

Pentecost:

The Holy Spirit is God's Gift to Mankind
and the Fulfillment of Jesus's Promises

A Message from Fr. Michael



Readings for Pentecost: Acts 2:1-11 and John 7:37-52; 8:12

Pentecost: Jesus' Promises Fulfilled

On the Feast of Pentecost, the Orthodox Church celebrates the fulfillment of everything that Jesus Christ set out to accomplish. With the sending of the Holy Spirit, Jesus fulfilled every promise that He spoke to his disciples.

Jesus made many promises to his disciples. He promised he would heal them, teach them the truth about God and about themselves, and that he would offer himself as a ransom for many. He also promised that he would rise from the dead and then go back to his Father.

And culminating all of his promises, Jesus promised one last thing: that God will never abandon his people, but would instead send the presence of God that will always abide with his Church:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 15:15-18)

In other words, Jesus promised that he would never leave his disciples (whether they are in the 1st Century or the 21st) orphaned and without a protector. So to fulfill all of his

promises, he sent the Holy Spirit of God to comfort, abide with, heal, cleanse, make righteous, bring together as a church, empower and guide his people to Heaven.

The Holy Spirit Comforts and Empowers

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he raised our humanity to the heights of heaven. After his ascension, he would send a "paraklete," that is, a "comforter." This Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would give all that Christians needed in order to live the life in Christ, both as a congregation and as individuals. The Holy Spirit, the "Lord and Giver of Life" would do many things: unite them into one Church -- empowering it to live the life with Christ-- to follow his commandments, be purified, be made righteous, endure trials and persecution, discern good from evil and to be led to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to be in the world, but not of the world.

The empowerment that God gives the Holy Orthodox Church, including its parish of St. Sophia in Bellingham, the power to do one thing: to live a the life centered on the Gospel Good News: that God has taken on flesh, dwelt among his people, suffered for their sins by being crucified and dying, and finally raising from the dead and destroying death by his death.

The Holy Spirit Abides with Believers and Bears Fruit that Satisfies

Do you want a parish life that satisfies you? That empowers you? Do you want more joy, comfort and assurance in your life? Pray to the Holy Spirit, inviting him to enter into every aspect of your life. The Church calls the Holy Spirit a gift. What does this gift give each Christian if he or she accepts and acts on it? St. Paul describes it:

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

If you receive these things from the Holy Spirit, nothing can harm you and you are on your way to the Kingdom of God! If we receive these as a parish, we will grow, grow, grow! God gave this gift... accept it! Seek out the Holy Spirit and enjoy Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to fulfill you and to make you perfect. Ask Him to purify your soul, to drive out dark things to fill your soul with light.

God the Father did not just give the Church the Holy Spirit to abide with his Church, but He gave the Holy Spirit to abide with YOU as an individual. St. Paul says each Christian is a



St. Sophia
Greek Orthodox Church

JUNE-JULY
2013
MONTHLY BULLETIN

St. Sophia
Greek Orthodox
Church

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Hymn of Pentecost, Plagal of the Fourth Tone

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fishermen all-wise, sending upon them the Holy Spirit and, through them, netting the world. O Loving One, glory to You.

Kontakion of Pentecost in the Plagal of the Fourth Tone

Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-Holy Spirit

“temple of the Holy Spirit.” Pray to be renewed by the Holy Spirit. Pray to become a worthy vessel, a purified temple, and a temple that is inviting for God’s Holy Spirit. Pray for God to make you worthy to hold such a gift.

This is what the Church prays every time it comes together:

“O Heavenly King, the comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is everywhere present and fills all things, the treasury of good things and giver of life, come and abide with us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.”

The Holy Spirit makes St. Sophia a Church

The Holy Spirit unites Orthodox Christians into a Church. Without Him we are nothing... powerless and incomplete, weak and sickly. Our parish would be merely human organization, a pointless club. With Him we are complete, healthy and strong... and truly Orthodox Christian.

We must always seek out the Holy Spirit and make ourselves ready to receive it if we want to be a real Orthodox Church that desires to be true to God and lead to Heaven.

