



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

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## The 9th Sunday after Pentecost

### Gospel Reading Matthew 14: 22 - 34



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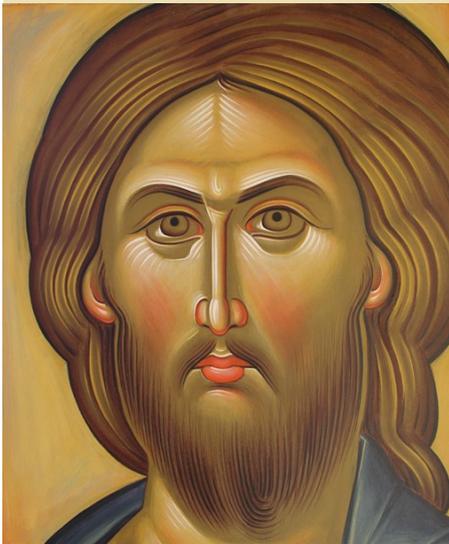
At that time, Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him

and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret.

### Apostle Reading 1 Corinthians 3: 9 - 17

*Brethren,* For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear;

for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.



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**Synaxarion.** Sunday August 22, 2021 (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost): Holy Martyr Agathonicus and those with him; Holy Martyr Anthuse; Holy Hieromartyr Athanasius, Bishop of Tarsus

## Christ Walks on the Water

Often, we think of God's will as some overarching plan for our lives. We tend to focus on the big picture and forget that God's will for us is revealed every day; it's discerned through a daily, if not moment by moment relationship and participation in the life of the Holy Trinity through His Church. We can forget or willingly choose to forget that "Thy will be done" goes hand in hand with "give us this day our daily (super-substantial) bread," feeding on Christ through the Sacraments. It's necessary for those who love God, who desire salvation, to suspend their own opinions and preferences to learn God's way, to continue to struggle, to change into the likeness of Christ. In this way, we learn to participate more and more in the Life that He is.

The word that St. Paul uses to describe this relationship of cooperation in today's Epistle is "synergoi," "synergy," saying, "we are God's fellow workers." This is no 50/50 relationship: We aren't equals with God. We cooperate with God's work in us through our obedience to His teachings, to His Church, to the hierarchy, so that we can be pastored, in order that we may grow in Christ-likeness and change, conforming ourselves to God's will. Obviously, this is a great challenge, but a necessary one if we're to grow in Christ and be deified.

Allow me to give you an example: The priest, as father of all those communing members of the church he pastors, isn't here to give you his 'opinions' about Christ, the Church, or the Orthodox Faith. Rather, he's here to strive to love as Christ loves, to teach, to preach, to adjure as a father in Christ in keeping with the sure path that's been entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. God loves us too much to leave us to our own devices! Instead, He gives us pastors, spiritual fathers, teachers accountable in His Church, to guide us—if we're open to receiving their guidance. The tenets of Orthodoxy can be learned in books; the heart of Orthodoxy is learned thru humility and obedience, and thereby, through cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In this way, St. Paul reminds us today: "no other foundation can anyone lay that that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." As I 'build' into you, I'm called and responsible to God, to my bishop, to give you the fullness of the truth of Christ, even if you struggle with it or, God forbid, reject it. Think, for example, of the call to come to Vespers, to make regular



confession, to prepare to receive the Eucharist, to pray daily, to put Christ first and witness to the Truth He is, to come before Christ's presence in the outward dress and inward humility we see in the icons of the Saints around us. These admonitions can all be challenging, but, they're also necessary.

For our part, we're each responsible for how we build on what we've received and the extent to which we're willing to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives through the Church, given to us for us to grow and work out our salvation.

Healing, growth, salvation in Christ, requires a dynamic, active, ongoing relationship and communion with the living God—He who is Eternal Life. And so, realizing what's at stake, we live with eternity before us, we prioritize the Kingdom of God over all that's temporal and passing away so that we may become inheritors of that Kingdom and help others find their way into the Kingdom as well through our example and life of faith.

Our cooperation, our daily "yes" to God, is predicated on faith, or, at least, the desire for faith. And faith is one of those big concepts that often eludes us or can seem ambiguous. Faith means letting go of our control, our own wills, and trusting God, even as that's a struggle. Taking a big step of faith can induce fear. The more pride we have, the more we can fear the spiritual surgery God may be doing in us to grow us in cooperation with His work in our lives for our salvation.

