

THE TOWER OF BABEL

IN ORDER TO MAKE Genesis 11:1–9, the story of the Tower of Babel, fit with known archeological data and scientific evidence, Biblical scholars have tended to reinterpret the Biblical story to make it a local event, or something dealing only with a single Near Eastern culture, under the assumption that it was only the world known by the Biblical writer, no larger. But this contradicts the clear meaning of the text, accepted without question by the Fathers, which indicates a world-wide event including all mankind: “and the whole earth was of one language and one speech.”

The writer of Genesis 11 may not have possessed the advantage of the scientific knowledge of the modern archeological professional, but the Holy Spirit used him as an instrument to convey the profoundest truths about the relationship of God and man in the earliest periods after the Fall of man: The story tells us that at one time, whenever it was, all human beings spoke a common language. With this unity of language, they were led to an evil and destructive intent that might have become permanent in human history (the great city and the tower being built “toward the heavens”). God confounded their intentions by a therapeutically-intended and providential dispersal of people and tongues throughout the world. In other words, the spiritual principle of the Biblical story of the tower of Babel remains true—iconically and symbolically and theologically true—and unassailable in spite of the limited geographical and ethnographical knowledge of the Biblical author.

What must be emphasized here is how Scriptural interpretation—according to what I am calling Patristic dogmatic-iconic consciousness—allows for a gracious accommodation to limited scientific knowledge. Since scientific knowledge is always advancing, we can see that at any given period or time, whether in Biblical or salvation history, or in the known course of human civilization, scientific knowledge will be limited or different compared with later periods. But this will not pose a problem for a patristically-inspired dogmatic-iconic consciousness or interpretation. As C.S. Lewis points out so well, in every theological or scriptural truth, we are dealing with three elements: thought, imagination and expression. Every truth expressed as thought carries with it an image, and one must be careful to distinguish the thought from the image that comes with it, because the

image may be true or false, or something based on appearances. Being derived from the senses—which are limited—the image may, or may not, be accurate. The most profound truths can only be expressed in metaphors and symbols, in other words, images drawn from the sensory world *but pointing beyond it*. Sacred symbols or icons are images that have been proven through experience to be “accurate” or to convey truth.

The important thing to realize from this state of affairs is that scientific advances, contrary to a popular understanding, don’t primarily affect our thought or dogmatic concepts first; rather, they affect first of all the images we have of the world around us. Witness the Copernican heliocentric image of the solar system as contrasted with the Ptolemaic geocentric image of the solar system. Orthodox theology did not have to change in its essentials because of that discovery, but our image of the world changed, and we then had to take account of that change in our expression of unchanging essential truths.

Scientific advances, or more precise historical or archeological knowledge, do not necessarily affect the thought or concept itself, much less the sacred expression of dogmatic truth. It is our images, our imagination, which are most affected by scientific advances, or by scientific theories that are “advanced” at a particular time. And we must always be discerning, as Orthodox Christians, to distinguish between *genuine advances* in real knowledge from a *current or popular theory* that is being “advanced” as new knowledge.

Thus the dogmatic-iconic thought or expression of the meaning of the tower of Babel story in Genesis 11 remains patristically inspired as it is liturgically celebrated—no matter what the advances of science and archeological knowledge of the Near East. The really breathtaking spiritual advance in our knowledge is how the Orthodox Tradition, inspired by the Holy Spirit as its interior Life, makes the spiritual connection between the confusion of tongues and the dispersal of nations at the time of the tower of Babel, and the descent of the tongues of Holy Spirit fire which brings about Divine unity and communion, which is also a prophecy of the union of all mankind in Christ. This is how the Fathers read the Bible with dogmatic-iconic consciousness.

— Brother Andrew Rossi, from an email exchange

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin
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The Rector, Fr. Lawrence Margitich, may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net. He is available Tuesday-Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

Parish Contacts

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KNEELING PRAYER—an excerpt

Wherefore, O most merciful and philanthropic Lord, hear us on whatever day we call upon Thee, and especially on this day of Pentecost, whereon, after our Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into Heaven and sat at Thy right hand, O God and Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit to his Disciples, the holy Apostles, Who alighted on each of them and filled them all with His inexhaustible and divine grace; and they did speak in strange tongues, prophesying Thy great deeds. Hear us who beseech Thee, and remember us, wretched and condemned. Deliver us from the sinful captivity of our souls by Thy loving intercession. Accept us, who kneel down before Thee and cry out: we have sinned, and we have cleaved unto Thee from our birth, even from our mother's womb...

