

THE LADDER

of
Divine
Ascent



Volume 11, Issue 1 The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

September 2009

Veneration of the Cross at the Feast of the Elevation

During the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross we will *venerate* the decorated cross that will be placed in the middle of the church during the Vigil service. Veneration is one often-used translation of the Greek word *proskynesis*. This word means, more-or-less literally: "to bow down before." In other words, we offer *proskynesis* before the Cross, which means we "bow down" before the Cross in the form of a prostration. A full prostration is when one falls down on his knees and then, thrusting his weight forward and supported by his hands, touches his forehead to the floor before standing up again. We even announce this in the very act of doing it, through the well-known hymn that we sing that accompanies our *proskynesis*:

"Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship (Gk. *proskynoumen*), O Master, and Thy holy resurrection, we glorify."

For many Orthodox Christians, this is very traditional, and hence very natural. However, for a non-Orthodox Christian who may be visiting the church during this Feast, such an act may seem peculiar or intimidating, and upon further reflection or explanation as to its meaning, unnecessary at best or blasphemous and idolatrous at worst! How this act of veneration before the Cross might strike the thoroughly secularized mind of many Christians is more than a little interesting to investigate!

To this day - and perhaps even more today than in the past - there exists an unspoken *dualism* in the minds of many Christians. Dualism in this context means the separation between soul and body in which only the "soul" is considered to be of any real importance, while the body is basically irrelevant to worship and our relationship with God. The extreme expression of this Christian dualism is the belief that at death the soul alone is taken to Heaven while the final destiny of the body is a matter of complete indifference. (This non-biblical attitude is at least one of the reasons why Christians are more readily looking to cremation as an "end of life" decision in today's world). This belief remains very strong, even though countless Christians to this day continue to recite the Nicene Creed which ends - not with a confession of belief in the "immortality of the soul" - but with that great confession of faith in our ultimate hope: **"I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."** In other words, Plato is alive and well in our churches today! This warmed-over and watered-down dualism has also made a strong impact on many forms of Christian worship. All that "counts" is on the inside - one's interior attitude, feelings, the heart, belief, etc. Again, the body is of little significance, and therefore the place of worship can be very iconoclastic.

Orthodox Christianity takes the approach that is much more consistent with the biblical understanding of the human person (Christian anthropology) and which is thoroughly holistic. A human person is conceived of as a unity of soul and body (that could also be expressed as spirit, soul, and body); and thus the whole person - soul and body - is meant to worship God. We do not merely have, or even worse, inhabit our bodies (like the often quoted 'ghost in the machine'). Rather, we *are* our bodies as expressive of our personhood. Thus, the whole person -soul and body - is saved, participates in this salvation, and awaits redemption and glorification in the Kingdom of Heaven:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:22-23)

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:21)

For our immediate purposes, we need to stress the fact that the whole person is engaged in worship and that all of our senses - our bodies, we could say - participate in the holistic activity of worshiping God. We express our inward relationship to God

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Fall Camping Trip October 16-18, 2009!

The St John's and Holy Apostles fall camping trip returns to Hot Springs (HS), NC on October, 16-18. Events include Hikes, Campfires, and Liturgy on Sunday morning. Reserve a space [try for campsites 450 - 461: (828) 622-7676] today! Map: <http://nchotsprings.com/camp/map.html>. There are motels available in HS as well. Contact Rick Eich (eich@charter.net) for more details.

St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

Schedule of Services

September 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 12 th Sunday after Pentecost St Alexander Nevsky Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Slavonic Molieben	31 <i>Furman OCF</i> 7:30 pm	01 Beginning of the Church New Year Church Growth Cmte 6:00 pm	02 <i>fast</i> <u>Inquirer's Class</u> <i>Contemporary 'Issues'</i> 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	03 <i>OCF at Clemson University</i> 7:00 pm	04 <i>fast</i> Holy Prophet Moses	05 <i>Confessions</i> Great Vespers 6:00 pm
06 13 th Sunday after Pentecost Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	07 US Labor Day Forefeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos Vigil 6:00 pm	08 Divine Liturgy 7:00 am Nativity of the Theotokos	09 <i>fish, wine, & oil</i> <u>Inquirer's Class</u> <i>Prayer and the Ascetical Life</i> 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	10 <i>OCF at Clemson University</i> 7:00 pm	11 <i>fast</i> Venerable Theodora	12 Leavetaking of the Nativity Choir Rehearsal 5:15 <i>Confessions</i> Great Vespers 6:00 pm
13 Sunday Before Exaltation <i>Church School Begins 9:00 am</i> Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Vigil of the Cross 6:00 pm	14 <i>Strict Fast</i> Divine Liturgy 7:00 am Exaltation of the Cross <i>**wine & oil**</i> <i>Furman OCF</i> 7:45 pm	15	16 <i>fast</i> <u>OCMC</u> <u>Missionary</u> <i>James Hargrave East Africa</i> 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	17 <i>OCF at Clemson University</i> 7:00 pm	18 <i>fast</i> <i>Spartanburg Area 'Small Group' Fellowship</i> 7:00 pm	19 <i>Choir Rehearsal</i> 5:15 <i>Confessions</i> Great Vespers 6:00 pm
20 15 th Sunday after Pentecost Sunday After Exaltation <i>Charity Brunch Ask the Priest</i> Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	21 <i>*Lucan Jump</i> <i>OCF at Furman University</i> 7:45 pm	22 Holy Prophet Jonah <i>Church Growth Cmte</i> 6:00 pm	23 <i>wine & oil</i> Conception of St John the Baptist <i>Confessions</i> 5:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm	24 Divine Liturgy 7:00 am Holy New Martyrs of AK <i>OCF Clemson University</i> 7:00 pm	25 <i>fish, wine, & oil</i> Rest of the Ven Sergius of Radonezh	26 Rest of St John the Theologian Great Vespers 6:00 pm
27 16 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>Church School</i> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	28 <i>OCF at Furman University</i> 7:45 pm	29	30 <i>fast</i> <i>Confessions</i> 5:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm	01 Divine Liturgy 7:00 am Protection of the Holy Theotokos <i>Furman Lecture</i> 7:00 pm	02	03 <i>Guest Speaker</i> <i>Fr Daniel Byantoro</i> <i>'From Islam to Orthodox Xian'</i> 4:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm

Fellowship and Goffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy.

Church School: Sundays before Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am prompt!!! (Begins in Sept 13th)

Confessions on Saturdays following Great Vespers (as noted above) and before Wednesday Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Inquirer's Glass continues --- See schedule above.

Coming in October: Guest Speaker Fr Daniel Byantoro, Indonesian Muslim convert to Orthodox Christianity.

A Word from the Desert

Nothing in this world but God can fill our heart or fully satisfy our desires. A fire cannot be put out with brushwood and oil, because only water will put it out. In exactly the same way, the desires of the human heart cannot be satisfied with the goods of this world, because only the Grace of God can quench the thirst of our desires.

St. Innocent of Alaska (1797-1879)

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with the outward positions, postures or gestures of our bodies, whether that be kneeling, standing, bowing, making the sign of the cross, kissing icons, or even making prostrations. These bodily actions signify repentance, contrition, awe, adoration, and even resurrection --- thus Orthodoxy's norm of 'standing' on the day of the resurrection and especially during the Paschal season. Of course, there is always the temptation of mere formalism or ritualism that might render our every gesture as devoid of meaning. But again, in its over-all vision and direction, our worship invites us to relate to God in the fullness of our human nature, body and soul.

How wonderful it is therefore to bow down before the "wood of the Cross," the new Tree of Life on which the New Adam, Jesus Christ, worked out our salvation "*in the midst of the earth.*" This is a profoundly satisfying gesture of adoration and worship offered to the One who stretched His arms out upon the Cross in order to embrace us in a definitive act of reconciliation with God. This could serve to rouse us from the complacency of our lives and the forgetfulness of God, to a direct encounter with the love of God revealed in our Lord's freely ascending the Cross for us sinners. The secularized mind might see our actions in church as ludicrous, scandalous and incomprehensible, the remnants of a medieval mindset. Yet, one cannot but wonder how many "idols" even the most sophisticated of those among the non-religious "bow down" before on a daily basis: money, status, possessions, or power; even "health and happiness" when understood autonomously. *Our concern, however, is with a spiritual vigilance that guards against certain outward "pious" actions in church, while inwardly we are actually worshiping the same idols.* Can we venerate the Cross in church and then live out the rest of the week hardly mindful of the words of the Lord:

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

This "spiritual schizophrenia" may be just about our greatest temptation these days: a kind of split between our church life on Sunday and our daily life in the world the rest of the time. One might readily make his prostrations, but be suffering from the very dualism our worship seeks to overcome: the separation between Church and world. The saints tell us, however, that all of reality is united in the heights and depths, the width and breadth of the Cross.

Practical Notes on Venerating the Cross

When one enters the Church and the Holy Cross is placed in the center of the Church (as it will from Sept 14th through 21st, and again at the 3rd Sunday and 4th Week of Great Lent), one approaches the cross and make 2 full prostrations (down on knees, forehead touches floor, stand up, repeat), venerates the cross, then make one more full prostration. This will be during the Liturgy as well, accompanied by the singing of "Before Thy Cross", and again at the end of services.

For the sake of care and good order---so as not to crush the fingers of those behind us inadvertently---usually the third prostration is done a bit off to the right side, though still facing the cross, since those behind us usually begin their prostrations while we are finishing in front of them.

Also on these days, when we are dismissed, there is no 'normal' veneration of the cross at the hand of the priest. Rather, he will distribute the antidoran (blessed bread) to all who approach.