The disciples were in constant fear as they followed Jesus AND, they were in constant need of faith. They seem to be placed in one perilous situation after another. In today's Gospel, we find them tossed about on the sea, the waves and the wind making them much afraid. To add to that, Christ comes walking to them on the storm-tossed waves. Imagine! They assume He's a ghost.

Christ's words to them are comforting: "It is I. Do not be afraid." Literally, Christ says here, "I AM; He uses the divine name of God. Who else has the power over the laws of nature and the elements of nature? Still dubious, Peter calls out, "Lord, if it's You, command me to come to You on the water." The Lord commands and Peter comes. This is a big step of faith on Peter's part. Peter walks on the water! We often forget

this when we consider this passage. For a few steps, Peter exhibits the faith necessary to get to Christ. He keeps His focus on Christ.

When Peter gets distracted—in this case, by the winds and the waves, taking his focus off Christ, he begins to sink; he’s now in trouble; his faith has wavered. So it is with us: if we hope to build on the foundation that we’ve been entrusted in the Church—the new life in Christ that is our hope for eternal life—it demands our cooperation of faith, our willingness to trust God, which means trusting His Church, which is the ship He’s provided to safely guide us to His shore.

Faith means repenting when we do sin and immediately striving to get our focus back on Christ. But as Peter evidences to us: faith is hard work; it’s hard keeping our focus on Christ. But when we fail to do so, what are the consequences? We can become fearful yet again, bogged down in the mundane of the material world, our pride, our passions, our worldly preoccupations, our self-focus—and we ‘sink,’ we spiritually ‘sink’.

And so, God in His love for us, knows this about us, and shows us His mercy: He gives us the tools we need to help us keep our focus on Him, to repent, to cooperate with the work of healing, growth, and salvation He’s doing in us. These tools are our daily morning and evening prayers, the Jesus Prayer, calling on the Name of Christ throughout the day, fasting, which reminds us to hunger and thirst after God, all the divine services of the Church, the lives of the Saints, the Holy Scriptures, and the Sacraments—all of which He offers us and guides us in through His Church.

We don’t just need some of these tools, but of all of them. Being an Orthodox Christian means we don’t go it on our own; rather, we make use of the tools God has entrusted to us. We’re accountable, we’re repentant, so that we may continue to grow further up and further in our relationship and communion with Him.

What foundation are you building on? Are you making use of the ‘gold’ that Christ God gives you? It begins with cooperation and a teachable spirit, praying for an increase in faith, striving to keep our focus on Christ at all times. May each of us pray that through growth in faith, we may do the hard work of cooperating with God’s work in our lives, through obedience, humility, repentance, and love for God and His holy Church, making use of all the tools He’s entrusted to us. In this way, we’ll be among those who build on the foundation of Christ with ‘gold,’ and not as those who are saved, “as through fire” (I Cor. 3:15).

**Fr. Robert Miclean**

(Source: <https://www.orthodoxannapolis.org/>)



## **HOLY TRINITY’S** Liturgical Schedule from August 22 to September 1, 2021

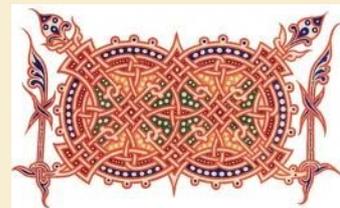
### **Sunday August 22** **(Nineth Sunday after** **Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

### **Sunday August 29** **(Tenth Sunday after** **Pentecost) - Beheading** **of St John the Baptist:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

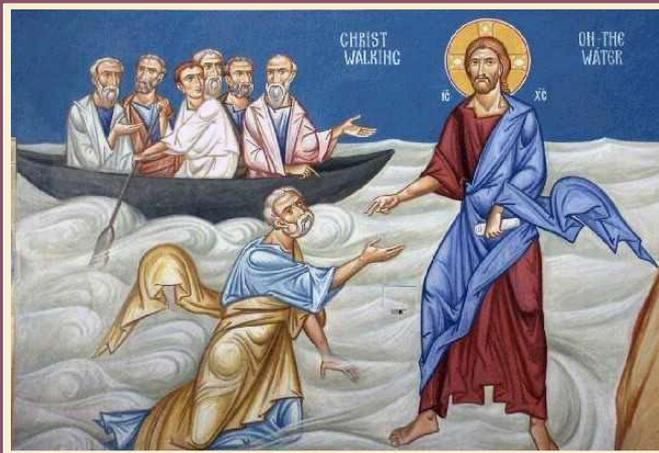
### **Wednesday September 1** **- Beginning of Church** **New Year**



