

Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

July 9, 2023



5th Sunday After Pentecost

Hieromartyr Pancratius

Divine Liturgy Readings

(Readings on Back)

- ◆ Romans 10:1-10
- ◆ Matthew 8:28-9:1

Announcements:

Parish Council Meeting

Our July Parish Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 11 at 6pm in the church basement.

Bulletin Articles

If you have any questions or topics you would like to see in the Sunday Bulletin, contact Fr Joseph with ideas.

Mark Your Calendars

Archbishop Daniel will be at our parish on Saturday, September 9 to celebrate Divine Liturgy and present Fr Basil Stoyka the mitre.

Festival Preparation Dates

Sunday, July 9: Following Coffee Hour - peel, boil & mash potatoes for pierogies.

Monday, July 10: 1:00pm - Pinch Pierogies.

Monday, July 24: 9:00am - Boil Cabbage, 12:30pm - Roll Cabbage

Wed, August 16: 9:00am - Boil Cabbage, 12:30 - Roll Cabbage

Thurs, August 17: Noon - Hall setup / Cabbage & Noodles / Beef Stroganoff

Friday, August 18: Tent / Bar Setup. Festival Beings (time TBA)

Sat, August 19: 2nd Day of Festival

Our festival is a lot of work, but also our largest fundraiser. Please plan on helping out as much as you can! Teamwork makes the dream work!

