

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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Sell Everything and Buy the Field

HE LOOKED AT ME right in the face and said the words I will never forget: “When you’re ready to ‘sell all you have’ to have this faith, then, and only then will you be ready!” Whoa, wait a minute, let’s talk about this! Everything? Yep, everything.

It was a turning point in my own spiritual journey and I was having to confront my own desire to “play it safe” or not cause trouble or even protect my own comfort level. But he was right. I wasn’t going to be willing to do what I had to do until I valued what was before me MORE than I valued the opinions of others; more than my own comfort; and more than my own private opinions! When I came to that point where I valued “the treasure” more than anything else; that’s when I converted to Orthodoxy! But that’s true of everything that is most valuable in our lives. We have to do the work necessary to be so discerning that we are able to prioritize the most important things over the less important things. And being disciplined enough to do that is the main characteristic of a spiritually mature person.

Look at ...Matthew 13:44-54:

The Lord said this parable, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Have you understood all this?” They said to him, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue.

First, notice that it is out of JOY that the man who found the treasure goes and sells all he has to buy the field that holds the treasure! It isn’t out of fear or obligation or

even knowledge that motivates us to prioritize our faith above all other priorities in our lives. And that joy flows from the ability to properly VALUE the treasure.

Too often we allow the fact that our faith is the greatest treasure in our lives to slip and that’s when we find it easy to allow our faith to fall from its proper place at the top of our priorities. Next, the placing of our faith at the top of our priorities is because of its eternal WORTH and understanding that valuing our faith FIRST allows us to properly value everything else in our lives in its proper place. No wonder the Lord uses the language of sorting and judgment to help us clearly see WHY the Faith must come first if everything else in our lives ever hopes to find their proper value as well!

Finally, those who have learned to discern their priorities are properly described as servants “who have been trained for the kingdom of heaven.” Those servants are wise enough to know how to use both old treasures and new treasures to enrich their lives with eternal values and wisdom. Today, are you wise enough to value treasures old and new? Are you discerning enough and well trained in recognizing the true value of your faith through regular practice, proper dedication, and humble learning? Make no mistake; the Kingdom of God is worth whatever price you have to pay in your own life to properly possess it and enter into it! Your relationship with God and His Church is the greatest treasure you possess and the greatest inheritance your children will ever receive from you. Only when that is abundantly clear in your choices and your priorities will you truly be Orthodox on Purpose! —Father Barnabas Powell

OUR SALVATION is not found in simply doing good deeds or obeying laws by our own power. If that were the case, we would not need the God-Man to conquer sin and death on our behalf. In Matthew 9:2, before healing the man’s body, Christ first forgave his sins, which means that He healed the corruption that reached to the depth of his soul and that kept Him from personal union with God. He did the same for each one of us, now we are free.

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin

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THE DIVINE LITURGY

I AM LIKE A ROCKY CLIFF, barren and hardened. These ministrations of the church, as given by the grace of God, are like a holy waterfall. They begin to flow over me, across my hardened façade, and over time, through repetition, they begin to soften me, change me, and dissolve me into that vast stream of love that is the life of Jesus Christ. This is the beauty and the mystery of the Orthodox way.

The Divine Liturgy exemplifies this beauty and this mystery. There is nothing else like it in the world; and it provides the antidote to the emptiness, fatigue and decay found in the world. It doesn't try to be like the world; instead, the Divine Liturgy brings us into the throne room of God. The Divine Liturgy was famously described by ambassadors of Prince Vladimir, back in the tenth century, who had been sent to experience the beliefs and practices of the faiths in neighboring lands, and to report back to him what they learned. They said of the liturgy: *"And we went into the Greek lands, and we were led into a place where they serve their God, and we did not know where we were, on heaven or on earth; and do not know how to tell about this. All we know is that God lives there with people and their service is better than in any other country. We cannot forget that beauty since each person, if he eats something*

