

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



Icon of Saints Irenaeus, Lupus and Callinicus -- August 23rd



August 23, 2015

13TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – TONE 4

Apodosis of Dormition; The Holy Martyr Lupus

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 24 – AUGUST 30

PLEASE NOTE: There will be **NO** vespers during the Summer months unless noted in the bulletin.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 – THE HOLY MARTYRS ADRIAN, NATALIA, HIS WIFE AND 23 OTHERS WITH THEM

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy + Volodymyr Vasylevskyy (40th day); Req: Olga Fedunyak

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29 – BEHEADING OF THE GLORIOUS PROPHET, FORERUNNER AND BAPTIZER JOHN

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy + Ihor Bohachevsky; Req: Maria Odezynskyj

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30 – 14TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; APODOSIS OF BEHEADING OUR HOLY FATHERS ALEXANDER, JOHN AND PAUL THE NEW, PATRIARCHS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily),
please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважні!*

WISDOM OF THE FATHERS

Many rich and powerful men would pay dearly to see the Lord or His Most Pure Mother, but God does not appear in riches, but in the humble heart... Every one of the poorest men can be humbled and come to know God. It needs neither money nor reputation to come to know God, but only humility.

St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, I.11,21

When you begin to read or listen to the Holy Scriptures, pray to God thus: “Lord Jesus Christ, open the ears and eyes of my heart so that I may hear Thy words and understand them, and may fulfill Thy will.” Always pray to God like this, that He might illumine your mind and open to you the power of His words. Many, having trusted in their own reason, have turned away into deception.

St. Ephraim the Syrian

Q. What is Holy Repentance?

A. It is a Mystery through which our sins, when confessed before a priest, are forgiven and our communion with God is restored.

Q. Which sins can be forgiven by repentance and confession?

A. All sins which we commit after our baptism which we repent of and are confessed before a priest.

Q. Who gave authority to bishops and priests to forgive sins?

A. The Lord Himself who said to His apostles: “Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven them, and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained.”

Q. How often should one confess?

A. The oftener the better. The more we confess our sins, the cleaner our conscience will be, and the more easily and joyfully we will be able to keep the commandments of Christ. If we are a frequent communicant of the Body and Blood of Christ, at a minimum we should go to confession during the four Lenten seasons.

Q. How should one prepare before confession?

A. One should seek to acquire 1) a spirit of contrition or sorrow for one's sins, and 2) a firm desire to correct one's life and regain peace with God and one's fellow man.

Q. When can the priest hear my confession?

A. After any church service, or at any other time made by appointment.

FOUR-STAR PARISHIONERS – ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

By A Ukrainian Orthodox Priest

The success (or failure) of a parish is dependent upon the synergy among pastor and faithful. Successful parishes aren't dependent upon any one person (this includes the priest!) for their success. In a successful parish the parishioners cooperate with each other, they fulfill their own obligations, and contribute what they can into the common treasury of deeds, wisdom and finances.

I used to work in a restaurant. It was a nice place with good food, a pleasant ambience, and class. We had many regulars, but one of them stood out. The owners called him the "four-star customer." He would visit often. He'd bring business clients there. He'd come for dinner with his family. He'd celebrate important occasions there. He was a good tipper. He was always pleasant to be with and a pleasure to serve.

I'm sure you see where this is going. What would a "four-star parishioner" look like?

A four-star parishioner. . .

. . . **prays.** The whole point of being a member of the Church is to know God. Union with Christ is the goal of all Christian endeavor. We must therefore seek to always have God in our thoughts and on our lips. This is prayer. A four-star parishioner prays (privately or with their family) upon arising in the morning, before retiring in the evening, and before meals during the day. They might do more, but they won't do less.

. . . **worships God.** If we know God we will worship Him. We are created to worship Him. He commands us to worship Him. Why? Worship creates unity and feeds us spiritually. Worship teaches us who we are and who God is. All human beings worship – either the one True God or an idol, and every idol is fundamentally an image of ourselves. God or me? Which will it be? Four-star parishioners attend the worship

services of the Church. Unless it is impossible to do so, they're in Church every Sunday and Great Feast Day and on as many lesser holy days as is feasible.

