

passive endurance, but it means constant vigilance, listening, for what is demanded; and above all, Love.

Poor, old, sick, to our last breath, we can love. Not sentimental nonsense so often confused with love, but the love of sacrifice – inner crucifixion of greed, envy, pride.

And never confuse love with sentimentality.

And never confuse worship with affectation.

Be humble – love, even when it is difficult. Not sentimental so called love – And do not treat church worship as a theatrical performance!

I hope that some of this makes sense,

With my best wishes,

Mother Thekla

(sometime Abbess of the Monastery of the Assumption, Normanby)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

It is our pleasure and joy to welcome Lucas, Stephani and Greyson into the communion of the Orthodox Church and the parish family of St. Paul Cathedral. For patronal saints, Lucas has chosen Ambrose of Optina, Stephani has chosen Syra of Persia and Greyson's saint is Silouan the Athonite. Many Years to our new members and the new family!

Wednesday, 1/06, 10AM: Matins for Theophany

Saturday, 1/09, 4PM: Bible Study followed by Compline and Confessions

Sunday, 1/10, 10AM: Divine Liturgy for the feast of theophany followed by the Great Blessing of Waters.

SAINT PAUL ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Rector: Rev. Fr. Robert J. Royer Email-robertjroyer@gmail.com
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Sunday, January 3, 2016
31st Sunday After Pentecost
The Sunday Before Theophany

Selection of Hymns for the Forfeast of Theophany:

Behold the Enlightenment of the faithful!
See, our Atonement desires to enter the streams of the river,
that He may wash away man's filth and corruption,
refashioning us, who had been broken to pieces!

O faithful, let us assemble in spirit
at the streams of Jordan,
that we may clearly behold the great wonder!
We shall see the Creator of all made manifest,
as He comes to be baptized.

O marvelous wonder!
He who baptizes by the Holy Spirit and by fire
comes to be baptized by John in the Jordan.
Neither simply God nor plainly man,
but, in both His natures, He is one only-begotten Son.
In His humanity, He asks a servant to baptize Him;
in His divinity, He takes away the sins of the world
granting great mercy to all.

**TODAY WE WILL CELEBRATE THE DIVINE LITURGY OF
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle – 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Sunday Before Theophany)

Brethren... As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Gospel – Mark 1:1-25 (Sunday Before Theophany)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight -- " John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Do You Really Want To Be Orthodox?

The following is a letter that the late English Orthodox nun Mother Thekla (d. 2011) wrote to an imaginary convert in 2009. It is useful for us who are orthodox to measure ourselves by her admonition to the aspiring catechumen:

Dear "John",

I understand that you are on the way to becoming Orthodox. I know nothing about you, beyond the fact that you are English.

Before we go any further, there is one point I should make clear. I have not been told why you are about to convert, but I assure you there is no point whatsoever if it is for negative reasons. You will find as much "wrong" (if not more) in Orthodoxy as in the Anglican or Roman Churches. [...or in the Protestant assemblies, editor.]

So – the first point is, are you prepared to face lies, hypocrisy, evil and all the rest, just as much in Orthodoxy as in any other religion or denomination?

Are you expecting a kind of earthly paradise with plenty of incense and the right kind of music?

Do you expect to go straight to heaven if you cross yourself slowly, pompously and in the correct form from the right side?

Have you a cookery book with all the authentic Russian [or Greek, or Serbian, or Macedonian] recipes for Easter festivities?

Are you an expert in kissing three times on every possible or improper occasion?

Can you prostrate elegantly without dropping a variety of stationery out of your pockets?

OR.....

Have you read the Gospels?

Have you faced Christ crucified? In the spirit have you attended the Last Supper – the meaning of Holy Communion?

AND....

Are you prepared, in all humility, to understand that you will never, in this life, know beyond Faith; that Faith means accepting the Truth without proof. Faith and knowledge are the ultimate contradiction –and the ultimate absorption into each other.

Living Orthodoxy is based on paradox, which is carried on into worship – private or public.

We know because we believe and we believe because we know.

Above all, are you prepared to accept all things as from God?

If we are meant, always, to be "happy", why the Crucifixion? Are you prepared, whatever happens, to believe that somewhere, somehow, it must make sense? That does not mean