

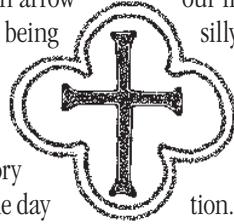
due punishment and forgiveness and goes on their way. There has also been a tendency to see confession as a type of yearly obligation in order to have a “pass” to come to communion. Unfortunately, these views of confession have done great damage to this “sacrament of reconciliation.” So, what is confession exactly? Is it a legal transaction that takes place in a “courtroom?” For the Orthodox Church, confession has always been understood more in terms of hospital language, rather than a courtroom.

Sin as Sickness

It is important, first of all, to remember that sin is not the breaking of a moral code of conduct. Sin means literally, to “miss the mark,” like an arrow that is shot and misses its intended target. The target here is man being what he was intended to be – created in the image and likeness of God. When we sin, we cease to be fully what God intended for us to be. It is we who break communion with God through our sin. We all sin and “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is a story from the desert fathers about a disciple who came to a certain elder one day and said, “Father, I have fallen!” The elder said to him, “Get up!” Again and again he came to the elder and said, “I have fallen!” And invariably the elder responded, “Get up!” The disciple then asked, “When will I have to stop getting up?” “Not until the day you give your soul up to God,” the elder replied. Thus it is not a matter of if we sin, but when we sin, what are we going to do about it? In the First Epistle of St. John we read, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” So the first step in confession is the acknowledgment of our sins. In hospital language, sin is a parasitic sickness or wound that needs to be cleaned out. Before it can be healed, one must acknowledge that there is a wound in the first place. Christ, as the Divine Physician, came to heal the sick. Christ Himself said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick . . . For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Confession as Surgery

Confession is primarily naming and taking responsibility of the illness in order for the spiritual hospital (the Church) to prescribe a remedy to aid in the healing process. This is just one of many metaphors that the Fathers of the Church have used to speak of confession and reconciliation. In the charge that the priest says prior to the confession of sins we find a strong injunction about not hiding anything, “lest you depart from the Physician unhealed.” Confession of sins is the rooting out of the infected wound. It is surgery that prepares the wound for the healing balm of penance and Holy Communion. This medicine of the Church comes from the same root as pharmacy (pharmakon). This medicine is given so that healing would continue to take place within the wound and not become infected again. This is how a penance is understood.



It is not a punishment or an earning of forgiveness, but a prescription from the doctor for the sake of healing and restoration. Fr. John Romanides, a well-known 20th century Orthodox theologian says, “Having faith in Christ without undergoing healing in Christ is not faith at all. Here is the same contradiction that we find when a sick person who has great confidence in his doctor never carries out the treatment which he recommends.”

Recovery

It is impossible to be saved on our own. It is only when we are able to admit our complete powerlessness over sin that we can be open to Christ’s healing in our lives. We need the Church in order to root out this sickness. Think of how silly it would be for a surgeon to operate on himself. A Father of the Church has said, “he who sees his own sins is a greater miracle than raising the dead.” This means that it is a miracle when we are truly willing to see ourself as we really are, to see the infection, and be willing to submit to the “knife” of the Church for the sake of true healing and restoration. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann said, “It is when man is challenged with the real ‘contents’ of the Gospel, with its divine depth and wisdom, beauty and all-embracing meaning, that he becomes ‘capable of repentance,’ for the true repentance is precisely the discovery by man of the abyss that separates him from God and from his real offer to man. It is when the man sees the bridal chamber adorned that he realizes he has no wedding garment for entering it.” This recalls the story from Matthew 25 about the virgins who had prepared their lamps with oil for the meeting of the bridegroom and how he came at midnight to claim those who were prepared. The bridegroom is Christ and the bridal chamber is the Kingdom of Heaven. This is what we sing during Holy Week on the first three days at Bridegroom Matins, “Thy bridal chamber I see adorned, O my Savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter. O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul, and save me.” Let us be ever open to a vision of Christ who desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of Thy Truth. He has given us His Holy Church as a place for recovery – that intensive care unit for our sinful souls where we are given medicine to aid us in our healing.

