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FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

The monthly newsletter of
**Saints Constantine and Helen Greek
Orthodox Church**

Volume XV, Issue 7

July 2023

The Litany of Completion-Offering our Gifts to God

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

Analyzing this year in the Sunday Sermons the "Completions", the prayers, that is, which we address to God during the Divine Liturgy after the Great Entrance and the transfer of the Holy Gifts from the Holy Prothesis to the Holy Altar, we have the opportunity to see other issues that are related to our lives. We see this in the requests of the entreaties to God.

The second entreaty is: "For the precious Gifts here presented, let us entreat the Lord", that is, let us beseech the Lord our God for the gifts we are offering. What are these gifts? It is the bread and wine that are offered to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. They are called "precious Gifts", because already from the Holy Prothesis they have been set apart to become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The bread and wine represent all the material goods we have, but also our whole life. From what we have, we separate these basic elements of life – bread and wine – and offer them to God. The prosphoron is prepared with care and faith, and special wine is gathered, and we offer them to the temple with reverence and love for God. Thus, we all participate in our own way in the Divine Liturgy, each according to his gift. The devout housewife prepares for days to participate in the Divine Liturgy, not only mentally and noetically, but



also with the senses, which is completed with the prosphoron. She brings herself to the temple, but also the prosphoron that is part of the material goods.

However, the prosphoron and the wine are not just our gifts that we give to God, but we consider them as God's gifts to us and we offer them back to Him. This is what is said in the phrase of the Priest, when he raises these two material elements: "Your own of Your own we offer to You, in all and for all", that is, we offer You a part of what is Yours, which You have given us, in every place and for all the benefactions You have given us. Thus, everything we have and all our lives are gifts from God to us and to our brethren.

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2023 Parish Calendar

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Thurs, May 25	Holy Ascension
Thurs, June 3	Saturday of Souls
Sun, June 4th	Holy Pentecost
Thurs, June 29th	Sts. Peter and Paul
San, Aug. 6th	Holy Transfiguration
Tues, Aug. 15th	Dormition of the Theotokos
Thurs, Sept. 14	Elevation of the Holy Cross
Sun, Oct. 29th	Fall General Assembly
Sun, Nov. 12th	Parish Council Elections
Sun, Nov. 19th	Stewardship Sunday
Mon., Dec. 25th	Holy Nativity of our Lord



We have nothing of our own, everything is a gift from God and we must offer it to Him.

An Orthodox Romanian theologian, the late Father Dumitru Staniloae, said that all creation is God's gift to man, but the gift is always connected to the cross, that is, it constitutes a life of the cross. This means that we should not cling to the gift and forget the One who gave it to us. Thus, every gift has its own cross, since we must not cling to it and forget God. In such a case, God takes the gift from us, so that the degree of our relationship with Him rises to another level.

We are grateful to God for His love, for the gifts He gives us, i.e. the creation, the material goods, our life, our loved ones who surround us, but we must learn to live the way of crucifixion, i.e. not to literally cling to the gifts, but to offer them to God and our brethren, in order to know God Himself.

The Divine Liturgy teaches us to live in this way, since we give the bread and the wine and receive the Body and Blood of Christ, the counter-gift of His love. Thus, we also learn how to consider each person as a gift from God to us, but also ourselves as a gift to God and others, so our communication with people must actually be an exchange of gifts.

"The God Who Sees Us"

Fr. Stephen Freeman, June 26, 2023

Recent days and thoughts have brought me to the conclusion that what we require is not so much to see God, as to be seen by God. The most frightful words in all of Scripture are, "Depart from me, I never knew you." To not be known, it seems to me, is tantamount to having never existed.

The Christian quest to see God would be bizarre if it were removed from this desire to be seen by God, to be known of Him. In a world driven by the acquisition of information, we can easily mutate "knowing God" into nothing more than one more piece of information. For us, we seek to know things in a manner that involves a sort of mastery. We know them that we might manage them, manipulate them, use them.

There is a different kind of knowing. There is a knowing that is sheer gift. It is something that we often find in intimacy (a very rare thing in our world). The things learned in intimacy become abusive when they are used for managing or manipulation. Such gifts can only be loved, or, perhaps, held in awe.

That God knows us (we wrongly imagine) simply comes with the territory of being God. "God knows everything," we say, and assume that He should therefore be able to manage everything and run the universe in a way that is pleasing to Him. This, I suspect, is what we ourselves would do were we to suddenly become a god.

God, however, loves the universe. What He knows, He loves. We are not the objects of His management, objects for manipulation. Rather, God holds us in a form of awe and wonder. In the creation story of

Continued on next page

THE ORTHODOX STEWARD GIVING-GETTING; GIVING



How many times have you heard people say, “I don’t get anything out of liturgy”? The truth is that we don’t come to church to get something, but to give ourselves – our whole being --- to God. We have to give ourselves as an offering to God and what we get in return is the presence of Jesus Christ within us. As we come to know Jesus this way, we are drawn into the communion of the Church.

When we talk about “getting” and “giving,” it is easy to get things turned around. It’s easy to get into the frame of mind that I, on my own, have something to give. After all, it’s mine. So, we end up with something common in the world: I give you this, and because of its value or worth to you, you give me something in return. It is easy to get quickly into that mode, isn’t it? It doesn’t take much to put myself at the center of all things, determining what is, well, best for me.

The truth is that our life and all things in it are gifts given by the Blessed and Holy Trinity. Our very being is a gift! Throughout the ages, that gets lost or abandoned. As an individual, I put myself in the center of all things – unhooked, as it were, from the One who is the lover and giver of life. We wander about seeking, but ignoring or not finding, inventing our own gods.

As we gather in the Divine Liturgy, we are recentered, receiving our Lord and God and Savior. Order is restored. We are joined together in His Body, the Church. We receive Life and Love from the source of life. Receiving what our God gives, we give back from our whole life. It isn’t a matter of division of who gives what and what gives back. We are actually bound together, the essence of life is given to us shared in our daily lives. It isn’t a matter of spreadsheets and numbers to keep track and compare with one another. It is being joined in the Eucharistic fellowship we have in Christ.

Our giving follows the receiving that takes place as our Lord and God gives Light and Life. We don’t give to selfishly get more.

Our Stewardship is lived as we realize that our lives are centered and lived in Christ our God in the love of God the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit. Only then does the language of human commerce recede, giving way to our Life in Christ!

Giving Thanks

A

Eucharistic Stewardship

Continued from p. 2

Genesis, we hear evidence of this knowledge.

“God saw everything He had created, and, behold, it was very good.” Again, we mistake this for being a way of saying, “God liked what He had done.” The world is created in such a way that God Himself holds it in wonder and awe. He sees not only its goodness, but its very goodness. This is more than mere knowledge and utterly transcends knowledge-as-information. This is knowledge of the most intimate possible meaning.

The modern world suffers from a crisis of loneliness we are told. I believe that much of that crisis is simply the by-product of an information society. The economy (whatever that is) knows pretty much everything about us. It is carefully mined from every action we take in the electronic world. That data is mined, stored, and sold. This is not only true, it is more true every day. But all of that information is the opposite of intimacy. Whoever possesses that information does not know you – though they could easily use it to destroy you. The information is dangerous precisely because those who possess it do not love you. God has no desire to gather information about us. I’m not certain that God knows anything in a manner that could be described as information. God knows us as He knew Simon Peter. He could predict Simon’s denials while reassuring him that he was being prayed for (and preserved). Perhaps those words of reassurance are the very thing that saved him in the end. God knows us as He knew the Woman at the Well (John 4). He Himself was thirsty, but He knew her thirst (living water).

The crisis of our loneliness is, I think, two-fold. It is the lack of intimacy on the one hand (surrounded

Continued on p. 9

THE CALL TO MISSIONS



Mission Team
St. Louis

The Orthodox Mission Team of St. Louis works to nurture an awareness within our local churches of the need to evangelize, catechize, and support missionary efforts and programs globally.



For nearly 40 years, the **Orthodox Christian Mission Center** (OCMC) has had long-term missionaries from all walks of life—from lay professions like teaching, health care, and engineering to students, clergy, and seminarians. No matter their background, these missionaries share the desire to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to care for the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of people around the world.

Ruby Maggard is preparing for missionary service in **Fiji** after experience helping others in Mexico, New Zealand, and Serbia. She shares, *“I hope to model and be an example of God’s love to kids that will enable them to grow into happy, productive adults especially in a world where so many adults are broken.”* Ruby will be working with kids in a new program associated with St. Tabitha’s Orphanage and Holy Trinity Orthodox Church.

While she will be far from home, Ruby will not be alone. Among her colleagues will be people from Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand, and she will also benefit from the work done by **OCMC Missionaries Michael and Meghan Jones**, who have been serving in Fiji for the past 13 months. Further, Ruby carries with her the prayers of thousands of OCMC supporters and the financial support of those who have helped her successfully fundraise for her mission.



Missionary candidate Ruby Maggard visited Fiji in April where she met people she will be working with upon her return later this year. Ruby is pictured here with Pres. Yulitta Senibulu.

If you are compelled to serve others in Oceania, to spread the good news of the Gospel, and to give your talents to God, watch this video "Hello Orthodox!" Orthodox Pacifica

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqopVGY17XY>

The incredible story of the Orthodox Pacific Mission details the miraculous events following Metropolitan Amfilochios Tsoukos’ arrival in the Pacific, his tireless efforts and remarkable achievements in bringing Orthodoxy to the islands of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Metropolitan Amfilochios is from the island of Rhodes and a spiritual grandson of St. Nektarios of Pentapolis.

To learn more about the wonderful influence of Orthodoxy in these Pacific islands, join us in St. Louis on Sunday, November 5, 2023 for a benefit dinner event to support Orthodox missions in Oceania.

*As always, please feel free to contact Rosie Hartley, 618-447-9688, if you have any questions, would like to be part of the Mission Team St. Louis, or if you would like to help our missionaries.
Thank you for your continued support!*

USA Independence Day



Blessed and Happy 4th of July!

Holy Sacraments And Services

◆ Memorials and Trisagias

- ◆ Sunday, June 11th-25 Years for Calliope Demos
- ◆ Sunday, June 18th-2 Years for Alexander Pavlopoulos

May their memory be eternal!

◆ Baptisms

- ◆ Saturday, June 24th--Joseph Wooten

Congratulations! As many has have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia!



**Painters
Wanted!!!**

If you may be interested to help paint the exterior of our Church this Fall, please contact:

Jim Sharos:

**618-530-7463
jpsharos@gmail.com**

On Sunday, June 11th, 2023
His Grace, Bishop Neofitos of Eldoret Diocese, Kenya, celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
and blessed us all!

Many Years, Your Grace!





Blessings and congratulations to newly illumined,
Joseph Wooten;

And newly enlisted
catechumens,
Lenos (Zachary) Howell
and
Darrik Dayhoff!



Holy Paraskevi the Virgin Martyr (Feast Day - July 26)

St. Kosmas Aitolos in one of his sermons taught about the Parable of the Sower which can be found in the following sections of the Gospels: Matt 13:3-23; Mk 4:2-20; Lk 8:4-15. In interpreting this parable, he explains: "Rock is the heart of the person who hears God's word and accepts it with joy but has little reverence for Christ, and when he's tempted, he denies Christ and goes with the devil. The thorns represent the person who hears God's word and to whom evil passions later come and choke and who remains barren. The good earth is the person who is perfect, who brought forth a hundredfold; the middle person who brought forth sixty-fold; and the lesser person who brought forth thirty-fold." Besides explaining the parable in this way, he brings up lives of the Saints to illustrate each point. After citing examples of each he comes to explain a Saint who yielded a hundred-fold and lifts up this example to his hearers for those who wish to imitate this Saint and yield a hundred-fold as well. This Saint he chose was St. Paraskevi.

Saint Paraskevi the Virgin Martyr

By Saint Kosmas Aitolos

Let us say something about the good earth. St. Paraskevi was a twelve year old maiden from a noble house. Left an orphan, she divided up all her possessions among the poor, and with these she purchased Paradise.

In place of cosmetics, she wore tears, remembering her sins. In place of earrings, she kept her ears open to hear the Sacred Scriptures. In place of a necklace, she fasted often, which made her neck shine like the sun. In place of rings, she acquired calluses on her fingers from the many prostrations she made. In place of a golden belt, she had her virginity which she guarded all her life. In place of a

dress, she was covered by modesty and fear of God. This is how the Saint decked herself.

