

August 2018

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# SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

## AUGUST NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR

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### *Now and for the future...*

As I have been praying and contemplating our parish life at St. Innocent I have found myself asking, “who are we as a community and where are we going?” More specifically, “what do our people want now and in the future?” To be clear, I know who I want us to become and where I want us to go. However, as you know I am one person.

Eight years ago Gary Cox and I crafted a general mission statement for our parish. What we wrote was not, in a technical sense, meant to be a “mission” or “vision” statement. It was more of a founding statement. “Like our patron saint, the 19th-century missionary to Alaska, St. Innocent, our parish seeks to bring the Early Christian faith, worship and practice - what believers called “the Way” - to the greater Middle Georgia region.” I believe an earlier version mentioned that we were bringing the

Gospel in the “language and culture” of the Middle Georgia region. Our website also states that “St. Innocent Orthodox Christian Church is a diverse community of believers seeking salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

I have to confess, that I have never been a pro-mission/vision statement person. I have always thought that if you lived a dedicated Christian life you would go and do what God intends. Mission statements can be constricting and they remind me of the business world. I am wary of too much business thinking in the church. On the other hand, as we grow, it is important to have dialog and discussion about who we are and what we intend to become as a community. In this context, mission/vision statements can be a way for the community to set direction and accountability.

As a priest, I believe that God has called me and my family to St. Innocent for our salvation. If I honor where God has sent me and to the best of my abilities use my God-given talents to build up our community then I hope to be considered a "good and faithful servant." Our diocese lays out basic idea of what the primary responsibility of the priest is, "the priest's primary responsibility is to preach and teach the doctrine of the Holy Orthodox Church, preside over the celebration of the Holy Mysteries and divine services in accordance with the Tradition of the Church, and to ensure that the life of the Parish as a whole is guided and directed toward spiritual and not secular ends."

I believe that God has also called you (and your family) to St. Innocent Church for your salvation. There is no simple statement of vocation for the Christian laity. Once one starts writing a list of what it means to be a dedicated Christian a problem occurs. Lists are always focused on qualifying minimums. God wants us to give 100% of ourselves and not make it our goal to simply qualify for minimum requirements. Aside from a general striving to live the Christian life and all that it entails by God's grace, each one of us is called to serve the church (our community) in particular ways. The priest and the parish are responsible, with God's aid, for the life of the parish. We, each one of us together, are stewards of St. Innocent and the gifts that God has bestowed on us.

Let's circle back to my question to each one of you. "Who are we as a community and where are we going?" More specifically, "what do you want now and for our future at St. Innocent?" With this newsletter I am beginning what I hope is a meaningful dialog with all of you. In the month of August, we will be having two discussions that relate to the future of our parish. On Sunday the 12th we will be discussing our Church School program at St. Innocent. On Sunday the 19th in the Everyday Orthodoxy Class we are going to begin to contemplate who we are and what we want our community to become. Of course, I encourage everyone who cares about our future and considers St. Innocent their spiritual home to come and be a part of the discussion.

## NEWS & UPDATES

- On Sunday the 5th Fr. David & Mat. Rozanne Rucker, who are Mission Specialists with OCMC and are currently serving in Kodiak, Alaska will be with us. Fr. David will be giving a presentation during our fellowship hour.
- On Sunday the 12th we will have a meeting to plan for the upcoming Church School year. If you have children who will be participating, if you have taught in the past or would like to teach in the future, or if you have any interest in the Christian education of our children, please come to this meeting. Most of the meeting will be a discussion about the needs and desires of parents
- See Calendar below for the schedule of services and happenings at St. Innocent Church. You can also find this calendar by signing into Realm, on our Google calendar, and our website.

## SAVE THE DATE! MARRIAGE RETREAT WITH DR. DAVID AND DR. MARY FORD

On Saturday, September 22 we will be hosting Dds. David and Mary Ford from St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary. The Ford's coauthored "Glory and Honor: Orthodox Christian Resources on Marriage" The topics and timing for this event will be announced next month.

## BOOK CLUB

We plan on reinitiating the Book Club in September. The plan is to meet at a local coffee shop to discuss "Indication of the Way Into the Kingdom of Heaven by St. Innocent of Alaska" which will be available in our bookstore for \$9.95. All are welcome. Details to be announced!

## MANY YEARS!

### Birthdays

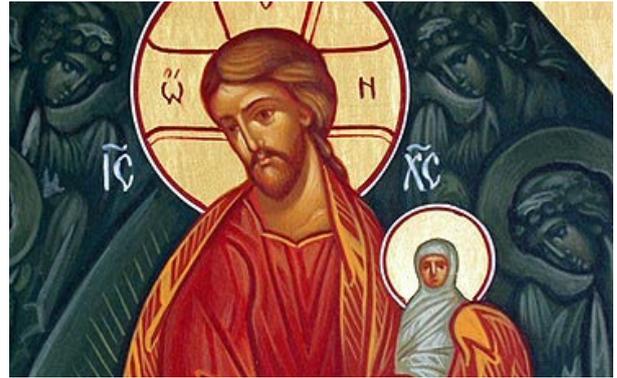
2 Mason Hough  
5 Barry Lee  
7 Jay Turner  
8 Susie Savage  
11 Rachel Marble  
13 Seraphin Curington  
14 Jacob Plummer  
23 Olivia Savage  
23 Sarah Savage  
23 Stephanie Curington  
24 Nadia Stephens  
26 Eric Olson

### Anniversaries

6 Fr. Theophan & Pres. Elena Buck  
13 John & Heidi Hintermaier  
15 Barry & Bianca Lee  
20 Linda & Paul Tutcher  
20 Olga & Peter Uchakin  
27 Allen & Leann Almqvist

## CONFESS YOUR SINS

The fasting periods on our Church calendar, such as the Dormition fast, are good times to come and partake of the Sacrament of Confession. Regular confession is a normative expression of our desire to grow closer to God. At St. Innocent confessions are heard before most services and can be also be heard by appointment. From the Church's perspective, regular confession is practiced to cultivate spiritual sensitivity. Drawing closer to God has the effect of opening our eyes to our secret faults. From this perspective, one who does not come to the sacrament of confession on a regular basis may actually be either insensitive to God or simply negligent towards their own spiritual life. None of the above is a judgment. Rather, be encouraged. Do you want to grow closer to Christ? Make regular confession a part of your practice of the faith and God will do the rest!



## THE DORMITION FAST

"So why do we fast before Dormition? In a close-knit family, word that its matriarch is on her deathbed brings normal life to a halt. Otherwise important things (parties, TV, luxuries, personal desires) become unimportant; life comes to revolve around the dying matriarch. It is the same with the Orthodox family; word that our matriarch is on her deathbed, could not (or at least should not) have any different effect than the one just mentioned. The Church, through the Paraklesis Service, gives us the opportunity to come to that deathbed and eulogize and entreat the woman who bore God, the vessel of our salvation and our chief advocate at His divine throne. And as, in the earthly family, daily routines and the indulgence in personal wants should come to a halt. Fasting, in its full sense (abstaining from food and desires), accomplishes this. Less time in leisure or other pursuits leaves more time for prayer and reflection on she who gave us Christ and became the first and greatest Christian. In reflecting on her and her incomparable life, we see a model Christian life, embodying Christ's retort to the woman who stated that Mary was blessed because she bore Him: blessed rather are those who hear His word and keep it. Mary did this better than anyone. As Fr. Thomas Hopko has stated, she heard the word of God and kept it so well, that she of all women in history was chosen not only to hear His Word but give birth to it (Him). So while we fast in contemplation of her life, we are simultaneously preparing ourselves to live a life in imitation of her. That is the purpose of the Dormition Fast." from the Antiochian website by Daniel Manzuk

## PASTOR'S CORNER REFLECTION

In Matthew 14 after Jesus feeds the 5000 he sends his disciples away on a boat and he retreats to pray. As the disciples journey they get caught in a storm. By the time Jesus came to them, between 3 and 6am, we can assume that were tired, cold, wet, and scared.

It is clear from Matthew's text that encountering Jesus was very alarming. In the ancient world water is a symbol of chaos and things unknown. Dragons and demons lurk in the chaos of the sea. The same water that gives life, food, and trade often randomly destroys boats and people sending them to the bottom of the sea. It is out of the water and chaos of the storm that Jesus appears, unrecognized, like a ghost. To the relief of the disciple, Jesus announces himself. Peter says, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." As Peter makes his way out to Jesus his mind becomes divided between the reality of Jesus's power and power of the wind and waves and begins to sink. Doubt in Greek indicates a divided mind.