. . . **partakes in the Holy Mysteries.** Just because I must approach for Holy Confession and Communion once a year doesn't mean that I should only approach for Holy Confession and Communion once a year. If Confession and Communion are a good thing, why not approach more often? The Church exists (among other things) in order to make the Holy Mysteries

– Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Communion, Marriage, Ordination, and the Oil of Prayer (anointing of the sick) available to the faithful.

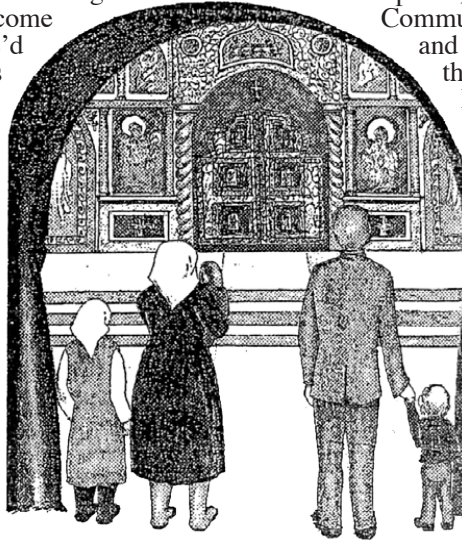
Four-star parishioners live a sacramental life: approach for Confession/Communion as often as possible, get married and buried in the Church, have their children baptized in the Church, etc.

. . . supports the parish generously.

If the Church can't pay the bills, it can't stay open. If it doesn't have the money to do outreach work or educate the children, it will die. A four-star parishioner treats parish financial obligations with the same seriousness

as taxes. Don't pay taxes, go to jail. Don't support the parish, go to . . .

. . . **helps the poor.** At the Last Judgment, Jesus is going to ask us, "Did you feed me? Did you clothe me? Did you visit me when I was sick?" etc. (Mt. 25:36). All our religious acts should lead us to charitable acts on behalf of the suffering, the poor, and the needy. A quick reading of the first epistle of St. John or the epistle of St. James will underline this point better than I ever could. Four-star parishioners give their whole life to God – not just two hours on Sunday morning (if that!). This includes sharing their wealth with God's beloved – the poor.



... respects church leaders. The days are gone when men become priests because they're seeking some type of status in the world. Nor do people join the parish council because they're seeking fame or riches. The least we can do is respect those who lead our communities. Even when we disagree with them, we should do so respectfully. They're not perfect – but neither are we. A four-star parishioner always speaks respectfully to and about the parish and Church leaders. The words of Abraham Lincoln bear repeating: "No one should criticize unless they're willing to help."

... respects their fellow parishioners. I once heard this terrible riddle: "What happens when a member of the Church is wounded (spiritually, emotionally, or personally)?" Answer: "Someone from the parish comes along and finishes them off!" It's a terrible riddle because it's often true. How often do we hear people spreading malicious gossip or delighting in the troubles of their brothers and sisters in Christ? A four-star parishioner doesn't gossip, doesn't impute evil motives to the actions of others, and doesn't try to build themselves up by tearing other people down. If we do love each other, we should speak positively and respectfully about each other and help pick each other up when we're down.

... fasts. There's an old saying: "The spiritual life begins with the stomach." Fasting is a sign of our obedience to the Church; fasting builds unity within the community (just look at the example of the Jews or Muslims); fasting builds discipline (all discipline is fundamentally selfdiscipline); fasting brings God's blessings upon us. Four-star parishioners offer their table to the Lord. How we fast may occasionally differ due to individual circumstances, physical needs, or illnesses. But if we wish to be close to God, if we are obedient to God and the Church, we will fast according to the apostolic teaching and practice of the Church.

... works for the parish. In order for a parish to function, much needs to be done: singing in the choir; sitting on the parish council; teaching religion; visiting the sick; cooking; working with youth; preparing the bulletin; organizing social events; cutting the grass; painting the walls; preparing tax receipts; paying bills, etc.. God has blessed every one of us with talents that can be utilized for the growth and benefit of our parish. Four-star parishioners offer their talents and abilities to the Lord and to the parish.

... reads the Bible. The Bible is God's Word to us. The only condition necessary to successfully read the Bible is that we must read God's Word in order to put it into practice. Reading the Bible simply in order to discuss it—or even worse, discussing the Bible without having read it—will not help us draw near to God – in fact, the opposite will probably take place. A four-star parishioner reads the Bible every day: a passage from the Gospel, a passage from another New Testament book, and a reading from the Psalter as a minimum.

... takes responsibility for their children's souls. People often send their children to "religious" schools – Catholic or Protestant – and figure they don't need to send them to Church school. If we send our children to non-Orthodox schools, they won't learn the Orthodox faith. Every parish child should be taking part in the religious lessons offered by the Church, as well as being taught to pray at home and seeing the example of parents living a deep and authentic Christian spiritual life. A four-star parishioner makes sure that the young people of the parish are given a solid education in the Orthodox faith by parents (or other family members), clergy, Church school staff, and participation in the liturgical life of the parish.

... never stops learning about the faith. A Ukrainian saying goes: "A man must spend his whole life learning so that he can die an ignoramus." Bible study classes, religious seminars, spiritual retreats, and adult education classes should be just as integral a part of the life of every mature Christian as professional development programs and inservice seminars are for teachers, doctors, auto mechanics, etc. This goes double for those in positions of leadership in the parish. Four-star parishioners take part in every bible study, seminar, retreat, and adult education class they are able to. When people fall in love, they want to learn everything about each other. If I love God, I'll want to learn as much as I can about Him.

What's stopping you from becoming a four-star parishioner?

A PRACTICING CHRISTIAN

Fr. Stephen Freeman

My father was an auto mechanic. He learned the trade by working on cars (airplanes before that in the war). He liked his work and would come home in the evenings with stories of things he had diagnosed and fixed. I thought he was amazing. Stanley Hauerwas tells similar stories about his own father who was a brick mason. A brick mason learns his trade by working with another mason until he has gained the skills required of a master mason. This method of learning is probably as old as humankind. We learn by doing. The learning we gain, however, is more than mere problem-solving. A mason comes to think like a mason. He knows where a wall should start and avoids missteps and false lines of work. A true mechanic knows his machines and their logic. My grandfather was also a mechanic. He could diagnose many things in an engine just by listening to it (even in his last years when he was blind). All of these behaviors and learnings belong to the realm of “practices.” They are the things we do that make us what we are.

Hauerwas famously writes about certain practices that create virtue. We do not become virtuous people simply by willing virtue. St. Paul describes this process:

“...we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Rom 5:3-4)

Christianity should be seen not just as a set of beliefs, but as a set of practices. The simple act of generosity is essential. Vigils and fastings are mentioned by St. Paul himself and remain part of the normative practice of classical Christianity. The forgiveness of enemies and regular, even continual repentance is required. And these things are more than mental concepts – they have a manner of being practiced.

Christ Himself did not give the Scriptures of the New Testament to the Church. They were written over the course of roughly 50 years, the first writings only appearing some 15 years or so after the resurrection. But Christ left an essential practice among the last acts of His ministry: the Holy Eucharist. This liturgical act was a constant practice of the Church’s life before a single line of the New Testament was written. It not only commemorated Christ’s death and resurrection – it explained them. This new feast defined Christ’s death and Resurrection as a Paschal feast. From there, the interpretation of the Old Testament could begin correctly. The Eucharist is the anchor of all Christian teaching and the New Testament is the first commentary on the Divine Liturgy.

Without such traditional practices, Christianity begins to change. The non-eucharistic character of contemporary Christianity not only violates Christ’s own commandment, but neglects the single most foundational practice that we have.

There are other practices as well. In Orthodoxy, the whole of doctrine is expressed in practice. The Great Councils of the Church were not bureaucratic decisions, official opinions on doctrine to be written and codified and consulted as needed. Every Conciliar decision was equally a decision about how we pray and every doctrine finds its expression in the mature Liturgy of the Church.

Doctrines as fundamental to the faith as the Holy Trinity are often neglected with a modernist “just Jesus” patois taking its place. These things happen not because of ill-will or rebelliousness. They are the natural outcome of a Christianity shed of its practices. As I noted in my previous article, even the Marian Feasts are essential to a right-understanding of doctrine. The Incarnation cannot be fully taught or appropriated without them.

But these things are under attack even within Orthodoxy. None of the practices themselves are criticized. They are simply neglected. I hear from time to time of a major feast being ignored in a parish. Doubtless a priest is thinking to himself, “Why should I bother to celebrate the feast if nobody is coming?” And too few come because many Orthodox have adopted the practices of cultural Protestantism.