If there is any maiden who wishes to adorn herself, let her consider what this Saint did and let her do the same if she wishes to be saved.

In this way, brethren, St. Paraskevi acquired learning and became very wise. Because of her purity, God found her worthy to perform miracles. She cured the blind, the deaf and she raised the dead.



Two Jews, sons of the devil, seeing the Saint perform miracles, envied her and betrayed her to King Antoninus as a Christian. So the King summoned her and asked her to deny Christ and to worship the gods and she would become queen.

The Saint replied: "I am not foolish like you to deny my Christ and to go to the devil; to leave life and go to death. May you leave the darkness and come to the light."

Do you hear, my brethren, how outspoken a young girl was before a king?

Whoever has Christ in his heart fears nothing in the world. If we too wish not to fear either people or demons, let us have God in our hearts.

The King said to the Saint: "I'll give you three days to obey; if you don't I'll put you to death."

The Saint replied: "O King, what you wish to do in three days time, do it now, for I will not deny my Christ."

The King then ordered a big fire to be lighted and over it a large pot was placed, filled with tar and sulfur. Seeing the pot, the Saint rejoiced, for she was to depart from this false world and to go to that which is real and eternal.

The King ordered the Saint to be put into the pot to be boiled. The Saint made the sign of the Cross and got in the pot. The king waited two, three hours and seeing she was not being boiled, he said: "Paraskevi, why aren't you burning?"

The Saint said: "Because Christ cooled the water and I don't burn."

The King replied: "Sprinkle me with the water so I can see whether it burns or not."

The Saint took some water in her two hands and threw it into his face, and immediately behold the miracle - he became blind and his face was flayed.

The King then shouted: "Great is the God of the Christians. In him I also believe. Come out and baptize me."

The Saint got out and baptized him and his entire kingdom. Later another king beheaded her and she went to Paradise to rejoice forever.

This woman yielded a hundred-fold, according to the Lord's word.

Source: John Sanidopoulos, Mystagogy Resource Center

COME AND SEE
SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

During our recent trip to North Carolina, we finished *Thinking Orthodox* by Presvytera Jeannie Constantinou. As we read, we considered her very thorough discussion of *phronema*, which speaks of the deeper reality of our life as Orthodox: it goes beyond what we think and say to how we live, the realities that form and shape us. It deals with who we are and how we live.

We also were thinking in terms of our lives and how they are, how they should be formed, and how they have changed in the last decade and a half.

We live in turbulent times on any number of fronts. As Christians, how do we live? How do we “think Orthodox?” Think for a moment of the lives of the saints. They picture for us what it means to speak the truth in love. At times they were rounded up by evil forces to be eliminated. Interestingly, they didn’t use force. In fact, they prayed for the enemy they faced. They prepared meals for them. They assisted thieves in cleaning them out.

In our day, people take up arms. They try to silence those with whom they disagree. They weaponize justice systems. It happens amongst those who claim to be Christian, too. Look at “churches” who endorse perversion or some speakers who call themselves Christian but endorse taking up arms, some literally, against opponents.

Think of your response. How often do we curse those on the other side, speaking in anger and passion even while supporting the truth? And how often do we live as though love means accepting and even supporting an evil lifestyle in another? Even “churches” have embraced that which is sinful and perverted and forbidden by God, trying to suggest

that “love” pretty much means anything goes.

How is truth spoken clearly, but in love?

One thing remains: we don’t compromise or redefine “truth.” That is to say: thou shalt not kill means just what it says. Life is a gift from God, never to be merely written off. The list goes on.

But our response is borne of and demonstrated with love, the Love that is ours in Christ. Our Lord wasn’t driven by passion. He didn’t call down legions of angels. He didn’t berate or put down or diminish His opponents. But He lived and spoke truth -- in love.

Remember this: *every living being received life as a gift from God. The lover of mankind never stops being the Lover of mankind.*

In our interaction with those around us, the Love that lives in us in Christ must abound. Step back and take a breath. Treat others with respect, not being driven by anger. Pray for the person, even the enemy or opponent. Never endorse evil of any kind. Listen carefully. Remember, too, that there will be many times when the best thing to do is to listen with no immediate engagement. Pray that a better time will come.

