

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

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The 21st Sunday after Pentecost

HOLY TRINITY

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Gospel Reading Luke 8: 5-15

The Lord said this parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have

heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience." As he said these things, he cried out "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Apostle Reading Galatians 2: 16-20

Brethren, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly

not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.



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Synaxarion. Sunday October 17 (The 21st Sunday after Pentecost – Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council): Holy Prophet Hosea; Holy Venerable Hieromartyr Andrew, Archbishop of Crete; **Thursday October 21:** Holy Transylvanian Confessors: Venerable Bessarion and Sophrony, Holy Hieromartyrs and Confessors John of Galeș and Moses Măcinic; Holy Martyr Oprea of Săliște

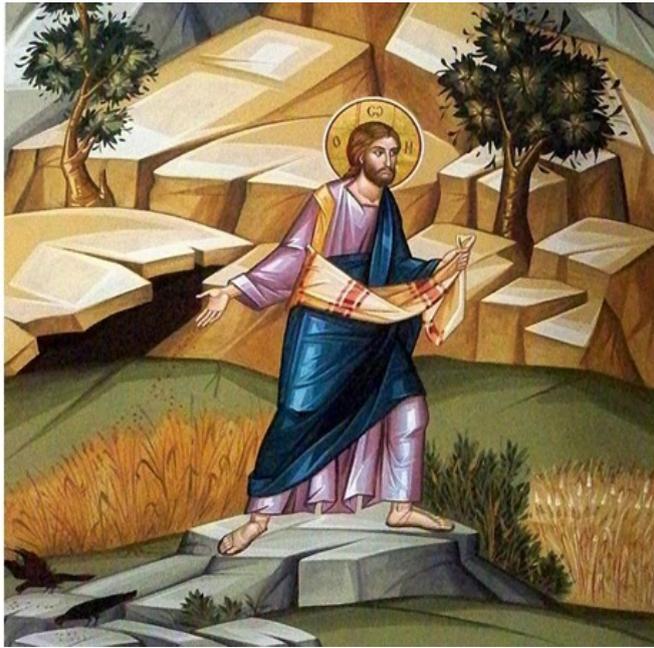
The Parable of the Sower

Mark Twain is supposed to have said that “it’s not the parts of the Bible I don’t understand that bother me; it’s the parts that I do understand.” In other words, we have more than enough already to stay busy with in the Christian life—we don’t need to go looking for new challenges.

Christ Himself reminded the Apostles that He had already taught them all that they should need: “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.” And though we find it hard to believe, that statement now applies to all of us who have entered into the fullness of the Orthodox Church. We share, with all the other members of the Body, the great responsibility of being faithful to what the Lord has revealed. Today’s gospel text reminds us all of the importance of being responsible for what we have received, for growing in the faith and bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ spoke of the word of God like seed cast upon the ground. Some seeds never even begin to grow because they fall along the wayside and are eaten by birds. And some who hear the good news of Christ do likewise, for they never even believe. Some seeds just begin to grow, but the sprouts die as soon as they spring up because they landed on rocks and couldn’t grow roots or receive nourishment. And some who believe at first fall away quickly, for they never seriously opened themselves to the strength received through regular prayer, worship, fasting, repentance, communion, and all the other means of support for the Christian life as taught by the Church—including the good deeds toward our neighbors that St. Paul wrote of in today’s epistle.

Then there are seeds that grow into plants that do take root; they seem to be healthy, but are eventually choked by thorns and weeds. And some who make a good beginning in the Christian life find themselves so distracted by their worries, riches, pleasures, and passions that they allow their faith to be destroyed. A gardener who is too distracted by other activities to look



out for weeds will probably not be very successful. Likewise, a Christian who is inattentive to the dangers posed by anger, greed, pride, lust, spiritual laziness, or other passions will not last very long. But some seeds fall on good ground, grow nicely, and yield a large crop. And some Christians not only hear the word of the Lord, but keep it in their hearts and lives, and bear fruit with patience.

Now in case all this gardening imagery becomes a bit too much, let’s be crystal clear: As Orthodox Christians, we have received the fullness of

God’s truth, the mystery of the Kingdom of God. We have put on Christ in baptism, been sealed by the Holy Spirit in chrismation, and nourished by the Lord’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Christ Himself forgives us when we repent in confession. In His Body, the Church, we are taught the whole, complete faith of the apostles. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, the Saints, who inspire us by their examples and help us by their prayers. In every Divine Liturgy, we join them and the entire heavenly host in the worship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no question what we have received in Jesus Christ: our salvation, our fulfillment, as partakers in the divine nature.