Peter's sinking is often interpreted as Peter's failure to have faith. Jesus Himself mentions Peter's lack of faith. Peter failed to be single-minded and allowed his faith in the weather to overtake his faith in Jesus's power. Certainly, we can say on one level that Peter failed, however, perhaps as Peter was never meant to succeed.

In the Christian world doubt and unbelief are taboo. I have often felt the guilt and shame of having doubts and unbelief. In the midst of chaos, I have often been encouraged by well-meaning Christians to simply look to Christ and "have faith." In the Christian world I have even been encouraged to deny my doubts and put on mask of confidence. Here is an interesting twist about Peter's story I would like you to consider. Peter is a mere man and at no point in Peter's life was he able to walk on the water of his own accord. In John 15:5 we are told by Christ that "apart from me you can do nothing."

Peter learned this lesson first hand while sinking in the sea. Apart from Christ, Peter could neither muster the faith nor sustain his focus on Christ enough to transcend the chaos of the wind and waves. Peter cannot walk on water without complete reliance on Christ, so he cries out as he is sinking, "Lord, save me" and Jesus immediately reached for him and pulled him to safety.

As Christians, we should remind ourselves daily that apart from Christ we can do nothing. We cannot have God-pleasing faith by our own efforts alone. We cannot simply believe in God or correct our lives by our own self-determination. We cannot obtain virtues apart from Christ. Everything we will ever accomplish spiritually will only be accomplished as we become reliant on the grace of God. Ironically, we cannot even become reliant on the grace of God without God's help!

Peter only came in contact with his divided mind while he was in crisis. Each one of us is journeying over the stormy seas of life, where chaos, dragons and demons lurk. Some of us might like to put on a confident face and transcend the suffering that surrounds us. However, we will only ask the Lord to save us if we truly experience our own inadequacy to live the Christian life and somehow walk on the water with Jesus. Ultimately, this means our own failure to focus on Christ and have faith are often what bring us into contact with the power of God.

So if you have doubts, unbelief, or an inability to focus on Christ in the midst of the storm don't waste your time feeling guilt and shame about it. Rather, like Peter, turn again and again to Christ asking him to save you and to pull you up and he will. It seems to me that God is always awaiting that blessed moment when we come to the ends of ourselves and realized that we can do nothing of value apart from Him and His grace.



# August 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 6pm Paraklesis (Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos)	2 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	3	4 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
5 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape Fr. David Rucker OCMC Presentation 6pm Great Vespers	6 9am Divine Liturgy for Transfiguration	7 9am Morning Prayers	8 6pm Paraklesis (Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos)	9 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	10	11 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
12 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape Church School Discussion	13	14 9am Morning Prayers 6pm Matins w/Lamentations to the Theotokos	15 9am Divine Liturgy for The Dormition of the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary	16 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 7pm Parish Council	17	18 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
19 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30pm Every Day Orthodox Class	20	21 9am Morning Prayers	22 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45 Bible Study	23 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	24	25 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
26 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape Possible Daybreak visit	27	28 9am Morning Prayers	29 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45 Bible Study	30 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	31	

## Tentative September 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
2 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30pm Everyday Orthodoxy Class	3 Labor Day	4 9am Morning Prayers	5 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45 Bible Study	6 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	7 6pm Great Vespers	8 9am Divine Liturgy - Nativity of the Theotokos 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
9 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30pm Everyday Orthodoxy Class	10	11 9am Morning Prayers	12 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45 Bible Study	13 9am Morning Prayers Vigil for the Feast of the Cross	14 9am Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Cross.	15 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
16 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30pm Everyday Orthodoxy Class	17	18 9am Morning Prayers	19 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45 Bible Study	20 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 7pm Parish Council	21	22 Marriage Retreat w/Dr. David & Dr. Mary Ford 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
23 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30pm Everyday Orthodoxy Class	24	25 9am Morning Prayers	26 6pm Daily Vespers 6:45 Bible Study	27 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	28	29 2 pm Wedding @ Holy Cross 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
30 9:40am 3 & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30pm Everyday Orthodoxy Class						