<http://holycrossoca.org/newslet/0611.html>

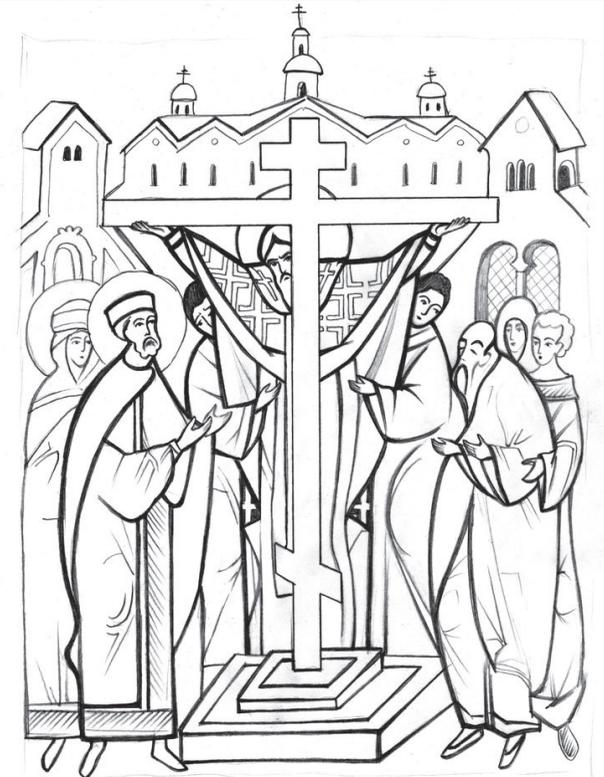
FATHER, GIVE US A PROFITABLE WORD...

One day Abba Arsenius consulted an old Egyptian monk about his own thoughts. Someone noticed this and said to him, ‘Abba Arsenius, how is it that you with such a good Latin and Greek education, ask this peasant about your thoughts?’ He replied, ‘I have indeed been taught Latin and Greek, but I do not know even the alphabet of this peasant.’



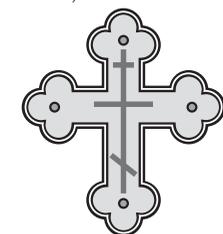
SS. Constantine and Elena Orthodox Church

September 9, 2018



EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14



Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, OCA
3237 West 16th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46222
317.638.4162 • saintsconstantineandelena.org

The Reverend Father David T. Wey, *Parish Priest*
317.484.1288 (home) • 317.627.2282 (cell)
Rev. Dn. Paul McDonald, *attached* 317.696.0079 (cell)

PARISH LIFE

SEPTEMBER 9, 2018: SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS (TONE 6, MATINS GOSPEL 4)

8:40 am Matins

10:00 am Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

6:15 pm Daily Vespers

7:00 pm “Heavenly Banquet” Study

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

6:30 pm Vigil for the Exaltation of the Cross
(Elevation Service around 9 pm)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 EXALTATION OF HOLY CROSS (STRICT FAST)

8:00 am Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

5:00 pm Mystery of Confession (by appointment, please)

6:00 pm Great Vespers (followed by confessions)

PRAY FOR THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND OF OUR PARISH:

Victor Cosgarea, Jay Hanko, Jan Isham, Brigid Johns (and unborn child), Alexandra Medard, Filomena Vraciu, Zachary Waltz, and Margaret Wey

LOOKING AHEAD...

Next Sunday's readings: (Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross; Tone 7, Matins Gospel 5): Galatians 2:16-20; Mark 8:34-38; 9:1.

Friday - Sunday, September 21-23

Annual St. George Festival, St. George Church, Fishers

(see flier on the bulletin board)

Sunday, September 23

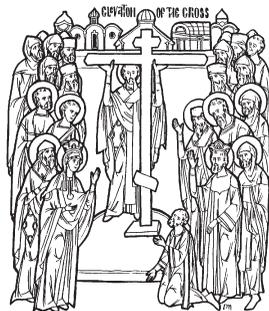
Church Safety Team (Ushers) meets immediately following the liturgy in St. Nicholas house.

“BE MINDFUL”

A word from Fr. David

Our shared life in Christ within our parish family is truly a joy and a great blessing. God has helped us to grow, not only in numbers, but in genuine fellowship and mutual friendship, which we cherish and for which we must continually give thanks.

We should, however, always seek to grow and mature in our understanding and practice of our Faith, which is so rich and full of meaning. The deepening of our devotion (properly called “piety”) is expressed and enhanced by our practices; ours is, after all, an “incarnational” faith. As the Apostle Paul wrote to his spiritual son Timothy: “I write so that you may know how you ought to



conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.” He immediately follows this with an important insight: “great is the mystery of godliness [piety]” (I Timothy 3:15-16). So our life together is nothing less than a participation in God’s life – a truly high and wonderful calling!

It is my hope in the coming church year to publish short articles of instruction and exhortation on a variety of topics concerning church practice, for our common growth and edification. My thought is to issue these reflections under the general title, “Be Mindful”: for it is in learning the meaning of our faith, and then acting upon that understanding – by being mindful – that we are shaped into well-formed souls, offering up our lives in the best way we can to our Lord, so that we may “present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable worship.” (Romans 12:1)

Watch for these little reflections in the bulletin and via email. It is my hope that they will increase our love, devotion and commitment to our Christian life, and deepen our shared communion in Christ.

BOOK STUDY CONTINUES

The Wednesday evening in our study of The Heavenly Banquet, we will begin a two-part series on the Creed, “The Symbol of Faith.” This will be followed with a special study on “Open/Closed Communion.” All are invited and encouraged to attend, and be edified in the discussion of the fullness of our Orthodox Faith.

THE HOHNE’S REQUEST: IN PLACE OF GIFTS

Chris and Jamie have made known their wish that, instead of wedding gifts for them, well-wishers make a donation to the church’s building fund. The parish Council is grateful for their generous thought, and encourage all who are able and willing to do so. This is a wonderful opportunity to offer a blessing to the new couple and, at the same time, take advantage of the \$50,000 matching grant opportunity.

ON THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

Fr Andrew Phillips

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

As Orthodox Christians we all know how important the Cross is in our Faith. The Cross is the central fact of the Faith, it is not only where Christ was crucified, as we have heard in today’s Gospel, but it is also where Christ is risen from the dead. It is also written elsewhere in the Gospels that by losing our life through the Cross, we save our life. In other words if we live for Christ, we will save our life. However, if we live for ourselves, we will lose our life. This is the law of our being and we can see it in all areas of human life.

The spoilt child who lives for himself will not share his toys. Thus he is lonely and bored, he has no-one to play with. His life is lost.

The spoilt man or woman who live for themselves will not share their lives. Thus they are lonely, separated or divorced and live singly and in futility. Their lives are lost.

The spoilt couple living for themselves refuse to have children; they want to make money in their careers. Thus they grow old and frustrated, it is too late to have children. Their lives are lost.

The spoilt rich living for themselves will not share their money. Thus they lie forgotten in the grave, their money taken by the government. Thus their futile lives have no-one to remember them and they contain nothing to be remembered for. Their lives are lost.

The spoilt people living for itself will not share its territory. Thus it lives besieged because of its egoism, hated by its neighbors and all peoples. Its life is lost.

The spoilt dictator living for himself gains the whole world, controlling territories and peoples. Thus he is unloved, hated by all peoples in the prison of all peoples. His life is lost.

Live selfishly, and you will lose everything, your life will be lost in lonely boredom and you will die selfishly.

On the other hand, the history of the Church teaches us that the saints, who lived for Christ, were neither lonely nor bored, neither futile nor lost.

By living for the Cross of Christ, not only do they not taste of death at the Last Judgement, but even more, they do not taste of the spiritual death and loss of lonely and selfish pride. For, by living through the Cross, they taste of the Kingdom of God come with power, the resurrection of their souls, the Easter of the uplifted heart that comes with repentance, the exalted leap for joy that comes when we take up crosses, weaknesses, difficulties, destinies. Then crosses become instruments of victory, weapons of salvation, Exaltation, because we no longer lock ourselves up, selfishly giving nothing, but instead looking to others.

St John Chrysostom speaks of ‘the sacrament of our neighbour’. In other words he means that salvation comes to us through others, the challenges and difficulties brought to us by others. Only the proud can imagine the fantasy that salvation comes from ourselves. Let us today go out and take up our crosses, and rejoice and exalt in them, for they have become through the power of Christ, the instruments of our salvation.

<http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/sermexal.htm>

CONFESSION: HOSPITAL OR COURTROOM?

Fr. Christopher Foley

Much has been said about the need for confession of sins in the Church and the need to be reconciled to God. There is a tendency to think of confession in some type of legalistic way – where one recounts their trespasses and gets the

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