

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

Volume 15 Issue 7

July 2015

June Council Highlights

- ✘ May's Operating Income was \$10,534.31 and Operating Expenses were \$11,843.22, resulting in a negative balance of **\$1,308.91** for the month.
- ✘ Volunteer committee cleaned the kitchen and removed clutter.
- ✘ OCA All-American Council information and financials are posted on OCA web site.



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Parables of Patience

The Gospel readings for the week of July 5th include Matthew 13: 10-43.

These verses come after Jesus has just told the crowd the Parable of the Sower. It describes various kinds of ground, and the seeds that fall on the ground as the sower works. Some seeds die because they are scorched by the sun or choked by thorns, eaten by birds or withered in soil that isn't deep enough to sustain them. But the seeds that fall on good soil bring forth abundant grain.



In verse 10, the disciples ask Jesus why He speaks to the people in parables. He answers: "The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'" His words are close to the message the prophet Isaiah is commanded to give the people (Isaiah 6: 9-10).

Commentators on this passage note that the Lord's words have different meanings for

different kinds of people. Those who are willing to hear and spiritually sensitive will gain understanding. But those who are hard-hearted, who are unwilling and spiritually insensitive, will only hear a story. They won't heap up condemnation on themselves by rejecting the message Christ is giving in the parable. So Christ makes His point in this way as an act of mercy toward those who do not want to hear Him. They are represented, in the parable, as the seeds that fall "by the wayside" as the King James Version has it.

The following verses include the Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Parable of the Leaven (or Yeast). Biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias writes in his book "The Parables of Jesus" that the words of these parables are often mistranslated. Jesus is not saying that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, or like yeast that a woman mixes with flour. He is saying that it is the same way with the Kingdom that it is with a mustard seed or a morsel of yeast.

Jeremias writes that the meaning of both parables is that "out of the most insignificant beginnings, invisible to [the] human eye, God creates His mighty Kingdom, which embraces all the peoples of the world."

Jeremias goes on to say that with these words about the mustard seed and yeast, Jesus is actually talking about His disciples, who will spread the Gospel and build up the Kingdom. He knows that doubtful people are asking whether this "wretched band, comprising so many disreputable characters" can actually "be the wedding-guests of God's redeemed community." Jesus' answer is that the Father will "cause My small band to swell into the mighty host of the people of God in the Messianic Age, embracing the Gentiles."

But to see this miracle, a person must be patient. The miracle only happens over time, just as a small, frail seed can grow into a lush plant only with time and with patient, unhurried tending by the sower.

To us, who read and listen to these words, Jesus says, "He who has ears, let him hear."

Rector's Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This past week, we had the joy of celebrating the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, in whose name our church is dedicated and who are the heavenly patrons of our parish community. Many of our parishioners and several clergy and faithful from other parishes joined together in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and for the festal meal that



followed. Thanks to all who made the beautiful celebration an event to be remembered.

The Holy Apostles' preaching, teaching, and the witness they bore to Christ through their martyric deaths, are an example to all of us, even though we live two millennia later, that Christians are called to live in the world but not belong to the world (see 1 John 2:15-17; Romans 12:2). This reality was also highlighted by the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States concerning "same-sex marriage." This decision has, understandably, generated much discussion, as well as confusion and some bewilderment and sadness among Orthodox Christians. I encourage you to read the statements made by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon (printed in this newsletter and available at <http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon/statement-concerning-june-26-us-supreme-court-decision>) and by His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin

(<http://dowoca.org/>). Both statements outline the Church's teaching concerning marriage and, at the same time, encourage us to be loving and Christ-like to those who disagree with us.

This month I will be traveling to Atlanta, GA, to participate in the (generally) triennial gathering known as the "All-American Council," July 20-24. Clergy and lay delegates from parishes throughout the Orthodox Church in America (David Homyak is our parish lay delegate) will gather under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Synod of Bishops to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, to pray, and to discuss the Church's life and mission and also to make decisions as to how to promote the ongoing mission of the Church in America. The theme adopted for this 18th AAC is taken from a talk given by Saint Tikhon when he was archbishop in North America over one hundred years ago: "How to Expand the Mission." Highlights of this AAC will be the anticipated adoption of a new Statute of the Orthodox Church in America (you may know I have been involved in its development and drafting for the past two years) and the hoped-for passing of a resolution that will simplify the manner in which local dioceses and parishes support the work of the Church on the national level.

