

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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The Least of These My Brethren

I was in this gospel choir in prison. They gave me a solo. But my time was up two weeks before the concert. I asked them if I could just stay in until the concert. They said no. I was so sad. It was just two weeks. I figured it would be no big deal, just two weeks. But they still said no.

A FRIEND OF MINE said this to me recently. He said it earnestly and with deep regret. He would rather have stayed in prison than missed that performance. He was in several choirs in prison. He said the years he spent there were the most fulfilling and peaceful period of his entire life. He spent actual years in prison because he actually broke the law. And for him to have been driven to that extremity, means there was probably a lot wrong with his life. So it's likely that there were many other reasons that the rigidity of prison life felt reassuring and peaceful to him. But I didn't hear about those reasons. I heard about the choirs. Many times.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

We live in a VERY unusual time, in terms of the human experience. For millennia, even as civilized humans, we were hungry, and we were naked, and we were oppressed (or imprisoned). But for most modern societies those are no longer our major obstacles. Materially, modern societies are extremely wealthy. Even the poorest Americans are radically more privileged than any other

humans at any other time in human history. Things we take for granted—clean water, sanitation, indoor climate control, basic medical care, basic human rights, a steady (even indulgent) food supply, refrigeration, agricultural and manufacturing machinery, comfortable and fast transportation, sufficient artificial lighting, even window screens and glass—all would be unimaginable luxuries to humans from any other age, even as recently as the nineteenth century. Of course, poverty and homelessness are still present and as terrible as they ever were, the changes in the practical lifestyle of the average westerner in the past two hundred years have been dramatically for the better. And that means that those historical problems of humanity aren't, in a sense, our problems. So what actually are our problems?

Depression affects more than one in ten adults in the United States in any given year and is the primary reason why someone dies of suicide about every 13 minutes—over 41,000 people annually.

Isolation is statistically as significant a risk factor for early death as obesity and smoking. Socially isolated children have significantly poorer health in adulthood. If you're isolated, you're twice as likely to die prematurely than someone with an active social life.

One in every 10 Americans over the age of 12 suffers *addiction* to alcohol or drugs (that's roughly equal to the entire population of Texas). Drug overdose deaths have more than tripled since 1990. For nearly all drug addicts, their addictions began before they were 18 years old. This is to say nothing of the more "benign" kinds of addictions, such as screen addiction, pornography, gambling, and countless others.

Anxiety disorders are the most common kinds of mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults—that's near-



FEAST OF THE GLORIFICATION OF SAINT SERAPHIM OF SÁROV

Thursday, July 18, 6:15 PM, Vigil with Litya. Friday, July 19, 9:30 AM,
Greeting of Archbishop Benjamin and Bishop Daniel and the Divine Liturgy. Festal luncheon to follow.

*O kind-hearted father: be thou indeed our guide to salvation, and bring us to the unweaning light of eternal life,
by thy good intercession before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity...*

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ly one out of every 5 Americans in any given year. Panic attacks, PTSD, phobias, social anxiety, and OCD are so common that most of us have someone in our lives who we know suffers from one (or several) of these disorders.

Purposelessness—Power, pleasure, and pride are the assumed motivating forces behind all advertising and all political and economic movements. Advertising and political discourse tend to get the most media airtime in western culture, and most of us are influenced pretty heavily by those messages. But they pit us against one another, leaving us isolated, suspicious, and dissatisfied. So what can we Christians possibly do to minister to these afflictions?

It's interesting that so much of Orthodox Christian worship involves singing. We have to sing in church in order to do our services. But, as is so often true of God's commandments, it's not an arbitrary order that we are expected to obey for the sake of obedience. Obeying the commandment serves to actually HEAL us. Music making—and singing in particular—is actually physically, mentally and socially healing.

