
ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

MAY 2021 NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR



The Joy of the Resurrection

***by Fr. Theophan (written for
the Monroe County Reporter
Pastors Corner)***

Many years ago, I attended my first Easter service at an Orthodox Church in Atlanta. At the time I was a wandering Christian who would go from church to church looking for a deeper connection with God. At some point wandering gets tiresome so my wife and I decided to fast and pray for a new and permanent church home. We didn't know how to fast outside of not eating food so we asked a friend who told us that the Orthodox fast from meat and dairy during Lent. Out of young zeal, we were able to keep this fast for the most part so we decided at the last moment to attend an Orthodox Christian Easter service.

What we encountered at that midnight Easter service changed our lives. We were surprised by a level of joy that we had never witnessed. Sincere, profound, and reverent joy sung in repeated hymns and songs that reverberated through the brightly lit church. The priest and the people bubbled over with joy as they sang 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling upon death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.' We were moved to thank and praise God from the very depths of our being. Today, much of that first Easter experience is a blur of shadowy memories but the experience of this other-worldly joy will never be forgotten.

The Serbian Bishop, Nikolai of Ochrid writes of his experience of Easter in Jerusalem,

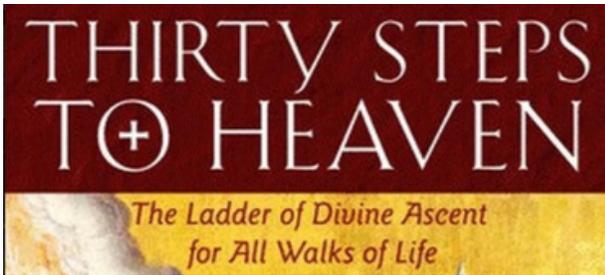
'We waited, and at last, our expectations were fulfilled. When the Patriarch sang "Christ is risen", a heavy burden fell from our souls. We felt as if we also had been raised from the dead. All at once, from all around, the same cry resounded like the noise of many waters. "Christ is risen" sang the Greeks, the Russians, the Arabs, the Serbs, the Copts, the Armenians, the Ethiopians—one after another, each in his own tongue, in his own melody.... Coming out from the service at dawn, we began to regard everything in the light of the glory of Christ's Resurrection, and all appeared different from what it had yesterday; everything seemed better, more expressive, more glorious. Only in the light of the Resurrection does life receive meaning.' Bishop Nikolai

(Velimirovich), *Missionary Letters*: abbreviated from the translation in *The Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius*, no. 24 (1934), pp. 26–7.

For Christians, when we were baptized, we died with Christ, and we rose with Christ (Romans 6). When we died in the waters of baptism we were forgiven and cleansed of our sins, and our slavery to sin, death, and the devil was broken. When we were baptized into Christ's resurrection, we were clothed with Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and set on a path of holiness. There is nothing more beautiful than a newly illumined Christian! There is nothing more profound than the transformation that takes place as people are healed and transformed by the Living God!

What a boring 'religion' Christianity would be if it was merely a remembrance of past events. If the Christian faith is merely an intellectual remembering of past events then it will eventually find itself consigned to a dusty museum where it will rightly die. Real Christianity, living Christianity, is always a personal re-experiencing and partaking of Christ's death and resurrection. I cannot fully explain how this happens but by the grace of the Holy Spirit, when we worship, when we celebrate the great feast of Easter, we go beyond mere intellectual memory of past events and somehow become partakers of these past events within our souls.

Throughout this festal season may our Lord bless us to experience and be transformed by the joy of the resurrection. Christ is Risen!



by Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou

Book Discussion wrapping up

Tuesday the 11th & 18th @ 7:15pm
All Zoom links will be posted on Realm

Many Years!

Birthdays

- 2 Oliver Hough
- 2 Quintin Curington
- 10 Lee Olson
- 11 Igor Osobov/Tsarkovska
- 13 Olha Osobov/Tsarkovska
- 15 Matthew Marble
- 16 Meg Croft
- 16 Susan Kehayes
- 28 Mose Williams
- 28 Sergei Lickwar

Anniversaries

- 2 Paul & Kimberly Guest
- 17 Radu & Daniela Galdau
Malcoci/Galdau
- 24 Jacqueline & John Stephens
- 26 Michael & Benita Muth



Between Mother's Day (May 9), and Father's Day (June 20) we will be participating in the Pregnancy Center's Baby Bottle Boomerang fundraiser. Please take a baby bottle, fill it with your loose change or a check, and return it by Father's Day (June 20). This is a great opportunity to teach our children about the value of life, even in the womb.

