



FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF CHRIST

Quarterly Bulletin of Saint John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church

Diocese of the West - Orthodox Church in America

1900 Essex Street, Berkeley, CA 94703

510-845-2944

www.stjohnthebaptistberkeley.com

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Priest Edward Henderson

The Bond of Peace

The Holy Apostle Paul writes: “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:1-3) Orthodox Christianity is not a philosophy or an ideology- it is life transfigured and transformed by God’s grace here and now for the sake of His Kingdom. We do not simply accept the Church’s teachings and submit to her precepts in hopes of a better afterlife- we are called to live the reality of God’s Kingdom today, tomorrow, and for all eternity.

The life to which God calls all of us is not according to the ways, logic, and passions of this fallen world. As Christians, we live *in* this world but must not be *of* this world, for Our Lord Jesus Christ chose us out of this world (John 15:19). Likewise, such a calling requires that we love God’s creation, especially our fellow man. Such a path is a royal way that avoids extremes.

In the history of the Church, one of her greatest struggles was against heresies, which often arose as an extreme reaction to another false teaching. If one heretic denied the personal distinctions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, other heretics reacted by denying

the very divinity of Our Jesus Christ and, later on, of the Holy Spirit. Heretics who denied Our Lord Jesus Christ's full divinity were countered by heretics who denied His full humanity.

Today, in the Church, we see two extremes that bring a spirit of division, once again, into the Body of Christ. One side wishes to align the Church with secular, politically fashionable, but anti-Christian ideologies, while another seeks to reduce her to a paranoid, isolated, and fundamentalist sect. Both have found their voice through the internet. Both promote themselves as authoritative experts. Both undermine the authority of the Church's hierarchy.

How do we avoid either extreme? We must live out our faith. We must make our participation in the life of the Church first and foremost in our lives. We must love our neighbors, including our enemies. We must not live in fear.

Since March of last year, the whole world has been plagued by fear. We fear COVID-19. We fear the changes in our society. We feared that the lockdowns and restrictions would never end and then became afraid as they were lifted. Once again, we fear new potential restrictions and lockdowns. We fear becoming ill while also fearing certain medical treatments and vaccines. Such fear drives people to extremes.

In the book of Proverbs, God reveals to us the fear we must have as Christians. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and there is good understanding in all who practice it." (Prov. 1:7) Likewise, "The fear of the Lord is unto life for a man, and he shall lodge without fear in places where knowledge is not examined." (Prov. 19:23) What is this godly fear? It is not fear in the sense of terror, but rather an awareness of our own inner weaknesses. It is a vigilance that guards the body, the soul, the mind, and the heart from losing communion with God. It trusts in God's love and mercy yet acknowledges the fragility of our own spiritual life. This fear of God repels worldly fear.

If we acquire the fear of God, then we believe and hope in everything He revealed to us, both in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Church. Such faith and hope transforms the heart so that it may truly love with the love that "casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Let us then, with the fear of God, walk worthy of our calling, not fearing death, disease, misfortunes, or one another. Let us gain knowledge and wisdom from the Scriptures and the Church Fathers rather than from the latest self-promoting internet guru. For we are not to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may *we* grow up in all things unto Him who is the head-Christ." (Eph. 4:14-15)

Namesdays, Birthdays, and Anniversaries

August 16- Birthday of Boris Gerlovin

August 20- Birthday of Elena Latour

September 20- Wedding Anniversary of Thomas and Xenia Evind

September 30- Namesday of Lubov Berlyant

October 12- Birthday of Xenia Evind

October 13- Anniversary of Fr. Edward's ordination to the priesthood

If you would like your namesday, birthday, and/or anniversary included in the future, please contact Fr. Edward at revedwardhenderson@gmail.com.

Choir Announcement

On July 1, Anastasia D. Klimko resumed her post as parish choir director. Our former choir director, Caleb Lewis, has relocated to Pennsylvania in order to pursue theological studies at Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary in South Canaan. The choir is now open to all Orthodox Christians. Regular choir rehearsals take place on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm in the parish hall and 30 minutes prior to all services.

Special Announcement

With the blessing of His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, Fr. Edward will be traveling to Russia from August 31-September 16. He will be traveling with other clergy and pilgrims as part of a delegation from Fort Ross to Irkutsk, Saint Petersburg, and Moscow. The main purpose of this visit is the opening of an exhibition in Irkutsk about Saint Innocent (Veniaminov) and Fort Ross.

Fall Lecture Series

Beginning Wednesday, September 21, Fr. Edward will offer a weekly lecture series: The Councils of the Church. All classes will begin at 7:00pm in the parish hall, are free of charge, and open to the general public.

Upcoming Events

August 14-August 28: Dormition Fast

October 11-14: Diocesan Assembly in Las Vegas, NV

Schedule of Services

Sundays: Divine Liturgy at 10:00am

Saturdays: Vigil *or* Great Vespers at 5:00pm

August, September, October services

Wednesday, August 18		Vigil	6:00pm
Thursday, August 19	Transfiguration	Liturgy	10:00am
Friday, August 27		Vigil	6:00pm
Saturday, August 28	Dormition	Liturgy	10:00am
Monday, September 20		Vigil	6:00pm
Tuesday, September 21	Nativity of the Theotokos	Liturgy	7:00am
Sunday, September 26		Vespers	6:00pm
Monday, September 27	Exaltation of the Cross	Liturgy	7:00am

* In connection with Fr. Edward's trip to Russia, Vigil is cancelled on September 4 & 11. More detailed service schedules are available on the parish website and at the candle desk.

“All outwardness without inwardness is nothing. Whatever is not inside the heart does not exist in actual fact. Virtue is not true virtue when it is not within the heart. Therefore correct your heart and your will, and you shall be good and your outward deeds will be good, for the inward is the beginning of the outward. When evil is not in the heart, then it will not appear outwardly. The hands will not do evil, the feet will not walk toward evil, the tongue and lips will not speak evil, the eyes will not look upon evil and so on, when the will and the heart do not desire it.”

-Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk

