

ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR



WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The word Gospel is used all the time in the media, by religious people, and even as a genre of music. But what is the Gospel?

By Fr. Andrew Damick

The first line of our mission statement states “At St. Innocent Orthodox Church, we seek to make Jesus Christ and His Gospel the center of everything we do.”

We live in a world with a multitude of competing ideologies, personalities, and movements which can end up distracting us from the centrality of Christ and the Gospel. Even worse, often times people confuse worldly things for Christ and the Gospel or attempt to mix Jesus and his Gospel with other world religions or philosophies. In order to be a Christ-centered church we need to know who Jesus is and what the good news is.

What is the Gospel? Who is Jesus Christ? I am going to pass this question off to Fr. Andrew Damick, who writes a succinct presentation of the Gospel message. Take your time and read it, invite God to reveal Himself to you so that the words don't remain merely words on a page. Remember, there is nothing more powerful, healing, and grace filled as Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Christ.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel is the good news that:

- I. Jesus is the Messiah.
- II. Christ is risen!
- III. We can be saved.

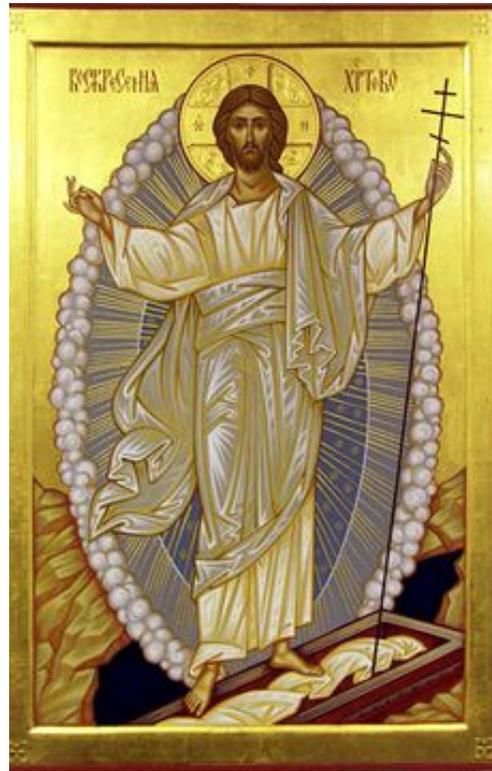
So what does this mean?

I. Jesus is the Messiah

It's apparent to anyone who's awake these days that there's something wrong with the world. Of course, it's not just the world that has something wrong with it, but as Alexander Solzhenitsyn once said, "The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts." Every human being has evil in his heart, whether he sees it or not, and this evil separates him from God, his Creator (Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:10). This is what sin is.

The word sin means "to miss the mark." Sin is therefore not only separation from God but also the failure to live up to the full potential of what God created us to be, created beings filled with the uncreated energy of God Himself, in intimate communion with our Creator, united with Him in both body and soul (Eph. 4:13).

Jesus, Who is the eternal Son of God Who became a human being, just like any of us, is therefore our Messiah ("Christ," "anointed one") because He came to Earth to save us from the separation of sin and from the power of death. Because He is both God and man, He bridges within Himself the gap that formed because of sin. His coming was foretold in the ancient Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament), and when He came about 2,000 years ago, history was forever changed.



II. Christ is risen!

The greatest moment in the history of the world was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Leading up to that moment was His birth from the Virgin Mary by the will of God the Father and by the power of God the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35). He grew up as one of us, lived, gathered His disciples around Himself, healed the sick, and taught about the Kingdom of God.

The defining moments of Jesus' life on Earth were His suffering and death on the cross, followed by His miraculous bodily resurrection from the dead. Although people had been raised from the dead before in the history of God's work with mankind, Jesus was the first to raise Himself from the dead, showing that He is God (Jn. 2:19).

Because Jesus is fully God, He has the power not only to forgive sins and restore mankind to sinlessness, but also to transform human persons to grow into the likeness of God Himself. And because Jesus is fully man, His deity filled His humanity and made possible the restoration and divinization (being filled up with and changed by God's (presence) of every aspect of what it means to be human.

To affirm that Christ is risen is to bear witness to and experience this reality, that sinful people can be united to Christ and healed of our spiritual wounds, given freedom from the power of death and separation from God (Heb. 2:14).

III. We can be saved.

Most of the time, when people talk about being "saved," they only have in mind whether they will go to Heaven when they die. But salvation in Christ is much more. Because of Who Jesus Christ is, both God and man, He made possible the way for us to become like He is (Eph. 4:13; 1 Jn. 3:2). We can become by His grace what He Himself is by nature. That is, we can become human beings filled up with the divine presence. We who are made in God's image can also take on His likeness, showing the presence of God to the whole world in our own presence.

This process requires participation in the life of Jesus

Christ (1 Cor. 1:18), repenting of sins (turning around and changing one's life), being baptized into His death and resurrection (Col. 2:12), followed by being anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit (chrismation/confirmation, Acts 2:38), and then partaking of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist (Jn. 6:53-56).

This lifelong, sacramental, mystical experience of God Himself gradually changes flawed human beings into grace-filled, divinized sons and daughters of God.

The process of salvation involves a lifetime of struggle against our sinful tendencies, a serious dedication to put away the "old man" and to put on the "new" (2 Cor. 5:17). In doing so, sinners gradually transform into saints, the high calling of every man, woman and child on Earth.

So what about the Church?

When Jesus came to Earth, He founded a living community to be His Body of which He is the Head. This community, called the Church, began on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, soon spread throughout the Roman Empire, centered in the ancient cities of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem and then later beyond the imperial borders.

