

hurling insults at you. The best strategy is to shrug it off. Don't pay attention. Just stay inside." The holy elders of the Church take the same approach to the harmful or tempting thoughts - just keep them out.

### *Splitting thoughts*

So what if, in spite of all best efforts, one cannot chase away such thoughts? What if one is on the verge of surrendering to them and consenting to them?

Holy Christian elders suggest a technique - a kind of game, if you like - that shifts focus from a dangerous thought (like lust or violent wrath) to another, innocuous thought. A hermit monk once spoke of chasing away a particularly bothersome temptation by counting the number of candles in the church chandelier - a huge task in a large church! By using this approach, one can gradually reduce the energy and strength of recurring thoughts. Next time such a thought returns, it will be weaker.

A brisk walk, focused prayer (such as the Jesus Prayer), and hard, manual work are all common practices in the lives of holy people, for just this reason: these activities help to turn the mind away from thoughts that would otherwise lead to spiritual downfall.

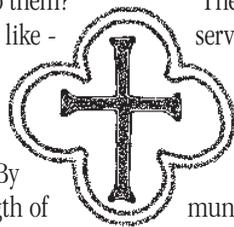
Saint Anthony the Great struggled with this very problem. When he retreated into the desert for silence, he was overcome with all sorts of troublesome thoughts, which tempted him and led him to depression. Praying to God for help, he noticed another monk who would pray for a while, then move immediately to physical work, clearing land, breaking up dirt in the garden, making baskets, and then return to prayer again. The other hermit was in reality an angel, sent by God to teach Saint Anthony.

### *Prayer*

Prayer is also critical in the struggle against the thoughts. It is important not to confuse prayer with panic, however. Prayer should be a daily and hourly tool to strengthen our will, and to help us be less emotionally attached to all the things that generate harmful thoughts of greed, avarice, covetousness, lust, anger, depression, etc. Prayer rests our heart and minds on Christ, allowing us to have greater success in achieving indifference (in Greek *apatheia*) toward troubling thoughts (called *logismoi*).

While we can and should pray in any time of need, we must take care not to make our resorting to prayer something like a paralyzed, terrified soldier, holding his rifle to his chest in fear. As a general rule, before a person begins to pray, when confronted with a troublesome thought, a rational mastery over the situation must be developed. If at all possible, the best way is to employ a strategy of complete indifference.

Prayer does its work deep in the human heart. In moments of panic, one becomes highly vulnerable to the machinations of our spiritual enemy, the devil. Trying to pray in a state of panic opens the floodgates of emotion, and the prayer itself is stifled. This is the reason we use the Sign of the Cross or other means, to help us return to stillness inside, so we can begin to truly pray.



### *Holy Books*

It is also important that we immerse ourselves daily in reading the Holy Scriptures, as well as the lives and writings of the saints. Reading these holy works shapes our minds in a new direction, creating a kind of spiritual antibody in our psyche that can combat destructive thoughts.

The same principle can be applied to people attending sacred rituals - the services of the Church. Even if the prayers and hymns aren't fully understood, the ancient words found in the services affect our spiritual heart, turning us back to God. The same is true with Confession, in which we empty out from our heart and mind all kinds of destructive thoughts, and allow God's grace to fill the space that is left. Similarly, Holy Communion allows us to commune directly with Christ Himself, which fills us with a tremendous spiritual weapon. It is really quite foolish to try to fight the spiritual battle without these weapons.

### *The Spiritual Father*

Of course, the temptation is to try to fight this battle on our own. Yet the experience of twenty centuries shows us that we need help: the help provided by a spiritual father or confessor. Our passions and addictions love to return, even after we have defeated them. When this happens, we lose any objectivity in charting the best course to take, and risk losing everything for which we've worked.

It's times like these that we especially need the spiritually experienced and objective counsel of a spiritual father or confessor. We recognize that freedom from the slavery to our passions is a path worth taking, but it is a path we cannot walk alone. The first place to seek (and to continue to seek) direction is an experienced spiritual father in the Church. With such help, our struggle may be truly blessed.