The scientific data supporting the powerful physical therapeutic effectiveness of music is compelling. Music stimulates parts of the brain responsible for memory. Music can reduce blood pressure and

slow heart rate. Singers' heartbeats physically align as they sing together. Music can calm the parts of the brain that manage anxiety and stress, and significantly lower anxiety levels. Music making is a highly effective treatment for depression, and is able to improve a patient's condition without the nearly universal side effects experienced with medications. Music triggers the brain to release dopamine (the same feel-good chemical that opiates, alcohol, nicotine, amphetamines, and cocaine stimulate the brain to produce). And as a psychological and social medicine, music turns out to be a powerhouse as well. Singing triggers the release of oxytocin in the brain, the hormone associated with intimate bonding and affection, and creates a powerful sense of intimacy between musicians.

Musicians often (and often easily) experience flow state, and ensemble music-making triggers a social flow state in which many people can share the same ecstatic flow experience, and a subsequently deep connection. Ensemble music making requires a level of cooperation that serves to build social bonds and trust, characteristics essential to a stable society. Listening to music increases empathy and strengthens the social skill of imagining what someone else is thinking. Even just listening to music together—let alone making music together—increases social cohesion in families and peer groups.

Singing can strengthen, inspire, and give meaning to people in even the darkest of circumstances. (Just consider how my friend wanted to stay in prison, of all places, so that he could sing in a choir.) It can actually heal the body at the same time as it heals the soul. I have to admit that I chose a career in music because I need this medicine as often as I can get it. And all of us suffer, to some degree, from these modern afflictions, even if we're not carrying the cross of a chronic diagnosis. I think we all need this medicine.

What if we started offering to the world our singing, our music—the actual medium of our worship—as a carefully crafted medicine for the ills that millions and millions are suffering? What if we realized that God made us able to be addicted not by some cosmic mistake, but so that we would want to come back again and again to this medicine, to this beauty? What heights of joy might we create for the world—and for ourselves, who need it, too—if we determined to make our music as good as it could be, to learn as much as we could, to improve as much as possible, and to keep doing it, to the Glory of God and to comfort His people—all people? And what if everyone began to know that the Orthodox Church was a source for this healing, and that beyond it lies an even greater healing? What then?

But how? (Coming soon...) —by [*Talia Maria Sheehan, from her blog post, click here*](#)

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **OUR EXCELLENT INTERN** and Deacon John and his wife Janine are moving to Pennsylvania to serve in a parish. We will have a BBQ in their honor and to wish them well and God's blessing, on Sunday, July 7 at 4 PM. This is a Pot-luck.
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** is held on the second Wednesday each month—July 10. Volunteers, please arrive around 5 PM to help set up. This Food Bank is an important way in which our parish does outreach to the community. Come and participate.
- **MEN'S GROUP WORK PARTY:** July 13 at 9 AM. A list of activities will be posted.
- **WEDNESDAY EVENING** Vespers, Potlucks and Talks: Fr. John will give a talk on Wednesday, July 10 on the "Mystery of the Departure of the Soul" and talk on Wednesday, July 24 on "The State of the Soul after Death." In August Fr. Lawrence will present an introduction to the Epistle to the Romans with two talks, and in September, Fr. Nicholas will give a series on the book by Professor Mary Ford from St. Tikhon's "The Soul's Longing: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Biblical Interpretation." Please bring a dish to share for the potluck.
- **PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CATECHUMENS,** Landis, Anahi and Peter. The baptism date will be announced.
- **WEDDING HERE:** We congratulate Tim and Monica from St. Timothy Orthodox Church in Fairfield, who will be joined in holy matrimony here on Sunday, July 28. The reception will be in our Hall, which means the Agape that morning will be on the porch.
- **OUR PARISH** will host the Diaconal Practicum this year (usually held at one of our seminaries back east) July 16–19. The Practicum is being organized by Fr. Kirill Sokolov, from Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco. Fr. Kirill is the Director of the Diaconal programs for the Orthodox Church in America. The instructors for the seminar will be Archbishop Benjamin, Bishop Daniel, Protopriest Alexander Rentel, who is the Chancellor of the OCA, Fr. Stephan Meholick, Protodeacon Peter (ROCOR, from Geary Street), Reader and Choir Master Nicolas Custer and of course, Fr Kirill. We expect about thirty deacons and deacons-in-training to attend. The tasks of our Parish for this Practicum will be to offer hospitality (meals and snacks!) the two churches and meeting places. Please come to help with cleaning, prepping snacks and serving meals. Most of the meals have been planned out. The schedule (which may change) is as follows:
 - ▶ Tuesday, July 16: 5 PM—Welcome BBQ; 7 PM—Molieben; followed by a talk by Archbishop Benjamin
 - ▶ Wednesday, July 17: 8:30 AM—Divine Liturgy; Breakfast; Sessions; Breaks; 5 PM—Vespers; Sessions until 9 PM
 - ▶ Thursday, July 18: 8:30—Divine Liturgy in St. Seraphim and Protection; Breakfast; Sessions; Breaks; 6:15 PM—Vigil for the Feast of St. Seraphim, our Parish Patron; Dinner to follow at a restaurant
 - ▶ Friday, July 19: 9:30 AM, Greeting of Hierarchs for the Divine Liturgy, followed by a festive lunch and wrap up