- The Pregnancy Center of Monroe County offers, free of charge:
- Pregnancy Testing
- Options Counseling
- Post-Abortion Support
- Parenting Classes
- Adoption Assistance
- Pre-Natal Educational Programs
- Clothes Closet
- Mentoring



Ask Father

Do you have a question about our faith or practices that you would like explained? Email Fr. Theophan and the answer to your question may end up in the Ask Father section of the Newsletter. (Of course with your permission!)

This month's Question

"Father, how often should I come to confession? Sometimes I feel that I have nothing to confess except little things that I have confessed before."

Before I answer your question directly let me begin by talking a little about our conscience. As fallen human beings our conscience is "fallen" to varying degrees. For some, the conscience is overly scrupulous and easily triggered into feelings of guilt and shame. For others, the conscience is not sensitive, either by nature, nurture or by being stunted by sin. Of course, some can have both of these problems in different areas at the same time.

As Christians, we want to be led by the Holy Spirit into all truth and emboldened to follow Christ wherever He may lead us. Our goal in everything that we do, say, and think should be to please Christ. As we grow in the faith the Holy Spirit will gradually reveal areas of our lives that need correction so that we can be more pleasing to Christ and better hear his voice.

As far as frequency goes, there are a few ways to approach the question. One way is to simply tell people to come to Confession when their conscience (aided by the Holy Spirit) is bothering them. Those of us whose conscience is more active, of course, will find it easier to come to Confession more frequently. However, this approach might present a problem for those who are either insensitive to our conscience or have overly scrupulous consciences. Additionally, some of us are generally good on the surface so to our own appearance we seem to be without sin.

Another approach is to give you a "rule" that says you should go to confession once a month or at least every six weeks. (This "rule" is in the OCA statutes.) Personally, I do not like rules but some people need them. The benefit of a rule is that it challenges us to make Confession a regular practice in our spiritual lives. After all, if our conscience is not bothering us after a month to six weeks, then it is highly probable that we are insensitive to the Holy Spirit. The downside of a rule is that it can sometimes lead to people going through ritual motions without connection to them.

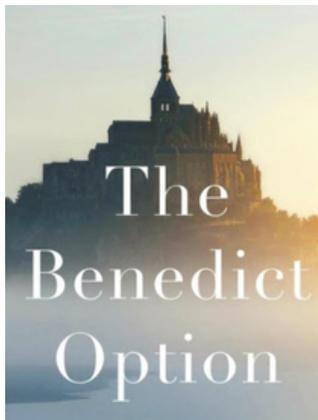
There is another aspect of this question that has to be brought to light. Almost everything we do in the Church is relational. It involves a relationship with God and a relationship with the community. In Confession, the priest is a "representative" of the community that bears witness to your repentance. This relational aspect means that the frequency of confession should be a discussion you have with your priest. In a prayerful relationship with God and the priest, the direction can be given that is most helpful for each individual.

If you would like a "bottom line" general answer, this is what I would say: Always confess your sins directly to God whenever you catch yourself sinning. If you have committed a grave sin (fornication, murder, think serious sin) come to Sacramental Confession as soon as possible. If you are not prone to grave sins, but only those "everyday" sort of sins (accidental swear words, moments of laziness) you should come to Confession either when your conscience is convicted or at least every six weeks for those who do not generally experience a convicted conscience.

For a more personal rule come and talk to me.

Finally, everyone repeats many of the same sins over and over. The full healing of our souls will take a lifetime and one of the reasons to go to Confession regularly is to be encouraged away from unhealthy despair or narcissism. It is important to remember that everything we do in the Orthodox faith is about God healing us and transforming us so that we can better follow Him.

May God truly help us to draw near to Him in humility and repentance.



New Book Study

*starting in June
led by Gary Cox*

Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Sentinel, 2017

What should be the Church's---and indeed Christendom's---response to a culture that is increasingly secular, pagan, and in many ways openly condemnatory of traditional Christian values and beliefs. This is the subject of *The Benedict Option*. I long resisted reading Dreher's book because of my belief that as a new convert to Orthodoxy Dreher had too freely and publicly involved himself in parish politics; because of this animus, I too easily accepted rather dismissive reviews of this book, which characterized the author's beliefs as focusing on withdrawal from the world to form Christian communes. But then I read Dreher's *Live Not by Lies*, an examination of how eastern European Christians---Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox---survived their seventy year ordeal with totalitarianism; it became clear to me that I had succumbed to reductionist fallacies that painted Dreher's ideas as a sort of Christian "Fiddler on the Roof" vision of happy peasants walled off from the world and its people.