<http://www.asna.ca/resources/five-steps.pdf>

### **FATHER, GIVE US A PROFITABLE WORD...**

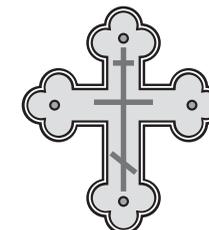
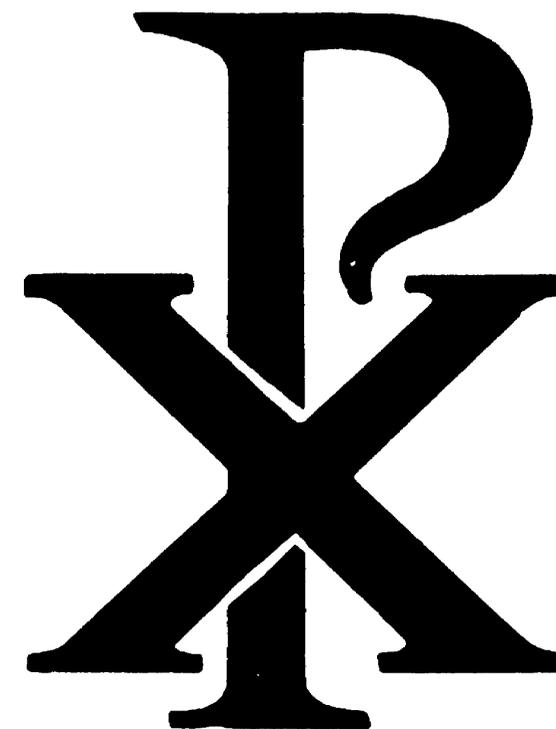
The work of prayer belongs to the angels, and is, therefore, the special concern of the Church. Every other work, i.e., charity, nursing the brethren, visiting the sick, caring for prisoners, releasing captives, and other similar things, is done by the brethren in love and offered by them to God. Similarly, poverty, fasting, sleeping on the ground, prostrations, vigils, etc., are good and like a sacrifice to God, because they aim to subdue and humble the body so that we may be purified and approach God and become friends of God - yet these things do not present us directly to God, whereas prayer does so and unites us with Him. A person praying acts towards God like a friend - conversing, confiding, requesting - and through this becomes one with our Maker Himself.

*St. Simeon of Thessalonica*



# SS. Constantine and Elena Orthodox Church

September 3, 2017



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Rev. Dn. Paul McDonald, *attached* 317.696.0079 (cell)

## PARISH LIFE

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2017: 13<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (TONE 4, MATINS GOSPEL 2)

8:40 am Matins  
10:00 am Divine Liturgy

### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

6:15 pm Daily Vespers  
7:00 pm “Heavenly Banquet” Study

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

6:30 pm Vigil for the Nativity of the Theotokos

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

8:00 am Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos

### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 9

12:00-11:00 pm SerbFest (St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church)  
5:00 pm Little Memorial for Slobodanka (George Dheri's grandmother)  
6:00 pm Great Vespers (followed by confessions)

### PRAY FOR THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND OF OUR PARISH:

Victor Cosgarea, Jay Hanko, Jan Isham, Zachary Waltz and Margaret Wey.

### LOOKING AHEAD...

*Next Sunday's readings ( Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross): Galatians 6:11-18; John 3:13-27.*

### Wednesday, September 13

6:30 pm Vigil for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

### Thursday, September 14

8:00 am Divine Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross  
(with Academy students)

### Friday, September 22

7:00 pm An Evening with Andrew Kern (see announcement)

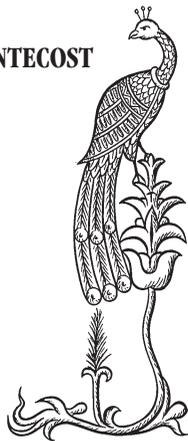
### Sunday, September 24th:

1:00 pm Baptism of Inna Manta

### HYMNS FOR THE FEAST OF THE BIRTH OF THE THEOTOKOS (USED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 12)

#### Tropar (Tone 4)

*Your nativity, O Birthgiver of God, has proclaimed joy to all the universe. For the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, has risen from you. By abolishing the curse, he gave a blessing; by destroying death, he bestowed eternal life.*



#### Kontak (Tone 4)

*By your holy nativity, O most pure one, Joachim and Anna were freed from the reproach of barrenness. Adam and Eve were saved from the corruption of death, and we, your people, are delivered from the guilt of sin. Therefore, celebrating, we cry out: The barren gives birth to the Birthgiver of God, who is the Nourisher of our Life!*

#### THANK YOU, FR. SILVIU!

We are blessed once more to have Fr. Silviu Bunta with us this weekend to celebrate the services. Many years to you and your family, Father!