There is a question, however, about how we will respond to what we have been given. Will we take our faith for granted and decide that there are more important matters than prayer, repentance, and serving others in the name of Christ? Will we allow our spiritual life to become sick and weak, and ultimately die, because we are too lazy or distracted to fight our passions and accept the healing and strength which the Lord gives us through His Church? Will we rest content with bearing no fruit at all for the Kingdom? If so, we betray and reject Christ and shut ourselves out of His life.

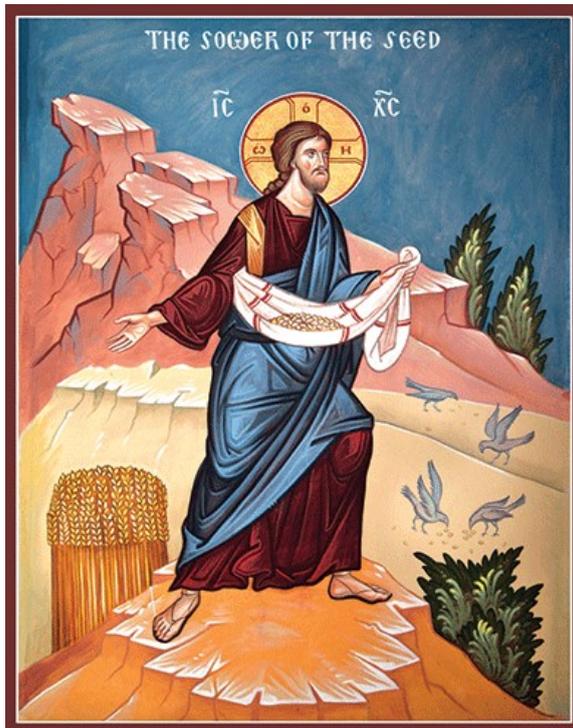
St. Paul warned in his letter to St. Titus against letting foolish disputes, pointless arguments, or anything else distract us from good works, [from meeting the urgent needs of others](#), from bearing fruit in the Christian li-

needs of others, from bearing fruit in the Christian life. We don't have to be experts in the New Testament to know that St. Paul was always writing churches to remind them to focus on Jesus Christ, to turn away from all the nonsense that tempts us from faithfulness to Him, that threatens to waste our time and energy on anything that separates us from the Lord, from loving relationships with our brothers and sisters, and from the building up of His Church.

The question which we all face, no matter what particular set of challenges we face in life, is whether we will grow into the full stature of Christ. Namely, will we build into our daily schedules opportunities to find the strength of the Lord through prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and service toward those around us? Will we repent through confession on a regular basis and whenever we are aware of grave sin in our lives? Barring extraordinary circumstances, will we attend Liturgy on Sundays and Feast Days? Will we do all that we can to direct our attention away from anything that inflames our passions and toward that which helps us grow in holiness? Will we become so busy with good works that we have no time or energy for foolish arguments or other pointless distractions? If so, then we will be like the seed that landed on good soil, got proper nutrition, and produced a bumper crop. And we will know already the joy of the kingdom of heaven.

That, my brothers and sisters in Christ, is the will of the Lord for each and every one of us. Young or old, male or female, priest or layperson, it does not matter. We have all received the mystery of the Kingdom of God, and we all have the ability to respond to our Lord's great mercy with repentance, love, and faithfulness in our daily lives, regardless of the circumstances we face. And, yes, that really is true for each and every one of us, no matter what sins we have committed and no matter what our problems may be. Remember St. Mary of Egypt, a wicked prostitute who later became an example of righteousness. Recall St. Peter, who denied Christ

before His crucifixion, and then became the most senior bishop of the early church, a powerful evangelist, and a great martyr. Bring to mind King David, St. Paul, and countless others who turned away from evil to embrace the mercy of the Lord and find new life in Him.



Maybe we feel this morning like we have done our best to kill the seed that Christ has planted in our souls. Perhaps we have had a spiritual draught or can't even see a sprout because of all the weeds in our lives; maybe we feel pretty far from bearing fruit, building up the church, or serving our neighbors. If that's the case, we should remember that the mystery of the Kingdom of God is all about mercy toward sinners like you and me. In Christ Jesus, there is always hope, there is always the promise of a new life with the blessing and peace of the Kingdom. No matter how far we have

to grow in the Christian life, He is with us, ready to heal our sicknesses, to strengthen us in our weakness, to calm our passions, to enable us to serve Him in our neighbors and in His Body, the church.

So in repentance and humility, it's time for us all to become responsible for the great gift of salvation, the mystery of the Kingdom, that is ours in Jesus Christ. Instead of taking the Lord for granted, it's time for us to root out everything in our lives that tempts us from responding to Him with a good heart, keeping His word, and bearing fruit with patience.