Over time, as heresies (false teachings) arose, various groups broke off from that first community of Christians. That original community remains, however, passing on the faith and experience given by Christ to His Apostles from one generation to another, without adding or subtracting anything. That original Christian community is the Orthodox Christian Church (sometimes called "Eastern Orthodox" or "Greek Orthodox"). You are invited to come and see, to taste and experience the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your local Orthodox community. Come and spend a month of Sundays with us and experience how the God-man Jesus Christ wants to transform you.

Parish Council Highlights

Here are the highlights from our January 2020 meeting.

- Fr. Theophan's monthly reflection focused on emulating Christ in focusing on our core mission as a parish instead of being distracted and pulled in multiple directions.
- An anonymous donation to the bookstore will be used to expand into offering icons and related items.
- The bulk of this meeting centered on organizing and preparing for the annual parish meeting. Much of the conversation focused on how much we have to be grateful for, and our appreciation for all the work that so many contribute to the life of the parish, in both seen and unseen ways.
- The council discussed creating a safety/security committee to address a variety of safety concerns that could arise, in conjunction with John Hintermaier's efforts as safety coordinator.
- After Pascha, the parish will host the Dave Ramsey meetings on financial independence. Stay tuned for more information!
- The council decided to allocate \$4,000 of our surplus funds from 2019 to the mortgage principal, to further our commitment to pay off as much of the mortgage as possible before needing to refinance.
- The council also decided to allocate \$4,000 of our surplus funds from 2019 into a "just-in-case" savings account at SunTrust, with the goal of having 6 months of accessible savings to cover bills in case of economic downturn, members moving, or other unforeseen circumstances.

Prayer Group on Realm

We now have a Prayer Group within our Realm system. Each member of the parish has been added to this group. The point of the group is to have a place to ask people to pray for you or to those you encounter who may need prayer. A monthly list will be published which lists the ministries of our community along with whatever names you submit. We also plan on having a monthly Paraklesis service with the names listed.

News and

Announcements

- Thank you to all of those who presented and participated in our Annual Parish Meeting.
- The Parish Council is meeting on Wednesday the 5th at 7pm.
- Family Church School is on Saturday the 8th at 4pm.
- The week of the 9th through the 16th is Fast free.
- Fr. Theophan will be out of town Feb 11-14th.
- The Outreach Committee is meeting on Sunday the 9th. All are welcome.
- The Charity Committee is meeting on Sunday the 16th. All are welcome.
- Fr. Theophan will be out of town Feb 17-20th.
- Sunday the 23rd is our last day of eating meat until Pascha.
- The parish council has scheduled the Dave Ramsey financial university for after Pascha. We will be sending out a signup in March

Many Years!

Birthdays in February

2 Loukas Wilcox
5 Damond Bush
8 Brad Perry
11 Danette Bush
11 John C. Savage
12 Gary Cox
13 Marianne Savage
16 Carlos Lopes
19 Sondra Franceil
24 Don Eberhart

Anniversaries

9 Eric & Lee Olson
10 Jerome and Diana Gratigny

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2020

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 9th	 <i>TRIODION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 16th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 23rd FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 1st FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 8th	 <i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 15th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 22nd	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 29th	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 5th	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 12th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 17th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 19th NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 5pm Confessions 6pm Vigil
2 <i>Great Feast of the Christ's Entrance into the Temple</i> 9:40am Hours 10am Festal Divine Liturgy with blessing of Candel 11:45am Agape	3	4 9am Morning Prayers	5 6pm Daily Vespers 7pm Parish Council	6 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	7	8 <i>4pm Family Church School</i> 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
9 Publican and Pharisee 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Outreach Committee	10	11 Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference in Miami, FL	12 No Fast Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference in Miami, FL 6pm Reader's Vespers	13 Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference in Miami, FL	14 Fr. Theophan @ DOS Pastoral Conference in Miami, FL	15 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
16 Prodigal Son 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Charity Committee	17 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	18 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	19 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	20 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	21 <i>6pm Vespers for Memorial Saturday</i>	22 <i>9am Memorial Saturday Liturgy</i> 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
23 Last Judgment 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape	24 Meat Fast	25 Meat Fast 9am Morning Prayers	26 Meat Fast 6pm Daily Vespers	27 Meat Fast 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	28 Meat Fast	29 Meat Fast 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers

Tentative March 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Forgiveness Sunday 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 am <i>Forgiveness Vespers</i>	2 6:30pm Great Compline with the Great Canon	3 9am Morning Prayers 6:30pm Great Compline with the Great Canon	4 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	5 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Prison Ministry 6:30pm Great Compline with the Great Canon	6 6:30pm Small Compline	7 <i>4pm Family Church School</i> 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
8 Sunday of Orthodoxy 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class <i>Bring Icons for procession</i>	9	10 9am Morning Prayers	11 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	12 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	13 11-12:30pm Burruss Prison Ministry	14 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
15 St. Gregory Palamas 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30am Lenten Class	16	17 9am Morning Prayers	18 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	19 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	20	21 <i>Tentative Lenten Retreat</i> 3:30-5:30pm 6pm Great Vespers
22 Holy Cross 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30 Lenten Retreat	23	24 9am Morning Prayers	25 <i>6:30 pm Vespertal Divine Liturgy for Annunciation of the Theotokos</i>	26 9am Morning Prayers 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	27	28 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
29 St. John Climacus 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 12:15am Agape 12:30 am Lenten Class	30	31 9am Morning Prayers <i>6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy St. Innocent's Feastday</i>				