Measure our transgressions according to Thy compassion, and set the depth of Thy compassions against the multitude of our offenses. Look down from the height of Thy holiness upon Thy people who stand and await abundant mercy from Thee. Visit us with Thy goodness and deliver us from the possession of Satan and preserve our life with Thy holy and solemn laws. Commit Thy people unto a faithful guardian angel. Gather us all unto Thy kingdom. Grant forgiveness to those who put their trust in Thee, relinquish us and them from sin. Encompass us with Thy holy angels. Arm us with the weapons of Thy justice. Envelop us with Thy righteousness. Protect us by Thy power, and deliver us from every oppression and from every conspiracy of the adversary.

Grant us that this evening and the approaching night and all the days of our life may be perfect, holy, peaceful, sinless, without doubt and vain imaginings, by the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and all the saints who have done Thy will from the beginning of time. —*First Kneeling Prayer of Pentecost Vespers*

ON GOSSIP

A SINGLE GOOD word made the thief pure and holy, despite all his previous crimes, and brought him into paradise (Luke 23:42-43). A single ill-advised word prevented Moses from entering the promised land (Numbers 20:12). We should not suppose then, that garrulity is only a minor disease. Lovers of slander and gossip shut themselves out from the kingdom of heaven. A chatterbox may meet with success in this world but he will not do so in the next. There he will trip and fall; 'evil will hunt him down and destroy him' (Psalm 140:11). It has been well said: 'Better to slip on the ground than to slip with your tongue' (Eccles.20:18). We should believe James the apostle when he writes: 'Let every man be swift to hear and slow to speak.' (James 1:19). —*St John of Karpathos*