And then we will be like the seed that fell on good ground and flourished, becoming a blessing to the world and a sign of God's salvation, of the great mystery of His redemptive love that is revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Fr. Philip LeMasters



“Learn to Love the Saints...!”

On this day, our Holy Mother Church celebrates the holy and god bearing fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. As you remember from Catechism, this is the Council that deliberated and finalized the Orthodox experience and teaching on icons. With this council's resolutions, all the persecutions and bloody purges because of the use of icons came to a halt. With this council, the heretical teachings on icons and those who taught these heresies were rejected from the church. In church circles, the Ecumenical Councils many times are referred to as the “Municipalities (gatherings) of Martyrs”. In other words, many of the Holy Fathers who made up these assemblies were persecuted and eventually suffered martyrdom. It became a standard. All Ecumenical Councils therefore were “Municipalities of Martyrs”. The Holy Fathers who assembled at the Councils of the one united Christendom, spoke in a fashion similar to the manner that St. Paul spoke to Titus in today's Epistle lesson. St. Paul tells Titus what he witnessed, things he actually heard, that which he lived, and finally, the meaning he drew from these life experiences. His confession to Titus today was the sum total of his illuminating life experiences. These experiences were real and never forgotten. Today, therefore, is an opportunity for us to reflect on sainthood and martyrdom (witnessing the faith) and their meaning for us today.

Many people have a tilted understanding of saints and sainthood. It must be known that saints of the church were not singled out because of their virtue, the quality of their character, their noble way of life, nor for their heroic and admirable accomplishments.



Saints were set aside by the Church because they participated in the Divine Nature of God. During the Divine Liturgy we chant the beautiful hymn, “One is Holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen”. The Church is Holy, not because we, the believers make her holy, but because Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, makes us holy. As the head of the Church is holy, He blesses the whole body of the Church, that is, the Christians who compose the body. St. Symeon the New Theologian says, “Christians make up the entire body of Christ with their deeds, their knowledge and thoughts.”

Those who unite themselves to Christ reflect the light of Christ. This is confirmed by St. Gregory Palamas who states “...we become creations of Divine Light”. This concept is repeated by the Fathers of the Church. Man participates in the Divine Light of God's actions. God is, by His own nature, the Light. We have the potential of becoming the Light by God's grace.

Saints therefore are the rays of God's light. The Church places an illuminating halo around the head of the saints as Saints reflect the uncreated light of God. Martyrdom was not a simple act of self-sacrifice. Saints witnessed their faith in the Holy Trinity to the whole world. They taught that communion with God means communion with the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Trinity reflects freedom, love and unity. As we freely accept to follow Christ (without threat or coercion) we display love for God and love for all people. This love serves to unify us regardless of our apparent differences.

God's love then return love to God, who loved us first, we receive understanding. When we develop passions and evil ways, it is because we have over stepped of loving relationship with God. Theology is rooted in the Pentecost experience. When our heart is fully purged by the Spirit of God, our mind is enlightened, our vision is renewed, and our love for our fellowman becomes reinforced.

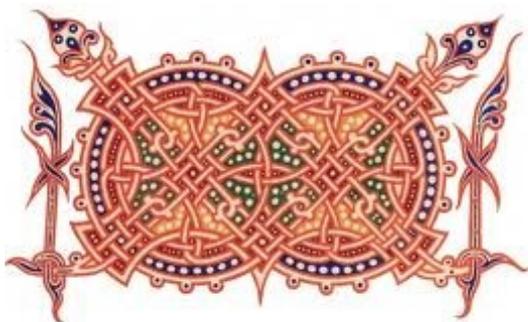
The Saints of the Church offered their life reflecting the image of God and not in support of any political faction nor for the expediency of a given ideology. They see the world as a gift from God. Far, very far, from the notion that the world can be compared to a hunted prey which should be used and subjected to man's individual wants and needs. The earth and the fullness thereof is holy. It is the space where God and man exchange gifts. God offers gifts to us, we offer gifts to God and to our fellow human beings on earth.

The Saints offered their life for their convictions. They were revolutionaries, radicals and transformers for Christ. They were able to transform the society in which they resided simply by their intense love for God.

Let us ed Abba Isaiah's words, "Learn to love the saints, so they will shed mercy on you. Learn to yearn for the saints, so that their zeal for God will consume you."

How many of you have studied the life of the saint to whom you have been dedicated at baptism? Today is a good time to begin.

Fr. Emmanuel Pratsinakis



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from October 17 to October 24, 2021

Sunday October 17 (21st Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

Thursday October 21 - Holy Transylvanian Confessors and Martyrs:

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

6:00 pm Vespers (With Metropolitan Nicolae)

Sunday October 24 (23rd Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy (With
Metropolitan Nicolea)
12:00 pm - Feast Day Banquet

