

August 2015



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# SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## August 2015 Newsletter

When Peter, James and John climbed up Mt. Tabor with Jesus they had no idea what was about to happen to them. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus transfigured before His disciples showing His glory to the disciples. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit revealed themselves to the bewildered disciples. It is clear from the various descriptions of this event that the disciples struggled to find words to adequately explain what they had seen and experienced. When one's eyes are opened to see the glory of God it is overwhelming and beyond human language to fully portray.

The experience of Jesus revealing Himself in glory to His disciples had a profound effect on them. They saw, heard, and experienced something from a realm beyond our mundane fallen creation, something they could not fully understand and yet something they could never deny. In the bibliopatric tradition to see is also to participate in. The goal of the Christian life is to see God, to participate in God, to know God. When I say "know God", I do not mean to know a lot of things about God as if He is an object of study. What is meant by knowledge of God is to actually encounter God in the person of Jesus Christ. To know Him because we have encountered Him and have seen Him as He is.

Most Christians cannot relate to the direct experiences of the apostles of Christ seeing Jesus as He is. That is not to say that these revelations of



Christ do not continue happen, they certainly can and have occurred throughout Christian history. However, for the majority of us the experience of God is subtle. For many Christians, the subtlety of God's presence in their lives is sometimes so faint that it becomes questionable. "Am I praying to God? Or simply talking to myself?"

When faced with God's seeming absence, instead of remaining steadfast in prayer, many choose more tangible substitute for God's presence. It is easier to read the Bible than it is to seek the face

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of God. It is easier to read theology than it is to wait on the presence of God in silence. It is easy for us to make our heads the focal point of our Christian experience while at the same time neglecting our hearts. There is a huge difference between the knowledge about God that we glean from the Scriptures and theology and the knowledge of God obtained by direct encounter with the living God.

Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos in his work *St. Gregory Palamas as a Hagiorite* summarizes some of the tendencies of our modern times by saying:

In the first place we see that men's search for God is increasing day by day. Many people are seeking to find and possess real knowledge of God. Some, since they are not following the true way to knowing God, become discouraged and come to deny God. Others, instead of finding the true God, find various idols of God, which they worship. Consequently idolatry is prevalent even in our time. Then we notice that even among Orthodox Christians there are two great trends. People are divided into two large categories. The first category includes those who can rightly be called followers of Barlaam, who give priority to reason and depend mainly on man. They believe that in this way they will solve many problems, including of course the first and principal one, which is the knowledge of God. The second category includes those who, like St. Gregory Palamas, have their heart at the center of their spiritual life – the heart in the full sense given to the word by the biblico-patristic Tradition. They follow the method which has been followed by all the saints of our Church. They have been counted worthy of attaining a true knowledge of God and, of course, true communion with God.

Our goal as Christians is not to be the smartest people in the room so that we can fix the problems of the world. Our goal is not to be good, moral, upstanding citizens and church members. Our practices of prayer, fasting, almsgiving are not simply about mental health and physical discipline. As Orthodox Christians everything we do has one goal in mind: that we could come to know Christ as He is.

The Apostle John writes: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.(1 John 3:2-3)" May God open our eyes as He did His disciples on Mt. Tabor. My He bless us to purify ourselves to that we can "see Him as He is."

In Christ,

Fr. Theophan



## *Announcements*

- The Dormition fast started Saturday August 1st. Orthodox Christians are asked to abstain from meat and dairy during this fast.
- This Wednesday/Thursday 5/6th we will celebrate the Great feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord. Vigil will be served at 6pm on Wednesday and the Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning at 8am. It is a custom to bring fruit to the Liturgy to have it blessed on this day.
- It is a custom in many Orthodox communities to serve the [Paraklesis to the Mother of God](#) during the Dormition fast. We will be serving the Paraklesis service on Wednesday's 8/12 in place of Vespers.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.
- On Friday/Saturday the 14/15<sup>th</sup> we will celebrate the Great feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Vigil will be served on Friday evening at 6pm and the Divine Liturgy will be Saturday morning at 9am.
- We are scheduled to have an infant baptism on Saturday August 15<sup>th</sup> after the Liturgy for Dormition.
- Fr. Theophan will be giving a parish update talk on Sunday, August 16<sup>th</sup> at coffee hour.
- Confessions are heard every Saturday from 5-6pm, before Sunday Liturgy if there is a need, and by appointment.

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## *Many Years!*

### *Birthdays*

August	5	Barry Lee
	14	Jacob Plummer
	26	Eric Olson

### *Anniversaries*

August	6	Fr. Theophan and Pres. Elena
	13	John and Heidi Hintermaier
	15	Barry and Bianca Lee
	20	Paul and Linda Tutchter
	20	Peter and Olga Uchakin
	27	Allen and Leann Almquist
	19	Jordan and Nicole Thomae

## *FOCUS Backpack Program 2015*

Help fill a backpack with needed school supplies for homeless or underprivileged children in the Macon area. Please talk to or email Linda Tutchter ([tutchter@att.net](mailto:tutchter@att.net)) if you are interested in participating in this charitable outreach to our community

## *Book Club*

On Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at 6:30pm we will meet at Tom and Susan Kehayes house for the Book Club. The book we will be discussing is *To Open One's Heart: A Spiritual Path* by Michel Evdokimov. Copies will be available in our bookstore for \$12. Light refreshments will be provided by the host. All are welcome.

## *St. Innocent Sisterhood Gathering*

On Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup> at 7pm Lee Olson will be hosting our first Saint Innocent Sisterhood gathering. We will be coming together for fellowship and to discuss and determine the vision and goals of a new sisterhood in our beloved community. This meeting and organized approach is long overdue but I am certain it is our Lord's timing to now take up this venture for our growing community and for its spiritual health. Please save the date and make every effort to join us in this Godly endeavor as your input is very important. Please bring some light, vegetarian finger food to share as this is a fast day. Lee's address is 3777 Drury Drive, Macon GA.