THE APOSTLES' FAST

THE APOSTLES' FAST is the oldest fast and the first one kept by the Christian Church. During the Apostles' Fast, the Holy Spirit spoke to them, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted the Holy Spirit said: separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3). The Apostles Fast begins the Monday after *All Saints Sunday* (June 12 this year) and continues until the *Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul* on June 29. The rule for this variable-length fast is more lenient than for Great Lent. *Monday, Wednesday, Friday*: abstain from meat, fish, wine and oil. *Tuesday, Thursday*: Oil and wine permitted. *Saturday, Sunday*: Fish, oil and wine permitted.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PENTECOST—Feast of the Holy Trinity:** On Saturday, June 3, at 9 AM, we will serve a Memorial Liturgy, and commemorate all departed pious Christians, with the idea that the occasion of the coming of the Holy Spirit not only consists of the divine dispensation (plan) of the salvation of man, but that the departed also participate in this salvation. Therefore, the Holy Church, sending up prayers on Pentecost for the enlivening of all the living through the Holy Spirit, petitions for the grace of the Holy Spirit also for the departed, which they were granted while they were still living, and was the source of eternal blessedness, because "all souls are enlivened through the Holy Spirit" (Hymn of Matins). On Saturday afternoon we will decorate the Church with greenery in honor of the Feast, and serve Vigil at 5 PM. On Sunday, June 4, we will have the joy of baptizing two catechumens, Keri and Norm, at 9 AM. Divine Liturgy to follow, with Kneeling Vespers to follow.
- **TOMATO LOVERS:** in 90 days or less you can have a feast of heirloom tomatoes in your garden. Now is the time to plant them. Our own blessed Nilus V has tomato starters for you, your family and friends (and even some for a Sunday Agape). See Nilus for acquisition of these happy varieties—although he is to shy to ask, a small donation is appreciated.—Leonard Carl
- **WOMEN'S GET TOGETHER:** Please plan to join in a casual Sisterhood luncheon at The Tides restaurant in Bodega Bay at 1pm on Saturday, June 10th (back to Church in time for Vespers at 5 PM). Car pools will be arranged from the church for those that want to share a ride. This is a "buy your own lunch" event. Space is limited, please RSVP by June 2nd: Kira Staykow, kirastaykow@gmail.com, 415.279.0353
- **THE APOSTLES FAST** begins on Monday, June 12, and ends on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, June 29.
- **SAINT SERAPHIM WEEK for KIDS:** Monday–Friday, 9 AM–Noon, June 19–23. Prayer, singing, crafts, games, snacks. For more information, contact Gloria Collins at 849-6135 or gypsybootsie@sonic.net.
- **SENIOR LUNCH FELLOWSHIP:** Thursday, June 22, at Noon. The lunch will be preceded by a visit of the Senior/Retired Group to the Family Support Center of Catholic Charities, at 465 A Street, Santa Rosa. We will car-pool from the Church parking lot, leaving here at 10:45 AM.
- **PARENT'S GET TOGETHER:** Daphne Russell and Kira Staykow—amazed by the faithfulness of all the parents at our church who bring their little ones to so many services—are organizing an evening of childcare to give the parents of young kids an opportunity to socialize TOGETHER. Plans are: Parent's Night Out, Friday, June 30, 5–10:30 PM, at the home of Anastasia and Aaron Brodeur, 5401 Kevin Court, Santa Rosa, CA 95403. This is a potluck with appetizers and wine. **FOR THE KIDS:** Drop kids off at the parish hall where childcare will be offered including dinner, games, crafts, maybe a movie. Space is limited. For RSVP or questions, contact Kira Staykow, kirastaykow@gmail.com, 415.279.0353 Daphne is looking for additional volunteers to help with childcare that night. If you are interested, please let us know ASAP. We are experimenting with this concept and hope to host future events like this. We hope it works out well and appreciate your prayers.
- **CHURCH CAMP:** Our Deanery Church Camp, down in Dunlap, CA in the foothills east of Fresno, happens July 2–8. Father Lawrence, along with Father Theodor and family will be going to the camp, and invite our church youth to join them. Scholarships are available—see Fr. Lawrence.
- **JULY 4th Pilgrimage to Fort Ross:** As always, there will be a Divine Liturgy at the Fort Ross chapel on July 4, 10 AM. His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, will preside at the service.

SUNDAY AGAPE MEALS

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Have you ever thought about preparing one of our popular Agape lunches which are served in the Hall after the Divine Liturgy on Sundays? Perhaps you've considered it, but felt a bit daunted by the task. My husband Greg Sanford and I have been preparing Agape meals for over twenty years. In that time we have made some mistakes, and have learned a lot. We are seeking people like you who might like to work with us and become comfortable with making these lunches. It's easier than you think, and very enjoyable. Greg and I are scheduled to prepare lunches on the following dates: June 11, August 20, October 8, January 7 (2018), February 11 (2018). Please phone or email me if you are interested in helping out. Thanks in advance for your help. —*Catherine Ostling*, lostling@comcast.net, (707) 887-1277.

BAPTISMS ON PENTECOST

FROM ANCIENT TIMES, as the *Book of the Acts of the Holy Apostles* attests, the day of Pentecost has been celebrated in the Church as the fulfillment of Pascha and as a baptismal day. We are reminded of this fact when we sing at Liturgy the hymn *As Many As Have Been Baptized into Christ* (from Galatians 3:27). Why baptisms this day? A Russian spiritual writer of the 19th century described the events of the day, saying that the "...Holy Apostle Peter raised his voice and delivered his first sermon, in which he pointed out the glorious events accomplished in this day, the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and the completion of the great work of salvation of the people, which was fulfilled on earth by the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. This first Christian sermon was simple and brief, but since the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the Holy Apostle Peter, his words penetrated the hearts of the hearers and won over their obstinacy. *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?... Repent, the Holy Apostle Peter answered them, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and you will not only be forgiven, but you shall also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* For the promise of the Holy Spirit is given not only to us, but also even to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:38-39). Then those who gladly received his word immediately repented, believed, and were baptized (Acts 2:1-41), and the new Church grew from one hundred and twenty to three thousand. (*Bulgakov Handbook for Church Servers, 1900*)

Therefore, since Pentecost is a baptismal day, and having prepared themselves by prayer, fasting, worship,

alms, stewardship, study, reading, attending the sixteen Catechism Classes of the program, the Catechumens Keri Elizabeth DeMaar and Norm Peter Vachon will be received in Holy Baptism on Pentecost morning, June 4 at 9 AM.