sweet, will not take something bitter afterwards; so we cannot remain any more in paganism." I had a similar feeling upon participating in the Divine Liturgy. It can carry one outside of themselves, in a sense, and into a heavenly realm, if one allows this to happen. Step by step we leave the world behind, beginning with our entrance into the sanctuary, where we are met by the transcendent beauty of the worship space itself: the warm light of glowing candles shining from their stands beside the icon stands, the equally mesmerizing glow of the oil lamps which light the faces surrounding us, icons of the holy ones, showing us the way to Christ, the intricate and ornately embroidered vestments of the priests, and those who serve with them, the central dome with its icon of Jesus, giving us a real tangible sense of heaven descending, to sanctify us and the earth, to redeem our world and bring it back into His fold. The Divine Liturgy presents us with a relationship, not just a knowing about God, but a participation in His life, and like any relationship it is tangible, and consists of more than just ideas; it is rather an experience of God, through all our senses. First we see the beauty of the place in which we worship Him, and then we smell the incense, as it coils upwards in communion with our prayers, made in faith, and finally we hear the sounds of heavenly music. —*Francis Spillane*

JULY ORDINATION

THE SUMMER FEAST of St. Seraphim of Sarov is July 19. Vigil on Wednesday, July 18 at 6:15 PM. Greeting of Archbishop Benjamin at 9:30 AM, Thursday, July 19. During the Liturgy, immediately following the *Cherubic Hymn* and the *Great Entrance*, Deacon Nicholas will be escorted from the Nave into the Altar to the Bishop—as one of the offerings that day—and the ordination to the Holy Priesthood will begin. Please keep Deacon Nicholas and Matushka Esther, James and Connor in your prayers as this important day approaches. The newly-ordained Priest Nicholas will serve Vespers after the festal meal, at about 2 PM, July 19, for the feast of the Prophet Elijah and Leave-taking of St. Seraphim.

He will serve consecutive Divine Liturgies: on Friday, July 20 at 9 AM for Prophet Elijah, on Saturday at the Kazan Skete for the Monastery Feast Day at 10 AM, Sunday at 10 AM and again at the Skete on Monday, July 23 at 10 AM for the Feast of St. Anthony of the Kiev Caves. Father Nicholas began assisting me in pastoral work already in mid-June. After his ordination he will be appointed second priest of the parish, splitting his work hours between his teaching position and the parish. Father John will continue to serve, hear confessions, advise and assist. And in addition to all that, we have our dear Father Peter Fermiglia helping us until September. Let us give thanks to God for the abundance of pastoral help in our parish. —*Fr. Lawrence*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **BAPTISM:** Congratulations to Rachel and Michael Dovey on the occasion of the baptism of their son Jacob. The baptism will take place Sunday, July 8 at 9 AM.
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** distribution will take place on Wednesday, July 11. Volunteers are asked to arrive no later than 5 PM.
- **OUR SISTER PARISH** of Sts. Peter and Paul will celebrate its Patronal Feast with Vigil on Wednesday, July 11 at 6 PM and Divine Liturgy on Thursday, July 12 at 9:30 AM. Father Alexander Krassovsky extends a cordial invitation to all of us.
- **GARDEN WORK-PARTY:** Saturday, July 14, 9 AM–3 PM. Please see Matushka Ann Margitich for more information.
- The Parish Council approved the purchase of a defibrillator in order to be prepared for an emergency. According, there will be a AED/CPR training class at 2 PM on July 21st. The cost is \$55 per person and the course will take around 2 hours. Please contact Freddie Myles 775-9436 or freddie.myles@gmail.com if you would like to take the course.
- **CHURCH CLEANING SIGN-UP SHEET:** Many thanks to those who signed up to clean the Church. We are covered until September—many slots remain until the end of the year. “O Lord, bless those who love the beauty of Thy House.”