The Holy Spirit Gives a Foretaste of Heaven

We cannot hope for Heaven without the Holy Spirit guiding us and empowering us. With Him helping us we can realistically hope for many great things! When we ask God to fulfill us with His Spirit, then individually we have to opportunity to experience a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. It is as if the Spirit lifts our minds and hearts up so that we can peek over the heavenly gates and see and even taste what the heavenly bliss will be like for us.

- Fr. Michael

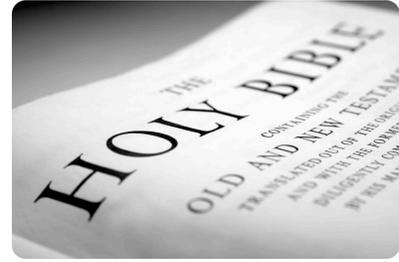
On Pentecost: The Symbolism of 50 Days

In the Church’s annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is “the last and great day.” It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end—the achievement and fulfillment—of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason, however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the “birthday” of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.



This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fulness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fulness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fulness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the “*day without evening*” of God’s *eternal Kingdom*. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ’s disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fulness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to “appropriate” these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.

from www.oca.org



What the Bible Says About... PENTECOST

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” **John 14:26**

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” **Acts 2:38**

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” **1 Corinthians 6:19**

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” **Luke 11:13**

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” **John 14:15-17**

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” **Romans 8:26**

“And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” **Isaiah 11:2**

“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness...” **Luke 4:1**

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” **Romans 15:13**

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” **Ezekiel 36:26-27**



**FOR THE
REFRIGERATOR
DOOR...**

WISDOM FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS: ON THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

“Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all “fulness of blessing,” both in this world and in the world to come, of all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise hereof, through faith, beholding the reflection of their grace as though they were already present, we await the full enjoyment.”

St. Basil the Great, “On the Holy Spirit”

“As the Lord put on the body, leaving behind all principality and power, so Christians put on the Holy Spirit, and are at rest.”

St. Macarius the Great, “Spiritual Homilies” (Homily 26)

“Jesus tells us that His holy Disciples will be more courageous and more understanding when they would be, as the Scripture says, Endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:49), and that when their minds would be illuminated by the torch of the Spirit they would be able to see into all things, even though no longer able to question Him bodily present among them. The Saviour does not say that they would no longer as before need the light of His guidance, but that when they received His Spirit, when He was dwelling in their hearts, they would not be wanting in any good thing, and their minds would be filled with most perfect knowledge.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria

“The aim of all those who live in God is to please our Lord Jesus Christ and become reconciled with God the Father through receiving the Holy Spirit, thus securing their salvation, for in this consists the salvation of every soul. If this aim and this activity is lacking, all other labour is useless and all other striving is in vain. Every path of life which does not lead to this is without profit.”

St. Simeon the New Theologian, “Writings from Philokalia”

“Acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will be saved.” “However prayer, fasting, vigil and all the other Christian practices may be, they do not constitute the aim of our Christian life. Although it is true that they serve as the indispensable means of reaching this end, the true aim of our Christian life consists of the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. As for fasts, and vigils, and prayer, and almsgiving, and every good deed done for Christ's sake, are the only means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Mark my words, only good deeds done for Christ's sake brings us the fruits of the Holy Spirit.”

St. Seraphim of Sarov



GREEK FESTIVAL UPDATE:

FESTIVAL COOKING: Will take place every Tuesday at 10:30 am until the festival. For more information, the contact person is Joyce Piantes (360) 224-5211.

PLEASE HELP FIND SPONSORS FOR THE FESTIVAL: Please consider asking your employer, places where you are a frequent customer, your favorite restaurant or coffee house or any other organizations if they would sponsor our festival. Forms are available in the festival website, www.bellinghamgreekfest.org. Printed sponsor forms are available at the coffee hour or at the church office. Contact: Harielkia Bryant, kia1@mac.com.

ATTENTION ANYONE WORKING IN A FOOD BOOTH: You will need to get a health permit, which you can attain online at www.foodworkercard.wa.gov. Please note that this is the only authorized testing site in Washington State. If you have one already, please bring a copy so the Festival Committee can have it on file.