#### FR. DAVID TRAVELLING THIS WEEKEND

Fr. David and P'sa. Janene are out of town over the Labor Day weekend, September 1-4. Please contact Dn. Paul if there is any urgent need for the services of a priest, and he will communicate with one of the other Orthodox clergy.

#### BOOK STUDY THIS WEEK

We continue our study this Wednesday of “The Heavenly Banquet,” with a reflection on “the Great Entrance” and a particular focus on the aspect of memory and remembrance, in the Liturgy and throughout our lives as Christians. All are invited and encouraged to attend, and be edified in the discussion of the fullness of our Orthodox Faith.

#### CHURCH SCHOOL SIGN UP

Church school begins in September! Those who were unable to register at the church picnic, do not worry! Hope springs eternal. You can contact Deacon Paul or Clara Clemens or email [stsechurchschool@gmail.com](mailto:stsechurchschool@gmail.com). Please include your child's (or children's) name, age, and grade, as well as your own name and email address. Registration is \$5 per family. We are also in need of teachers. If you are willing able to help, please let Dn. Paul or Clara know right away.

#### JUNIOR YOUTH GROUP

Calling all 6th graders! Anyone entering the 6th grade this year is now eligible to join the Junior Youth Group, which is open to anyone from 6th to 8th grade. We meet upstairs in the Saint Nicholas House during coffee hour on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. Come join us!

#### THE “SEASON” OF FESTIVALS CONTINUES ...

This time of year brings the holding of festivals at several of our Orthodox parishes. St. Nicholas Serbian Church will hold their 2nd annual SerbFest this Saturday, September 9 from 12 pm to 11 pm. Then on the weekend of September 15-17, St. George will hold their festival at their church plant in Fishers. See the fliers on the bulletin board for these events. Plan to attend one or both of these enjoyable opportunities to support our sister parishes.

#### SPECIAL FALL SEMINAR WITH ANDREW KERN

Our parish school, Hagia Sophia Classical Academy, will sponsor a very special guest speaker, Andrew Kern, on Friday, September 22, in our church hall. Mr. Kern is the founder and president of the CiRCE Institute ([circeinstitute.org](http://circeinstitute.org)) and a well-known and respected international speaker on topics concerning Classical Christian education. Andrew will be conducting an in-house workshop for our Academy that Saturday, and has graciously agreed to have a lecture on Friday evening open to all. An engaging and inspiring speaker, Kern is a leader and pioneer in the field of classical education. This talk with be well worth your time, even if you don't have school-age children. Save the date, spread the word, and plan to attend this lecture and be “educated” by a great educator!

#### THE ROAD OUT OF SIN

Father Geoffrey Korz

*Effective ways to break the chains of addiction and obsession and win back true freedom in your life*

When you ask most people if they would like to find their way out of addictive or obsessive behaviour - eating, drinking, drug use, viewing pornography, watching television, or shopping - most people would reply, “Of course - but it's not possible.”

For many of us, raised in a world where personal habits and proclivities are seen as “natural”, it's hard to believe that change can ever happen. Others, who subscribe to a protestant Christian view, often tell us that accepting Christ into their hearts will change everything - yet the struggle is often far less successful than they hoped.

In his book *The Mountain of Silence*, author Kyriakos Markides shares the timeless wisdom of the holy people of twenty centuries of Christianity, and outlines the very practical ways they fight against the thoughts that lead to sin, addiction, and slavery to the passions. Centuries of experience is just as useful to us.

#### *Indifference*

It is popular today to hold the view that any thought that comes our way must be entertained, accepted, and dealt with. Nothing could be further from the truth. The ancient Christian tradition offers quite the opposite strategy.

“Our first defense against destructive thoughts is complete indifference - ignore them completely,” says Father Maximos, a monk from Cyprus. “Do not interact with them, either out of curiosity or out of overconfidence. It is a tactical error. It's like starting a dialogue with a mortal enemy who is much more clever than you.”

“Imagine,” says Father Maximos, “you are inside your home with the doors and windows firmly shut and someone in the yard is shouting obscenities and daring you to come out and fight. He cannot get inside. He is just outside

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