

Today's Scripture Readings

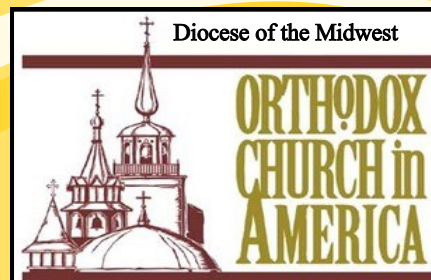
Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Brethren, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen..

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!



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Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

February 11, 2024

Tone 3



36th Sunday After Pentecost

*St. Blaise,
Bishop of Sebaste*

Divine Liturgy

Readings

(Readings on Back)

- ♦ 1 Timothy 1:15-17
- ♦ Matthew 15:21-28

The Week Ahead

Monday, Feb. 12

9:00am - St. Herman's Meal

6:00pm - Paula B. Parastas

Tuesday, Feb. 13

10:00am - Paula B. Funeral

Saturday, Feb. 17

6:00pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, Feb. 18

9:00am - 3rd & 6th Hours

9:30am - Divine Liturgy

Announcements:

Annual Parish Meeting

We will hold our ANNUAL PARISH MEETING TODAY following the Divine Liturgy. Lunch will be provided.

St. Herman's Meal

We will be cooking for St. Herman's on Monday, February 12. We will gather in the Church hall at 9:00 a.m. All are welcome to help!

Coffee Hour Sponsors

The 2024 Coffee Hour sign-up sheet is tacked up on the bulletin board. Take a few minutes to look at it and sign your name to a date or two.

St. Herman's Meal

Please keep in your prayers the newly departed handmaiden of God, Paula Baymiller, who reposed in the Lord early this morning. Funeral arrangements are:

Monday, February 12: Visitation from 4-6pm. Parastas at 6pm.

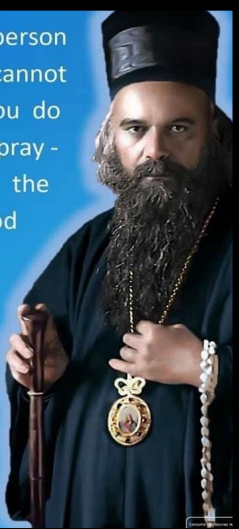
Tuesday, February 13: Visitation from 9-10am. Funeral Service at 10am.

Visitations and services will be held here at Ss Peter and Paul Orthodox Church. Internment will be at Ridge Hill Memorial Cemetery, after which everyone is invited back to the parish hall for lunch.

May the Kingdom of Heaven be hers, and may her memory be eternal!

If you can help a person - help, if you cannot help - pray, if you do not know how to pray - think about the person in a good way! And this will already be a help, because godly thoughts are also a weapon!

*- St. Nikolai
Velimirovich*



On Today's Gospel Reading

We've all had the experience of a prayer going unanswered. We've even offered prayers that we thought were worthy prayers for worthy causes and had them go unanswered. It begs the question: Does God test us by not answering our prayers?

Many people think of prayer as some kind of vending machine. We insert request, and Christ gives us an answer. Prayer is when we speak to God, and said even more simply, it is being with God. In prayer, we enter into intimate conversation with God, conversation that is joyful, vulnerable and humble. God always hears our prayers but answers them in His way and in His time.

Certainly, Christ knew He was going to heal the woman's daughter, but first there was a teaching moment both for the woman and for the crowd that was there. First of all, the woman was a Canaanite woman, a Gentile. She was not a Jew, one of God's chosen people. Jews didn't go out of their way to help Gentiles.

When the woman's initial prayer was not heard, she kept crying out after Jesus. Even the disciples were annoyed and wanted Him to send her away. Jesus told her "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mathew 15:24) Obviously, Jesus had come for everyone, but He wanted to see what she would do, and He wanted her to serve as a witness for the Jews who were nearby.



Jesus told her "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (15:26) And she replied "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." (15:27) In saying this, she was showing humility, comparing herself with a dog, and acknowledging Jesus as her master.

Jesus indeed healed the woman's daughter and at the same time gave us two lessons. First, a lesson in faith. Faith is when we don't know the outcome but we continue to show up and believe. If every prayer was answered instantly, if prayer was like a vending machine, it wouldn't take any faith at all to pray. It takes faith to offer a prayer, knowing that Christ will answer all requests, but in His way.

The second lesson in the miraculous encounter was that Jesus was going to be the Savior of not just the Jews, but of the Gentiles as well. And that the faith of the Gentiles was going to be greater than the faith of the Jews. Remember that it was the Jews that were going to reject Jesus as the Messiah.