Dear Parishioners,

Below is a list of major food items and miscellaneous items we use in preparation for the St. Sophia Festival. We kindly ask for your help in helping us defray the parish's expenses. While monetary donations are preferred, since they allow maximum flexibility in purchasing, donations of food and other items are always appreciated. Please check with the Festival committee before making food donations to make sure these items are still needed.

Thank you!

The St. Sophia Festival Committee

Meat	Quantity	Cost	Vegetables	Quantity	Cost
Lamb legs lbs	150	\$657.00	Cucumbers cases	16	\$880.00
Lamb Whole lbs	140	\$875.00	Tomatoes cases (Roma)	36	\$1,085.00
Chicken lbs	1120	\$2,240.00	Lettuce mix cases	4	\$80.00
Pork lbs	500	\$960.00	Spinach bags	15	\$68.00
Gyro Meat cases	122	\$3,920.00	Dill bags	6	\$67.00
Ground Beef 10lb	17	\$395.80	Parsley Bags	24	\$109.20
Sausage lbs	100	\$350.00	Green Onions Bags	18	\$58.05
Pita cases	63	\$1,480.00	Onions chopped bags	34	\$546.00
			Peppers cases bell	15	\$452.00
Baking Items	Quantity	Cost	Paper/Plastic	Quantity	Cost
Flour 50lb (all purpose)	6	\$120.00	Paper Towels cases	10	\$125.00
Sugar 50lb	6	\$165.00	Coffee cups case 8 Oz	1	\$180.00
Honey gal (Money)	10	\$350.00	Plates		\$400.00
Olive oil gal	8	\$104.72	Coffe cups (Greek) case 4 oz	1	\$180.00
Walnuts cases	6	\$205.00	Napkins		\$200.00
Yeast Dry cases	2	\$50.00	Spoons		\$35.00
Rice 25lb	15	\$375.00	Forks		\$50.00
Butter	500 lbs	\$1,500.00	Knives		\$50.00
Margarine 30lbs	2	\$61.80	Gyro wraps		\$500.00
Eggs Doz	150	\$225.00	Styrofoam cups	250	\$100.00
Evaporated milk	20	\$21.40	Miscellaneous	Quantity	Cost
Chicken Base lbs	100	\$300.00	Propane		\$500.00
Cooking Oil gal	8	\$200.00	Olives 5gal	2	\$200.00
Parchment Paper	2	\$141.00	Red Wine Vinegar 1gal	5	\$200.00
Grape leaves 5 gal	5	\$380.00	Seasoning large pk	20	\$200.00
Cotq Cheese 5lbs	24	\$200.00	Tent Rental/Setup	6	\$6,000.00
Yoqurt lbs	22	\$150.00	Garb bags cases	10	\$175.00
Filo cases	13	\$715.00	Alum Foil	2	\$100.00
Powder sugar lb	75	\$75.00	Saran Wrap	4	\$150.00
Tzatziki sauce gal	22	\$360.00	Spices		\$400.00
			Lemon Juice gal	20	\$200.00
			Pepperoncini (greek) case	3	\$100.00
			Feta Cheese 5 gal bucket	10	\$375.00
			Oranges case	1	\$50.00
			Bread		\$600.00
			Lemons case	2	\$50.00
			Creamer Liquid case	1	\$180.00

CONTRIBUTION FORM

Payment Information for Cash Contributions

Check inclosed for the amount of \$ _____ Please make checks payable to St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

Send Payment to
 St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
 Attn: Festival Committee
 510 E. Sunset Drive
 Bellingham, WA 98225
 Phone 360-734-8745 E-mail: greekfest.bellingham@gmail.com

Thank you...