Less noise. No shouting. Lots of prayer. In Christ we live and move and have our being. He will guide us, and He will give us wisdom to speak truth in love in a way that is appropriate and fruitful.

Glory to God for all things!

Ezekiel

Continued from p. 3

by information gatherers). It is also a crisis of vulnerability (humility) in which we fear to be known, for ever-so-many reasons. Intimacy is something of a dance. It requires a gift, for the knowledge that comes from love can only be made available freely and as a gift. The gift requires love in order to be received. For what can be known in intimacy can only be known through love. It dissipates in the hands of anything else.

St. Paul, summarizing his amazing 13th chapter from his first Corinthian letter (the chapter of love), says this:

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” 1 Cor. 13:12

I found this poem today, by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Like most of his work, it burst into my mind and gave light. It’s worth sharing.

As Kingfishers Catch Fire

*As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies
draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells,
each hung bell’s
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out
broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and
the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one
dwells;
Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks
and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I
came.*
*I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings
graces;
Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he
is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thou-
sand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not
his
To the Father through the features of
men’s faces.**

STS. CONSTANTINE & HELEN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH


Wine and Oil



Fish Allowed

July 2023

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 Fr. Achilles Karathanos, Parish Priest

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			Shaded days are Fasting days.			1 NO Vespers
2 4th Sun. of Matthew 8:45 Matins 10am Divine Liturgy	3	4 Independence Day	5 No Vespers	6	7	8 5pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
9 5th Sun. of Matthew 8:45 Matins 10am Divine Liturgy	10	11 5:30pm Great Vespers	12 St. Paisios of Mt. Athos 9am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy	13	14	15 5pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
16 Sunday of the Holy Fathers 8:45 Matins 10am Divine Liturgy Parish Council	17	18	19 5:30pm Great Vespers	20 Holy Prophet Elias	21 	22 5pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
23 7th Sun. of Matthew 8:45 Matins 10am Divine Liturgy	24 Great Martyr Christina	25	26 St. Paraskevi Of Rome 5:30pm Great Vespers	27 St. Panteleimon The Great Martyr 9am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy	28	29 5pm Great Vespers Holy Confession
30 8th Sun. of Matthew 8:45 Matins 10am Divine Liturgy	31					

In Loving Memory
of Paul (Joseph) Wilbanks

May his memory be eternal,
And blessed Paradise!

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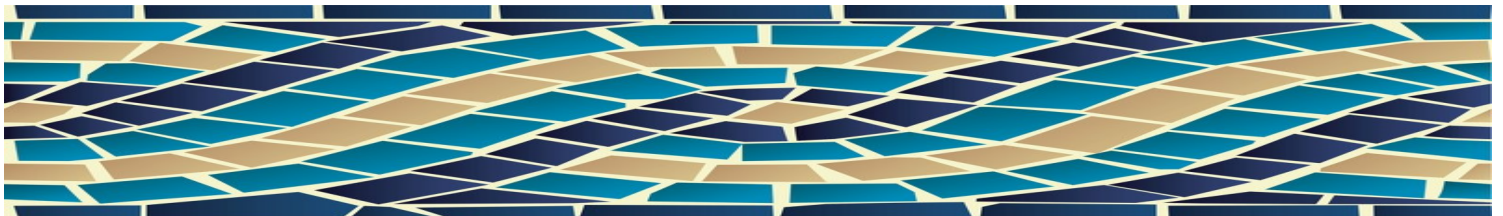
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Please contact the Church Office:

618-277-0330

contact@ssconstantinehelen.org

Thank you!



**Return
Service
Requested**



OUR MISSION

AS AN EXPRESSION OF CHRIST'S LOVE,

FOCUS exists to serve the poor by bringing together Orthodox Christian churches and community partners to provide Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding, and Shelter and other assistance to address the needs of local communities.

For the Month of **July** Our Parish will continue to collect:

Big soup cans 18 oz **(VERY High Need)**
Small soup cans 10 oz **(VERY High Need)** - ***Please no Chicken Noodle soup.***

There is currently a critical need in the pantry! Please remember that pull-tabs are ideal!