Consignment Project

Fall is fast approaching so you know what that means! Clean out those closets and declutter! As always, our on-going Consignment Project is in need of items. We especially need **household items**. We are looking for household items (kitchen, knickknacks, etc...) that are gently used, which means - not broken, in good working order, and CLEAN!

We CANNOT accept:

electronics (no tv's, radios, etc.), picture frames, vases

WE WILL ACCEPT:

All other types of household items are accepted.

CLOTHING - both adult and childrens, preferably fall and winter items.

Please DO NOT bring in lingerie, underwear, socks, nightgowns or pj's - they do not accept these items.

REMEMBER - Clothing must be gently used and in really good shape: NO HOLES, RIPS, MISSING

BUTTONS OR STAINS. THEY WILL NOT

ACCEPT THINGS IN THIS CONDITION. If you

have things to donate and are not sure...they are

probably better off taken to United Ministries or the Salvation Army. Thanks for your ongoing support of

our worthy cause. If you have ANY questions at all, please contact Georgia Pelinsky (pelinsky@charter.net)

or Margie Wamboldt (wamboldtw@bellsouth.net).

Thanks in advance!

OGMG Missionary to Speak September 16th Following Vespers



Come and hear OCMC Missionary Candidate James Hargrave speak about the Orthodox Church in East Africa! James is preparing for long-term service as an assistant to Metropolitan Jeronymos in Mwanza, Tanzania where he will help with administration of the diocesan office and begin work on liturgical translation into Swahili and other Tanzanian languages.

A convert to the Orthodoxy, James first learned of the Orthodox Church as a child growing up in East Africa through the witness of the Orthodox faithful there.

Learn more about his ministry, his mission field, and how you can be involved on Wednesday, September 16th, following Vespers.

2009 Financial Snapshot

	Income	Expenses
YTD (thru July)	\$80,473	\$85,152
July	\$9,294	\$11,880
YTD Charity	\$8,055	\$8,975

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALMS SUNDAY

September 13th is our Alms Collection Sunday. Please remember to bring foodstuffs and personal items. Baskets are in the vestibule as you enter the church. These items and money collected support the following (among other occasional) charitable needs: **United Ministries, OCMC Missionaries Floyd and Ancutsa Frantz, two St Vladimir's Seminarians, the Carolinas Deanery fund, a widowed priest's wife and her two children.** Thanks to all who continue to give so generously to our outreach efforts!

UPCOMING --- 'SMALL GROUP' MEETING & CHURCH SCHOOL

- * A 'Small Group' Fellowship is forming in the Spartanburg area for those parishioners interested. It will be a time for fellowship, food, and spiritual growth, and to encourage and strengthen community. We will meet once a month on Friday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All members will participate with hosting, leading and discussion. Come and see if it is for you. The first meeting will be held on September 18 and 7:00 p.m. at the home of Teresa Dees, whom you may contact for more info (864 373 1316).

* RECORD CHURCH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT!!!

Church School will begin on September 13th at 9 am (immediately preceding Divine Liturgy). Church school will be offered in 3 classes: preschool, elementary, middle school and high school. This year's theme will be Church History (beginning with the Acts of the Apostles). A sign-up sheet is in the Fellowship Hall to 'register' your child. For more details, or if you have any questions or concerns, email or contact Mat Barbara (blburch@greenwood.net or 864 554 5292).

A Reminder and a Hearty 'Thank You!' August Fellowship and Goffee Hour

September 06 th	Team 5
September 13 th	Team 6
September 20 th	Team 7
September 27 th	Team 8

Celebrating Anniversaries and Birthdays in September
Fr Marcus (3rd), Sonya Flanagan (9th), Ian Burch (11th),
Sue Gantrell (11th), Theodora Hannam (11th), Sue Gantrell
(11th), Paul and Nancy Rusinko (11th), Sierra Elliott
(13th), Mark and Irina Simpson (19th), Chrissy Helvey
(20th), Antonina (20th), Suzanne Gubser (21st), Renee
Simon (21st), Rick Eich (26th), Ethan Eich (28th),
Margie Pich (30th)

From the Feast of the Exultation of the Cross

Moses prefigured the cross and defeated Amalek!

David ordered worship at Thy footstool.

So today we sinners fall in worship

Before Thy precious feet, O Christ.

We cry to Thee who was crucified:

Make us worthy, with the thief,

of Thy Kingdom, O Lord!

(From the Aposticha of the Feast)

St. John of the Ladder



Orthodox Church in America

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Rev Fr Marcus C Burch, Rector
Rev Fr Nikolay Miletkov, Assistant

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Schedule of Services

Vespers, Wednesday, 6:00 pm
Great Vespers, Saturday, 6:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, Sunday, 9:30 am

"Whatever is obtained as a result
of long and persistent prayer will remain."

~~~ St John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* ~~~



PLACE  
POSTAGE  
HERE

September 2009