LAVENDER HARVEST

Mother Melania and the Sisters at Holy Dormition Monastery in Calistoga have requested the help of our youth (and their parents/guardians) in the harvesting of the lavender fields on Tuesday, July 16th. Details are as follows:

Tuesday, July 16, 6:30 AM—arrive at Monastery where they will treat us to a hearty breakfast. The early start time is to try to beat the heat of the day. The sisters would like to be done harvesting by 11 AM. **7:00 AM**—we will be split in to three teams. The Sisters will give us directions on how to harvest the lavender. They will also give us maps and directions to the lavender fields. There are three fields, each one about 30 minutes from the Monastery. **7:30 AM**—depart for the lavender fields. **8–11 AM**—harvest lavender. **11 AM**—clean up and start back to the monastery. **11:30 AM**—arrive back at the monastery. Change clothing and clean up for lunch. **Noon**—lunch hosted for us by the Sisters with a Talk given by Mother Melania, followed by either an Akathist or Vespers. The harvesting of the lavender is a very critical task for the Monastery. This is done once a year. They use the lavender from this harvest to make all of the lavender products they have for sale. They really need our help. Mother Melania has also reached out to youth in the other Orthodox churches in this area with the hopes that this can be an event at which our youth connect with each other as well as with the nuns. This is also a wonderful opportunity to support the Monastery, be edified by the words of Mother Melania, and for our communities to come together. Please let me know if you can join us!

—Vicky Basch, vbasch@sonic.net / (707) 291-2369

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
JUNE 30 – All Saints of America <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Agape Meal 	1	2	3	4 – Fort Ross Liturgy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy and Picnic at Fort Ross Chapel 	5	6
7 – St. Thomas of Mt. Meleon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Agape Meal • 4:30 PM, BBQ for Kotaliks 	8	9	10	11	12 – St. Paisios of Athos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Feast Day of Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church, Stony Point Road 	13
14 – Holy Fathers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Agape Meal • 1:15 PM, Vespers (St. Vladimir) 	15	16	17 – Royal Passionbearers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • <i>All Day Practicum</i> • 5 PM, Vespers 	18 – St. Elizabeth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • All Day Practicum • 6:15 PM, Vigil 	19 – St. Seraphim Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Greeting of Hierarchs, Divine Liturgy and Agape Meal • Vespers for Prophet Elijah after lunch 	20
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <i>Diaconal Practicum (see Bulletin for more information)</i> </div>				
21 – Kazan Skete Feast Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Agape Meal 	22 – St. Mary Magdalen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy 	23	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Great Vespers for Dormition of St. Anna, followed by potluck and a talk by Fr John: <i>The State of the Soul after Death</i> 	25 – St. Anna <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Great Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	26 – St. Jacob of Alaska	27 – St. Panteliemon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers
28 – Church Consecration Anniver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Agape Meal • 3 PM, Wedding 	29	30	31	August 1 <i>Beginning of the Dormition Fast</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and blessing of water 	2	3
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers