

ST. MAKARIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH, saintmakarios.org

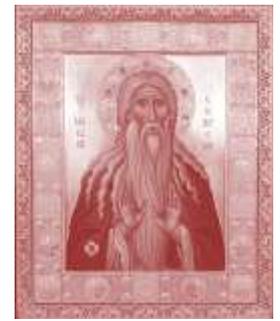
Orthodox Church in America oca.org

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Until September, all services at Calvert House, 5735 S. University Ave.

Sunday, 9am Orthros, 10am Divine Liturgy

Saturday, 6pm Vespers; Tuesday, 6pm Vespers



PLEASE NOTE: Thursday night, 6/28: Vigil and Liturgy for Sts. Peter and Paul, 5-8pm.

What we learn from St. Peter and Paul is strength from weakness; the cross of Christ. This is what apostleship is being sent into the world to manifest: weakness, humility and kindness. We are greatly tempted as Orthodox Christians to say the prayer of the Pharisee. We are greatly tempted as Orthodox Christians to pass by on the other side of the road, and to deride others for their crosses. When we see the reading from the second epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (11:21-12:9) we see that he interprets all of his persecution by others under the sign of human weakness and identifies with it. This is his glory, or rather, the glory of God and no glory to humanity except in as much as it accepts weakness, humility, kindness and generosity. He says "I must boast in my infirmity." He is lifted up to the heavens so as to see mercy: a persecutor becomes in himself the gospel, the proclamation of God's grace which ordains us, fills that which is empty, and gives rest to those weighed down by death.

In the reading from the Gospel according to Matthew we see St. Peter confessing that Christ is the Son of the living God. This faith is the rock which characterizes Peter and gives him the power to bind and loose. Does this contradict St. Paul's weakness? Does this contradict St. Paul's message of grace? No. St. Peter is binding and loosing for the living God. He is loosing us for life. He is binding to restrict the power of Satan. The loosing and the binding are one in Christ: do we choose to enter through him or to remain enslaved? Peter does not bind and loose by smashing others; he binds and looses in the solidity of faith in the life giver. It is the same faith that we see in the first epistle of Peter, in the first chapter which we read at Vespers: a faith which shines through trials and reveals to us the glory of the kingdom of heaven known through the cross.

Too often we focus on worldly glory. We wish for this or that victory, some acclaim, some recognition, affirmation. We wish for people to stop irritating us, to become more convenient. We wish for an unnecessary pleasure even in the church context. We think of the church and of faith in ways that are not directed towards the kingdom of heaven and the ascent of the heart to a purer vision of transfigured humanity, to salvation in Christ.

The mission of the apostles is not finished, even as it touches on salvation completed and perfected. The kingdom of heaven and the heavenly liturgy was complete in the sacrifice of Christ, but the apostles are sent out to go into all the world. The "incompleteness" is not about geographic boundaries, or mere need to translate and preach to people. What is incomplete is the mystery of the time of the providential work of the Church. The Church was and was not all that it humanly is and will be during the time of the apostles, the 2nd or 3rd century, the time of Constantine, the restoration of icons, the baptism of the Rus, the middle ages, the 19th century, or any time we romanticize. The Church is ever met in its human completeness in a person or community living the eternal heavenly liturgy in Christ and the Spirit in any time which touches on the eternity of love and is not reduced to human pride. The Church is not met in human social exaltation, but in the Spirit-given perception of the Son of the living God through the cross opening up the resurrection. This is what looses those who love and binds those who are proud. This exchange of weakness for grace is the Church which is in heaven and on earth.

Let us celebrate the holy apostles for this love which stands with us to loose us for life and for the kingdom of heaven.

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The question is: to whom was offered the blood that was shed for us, and why was it offered, this precious and glorious blood of our God, our high priest, our sacrifice? We were held captive by the evil one, for we had been 'sold into the bondage of sin' (Romans 7:14), and our wickedness was the price we paid for our pleasure. Now, a ransom is normally paid only to the captor,

and so the question is: To whom was the ransom offered, and why? To the evil one? What an outrage! If it is supposed not merely that the thief received a ransom from God, but that the ransom is God himself - a payment for his act of arbitrary power so excessive that it certainly justified releasing us! If it was paid to the Father, I ask first, why? We were not held captive by him. Secondly, what reason can be given why the blood of the Only-begotten should be pleasing to the Father? For He did not accept even Isaac when he was offered by his father, but He gave a substitute for the sacrifice, a lamb to take the place of the human victim. Is it not clear that the Father accepts the sacrifice, not because He demanded or needed it, but because this was the part of the divine plan, since man had to be sanctified by the humanity of God; so that he might rescue us by overcoming the tyrant by force, and bring us back to Himself through the mediation of the Son, who carried out this divine plan to the honor of the Father, to whom he clearly delivers up all things. We have said just so much about Christ. There are many more things which must be passed over in silence...

http://holytrinityorthodox.org/ask_the_priest/index.htm#a5 From Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston.

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A useful blog entry for those encountering the same old materialist/ atheist stuff:

<http://frted.wordpress.com/2012/06/27/the-mystery-which-binds-science-and-religion/>