

# + SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America  
305 Main Road, Herkimer, New York, 13350 • 315-866-3272  
Archpriest John Udics, Rector • e-mail: john.udics@gmail.com  
Deacon Demetrios Richards • e-mail: dwr00nhr@twcny.rr.com  
Parish Web Page: www.cnyorthodoxchurch.org

## *Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to God For All Things!*

July 26, 2015	8 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am
August 1	Saturday	Great Vespers	4:00 pm
	<b>Beginning of Dormition Fast (until August 15)</b>		
August 2	9 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost	Divine Liturgy	9:30 am

**Saints of the Day:** Repose of Saint Yakov (Jacob) Netsvetov, Enlightener of the Peoples of Alaska (1867). Hieromartyrs Hermolaus (305), Hermippus, and Hermocrates at Nicomedia. New Hieromartyr Priest Sergius (1937). Venerable Moses the Hungarian, of the Kiev Caves (1043). Martyr Parasceve of Rome (138). Martyr Oriozela of Reuma in Byzantium (ca. 250). Venerable Monk Ignatius of Mount Stirion. Virgin-martyr Jerusalem of Byzantium. Venerable Gerontius, founder of the Skete of Saint Anne, Mount Athos (13th c.) Saint Sava III, Archbishop of Serbia (1316).

**Please remember in your prayers:** Suffering Christians of Egypt, Syria, the Middle East and Ukraine. Bishop BOULOS and Bishop YOHANNA, of Aleppo. Archimandrites Athanasy, Nectarios, Pachomy, Luke. Archpriests Alvian, Eugene, Leonid, John, Jason, John, Vincent. Priests Jacobus, Leonid. Deacons Mark, Demetrios, Philip. Mother Victoria. Mothers Raphaela, Michaela, Catherine, Anna. Sister Piama. Monk Victor, Mary, Valentina, Dimitri, Nina, Daniel, Helen, Catherine, Anna, Peter, Helen, Michael, Stephanie, Zara, Nolan, Emelie, Michael, Ed, Nettie, Anita, Maria, Michael, John, Linda, James, Nancy, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Nicole, Ashley, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Marianna, Isaiah, Jamie, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, Betty, David, Warren.

**God Grant Many Years!** Prayers for the health of Matushka Fran (Parasceva) Vansuch, cousin Mark Peter Petras, and Ken Linn were offered at Liturgy and Moleben today at the request of Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the souls of mother Julianne, father Michael and sister Elaine Carroll were offered July 19 at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of Denise Wolfsheimer.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of father Michael Rinko were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of John Rinko.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the souls of cousin Don Udics and Archbishop SILAS of Sarantaeklesia were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya at the request of Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of Mary Sokol, Theodosia Kluka, Michael Pupchek and Helen Nesterak were offered today at Liturgy and Litiya requested by the "Memory Eternal Requiem Service Fund."

**Cemetery Work Evening: Monday, July 27** from 6 pm. Goal: fill dirt where ground has settled. Straighten several gravestones. Weedwacking around several gravestones. In case of rain – we'll gather Tuesday evening.

**As our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration approaches (November 2016)**, we notice various items around the church, which need repair, refurbishing or replacement. Having our metal items re-plated is a good example. So far, two persons have donated toward this effort. The chalice set, hand cross, communion cups will take a moment to be re-plated. We could use a new set of altar covers, a new set of vestments. Would you like to make a donation in memory of a loved one? Please let Father John know.

**8th Sunday after Pentecost Gospel (Matthew 14:14-22)** a sermon by Father Phillip.

Have you ever noticed how Jesus' hands transformed everything He touched? A blind man once lived in night blacker than black; but when he was touched by Jesus' hands, color and movement flooded his life. A widow's son died, and his death meant excruciating loss to her in every way. But as they carried the young man's body on a stretcher, taking it to a dark tomb while his soul was taking its place in the realm of the dead, Jesus' hands touched the cold corpse; and life pulsed again through that body. And in today's Gospel, Jesus' hands take a bit of bread and a couple of fish; and as He touches them, they multiply; and He breaks the bread for all to see and eat. And that "all," by the way, was something like 15,000 or 20,000, because there were "*about five thousand men, besides women and children.*" It's a flat-out miracle wrought by a God Who doesn't look down on the world to get anything from His subjects, but Who's genuinely touched by human need and wants only to give.

But note how this miracle begins. Matthew 14:13 says that Jesus "*departed from [the area around Nazareth] by boat to a deserted place by Himself.*" Jesus has been pressed on every side for months. People followed Him everywhere He went, so that He couldn't get a minute to Himself; and everywhere there were outstretched hands, grabbing hands, and pleading voices rising from a sea of sorrow, sickness, pain and need. Everybody wanted something from Him, and He'd been giving to everyone who came. So in His human nature, He was tired. Add to that His grief over the very recent execution of His second-cousin, John the Baptist; and Jesus needed some down time. Now He had an opportunity to be by Himself, to rest, to think, to pray: no noise, no

voices, no people, just to be alone for awhile. Yeah, right; fat chance! It goes on to say that “*when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities,*” obviously keeping an eye on the sail of the boat Jesus took from Galilee, because “*when Jesus went out [that is, out of the boat], He saw a great multitude.*” The crowd He planned to get away from was already there waiting for Him.

And right there the Lord teaches us to keep a very loose grip on our expectations about what's going to happen and what's **supposed** to happen in life. Proverbs 16:9 says that “*a man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps;*” and Proverbs 19:21 reminds us that “*there are many plans in a man's heart; nevertheless the LORD's counsel---that will stand.*” That doesn't mean we're supposed to wander through life like a brain-dead stoner, just waiting for something, anything, to happen; prudence is still a virtue. But whatever plans we might make and/or goals we might set, the Lord may have something else in mind for us.

Again, as Jesus lands, the people are already there waiting for Him. And we might expect that, like us when our plans are thwarted, He'd be at least a little exasperated. But verse 14 says that “*When Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.*” Jesus put aside His needs and ministered to the needs of those around Him, people He didn't even know personally. And that's another lesson, and one not easy to learn. I once got a call about 5pm on a Monday evening, after a “day off” already riddled by interruptions. Someone from another parish was in the University hospital, dying; would I come? Quite frankly, I had other plans, something I needed to do for me. But something wouldn't let me say “No” or “Tomorrow.” So, in rather a cranky mood, I hauled my freight down to the south side, found the room--and realised that I needed to begin at once the prayers for the dying. So I strangled my irritation, whipped on my stole, opened the book, and prayed for this man I'd never met. As I did, peace came to us both; and as I pronounced that final absolution, he slipped gently into eternity. Can you say, “Learning a lesson the hard way”?

Anyway, Jesus ministered to the people all day, listening to them, healing them, teaching them. Then it was evening. He's hungry and knows the entire crowd is hungry. The disciples, also tired and hungry, say to Him: “*This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.*” This would've been a great way to get rid of the crowds and have a little down time. But again Jesus has compassion on the people, turns to his disciples and says to them, “*They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.*” And what's their startled response? “*We have here only five loaves and two fish.*” They lived in a small world of limited possibilities; they realized they had very limited resources, that the crowd had unlimited need, that really they had nothing to offer. What they didn't realise that Jesus lives in a wide world of **un**limited possibilities. That's why they were puzzled when Jesus, referring to the five loaves and two fish, said, “*Bring them here to Me.*” What could He possibly be thinking?

Sound familiar? Don't we too often see impossibilities, when God wants us to see possibilities? We look at our meager resources and, like the disciples in John's account of this miracle, say to God: “*But what are these among so many?*” And still He says to us, “*Bring them here to Me.*” We, like the disciples, need to see that when we keep our needs and sorrows, our pains and problems, **and** our concerns for others and their needs, in our own hands, we're pretty helpless; but when we stifle our pride and surrender them into His hands, everything changes.

How? “*And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples.*” Now, notice how Jesus does **not** complain about the meager provision; He just thanks the Father for providing it. Only then, in a spirit of gratitude and trust, does He share it out to the disciples. “*And the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets of the fragments that remained.*” Get it? Without Jesus we do not have and will never have adequate resources to meet other people's needs (or our own) on our own. But we do have is the blessed opportunity to quit complaining about what we don't have, to start thanking God for what we do have, and to start trusting a God Who can place His hands on our meager offering and cause it to grow to fill every need. What we do have is the opportunity and the invitation to take whatever little bit we have, including that stash we were saving for ourselves, and give it to Him---all of it---and let Him turn it into something that can not only satisfy the needs of other people, but provide an abundance beyond that.

In this miracle, God proves Himself the God of abundance---and not for the first time, either! Remember how God fed His people with manna and quail in the wilderness and brought cold, refreshing water from solid rock. Remember, from 2 Kings 4:43-44, how through the prophet Elisha God fed a hundred hungry men with only twenty little loaves of barley bread. Elisha's servant didn't believe it was possible: “*What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?*” But Elisha said, “*Give it to the people, that they may eat. For thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.' So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.*” With God there's not just enough to meet our needs; there's more than enough.

Our God is the God of abundance. But do we really believe that...not just in our heads, but with our lives? In John 10:10 Jesus says plainly, “*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*” And in Philippians 4:19 the Apostle assures us that “*my God shall supply all your need [not all our wants and whims, mark you, but all our need] according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*” But too often, isn't what we want and what we expect of God really just to have our life become only a little bit better: not abundant, not joyful, just a little less cruddy? In Matthew 6:11 Jesus teaches us to ask our heavenly Father, “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” But too often, isn't what we really expect from God, not satisfaction, not to eat and be filled and have leftovers, but just a few crumbs to stave off starvation? What **is** it going to take for you and for me to get it through our heads and down into our hearts that Jesus means exactly, precisely, and literally what He says in Matthew 6:32-33, that “*Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*”? Or do we prefer being stuck in the desert, tired, hungry, miles away from a Safeway and flat busted broke anyway? It's your choice...and mine too.