I am certainly not saying that I necessarily agree with Dreher---some of his ideas and their implications profoundly trouble me. The state of our culture, however, troubles me a good deal more, and suggests that traditional Christians need to examine the signs of the times to discern what our response to modernity will be.

Dreher himself provides a vehicle for an examination of his ideas, with a series of

discussion questions (which for some reason I didn't find in my "Kindle" edition) grouped by chapter. Some implicitly criticize the book; we should feel no hesitation to sharpen that critique.

Using some of these questions as a starting point, I propose dividing *The Benedict Option* into four discussions:

- Part I: The Problem---read the Introduction & chapters 1-2.
- Part II: The Solution (thru the Church)---read chapters 3; 5; 9.
- Part III: The Solution (Politics, Education, Technology)---read chapters 4; 7; 10
- Part IV: The Solution (Daily Living)---read chapters 6; 8; Conclusion

I propose picking out for our work some of Dreher's interrogatories, as well as whatever questions occur to us as we read, in order to see if Dreher's description of our plight, and his proposed solution, offer anything we as a parish ought to consider as we maintain our collision course with the future.

A final word: however our discussions unfold, they will absolutely avoid partisan politics: "evil, power-hungry Dimmocrats" and "wicked, wascally Wepublicans" are creatures for another day, and forum. Dreher himself may be too young to remember Walt Kelly and his legendary comic strip "Pogo"---but he would subscribe to the eponymous lead character's frequent injunction that "we have met the enemy and they is us"; he says that there is more than enough blame to go around on all sides of the political spectrum for our present discontents.

In any event, our focus will NOT be on politics, but on the situation of Christians and their Church in a milieu that can most charitably be described as "challenging." Certainly, our discussions need to include an evaluation of Dreher's description of the culture, as well as the merits (and de-merits!) of his proposed solution.

I invite you all to what should prove an interesting discussion. Venues, dates and times to be determined. For now, please let Father know if you are interested in participating.

Gary



ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH
7301 Rivoli Road - Macon, Georgia 31210



MAY 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Apr 25 PALM SUNDAY 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy with Palm Procession 11:45am Food and Fellowship	Apr 26 Holy Monday 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins	Apr 27 Holy Tuesday 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins	Apr 28 Holy Wednesday 6:30pm The Sacrament of Holy Unction	Apr 29 Holy Thursday 10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 6:30pm Matins with the 12 Passion Readings	Apr 30 Holy Friday Strict Fast 10am Royal Hours 3pm Vespers with the placing of the Shroud 6:30pm Matins with Lamentations at the Tomb	1 Holy Saturday 10am Vesperal Liturgy, <i>The Harrow of Hell</i> 11pm The Book of Acts 11:30pm Paschal Nocturns
2 PASCHA 12 am Paschal Matins 1 am Paschal Divine Liturgy 2:30 am Blessing of the Baskets & Fellowship 1pm Agape Vespers 2pm Pascha Party	3	4 9 am Bright Tuesday Liturgy with Procession	5 6 pm Paschal Vespers	6 9 am Bright Thursday Liturgy	7	8 St. John the Theologian 2:00pm Catechism 5:00pm Sacrament of Confession 6:00pm Great Vespers
9 St. Thomas Sunday Mother's Day 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Cemetery Panikhida 12:15am Food and Fellowship	10	11 Ss. Cyril and Methodius 7:15 pm 30 Steps to Heaven Book Group	12 6:00pm Daily Vespers	13 9 am Divine Liturgy	14	15 5:00pm Sacrament of Confession 6:00pm Great Vespers
16 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship	17	18 7:15 pm 30 Steps to Heaven Book Group	19 6pm Daily Vespers 7pm Parish Council Meeting	20 9 am Divine Liturgy	21 Ss. Constantine & Helen	22 2pm Catechism 5:00pm Sacrament of Confession 6:00pm Great Vespers
23 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship	24	25 6pm Great Vespers for the Midfeast of Pentecost	26 Midfeast of Pentecost 9am Divine Liturgy for the Midfeast	27	28	29 5:00pm Sacrament of Confession 6:00pm Great Vespers
30 9:40am 3rd and 6th Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Food and Fellowship	31	Jun 1	Jun 2 6:00pm Daily Vespers	Jun 3 9am Divine Liturgy	Jun 4	Jun 5 2pm Catechism 5:00pm Sacrament of Confession 6:00pm Great Vespers

Please consult the Sunday bulletin for changes to the monthly calendar.