This, too, is not rebelliousness or ill-will. It is the shape of our culture. Our neighborhoods, and infrastructure are architectural monuments to a secularized culture. There is no need to think of living near the Church if you only need to commute once (or twice) a week. Schools, parks, shopping – all of these

“conveniences” are considered first – the Church often exists as an inconvenient afterthought.

There has recently been discussion of the so-called Benedict Option, an incubation of the Christian community with a view to the long run. The Benedict Option will not likely be a suburban project. Suburban life embodies a set of practices designed to secularize and marginalize the traditional faith.

In the classical Christian village (once upon a time), the day began with prayers. You could hear the bells of the Church ring. A person’s daily cycle mirrored the Church’s daily cycle. The calendar of the Church marked and blessed the passing of the year. These things were completely integral. Today’s left-overs such as blessing grapes at Transfiguration, or honey on August 1st, are merely shadows of a village way of life that has passed. They are good memories, even though they feel alien to our suburbs.

It is interesting that we are discovering that our suburbanized American lifestyle is among the most wasteful and polluting ways of living ever devised on the planet. In time, such extravagance will fail. In the meantime, we need to remember (and recover) as much of our humanity as possible. For Christians, who alone remember the fullness of humanity in Christ, this means remembering and recovering as much of the practice of the faith as possible. Doubtless, there are practical decisions families can make. Is it possible that being a Christian might cost you a lifestyle?

Did You Know?

- ❖ Most people come to church because of a personal invitation.
- ❖ Only 2% of church-going people invite someone to church in a given year. That means 98% of church-goers never extend an invitation in a given year!
- ❖ 7 out of 10 unchurched people have never been invited to church in their whole lives.
- ❖ 82% of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited.
- ❖ The top "rational" reason adults seldom or never attend church is they don't agree with organized religion or what they preach (24 percent).
- ❖ The top "practical" reasons for hardly attending or missing church altogether, 21 percent said they don't have time or they don't get around to it.
- ❖ Children and youth who attend religious services weekly, exhibit fewest behavior problems, are more likely to have high-quality relationships with their parents, and are more likely to exhibit positive social behavior, including showing respect for teachers and neighbors, getting along with other children, understanding other people's feelings, and trying to resolve conflicts with classmates, family or friends.
- ❖ September 20, 2015 is National Back To Church Sunday! Who will you invite?

Last Sunday's Bulletin

If you haven't yet picked up last Sunday's bulletin, it is available in the church hall, or on our website, stjohnthebaptizer.org.

Please Note:

When you are away, please don't forget that the church still relies on your contributions. Our bills do not go on vacation. Your absence on any Sunday does not negate your obligation to support your home parish.

GOD'S EXTENDED HAND

FOCUS (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve) has provided us with a special bin for collecting donations of clothing, toiletries, etc. to be distributed at GEH. It is located near the door of the church hall.

Haven't Seen Someone in a While?

Give them a call. See how they are doing. Let them know that you not only miss them but also care enough to see if everything is okay. A kind word can go a long way.

Pastor:

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Pastoral Council:

Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

Jeanine Soucie: (718) 674-4529

Social Committee Chairperson:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

Finance Committee:

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698



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Wisdom from the Bishop of Lyons

One should not seek among others the truth that can be easily gotten from the Church. For in her, as in a rich treasury, the apostles have placed all that pertains to truth, so that everyone can drink this beverage of life. She is the door of life.

He who shall preserve the life bestowed upon him, and give thanks to Him Who imparted it, shall receive also length of days forever and ever. But he who shall reject it, and prove himself ungrateful to his Maker, inasmuch as he has been created, and has not recognized Him Who bestowed the gift upon him, deprives himself of the privilege of continuance forever and ever. And, for this reason, the Lord declared to those who showed themselves ungrateful towards Him: 'If you have not been faithful in that which is little, who will give you that which is great?' (cf. Lk. 16:11) indicating that those who, in this brief

temporal life, have shown themselves ungrateful to Him Who bestowed it, shall justly not receive from Him length of days forever and ever.

We have learned the plan of our salvation from no one else other than from those through whom the gospel has come down to us. For they did at one time proclaim the gospel in public. And, at a later period, by the will of God, they handed the gospel down to us in the Scriptures to be the 'ground and pillar of our faith.'

He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man ... might become the son of God.

The glory of God is the human person fully alive.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

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