Keri is a surgical physician and moved to Santa Rosa last June. She and Alex DeMaar were married here in October 2015, at which point she also became a catechumen (usually we do it the other way around, but pastoral concerns dictated otherwise). Keri practices for Memorial and Petaluma hospitals. Carol Elizabeth Thong will stand as Godmother.

Norm Vachon has known about the Orthodox Church for a very long time, since he is married to Sohier, who is the mother of Kristina Daya. He started to attend St. Seraphim last summer, immediately got involved in parish life, helping out where he could, and taking over the vineyard work after Gabriel reposed. He became a catechumen about that time. Norm is an electrical engineer, and actually did design work for our new parish hall four years ago. Leonard Carl will stand as Godfather for Norm, who will be baptized with the name Peter, after the Holy Apostle, appropriately so on Pentecost. Let us pray for Keri and Norm as they prepare for Holy Illumination. 🙏



THE CHALLENGE OF REPENTANCE

MORE THAN A hospital, the Church, if we see it as Christ's oneness with life itself, is God's life and joy offered to the world, creating a kind of proving ground of love, constantly questioning us as to how much of My Heart, of My Body, of My Blood, can you bear? God wants to give it all, but won't do it in such a way that we're eliminated. But how can we really become one with God without being stretched?

It's not just a magic carpet ride. Receiving the Eucharist unworthily by not discerning the Body and Blood of Christ has more to do with the depth of being grasped by the significance of the Eucharist existentially in daily life, than with any sort of adoration of the body and blood and sacrament as an object. In fact, it's indicative of our spiritual disorder that we can adore Christ liturgically at the feeling level, while being existentially blind and deaf and turning our backs on Christ in the world of our daily lives. Discerning Christ's Presence means to find one's self placed squarely in one's humanity before God and others and the world, and recognizing our part in witnessing, assenting, and participating in the damage to others and to the world. "Keep our mind in hell" (St. Silouan), because there's a lot of hell. If I don't, I'll dissociate and build myself a little castle, comfort myself with Jesus and let the rest go to hell. I'm preaching to myself, so don't worry. —*Deacon Stephen Muse*

GLENDI GAZETTE



A GLENDI MEETING was held on Thursday, May 2 at 7 PM, as announced. Twelve of our dedicated, hardworking Glendi veterans were present to discuss the event. Perhaps we had expected more attendance, but those who were there were key personnel and very knowledgeable about the Glendi. The meeting was called to discuss whether or not we would have Glendi this year, and what it would look like. We are facing some difficult issues: increased expenses in many areas, the lack of on-site parking, the lack of off-site parking (or the very high expense of providing busses if we had an off-site lot) and the uncertainty of personnel for key positions. Starting with me, we all expressed our thoughts on these topics. All of us recognized that although Glendi is not an evangelism tool (it's not very effective, in any case), it has given many thousands of people a unique experience of our wonderful Parish. Although Glendi certainly raises funds for us, somehow by God's grace we focus our efforts just as much on those things that aren't about money: decorations, church tours, Vespers and the candlelight choir concert and serving our guests. God gave us the "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (*Ephesians 4*) as we worked together as members of the Body of Christ. There's something palpable about that.

As I go about town, I continually hear positive comments about the Glendi and about the Parish. Rachel Dovey who's husband Michael last year created a wonderful "taproom" for the beer booth, wrote that many of her "friends from outside the church (neighbors, people from work, parents from E's school) are not even remotely religious. With the exception of a few lapsed Catholics, many of them are either overtly hostile to religion or just very suspicious of anything having to do with 'church.' Usually if I mention that I go to church, there's a moment of awkward, horrified silence and then they'll regroup and try to be polite and ask 'Which church?' I tell them St. Seraphim, it's Orthodox. But then when I say 'the church that does Glendi,' their whole demeanor changes. I can't tell you how many times I've heard 'Oh I LOVE Glendi' and then people will start talking about a particular memory that they have at Glendi or how beautiful the church is or how nice the people are. I love watching that transformation, because they instantly go from suspicion about church in general to very positive associations with our church. I don't know how much it does in the way of outreach to the young agnostic demographic that makes up most of our (Michael and my own) community outside church—I don't see a lot of conversions happening—but it's just lovely to see the real joy that they have associated with us."