## *Spiritual Gifts Retreat*

Fr. Anthony Salzman's parish in Athens GA will be hosting Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff for a Gifts Based Ministry Retreat on Saturday August 22, 1:30-5:30pm. Fr. Jonathan represents the ONCD Orthodox Natural Church Development program and recently held a seminar in Macon for our parish. This Gifts Based Ministry Retreat is designed to help individuals identify their "Gifts" in order to serve more effectively within their parish community. If you are interested in attending this seminar you will need to register. Registration forms can be found in the Narthex of the church.

## *Choir Retreat*

On Saturday September 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 we are planning a choir retreat. The focus of the retreat is to orient new members into the choir. Details will be announced soon. The choir, all who are interested in joining the choir, and anyone who would like to learn more music or Orthodox spirituality as it relates to music are welcome to attend.



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<http://orthodox360.com/tours/stinno-cent-macon/>

## Orthodox Natural Church Development Update



On July 25<sup>th</sup> 2015 the Parish Health team retreated to with Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff at Holy Cross Church in Macon. Orthodox Natural Church Development (ONCD) is a ministry that helps parishes assess themselves with the goal of creating health and growth.

The ONCD process takes years. Here is what you will see in the coming months. The parish health team (Gary, Heidi, Eric, Jackie, Chris) has selected 30 members of our parish that fit certain criteria to take the ONCD assessment. The idea of the assessment is to show general strengths and weaknesses in our parish. Once we get the results of the assessments we will have a clearer understanding of how people feel about our parish.

Every parish has areas it can grow in. The idea behind ONCD is that as we address our weakest areas the parish becomes naturally healthier. Healthy and spiritually vibrant parishes attract people.

In early October we are planning to hold small focus groups to discuss any weaknesses that are brought to light by the assessment. The goal of the focus groups is to get everyone involved, thinking, and discussing the results of our assessment.

Please pray that God guide and illumine us as we begin the ONCD process.

## Kingdom Builders Outreach opportunity Oct 2-3

Kingdom Builders is an outreach ministry started by the Monroe County Ministerial Association. Each year the churches of Monroe County gather for a few days to help repair, clean or service homes of the less fortunate in the area. There are many people in our area elderly or do not have the funds to fix their own houses themselves. This year the Kingdom Builder weekend will be on Friday and Saturday October 2-3. There are a few different ways you can participate in this event.

1. You can be one of the volunteers who helps with the small construction projects. Skills are appreciated but are not required. Youth are welcome. Participant Form due by September 7, 2015
2. Do you have tools sitting around that you do not need or use? Kingdom Builders needs tools donated. Tools such as tape measures, hammers, scrapers, squares, goggles, and gloves. Large items will also be needed, ladders, saws, drills, and extension cords. These tools will be stored year round in the Kingdom Builders trailer and will be available for use by churches throughout the year.
3. Funds. Kingdom Builders has received a donation of \$5000.00 from Southern Rivers Energy and have applied for donations from other organizations. In years past our community has donated around \$500 for this outreach. All monies donated will be used to purchase materials for the home repairs. Kingdom Builders is operating under the 501c3 of Community Care Council, Inc. (Circle of Care) and therefore is tax deductible. If you donate through our church please make it clear that you want your money to go to Kingdom Builders.

If you are interested in participating in the Kingdom Builders event this year please let Fr. Theophan know and fill out your Participant Forms by September 7, 2015.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Wine & Oil <b>Beginning of the Dormition Fast</b> 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
2 Wine & Oil  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	3	4  7pm Bolingbroke Community Club meeting	5  <b>6pm Vigil For Transfiguration</b>	6 Fish, Wine, Oil <b>8am Divine Liturgy for Transfiguration</b> 9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	7	8 Wine & Oil  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
9 Fish, Wine, Oil  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	10	11	12  6pm Paraklesis	13 Fish, Wine, Oil 8am MCMA 9-1pm Fr. T. CPE  6pm Parish Council	14  <b>6pm Vigil for the Dormition of the Theotokos</b>	15 <b>9am Divine Liturgy</b> for the Dormition 10:30am Baptism 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
16 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape <b>Parish update</b>	17	18  6:30pm Book Club	19  6pm Daily Vespers	20  9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	21	22 <i>Spiritual gifts retreat 1-6pm</i> <i>Athens GA</i> <i>6pm Readers Vespers</i>
23 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	24	25	26  6pm Daily Vespers	27  9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	28  7pm Sisterhood meeting	29 Strict Fast  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
30 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	31					

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Church New Year 7pm Bolingbroke Community Club	2 6pm Daily Vespers	3 9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	4	5 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
6 9am Bible Study 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape ONCD Assessment	7 Labor Day	8 Nativity of the Most- Holy Theotokos	9 Fish, Wine, Oil 6pm Daily Vespers	10 8am MCMA 9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Parish Council	11	12 <i>5pm Confession</i> 6pm Great Vespers
13 9am Bible Study 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape ONCD Assessment	14 Strict fast  Exaltation of the Life-giving Cross	15	16 6pm Daily Vespers	17 9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	18	19 <i>Choir Retreat</i>  5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
20 9am Bible Study 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape Church School	21	22	23 Wine & Oil 6pm Daily Vespers	24 9-1pm Fr. T. CPE 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	25 Fish, Wine, Oil	26 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
27 9am Bible Study 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape Church School	28	29	30 6pm Daily Vespers			