*to those who turned in their 2013 St. Sophia
Stewardship Commitment Card:*



Fr. Michael and Elizabeth Tervo * Deacon Peter & Cathy Alex * Sam
& Yanolla Boulos * Gebran & Wafa Gholam * John Tsoulouhas *
Hariékliá Bryant * Areti Moularas * Christos Christophorou * Victor & Dorine Boulos *
Cynthia Chahine * Nahla Gholam * Fawzi & Samia Boulos * Valerie Reed * Marco & Marie
Boulos * Yanni & Christina Gholam * Alex & Ortance Youseff * Fayez & Fares-Boulos *
Georgia Sentkowski * Chadi Moussi * Roger Hulbush * Bryant & Tamara Mattson * Gabriel
& Jaimee Twining * Riad Youseff * Angelina Todd * Samantha Raney * Gabriella Boulos *
John Harriman * Kim Weil * Alexandros Christophorou * Tim & Voula Parks * Elizabeth
Morgan * Nikitas & Tasia Tsoulouhas * Manoli & Marina Polichronakis * Mary Hulbush *
Demetrios & Terpsithea Totskas * Partena Karipikis & Anthony Rodriguez * Sorin & Ilana
Rotea * Dalene Piantes * Thelma Stasinós * Niki & Ray Welton * Dymond Nicon * Nadim &
Angeline Moussi * George & Ibtissam Mansour * George Mansour III * Sarah Janine
Mansour * Norma Nina Mansour * Vasile & Ioana Aluhas * Gianni Tsoulouhas * Pete Besas *
Stephanos & Paula Margaritis * Loree Foote * Helen Griffin * Kallee & Justin Dalton * Doug
& Dena Lien * Paul & Anna Richardson * George & Judith Moularas * Brooksana Raney *
Jim & Eleni Zourkos * George & Marie Miles * Christos Tselios * Roni & Jon Walsh *
Prokopis & Rina Contoravdis * Louie & Evelyn Lallas * Charles & Vasiliki Margaritis * Gus
& Maria Ilvanakis * Forest & Holly Grow * Theodosios & Eleni Kipelidis * Richard & Zeina
Evans * Georgia Karavias * Curt & Salome Wolters * Demetrios & Eleni Soteriou (As of
5/22/2013)

Thank you to those who made donations to help defray the cost of the Church roof replacement: Doug & Dena Lien, Deacon Peter & Cathy Alex, Areti Moularas, Matthew Burke, Yani & Christina Gholam, George Caldes, Richard Mason, Jim & Eleni Soteriou, Fr. Photios Pentikis, John & Francine Tsoulouhas, Roger Hulbush, Basile & Iona Aluas, Valentina Nestle, Christos Christophorou, John Harriman, Ray & Niki Welton, Kristina Damianidis, Stephanos & Paula Margaritis, Joan Meras, George & Judy Moularas, Sorin & Ellie Rotea, Presvytera Alexandra Diamant, Kim Weil, Mary Hulbush, Charles & Koula Margaritis, Peter Besas, Kristina Falkner, Anonymous. (as of 5/22/2013)

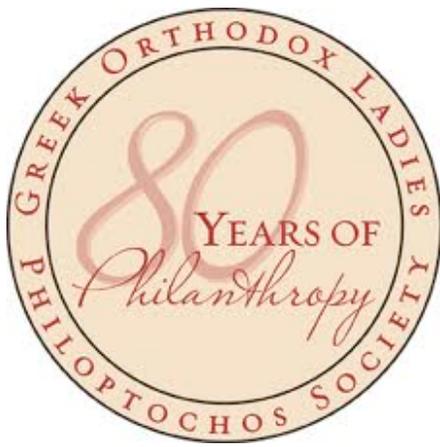
Milestones

Baptism Leah Raney, daughter of Samantha Raney, grand daughter of Brooksana, was baptized on Saturday, May 18th. Godparent, Eva Jefferson

Wedding Riad Youssef and Angelina Todd were married on Saturday, May 25th. Koubaro: Sam Boulos

Graduate Announcement Congratulations to Mary Katherine Kahle, daughter of Cheryl Kahle, who graduated from Ferndale High School with honors. She plans to attend WWU.

Retirement Congratulations to Georgia Sentkowski, who is retiring after decades-long service at the Art Department at WWU.



St. Sophia Philoptochos

Next Meeting:

Sunday, June 16th

in the ground floor of the fellowship hall. During coffee hour.

Philoptochos Patio Sale in the Works

At the next meeting will discuss when we will have the Patio Sale. Tables will be set up between the Church and the hall for people to bring their “pre-owned” items. Monies raised will be donated to our parish “roof fund.” Please start looking through your garages, attics and basements for items to donate. If anyone would like to make and sell Greek and Lebanese pastries, that would be a great fund-raiser for the sale.

Coffee Hour Offerings

- June 2 Yanolla Boulos & Nahla Gholam
- June 9 Meras Memorial
- June 16 Effie Eisses & Joyce Piantes
- June 23 Cristina Falkner & Ioana Aluash
- June 30 Marina Polychronakis & Eleni Pantoleon
- July 7 Nia Zourkos & Eleni Mistry
- July 14 Evelyn Lallas & Tula Trames
- July 21 Salome Wolters & Elizabeth Morgan
- July 28 Tasia Tsoulouhas & Francine Tsoulouhas

Thank you for finding a substitute and notifying Georgia Sentkowski if you are not able to provide for coffee hour on your scheduled day.

Prosophoro Baking

- June 2 Tamara Mattson (4)
- June 9 Eleni Kyriazis (4)
- June 16 Evelyn Lallas (4)
- June 23 Tasia Tsoulouhas (5)
- June 30 Kim Weil (5)
- July 7 Tammy Mattson (6)
- July 14 Eleni Zourkos (4)
- July 21 Brooksana Raney (4)

July 28 Evelyn Lallas (4)

Epistle Readers

- June 2 Gabe Martini
- June 9 Alicia Morgan
- June 16 Anastasia Boulos
- June 23 Juju Gholam
- June 30 Gabriella Boulos
- July 7 Christos Christophorou
- July 14 Gabe Martini
- July 21 Andriana Boulos
- July 28 Gebran Gholam

Sunday Altar Server Schedule

Team 1- 26; June 9, 23; July 7, 21

A. Christophorou, E. Christophorou, P. Tervo, N. Mattson, Bassam Najib Boulos, J. Morgan, G. Grow, N. Eisses

Team 2- May 19; June 2, 16, 30, July 14, 28

N. Tsoulouhas, C. Kyriazis, N. Kyriazis, A. Kyriazis, E. Cretu, F. Cretu, Emilio. Bessam Victor Boulos, C. Grow

Bookstore News

We are now carrying CD's and DVD's: We have a 5 pack DVD; everything necessary to present the Orthodox Christian Faith handed down unbroken since the time of Jesus. \$49.95.

Books: THE JESUS PRAYER by Father David Hester.....\$4.00
The Jesus Prayer is of great importance to the Christian East; often times called the summation of all Orthodox Spirituality.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT(wisdom from the apostolic Fathers).....\$12.95
This is a compilation of various Christian authors of the first and second centuries; this is for those looking to deepen themselves and their own faith.

INNER RIVER.....\$15.00
MOUNTAIN OF SILENCE\$15.00
Both of these books are by Kyriacos C. Markides. Mountain of Silence will be our book for “bookclub” this month. The author’s books are an excellent resource for those looking at spiritualism at another level. He is a native cyprriot and his writings are light and most engaging.

HEAR ME.....\$9.00
This is an excellent prayerbook for Orthodox teens. Written by Anastasia Boyd who resides in Colorado.

SIGN OF THE CROSS by Andreas Andreopoulos.....\$17.00
The gesture, the4 mystery and the history.

THE NICENE CREED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE(with study guide) by Anthony Coniaris This is a spellbinding summary of the Christian Faith.

PERSPECTIVES ON LIVING THE ORTHODOX FAITH by Anthony C. \$12.00

We are special ordering icons at this time; please let the bookstore know if you want one ordered. Orders will be placed on June 3rd. Contact kli1@mac.com

Iconography Workshop



Three day icon painting retreat using the icon, 'Sweet Kissing', as the prototype. Experienced and new painters are both welcome.

Heather Sommer, instructor

Heather Sommer is an accomplished iconographer whose work can be found in churches and private collections across the country.

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, Bellingham, Washington
September 28, 9-5pm; September 29, 1-6 pm; and October 5, 9-1pm

Class fee - \$350.00, includes all materials and supplies
-Limited to 12 students-

For more information and registration, please contact Brooksana Raney (360) 441-0144 or
redheadbby@yahoo.com

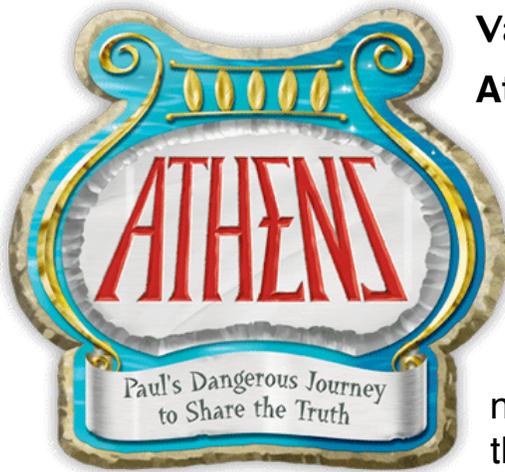
Memories from Holy Week & Easter



ST. SOPHIA YOUTH

Summer Camp July 7-13, 2013 All Saints Summer Camp (High School and Elementary Sessions) July 14-20, 2013 All Saints Summer Camp (Middle School Session). Fr. Michael and Presvytera Elizabeth will serve at the camp for the Elementary Session.

Camper and Volunteer Staff Applications for All Saints camp are available for download at www.allsaintscamp.com.



Vacation Bible School Our theme is "**St. Paul in Athens**"

VBS will take place August 19-23, Monday-Friday, 9 am-12 noon. The program will include dramas, games, dancing, singing, crafts, and a taste of ancient Athens! Our children ages 5 up to 5th grades will participate in the program, learning about their faith, and having fun together! High school and middle-school students needed to assist group leaders, who will work with the adult volunteers. Volunteer opportunities

include arts and crafts, decorations, costumes, singing, Olympic-style games, Greek dance, dramas, and leaders of groups of children as they go to the different activities. We also need help with registration, planning, and set-up. Please see Fr Michael or Presvytera Elizabeth for questions.

High School Hot Chocolate Talk, Sunday June 9th. Subject: "The Prayer that God Hears" and going to serve at Project Mexico in June, 2014.

John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Speech **Delivered by St. Sophia Youth, Alicia Morgan**

Below is the speech that Alicia Morgan delivered as part of the St. John Oratorical Festival held this past March at St. Sophia. Alicia went on to compete at the Northwest Regional Oratorical Festival held at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Beaverton, OR. Thank you, Alicia, for your inspiring words!

When we faithfully follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, graces trigger acts of goodness that reflect this dynamic action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore these behaviors are aptly called the fruits of the Spirit. Because the fruits reflect the goodness within, they provide a valuable measure of our commitment to our Lord and Savior. During the Sermon on the Mountain Jesus warned of the deception from false prophets (Mt 7:15-20). Twice he gave this tool for discernment: “You will know them by their *fruit*” (Mt 7:16, 20). Examining the presence of the fruits or the lack thereof in our every day behavior is a valuable tool for self-examination.

Love

The word love may be the most misunderstood common word in the English language because in the popular understanding it is defined by feelings. Authentic love is an act of the will. Genuine love has two essential elements: self-sacrifice and commitment. Perfect love embraces total self-sacrifice and complete commitment.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to live with self-sacrificing love because he is the divine Person of Love. This virtue is so important that St. Paul called it greater than faith and hope (1 Cor 13:13). Jesus proclaimed its importance: “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 15:34-35). Love or loving is also the principal fruit of the theological virtue of love. It is observed in the habitual behavior of those who readily sacrifice themselves for others, even in difficult circumstances.

Joy

The prophet Nehemiah declared: “the *joy* of the Lord is your strength” (NH 8:10). The author of Hebrews wrote: “Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the *joy* that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). The fruit of joy is the awareness that God is our strength and protector because we safely abide in his love. This inner joy is undisturbed by the negative conditions that may surround us. We know Christ has redeemed us, loves us, protects us, and he will never abandon us. The fruit of joy is a foretaste of the perfect bliss and eternal delight of paradise that God wants us to experience now.

Peace

St. Paul addressed the subject of peace twice in his letter to the Romans. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). “May the God of hope fill you with all *joy* and *peace* in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13). The peace of the Holy Spirit is the inner tranquility, even amid great hardships, that comes from our reliance on God who is all-powerful and always faithful.

Genuine peace comes from living confidently in the present moment with God rather than vainly trying to wrestle anxiously with tomorrow’s problems. The grace to cope with tomorrow’s trials does not come to us today.

Patience

Patience is the virtue that helps us calmly bear our troubles and preserve serenity amid the difficulties of life. Patience mitigates sorrow and staves off excessive anger and complaining. In his letter to the Ephesians he wrote: “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all *lowliness* and *meekness*, with *patience*, forbearing one another in *love*, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*” (Eph 5:1-3).

It is easier to bear with others when we live in the comfort of God’s mercy and forgiveness. When we have taken responsibility for our sinfulness and imperfections, we are less likely to be impatient with others.

Kindness

Genuine kindness stems from authentic love because it inclines a person to give to others without counting the cost. The kind person is other-directed. Some expressions that describe kindness are: benevolence, compassion, goodwill, generosity, and altruism. St. Paul describes kindness as a characteristic of authentic Christians: “but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, *kindness*, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left” (2 Cor 6:4-7).

Kindness combats the evil of envy. Blessed Mother Teresa said: “Kind words can be short and easy to speak but their echoes are truly endless.”

Goodness

Goodness is one of God's attributes (Ps 107:1; 31:19; Hos 3:5). Human actions are said to be good when they conform to the proper moral order according to the natural and divine law. A person is said to have the characteristic of goodness when their actions pursue all that is good and avoid all that is evil. This is the principle of sound, practical reasoning. In St. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians he wrote: "To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fill every *good resolve* and work of faith by his power" (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

In a world polluted by evil, it can be difficult to grasp the concept and value of goodness, much less to pursue it as a goal. Yet, our eternal destiny is determined by our goodness (Jn 5:28-29; Rom 3:1-26; Tit 3:3-9).

Faithfulness

Faithfulness is the ability to remain true to our Christian vocation to the end of our life. This fidelity is extremely important, because if we abandon Jesus at the end of our life it negates all that went before. This is consistent with the bible quote: "It is not he who begins the race well who is commended, but he who ends it well." Jesus declared: "But he who *endures to the end* will be saved" (Mt 10:22).

The faithful person is reliable. He is responsible. As a fruit of the spirit it means faithfully living an authentic Christian life. In his letter to Timothy St. Paul warned about those who are not faithful. "But understand this, that in the last days there will come time of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, un holy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it" (2 Tim 3:1-5).

Gentleness

Gentleness and meekness are synonyms. The gentle person shuns actions based on the principle, "might is right." He does not insist on his own way. Jesus set the standard with the words, "learn from me; for I am *gentle* and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29). Then he lived this instruction during the terrible ordeal of his passion and death. St. Peter, who was not naturally gentle, learned and preached this lesson: "Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a *gentle* and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious" (1 Pet 3:3-4).

Gentleness reflects a person character, because the person who is meek is not excessively focused on himself. Tragically, the world often honors harshness under the banner of productivity. So attitudes like "brutally honest" are applauded. In the process people are stomped beneath our words and actions.

Self-control

Self-control is achieved through the virtue of temperance. This is a very important virtue because it reflects the power of the Holy Spirit to control all our appetites. St. Peter wrote in his second letter: "For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with *self-control*, and *self-control* with steadfastness, and steadfastness with goodliness, and goodliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with *love*. For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins . Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall [because the grace of the Holy Spirit will protect you]; so there will be richly provided by you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet 1:5-11). Therefore, the person who lacks self-control is a slave to his unruly passions.



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