## Homily for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Today is the 9th Sunday after Pentecost and we read about Jesus walking on the water to His disciples when they are in a ship beset by a storm. It is also the day when we commemorate St. Panteleimon, being July 27 on our calendar. And in the Epistle which is appointed for St. Panteleimon the Apostle Paul tells his son, Timothy, "Thou, therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Then he goes on to say, "No man that warreth entangleth himself in the affairs of this life, that he may please Him Who has chosen him to be a soldier." There is instruction here for how we are to live the Christian life. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. How does one do this? For one thing, St. Paul immediately says 'don't be entangled with the affairs of this world.' But there's something even deeper than this and it is really shown in the Gospel that is appointed for this Sunday.

Jesus had just fed a multitude with five loaves and two fishes. And the people looked at Him as the potential for a king, the potential for a military commander who could crush Rome, because, after all, an army needs rations as much as they need weapons. No starving army wins. And Jesus was their, let's say, "meal ticket". He was their way to crush Rome. That's why He constrained His disciples to get into a ship and that's why He left. St. John is even more explicit about it. He says it right out, that they tried to make Him a king and because they were going to, He left. And then what did He do right after this great miracle where people look and see the magnificence of what God can do? He goes up in a mountain apart to pray. Now, how do we react to good fortune, eh? How many people who were brushing the crumbs off their beards were praying to God with thanksgiving, huh? Not too many. It's a great contrast. You should pray alone in your closet begging God for help. This is God's example here. The God-Man himself is showing you. Go up into the mountain. How is the mountain? The mountain is to ascend right? The mountain is to bring your thought up to godly thing and to pray. How many times to you do this? How often? Does it happen once a day? Perhaps. Does it happen once a week? Does it ever happen that you really gather your thoughts and pray to God with desire in a mountain? You have to examine yourself and see if this is



true. I'm the confessor of most of you and I can say that I would guess that for some of you it's not true that you go up into the mountain very often. And that's sad. This is the example God's giving us. Let's make our thought ascend and pray.

Now, while He's praying the disciples are in the boat. And the boat is a metaphor for the Church, the Ark. The boat has sides to keep us safe and it floats in the water to keep us safe from the waves and

the storms of life if you stay in the boat. If you leave the boat you will drown. The boat is the life in the Church. Everything that has to do with being a Christian—our laws, our ways of thinking, our ways of living, but the reason for all of those things, is the mind of Christ which should be in each Christian. If you don't have this mind, you're going to falter. Now the disciples were in the boat and it was beset by storms. Christ was on the mountain praying deep into the night, because the fourth watch is the watch right before dawn. So He comes to them after the entire night and that night is the indication of our entire life, brothers and sisters. If we are to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, then we must endure to the end. Not to somewhere in the middle or even at the beginning, we have to endure to the end, in the boat, in the way of life that is the Christian way of life. The Christian way of believing, acting, changing one's soul and heart and to be godly all the way to the end - the fourth watch.

So Christ comes to them walking on the water and they're frightened. Alright, they shouldn't have been. They should have immediately realized it was Christ, because they were once in a boat before. He wasn't walking on the water. He was asleep, but they knew He had command over the elements. But they're mortals. They're sinful men. Their faith was still not tested and proven, but they were in the boat. They were following as best as they were able and God was revealing Himself a little bit more to them every day. So they were safe. Although it still was perilous for them, it was dangerous if they were to leave the boat. So they see Christ and Peter says "Lord if it's You, bid me to come." There is a problem with that. Peter had the best of intentions and he had zeal. God can do things with zeal, only, zeal when it is mixed with ardent love for the Savior. When he got out of the boat He walked just fine until he saw the wind. What is wind to a man? The waves are what will drown him. What is the wind? I'll

The waves are what will drown him. What is the wind? I'll tell you what the wind is. The wind is things in life that seem to so frighten us and seem to so effect us. We don't see the waves. We look at the wind. And he saw the wind boisterous. He saw the struggles, to extend the metaphor, the struggles of life. He became afraid. How many of us are afraid when we see the wind when we have struggles in life that we're not quite able to conquer? Or, most often, let's be honest with ourselves, most often we don't really want to conquer these things. And it causes this hurt in our conscience right, because we know we should try to be Christians? And yet there are things that we are attached to. So it sets up this cognitive dissonance in our life. And usually the way we deal with it is by ignoring the waves, by forgetting about godliness, or sometimes by getting despondent. Despondency, in my experience, is almost always when a person is not really struggling against a sin. Not struggling and failing, mind you. I've had the wonderful privilege as a Christian to see people struggling against a sin and failing. And they're blessed people because they are wholly depending on God.

I just got a letter from one yesterday. A woman who has deep problems, but deep honesty, too. And her afflictions are actually causing her great afflictions, great troubles. She falls. She blames no one. She makes no excuses for herself. In an external sense, she fails. But, in her heart, she's becoming purified. And in the fourth watch, this will become evident. That's when her reward will come and that's when she will be freed from her afflictions which, in my heart, I believe she'll be afflicted until the end of her days, until she dies, with some terrible afflictions and terrible difficulties. But most of us are not like that. Most of us do not really struggle against our sins. We say we do. We give lip service to it, and it causes all kinds of difficulties in our lives. Not only because we continue doing the sin and the sin leads us into all kinds of other sticky nets and crooked traps of the evil one. But because a man who's lying to himself cannot know God. We're created to know God. Jesus Christ chose apostles who were weak men. They squabbled with one another they made boastful comments about their own faith and they fell, in the case of Thomas and in the case of Peter, in the case of all of them. But there was something about these men. When they had God revealed to their hearts they responded. This is what it means to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

God reveals Himself to you. You must respond. You must not just be like the stump of the tree - not listening, not changing. If you change then you are a Christian, if you struggle. You must understand. You must struggle until the end of your days. For some, I think, this is a very frightening statement-to struggle until the end. We don't like struggle. We don't like to work very hard. We don't even like to spend more than two minutes waiting for our hamburger at the restaurant. We're

very impatient people, unwilling to endure much. This is a problem, because if you don't endure you won't be saved. Jesus Christ will come in the fourth watch. Not in the second, not in the first or the third. You must endure until the end. You must understand what God reveals to you, by putting it into action. And that's what Peter tried to do. He was not quite ready. He was a little bit beyond his abilities, but because of his ardent love God raised him up. And see what became of Peter. See his faith later on. See his ardent love for the Savior. I've said this before and I think it's worth repeating. When Peter goes out of the boat and he said, 'Lord, if it's your bid me to go on the waves' and then he starts to sink, this is, in a mystical way, pointing to his later three-fold denial of Christ, where he was full of faith but then he denied Christ three times. But Christ raised him up after that as well and it became fire. But all of his days, after his denial of Christ, after all the great things that he did, raising the dead, having thousands come to Christ in a single sermon, seeing miracle upon miracle and having his heart changed into fire, every day of his life he wept when he heard a cock crow. Every day because he felt the love of God and he remembered a time when he had not felt the love of God. He didn't feel unforgiven. His heart was tender.

We must have a tender heart. If we don't have a tender heart we're not Christians. The only way to have this tenderness, is to struggle in all the things that God has given us. But we must struggle with a purpose. Not just blindly. Not just because Fr. Seraphim says so and he's going to talk to me if I don't. You don't have to face me in the Judgement. You have to face God in the Judgement. He's going to say to you, 'I've given you all so much, and you haven't stood strong in the grace that I've given you. You haven't grown. You haven't changed.' May it not be that any of this happens to any of you because it would be a terrible tragedy. You were born for God but you won't realize God in the end. The path, brothers and sisters, is to stay in the boat; to struggle in the way of life that is the Christian way of life. Not to listen to liars who try to say the Christian way of life is something other than it is, other than struggle, other than changing our hard heart to be soft. These people are liars inspired by the demons. We know what the Christian way of life is. We see it over and over. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Himself showed us personally the Christian way of life, and all the saints, also, have showed us, also, this way of life.

May God help you to struggle to stay in the way of life that is Christian and to remember you are the temple of God. The Spirit of God dwells in you. May God help you in all these things. Amen.

**Fr. Seraphim Holland**