There is one troubling thing that lingers from this story for which there is no answer. In my ministry, I've had the experience of burying many children and young adults, children of faithful parents who prayed and all they prayed for was their children to be healed and to extend their life. They acknowledged Jesus as Lord. They were persistent like the Canaanite woman. I'm proud to say that just about all of them still go to church every Sunday and are very involved in the life of the Church and live a life a faith. So why did these prayers not get answered? And the simple answer is, I don't know. There are certain things that happen in life that make no sense. I still believe in God, even in the face of senseless tragedy. When I meet the Lord, I will certainly have some questions, or maybe I won't, maybe at that moment, it will all make sense. It's just that some things don't make sense in my very human mind.

If you are struggling to make sense of things, don't despair. I'm sure that the Canaanite woman struggled also to make sense of things. What she did that serves as an example for all of us, is that she didn't go away the first time her prayer wasn't heard, or the second or the third. She stayed with Christ, and eventually her prayer was answered, in His way, in His time. The ultimate thing we pray for is salvation. This is a prayer that God will answer in His way, in His time. The route for each person will be different in length and in challenges along the way. The important thing is that we continue to walk the path He has chosen for us in faith and to not be discouraged even when life doesn't go as we wish, even when we feel like dogs begging for crumbs. It was in her great humility that her prayer was answered. A life lived with humility, as we will learn shortly in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, will lead to great exultation. So stay humble and stay focused, no matter how difficult the path gets.

- Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis

St. Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste

The Hieromartyr Blaise was consecrated Bishop of Sebaste during the reign of the Roman emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Licinius (307-324), fierce persecutors of Christians.

Many hid themselves from the persecutors by going off to desolate and solitary places. St Blaise also hid himself away on Mount Argeos, where he lived in a cave. Wild beasts came up to him and meekly waited until the saint finished his prayer and blessed them. He also healed sick animals by laying his hands upon them.

His was discovered by servants of the governor Agrilaus, who had come to capture wild beasts to loose on the Christian martyrs. The servants reported to their master that Christians were hiding on the mountain, and he gave orders to arrest them. But those sent out found there only the Bishop of Sebaste. Glorifying God Who had summoned him to this exploit, St Blaise followed the soldiers.

Along the way the saint healed the sick and worked other miracles. Thus, a destitute widow complained to him of her misfortune. A wolf had carried off a small pig, her only possession. The bishop smiled and said to her, "Do not weep, your pig will be returned to you..." To the astonishment of everyone, the wolf came running back and returned his prey unharmed.

Agrilaus, greeting the bishop with words of deceit, called him a companion of the gods. The saint answered the greeting, but he called the gods devils. Then they beat him and led him off to prison.

On the next day, they subjected the saint to tortures again. When they led him back to the prison, seven women followed behind and gathered up the drops of blood. They arrested them and tried to compel them to worship the idols. The women pretended to consent to this and said that first they needed to wash the idols in the waters of a lake. They took the idols and threw them in a very deep part of the lake, and after this the Christians were fiercely tortured, then beheaded.

Saint Blaise was again brought before Agrilaus, and again he unflinchingly confessed his faith in Christ. The governor ordered that the martyr be thrown into a lake. The saint, going down to the water, signed himself with the Sign of the Cross,

Prayers Appreciated for:

Living:

Chris,
Marianne,
Dan,
Mat. Nadean
Mat. Krystyna

Departed:

Paula (Seraphima)

Tall Candles

Tall Candles are sponsored by
Kathy & Sam Jacob
in honor of

Dn. Doug & Mat. Kathy's 50th
Wedding Anniversary
and in memory of the
newly departed
handmaiden of God,
Paula Baymiller

WEEKLY READINGS

Monday, Feb. 12

St. Alexei, Met. of Moscow
James 2:14-26
Mark 10:46-52

Tuesday, Feb. 13

St. Seraphima
James 3:1-10
Mark 11:11-23

Wed, Feb. 14

St. Auxentius of Bithynia
James 3:11-4:6
Mark 11:22-26

Thurs, Feb. 15

Apostle Onesimus of the 70
James 4:7-5:9
Mark 11:27-33

Friday, Feb. 16

St. Nicholas of Japan
1 Pet. 1:1-2, 10-12, 2:6-10
Mark 12:1-12

Saturday, Feb. 17

Theodore the Recruit
1 Thess. 5:14-23
Luke 17:3-10

and he walked on it as though on dry land. Sixty-eight men of the governor's retinue entered the water, and immediately drowned. The saint, however, heeding the angel who had appeared to him, returned to shore.

Agrilaus was in a rage over losing his finest servants, and he gave orders to behead Saint Blaise. The relics of St. Blaise were brought to the West during the time of the Crusades. We pray to Saint Blaise for the health of domestic animals, and for protection from wild beasts.