This Week

Monday, July 10

1:00pm - Pierogi Pinching

Tuesday, July 11

6:00pm - Parish Council

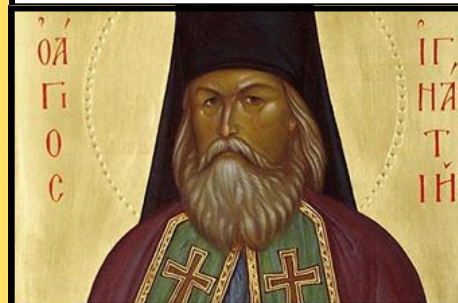
Saturday, July 15

6:00pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, July 16

9:00am - 3rd & 6th Hours

9:30am - Divine Liturgy



*Destroy within you the devil's rule over you;
destroy all his influence over you;
acquire spiritual freedom.
The foundation for your struggle
is the grace of holy baptism;
your weapon is the prayer of Jesus.*

~~~~~  
*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov*

## *Meditation on Today's Gospel*

We live in a time in which many people feel lonely and isolated, even if they are around others on a regular basis at home, work, and other settings. Sometimes that is because we hold ourselves back emotionally from the possibility of being rejected or harmed. Such separation is a symptom of the estrangement from God and one another which Jesus Christ came to heal.

The demon-possessed men in today's gospel reading represent Gentiles who were enslaved to the worship of idols and false gods. Their deliverance shows that Christ's salvation is for all people, including those separated from others by the power of evil in their lives. When He set them free from their miserable isolation, the Lord required nothing of them in advance; instead, He graciously liberated them from the degrading forces of evil and restored them to a truly human existence. Here we see an implication of St. Paul's instruction to the Romans: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." At the very heart of our faith is not a requirement for meeting an objective standard; instead, the unlimited mercy of God is the very foundation of our life and extends even to demon-possessed Gentiles, as well as to you and me.

The Orthodox Church has many rules, many canons, traditions, and practices. But at the heart of our faith and common life is not the obedience of law, for we are not called to be like the Pharisees of old. Instead, we are called, as St. Paul teaches, to confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus and to believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead; if we do so, we will be saved. "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Of course, there are no magic words that can heal our souls. Instead of creating a new law, St. Paul points to the deep truth of what it means to commend all our life to Christ our God. It means that we trust in Him as whole persons. As we offer our lives to Him, our words, deeds, and thoughts will come to embody the new life that He has brought to the world. That is how we open ourselves to receiving His transforming grace. That is how, like the demon-possessed men in today's reading, we too may become living icons of the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Remember that He did not require the Gergesene demoniacs to earn their deliverance; neither does He require that of us. Instead, the Savior has graciously taken upon Himself the consequences of all human corruption and sin



to the point of death, burial and descent to Hades so that He could conquer them all in His glorious third-day resurrection. He has ascended into heaven with full, complete glorified humanity and sent the Holy Spirit to empower His Body, the Church, of which we are members. He lives within our hearts by the Holy Spirit, casting out our demons, forgiving our sins, and enabling us to share in His eternal life even now as healed and transformed persons in relationship with Him and one another. By His grace, Christ restores us to the dignity and freedom of those who bear the divine image and likeness.

Those particular men were set free from the control of demons, but that

was surely only the beginning of their lives in Christ. Even though their deliverance was quite dramatic, it was only a start and they surely had to press on from there to resist temptation, to grow in holiness, and to learn to love and serve Him in their neighbors. They certainly had old fears and habits to overcome. And the same is true of us. Our salvation is a process, an ongoing journey of sharing more fully in the new life that our Savior has brought to the world. We must confess Christ more fully each day as we find greater healing, as we more fully manifest His victory over sin and death in our own lives.

If our religion were about meeting the requirements of a law, we could meet the standard and not think about it



anymore. We could check off a box and move on to something else; perhaps then it would make sense to condemn others who did not measure up. But Orthodox Christianity is not about rules and regulations, but instead about growing in relationship with a Person, our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. It is about sharing in His blessedness, about partaking in His divine nature by grace. And because God is eternal and infinite and beyond even our best attempts to define and control Him, there is no upward limit on what it means to unite ourselves to Him.

So we are constantly as much in need of Christ's mercy as were those demon-possessed fellows. We say the Jesus Prayer precisely because we are sinners in need of Him. The more we are healed by His grace, the more aware we will be of our brokenness and weakness. The more we open our lives to Christ, the more clearly we will see how far we have yet to go, how undeserving we are, how grateful we must be before an infinitely holy God Who will stop at nothing—not even the cross—in order to bring us into His blessed kingdom.

The formerly demon-possessed men could claim no credit for their deliverance. They could only marvel at their great blessing and do their best to live lives worthy of what Christ had done for them. We all face the same challenge: to live in ways that reflect what our Lord has done for us, to bear witness to the healing and fulfillment that He has brought to our lives, and to continue to open ourselves more fully to His salvation.

That means that we must all continue to struggle against whatever evil thoughts, habits, words, and deeds threaten to separate us from the Lord and one another. We will not do that perfectly, for we get side-tracked and distracted from fulfilling our vocation each day. That is precisely why we need to build holy habits like attending services, praying daily, fasting regularly, and giving generously to the needy.

At stake is whether we will grow in relationship with Christ by faith, repentance, and humility: by a life that confesses what He has done and is doing for us. The other alternative is to return to the graveyard, to the isolation and slavery of worshipping the false gods of our own will. Our choice is not whether to obey a law, but whether we will embrace deliverance and healing.

### Prayers Appreciated for:

#### Living:

Mat. Priscilla, Priest Ian  
Dn. Doug, Mat. Kathy  
Dawn, Katherine,  
Sam, Paula,  
Marianne, Molly,  
Suleiman, Steve

#### Departed:

Lisa

#### Tall Candles

*Are given by Delaine Ward for  
the health of the  
Royhab & Jacob Families*

*And in memory of  
Bill, Halim, Elizabeth, Kai  
& Sandy*

### WEEKLY READINGS

#### **Monday, July 10**

*Ven. Anthony of the Kiev Caves*  
Romans 16:17-24  
Matt 13:10-23

#### **Tuesday, July 11**

*Equal-to-the-Apostles  
Blessed Great Princess Olga*  
1 Cor. 1:1-9  
Matthew 13:24-30

#### **Wed, July 12**

*Ven. Paisios of the Holy Mountain*  
1 Cor. 2:9-3:8  
Matthew 13:31-36

#### **Thurs, July 13**

*Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel*  
1 Cor. 3:18-23  
Matthew 13:36-43

#### **Friday, July 14**

*Apostle Aquila of the 70*  
1 Cor. 4:5-8  
Matthew 13:44-54

#### **Saturday, July 15**

*Great Prince Vladimir*  
Romans 9:1-5  
Matthew 9:18-26

So like those Gergesene demoniacs, it is time for us to leave behind the graveyard of evil and instead become who we are called to be in Jesus Christ. It is time to embrace our true identity as those created in God's image and likeness and called to become partakers of the divine nature. By sincere faith, honest confession, and genuine repentance, let us accept the infinite mercy of the One who loves us so much that He conquered sin and death in order to bring us from the despair of the tomb into the joy of the Kingdom. Now is the time to turn our backs on the degrading delusions of idolatry and to enter into the unspeakable blessedness to which He calls us. Now is the time to confess and believe in Christ as we offer every dimension of our lives to Him for deliverance and transformation that know no bounds. Now is the time to turn from the isolated misery of sin for the joyful communion of those who have been set free through the mercy of Jesus Christ.

- Fr. Philip LeMasters

## *Today's Scripture Readings*

### **Epistle: Romans 10:1-10**

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

### **Gospel: Matthew 8:28-9:1**

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

*Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!*

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