11 Quotes of Guidance from St. Theophan the Recluse

- 1) The heart is like a sponge that has absorbed various liquids. Squeeze it and the liquid will come out. The pressures upon the heart are the life experiences and circumstances of this world, which can produce either good or evil depending on which part of the heart pressure is placed upon. Pay attention. Such thoughts can lead to a good level of self-realization.
- 2) Learn about the teachings of the Orthodox Christian Church and hold onto them in your heart—and you will see the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 3) Knowing what is contained in the Holy Mysteries of the church, be a communicant of the Mysteries as often as possible, with faith and with the Holy Tradition of the church. Then the Divine power of God, will not weaken and direct to the the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 4) Make sure you live within the framework of the Church, because then you will live in a spiritual atmosphere and you will be fenced off from temptation. Your strength will never weaken in your path to salvation, and temptation will not at leave you at a difficult crossroad.
- 5) Be obedient to the leadership of the spiritual fathers—and you will avoid the temptations and mistakes on the way to the Kingdom of Heaven; Instead you will quickly and without troubles come to the gates of Paradise.
- 6) Nothing good is acquired for free. Instead it is acquired later through tears and toil.
- 7) During prayer, the enemy always attempts to bring into your mind things that may seem extremely important, and then removes these thoughts and leads you further astray. It is vital to instill in your heart a strong conviction and decisiveness in order to be able to choose God as opposed to anything else, at least during prayer.
- 8) When you complete your morning prayer, do not think that your are finished: Act as if you are attending the liturgy. Always have a sober mind and keep your thoughts chaste.
- 9) A person who has repented will first only see his sins, but once the inner self begins to settle, that person will begin to see passions and impulses that surround the soul. At the beginning we say: *O Lord have mercy on me a sinner*, but later we add: *O God, cleanse me a sinner or heal my soul*.
- 10) God arranges for us to meet certain people so that we might pass on the good He gave to us. The devil will try to do everything to make sure these meetings become useless and even harmful. Keep this in mind!
- 11) It also happens that even though a person does not do bad things, the state of the heart may be in a poor spiritual condition. God rejects such people because of their poor inner self. Check with yourself. Are you one of those?



PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - St. Cosmas and Damian • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:15 PM, Akathist to St. John of San Francisco	2 – St. John of SF <i>Feast Day of the Monastery in Manton</i>	3	4 - Fort Ross Pilgrimage • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy and picnic at Fort Ross <i>No Vespers</i>	5	6	7 • 4 PM, Children’s Choir Rehearsal • 5 PM, Great Vespers
8 - Great Martyr Procopios • 9 AM, Baptism of Jacob Dovey • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal	9	10	11 • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers	12 • 9:30 AM, Parish Feast at Sts. Peter and Paul, Divine Liturgy	13 • 9 AM, Memorial Liturgy	14 • 9 AM Garden Work • 4 PM, Children’s Choir Rehearsal • 5 PM, Great Vespers
15 - St. Vladimir of Kiev • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal	16	17	18 • 6:15 PM, Vigil for St. Seraphim of Sarov	19 - St. Seraphim Feast • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Ordination • 2 PM, Vespers	20 - Prophet Elijah • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	21 - Kazan Skete Feast • 10 AM, Kazan Monastery feast, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers
22 - St. Mary Magdalene • 8 AM, Divine Liturgy in Protection Church • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal	23 • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy at Kazan Skete	24	25	26 Parish Council Mtg moved to 8/9/2018	27	28 • 5 PM, Vespers
Fr. Lawrence in St. Louis for All American Council						
29 - Virgin Martyr Seraphima • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal	30	31 - St. Germanos • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Matins and bringing out of Cross	August 1 - Holy Cross • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Water • <i>Beginning of Dormition Fast</i>	2 • 8 AM, Divine Liturgy at Kazan Skete	3	4 • 5 PM, Great Vespers

- **GARDEN WORK-PARTY:** Saturday, July 14, 9 AM–3 PM. Please see Matushka Ann Margitich for more information
- His Eminence, Vladyka Benjamin, will be with us for the Feast of St. Seraphim, July 19. We will greet him at 9:30 AM. The ordination of our Deacon Nicholas to the Holy Priesthood will take place during the Divine Liturgy, immediately following the Cherubic Hymn and Great Entrance
- The early Liturgy in Protection Church on July 22—early-birds are welcome to attend—allows Fr. Lawrence to get to SFO in time for his flight to St. Louis