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) will hold its annual convention at the same venue prior to

the convening of the AAC. Our own diocese, the Diocese of the West, will also hold its annual assembly in Atlanta in the morning of Monday, July 20, prior to the opening session of the AAC later that day.

You can find more information about the AAC on the website of the Orthodox Church in America: <http://18aac.oca.org/>. I encourage you to follow the work of the Council through the daily postings on the OCA website. I further ask your prayers on behalf of the bishops, clergy, and lay delegates, observers, and guests who will gather for the Council. May all of us, in our own parishes, also seek to "Expand the Mission" of Christ's Holy Orthodox Church here in the Valley of the Sun.

With love in the Lord,

+ *Bishop Daniel*



Bishop Daniel blesses Sue and David Bieber on their 50th wedding anniversary. Many Years! Многая лета!

Statement Concerning June 26 US Supreme Court Decision

June 28, 2015

To the Venerable Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

Dearly Beloved,

The recent ruling by the US Supreme Court on the legality of “same-sex marriages” has received much press coverage and has already caused some consternation about its implications and ramifications. But we Orthodox Christians must rest assured that the teaching of our Holy Church on the Mystery of Marriage remains the same as it has been for millennia.

Over the past few years, the Holy Synod of Bishops of our Orthodox Church in America has issued a number of statements outlining, detailing and clarifying the teaching of our Holy Faith on this matter in light of challenges from our American society. These teachings remain in effect, in spite of the Supreme Court’s decision. Links to these statements are provided below.

As we reflect on the Supreme Court’s ruling, we should thank Almighty God that we live in a country that allows us the First Amendment rights to worship freely, practice what we believe as Orthodox Christians, and live as examples of Christ our Savior and His love for others.

The ruling does not change the teaching of the Church, but it does remind us of the need to be Christ-like in our dealings with everyone. The state has the responsibility to enact laws that protect the rights of each individual. The Church, while it does not bless “same-sex marriages” or view them as sacramental, does see the image of Christ in every individual, and his or her worth in the eyes of the Lord Who died upon the Cross for our salvation.

As the Orthodox Church in America, it is our responsibility to care for those who are in need, help those who are victims of prejudice, racism or persecution of any kind, and to provide for those who are sick, destitute, homeless or imprisoned.

The Church’s mission continues, and we have a great responsibility to be “all things to all people,” so that we all may be “one in Christ,” and hear on the last day, “Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

With love in the Lord,

+ *Tikhon*

Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

When Words Don't Come

Fr. John Breck But she found she simply couldn't pray. The words just didn't come.

An elderly woman recently broke down during Confession and began sobbing. She had attempted to offer to God what she felt was her sinful neglect in raising her son. Throughout his childhood and adolescence, she had taken him to church services on Sundays and feast days, and each day she had prayed with him and for him. Apparently, she had done all she could, gently and supportively, to lead him into life in Christ, with a serious and deep reverence for the Orthodox Christian faith.

Now that he was in his late thirties, with a failed marriage behind him and no apparent connection to the Church, his mother was heartbroken. Her grief was compounded by guilt, since she was convinced she had somehow failed both him and her Lord. She asked the priest hearing her confession how she should now pray for him, especially since he was about to embark on a second marriage with a woman who had even less interest in the Church than he did.

The priest tried to suggest ways she could focus her prayer. In the weeks that followed, he kept in touch with her, only to hear that she felt she couldn't pray at all, that she didn't have any idea as to how she should formulate prayer that would speak both to her son's need and to her own. She tried spontaneous intercession, then her well-worn prayer book, then psalms, chosen for their emphasis on suffering, loss and grief. When she returned for confession a few weeks later, she felt she needed to add to her original burden the dryness of her prayer. In particular, she found she couldn't pray for her son at all without interrupting her petitions with weeping. She wanted desperately to ask God for help and guidance in her prayer as well as in dealing with her son's situation.

More dramatic experiences of this kind occur especially around unexpected loss or a tragic death. A man who is the sole breadwinner for his wife and children gets laid off at work. A family receives a visit from the military, informing them their son was recently killed in Afghanistan. Or the baby a young couple has just brought into the world turns out to have an untreatable and lethal genetic defect. If these families are firmly rooted in a

Abba Macarius was asked, 'How should one pray?' The old man said, 'There is no need at all to make long discourses; it is enough to stretch out one's hands and say, "Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy."

particular faith tradition, they will most naturally begin by praying about the crisis that has just impacted their lives. But very often the prayer seems inadequate, even empty. What does one ask for? How does one formulate a request that sufficiently describes the situation at hand and appropriately requests that God provide some answer? And how does a family pray for a child who has just been killed, or for a parent suddenly carried off by an unpredictable fatal illness?

These are examples that point out what we all know: that sometimes we find our-

selves at a loss for words when we want most earnestly and explicitly to pray for someone or some thing that is of crucial importance to us. It can also be difficult to find appropriate words when we begin for the first time to develop a pattern of regular prayer. But there we have resources at hand that can help structure and provide content to our prayer: the Scriptures or a traditional prayer book, for example, together with the sound advice of spiritual teachers. (In this regard, I often think of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom's reply to a woman who complained of difficulty in beginning to pray. When more traditional means don't work, he told her, it can be enough to sit in front of an icon and knit, leaving spiritual growth and inner progress to the Holy Spirit.)

There are other times, though, when a crisis or ongoing stress creates a stumbling block in the way of prayer, to such an extent that we feel we can't pray at all. Again, the words are just not there. We don't know how to formulate what we need; we can't even discern an appropriate way to express what we feel. "Ask and you shall receive," the Scriptures tell us. But how do we ask for some gift of grace, or solution to a problem, or relief from the suffering of acute loss, when we can't step back and away from the tension and chaos we may feel, in order to put that request into coherent words? How does this woman pray for her son, estranged from the Church? Or the parents for their teen-ager who is being brought home in a coffin? Or the young couple for their terminally ill newborn? Grief has a pernicious way of stifling prayer, since it attacks on the level of both mind and feelings. Where, then, does this leave us?

It's especially important in times like these

(Continued on page 6)

Christlike Love

During the week of July 19, the Church remembers two saints who showed deep love for Christ by doing things that go far beyond what most people would be willing to do.

The first is Saint Seraphim of Sarov. On July 19 the Church celebrates the transfer of his relics from his original place of burial to the Church of Sts. Zosimus and Sabbatius, and then to the Dormition Cathedral in Sarov. Over 200,000 people paid their respects to the beloved saint, and many healings took place during the procession with his relics.

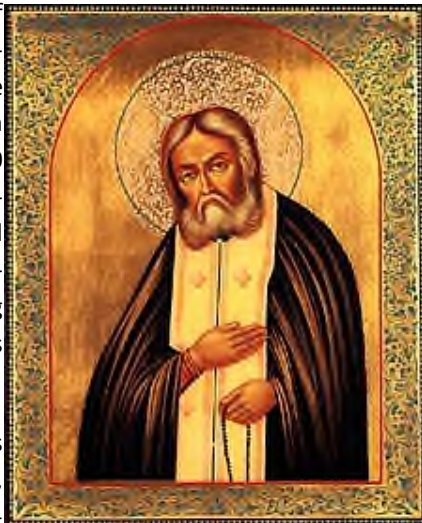
We know many things about Saint Seraphim, including his wonder-working and his gentle way with wild animals. But one of the most unusual things we know is the story of what caused him to walk hunched over during the later years of his life.

Saint Seraphim was working in his garden when he was attacked by robbers. Rather than defend himself or use his heavy garden tools to fight them off, he allowed them to beat him badly. It was after that incident that his injured back was permanently bent and affected his walk.

For most people, the idea of not even try-

ing to defend ourselves from an unjust attack is unthinkable. But Saint Seraphim's Christlike love for God's creatures made him unwilling to harm any of them, no matter what the circumstances.

Saint John Chrysostom comments on a similar episode, when companions of Saint Paul didn't fight back against attackers:



"For to endure when insulted is God's part: to be merely abusive, is the part of the devil...to them that beat us, let us return blow for blow, by meekness, by silence, by long-suffering..."

The second saint, commemorated on July 21, is the Venerable Simeon of Edessa, Fool-for-Christ. Like Saint Seraphim, though in a different way, he showed Christlike love that would be difficult for most people to manage. He called people to repentance by feigning madness. He would bound around crazily in the streets and approach people, whispering their sins in their ears and urging them to repent. Sometimes he appeared in dreams and reminded the dreamers to repent. To do this, of course, he had to have insight into people's deepest secrets, which he did.



Commenting on Saint Simeon in "The Prologue from Ochrid," Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes about Lycerges, the king of Sparta, who set down strict laws and got his citizens to promise to obey them while he

was away for a protracted period of time. Having secured their agreement he left, and never returned, thus "binding them to their oath forever."

Lycerges' willingness to leave his country forever was a sacrifice for the good of the Spartan people, Bishop Nikolai writes: "But how much greater a sacrifice it is voluntarily to leave one's mind and always to appear before men as mad! Is not madness the greatest banishment known to man? And to live year after year in that state, and all in order to be of help to one's neighbour!"

From the Fathers . . .

"Firmly believe that the Lord is at all times everything to you. During prayer He is the power and the fulfillment in the Holy Spirit of each of your words. During pious conversation He is your living water, the ardent flow of your words at all times? He is everything to you. Be free from care in the presence of your Lord. He has enclosed you with Himself upon all sides. He penetrates you wholly and knows all your thoughts, all your needs and inclinations, and if you live in Him with faith and love, then no evil shall befall you. 'The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing' (Phil. 4:6)."

John of Kronstadt
My Life in Christ; Holy Trinity Monastery
pg. 193

When Word Don't Come (cont'd.)

(Continued from page 4)

to remember that God knows each of us to the very depths of our being. Nothing is hidden from him: not our sinfulness, nor our longings, nor our grief. In fact he knows them, and us, better than we ever can. He not only knows them, but he carries in himself the burden of our sin, the awareness of our needs and desires, and the suffering caused by our loss. This means that he does not need for us to formulate our prayers as if to inform him of our situation. It means that in times of stress and chaos that are so devastating that our minds can't function well enough to formulate what we feel we want or need, that is no impediment to God. In those moments, it may be far more appropriate to stand before God in silence. Stand "with the mind in the heart," fully confident that God understands our needs and desires, and that he wants nothing more than to address them directly and in such a way as to further us along the way towards salvation. If any words are required at all, they are simply "Thy will be done!"

Two quotations in particular speak to this question and provide a fitting close to what I've wanted to say about prayer "when words don't come." The first is a reflection by Metropolitan Anthony, mentioned earlier, and the second is from the sayings of one of the great desert Fathers.

"Prayer is essentially standing face to face with God, consciously striving to remain collected and absolutely still and attentive in his presence, which means standing with an undivided mind, an undivided heart and an undivided will in the presence of the Lord; and," the Metropolitan adds, "that is not easy."

Abba Macarius was asked, 'How should one pray?' The old man said, 'There is no need at all to make long discourses; it is enough to stretch out one's hands and say, "Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy." And if the conflict grows fiercer say, "Lord,

help!" He knows very well what we need and he shows us his mercy.^[1]

[1] A. Bloom, *Creative Prayer* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1987, 2004), p. 26; B. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), p. 111.



Fr. Breck was Professor of New Testament and Ethics at St. Vladimir's Seminary and Professor of Biblical Interpretation and Ethics at St. Sergius Theological Institute, Paris, France. With his wife, Lyn, he is the director of the St. Silouan Retreat Center, Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina.



Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, *Reflections in Christ*,

<http://oca.org/reflections/fr.-john-breck/when-words-dont-come>*

Around SS Peter & Paul

JULY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

July 7 Stephen Sedor
 14 Barbara Harp
 Azariah
 16 John Yavornitzky
 18 Dan Sieckman
 20 Wesley Holmes
 Matushka Mary Balmer
 Fr David/Matushka Mary Balmer
 22 Nadya Moriarty
 23 Nicholas Enoch Sr.
 25 Protodeacon Alexis
 27 Phil O'Brien

Многая лета! Many Years!

CONGRATULATIONS

July 1st marks
 Bishop Daniel's
 ninth anniversary at
 SS Peter and Paul!

Многая лета!

Many Years!

PRAYER LIST

*"I was sick and you visited me."
 Matt 25:36*

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

Ted Demos
 Larry Gardner
 Cassandra Wagner
 Ann Carroll
 Ann Garza
 Rose Koval
 Rose Kurowski

If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Bishop Daniel.

Bits and Pieces

PARISH VOLUNTEERS

Forty-three parishioners responded to the volunteer survey this Spring. Of those, 30 stated a willingness to volunteer to further help the church in various needed activities. Others are either maxed-out doing work for the parish, or are physically unable to help. Encouragingly, of the 30 volunteers, 13 have not been involved in helping the church before. Sixteen (16) males and 14 females are willing to help (beyond those that already do a lot of work for the church).



The first volunteer effort was a successful deep cleaning of the kitchen on Saturday June 6. Sixteen parishioners joined together for this effort. Not only was a good job done, but it was also a good community-building opportunity. Thanks to all those who participated.

David Bieber

BOOKSTORE

Summer reading starts and ends at the church bookstore and parish library!

Don't fill your free days with senseless drivel! Redeem the time! Nourish and refresh your soul! There is something for everyone! Advice for everyday living, stories from centuries ago to present day, history, adventure . . . you name it, we've got it.

And if we don't have it, I can get it for you. So don't fill your head with ridiculous romance or vitriolic political prattle that only infuriates . . . instead satiate yourself with hope, joy and wonder!

All to be found in our humble little bookstore and library.

T/YAL: FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN

A truly amazing time was had by all at the Feed My Starving Children community service project!! Hundreds and hundreds of boxes were packed and will be shipped to Guatemala for malnourished children! This nonprofit mission was unbelievably grateful for our \$440 donation!

I am looking to set up a service event at St. Vincent DePaul for early August. This will once again be a service event that the entire church can join in on with the teen and young adult



league! I would like to open the St. Vincent DePaul event up to the whole church because FMSC was so overwhelmingly successful! With an estimated 40 to 50 orthodox volunteers that attended and raising over \$440, it shows that our churches truly embrace these service opportunities!!

I will keep everyone posted on the day and time of our August event! Please contact me if you have any ideas or would like to suggest an upcoming service project.

Mara Hecht

BLESSING OF VEHICLES

It is our parish custom to blessing vehicles on the Sunday nearest to the Feast of the

Holy Prophet Elijah. This year, that commemoration falls on Sunday, July 19. Cars and other vehicles will be blessed that day, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.



WELCOME

We welcome all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, and enjoy some coffee and fellowship. We invite you to visit our website at

www.sspeterpaulaz.org.

SUMMER STEWARDSHIP

Throughout the summer months, many of our parishioners will be taking vacations, seeking cooler climes, or visiting family and friends throughout the country and world. It is also during the summer, when church attendance decreases because of vacations, that our parish expenses rise, due to the greater use and higher cost of electricity in the heat of the summer. However, the life and work of your parish community continues even when you are traveling and away and enjoying your vacation. You are asked to kindly remember this and to maintain—and even increase—your stewardship during the summer months. May the Lord bless your travels and bring you safely home.

SUMMER READING

If you're looking for reading material for those long hot summer afternoons or for summer trips and vacations, don't forget to visit our parish library. We have about 300 titles in various topics relating to the Orthodox Christian life.



July 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p>St. Elijah—Blessing of Cars Vehicles will be blessed immediately following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, July 19, 2015</p>			1	2	3 Milk-Giver Icon at Mt. Athos	4 Galatian Icon 5:00pm Vespers
5 Ven. Athanasius of Mt. Athos Relics Ven. Sergius of Radonezh 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	6	7 Blachernæ Icon	8 Kazan, Sitka-Kazan Icons and others	9 Kolochskaya Icon	10 Konevskaya Icon Ven. Anthony of the Kiev Caves	11 5:00pm Vespers
<p>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</p>						
12 "Three Hands" Icon 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	13 "Axion Estin" Icon	14 6:00pm Council Mtg	15 Great Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles	16	17	18 5:00pm Vespers
19 Fathers of the First 6 Ecumenical Councils Relics Ven. Seraphim of Sarov 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Blessing of Cars	20 Holy Prophet Elijah	21 Amatia Icon	22	23 Pochaev & Joy of All Who Sorrow Icons	24 Martyrs Boris & Gleb, Passionbearers	25 5:00pm Vespers
<p>18TH ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL ATLANTA • GEORGIA</p>						
26 St. Jacob, Enlightener of the People of Alaska 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	27 Greatmartyr & Healer Panteleimon	28	29	30	31 Forefeast Procession of the Lifegiving Cross	1 Procession of the Lifegiving Cross Beginning of Dormition Fast 5:00pm Vespers
2 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	3	4	5 Forefeast Transfiguration 6:00pm Vespers	6 Transfiguration 9:00 Divine Liturgy Blessing of Fruit	7 Valaam Icon	8 Tolga Icon 5:00pm Vespers