Those at the Glendi meeting on Thursday concur with Rachel. **So it was with regret that the meeting participants came to the conclusion that we are unable to do Glendi this year.** This decision has significant financial implications. I would ask you to consider two things. First, perhaps not all of our parishioners are aware of the fact that Glendi income covers *eight months of our mortgage* for the Hall, Storage building and other building-related expenses (we had a net of \$41,000 last year). Glendi is part of our stewardship—we all give a great deal of our time, talent, funds and hard work to make it happen—so how will we respond to this loss?

Being relieved of all that labor (and personal expense) this year, I invite you to give yourself to what I believe is the Biblical and Churchly approach to stewardship: Let each of us, prayerfully considering what God has given us, give a proportion of that as an offering of thanksgiving to Him. Many of you do this already, so this is only a reminder: If you have much, give a proportion, a percentage, of that bounty; if you have little, then give from that knowing that God will bless the offering given to His Church, and He will give the increase and supply what is lacking. "Test me and see" says the Lord (Malachi 3:10). Experience tells us that those who practice proportional giving are relieved of anxiety about money, and the parish has sufficient funds to care for itself and the poor and practice evangelism. Try it and see!

Secondly and briefly, but just as important: Without doubt, our parish is doing charitable work, yet surely we could do more. I ask all of you to consider opportunities—since without Glendi we have a bit more time—for deeper engagement in charitable outreach. Glendi supplies about \$4,000 to charity each year. Let's not falter in our work in this year. —asking God's blessing in thanksgiving for all of you, *Father Lawrence*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JUNE 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May 28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School, final session • Noon, Agape Meal 	29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Panikhida at Santa Rosa Cemetery • Potluck BBQ here to follow 	30	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Panikhida for Anna Stewart • 6:30 PM, Talk by Mother Melania on "Love, Marriage and Sexuality" 	JUNE 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Funeral for Anna Stewart • 6 PM, Prayers for the Sick 	2	3 - Memorial Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • Church decoration • 5 PM, Vigil for Pentecost
4 - PENTECOST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Baptisms • 10 AM, Liturgy/Kneeling Vespers to follow • 12:30 PM, Potluck Agape 	5 - Holy Spirit Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 	6	7 <i>(Fr Lawrence in SF at Diocesan Council all day)</i>	8	9	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 4:30 PM, Panikhida • 5 PM, Vespers
11 - All Saints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Liturgy <i>(Children's Choir to sing responses)</i> • Noon, Agape Meal 	12 <i>Beginning of the Sts. Peter and Paul Fast</i>	13	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <i>Frs. Lawrence and Theodor at LIFE Retreat in Manton</i> </div>			17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Vespers
18 - All Saints of Russia/Amer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Father's Day</i></p>	19 <i>St. Seraphim Week For Kids, 9 AM-Noon each day</i>	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council 	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers • 6:30 PM, Talk on the Mission of the Church in Norway 	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Senior Lunch • 6 PM, Prayers for the Sick 	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:15 PM, Great Vespers for Nativity of St. John the Baptist 	24 - Nativity of St. John <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Children's Choir) • 5 PM, Great Vespers
25 - Martyr Febronia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal 	26	27	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:15 PM, Great Vespers for Sts. Peter and Paul 	29 - Sts. Peter and Paul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins and Divine Liturgy, end of the Fast 	30	JULY 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers

- Check the parish website for any changes to the calendar: www.saintseraphim.com
- The Apostles Fast begins on Monday, June 12, and ends on the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul
- July 4th: Divine Liturgy at Fort Ross, 10 AM. Pack a picnic lunch for after the Liturgy