



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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AUGUST, 2008

***“It is time for the Lord to act”:
the Divine Liturgy as heaven on earth***

+ KALLISTOS OF DIOKLEIA (Ware)

[Delivered at the Third Orthodox Congress of Belgium, October 2000]

A continual miracle

“The Eucharist is a continual miracle,” affirms one who was *par excellence* a eucharistic priest, St John of Kronstadt. The purpose of our congress is precisely to open our eyes, so that we appreciate with fresh vividness the depth and the revolutionary consequences of this continual miracle. In the words of Plato, “The beginning of philosophy is to feel a sense of wonder.” During these days of reflection and celebration that we are to share together, may Christ the High Priest increase our sense of wonder before the miracle of the Divine Liturgy.

At the outset let us remind ourselves of two things. First, it is not for nothing that we refer to the consecrated gifts as “the holy mysteries.” As a continual miracle, the Eucharist is precisely a mystery beyond our understanding. In discussing its nature, let us take care not to be over-curious, and not

to diminish or trivialize that which should be honoured with apophatic reticence. There is so much that we cannot express in words. “Let all mortal flesh be silent, and stand with fear and trembling” (the Liturgy of St James). This brings us to a second point. A mystery does indeed transcend our understanding, but it is at the same time something that is revealed to us, although never totally and exhaustively revealed. While reaching into the unfathomable depths of God, a mystery is also something in which we participate. This applies to the Eucharist, as to other mysteries. Without direct participation in the eucharistic mystery, without personal involvement, without active experience, all our words about the sacrament are empty and useless. St Philaret of Moscow affirmed that the creed is only ours in so far as we live it. So too with the Eucharist: it has to be lived - directly, communally, personally, practically. Invoking the term used by Byzantine commentators on the Liturgy, we

may say that there is no true “mystagogy” that is not firmly based on lived experience. Liturgical scholarship, divorced from this lived experience, is like train spotting or collecting postage stamps.

Such, then, is our double starting-point: both a sense of awe and a sense of involvement; both mystery and participation. As St Ephrem the Syrian expresses it, in words that I shall quote later in a more extended form, “a wonder set apart, yet received by our lips.”

Not “I” but “we”

“The Divine Liturgy,” we say; but what is the true meaning of this familiar term “liturgy”? The Greek word *leitourgia* is sometimes explained as signifying *ergon tou laou*, “the work of the people.” This I suspect, is dubious etymology, but it is nonetheless good theology. In classical Greek, a “liturgy” is a shared, corporate action, something done by many persons in common, something that these persons can only do in solidarity with one another, not in isolation. If, then, the Eucharist is termed “Liturgy” this signifies that it is always corporate in character. At the Divine Liturgy there are only active participants, and there are no passive spectators.

The Divine Liturgy, as a shared, corporate action, expresses in this way the true character of our human personhood. In Greek the term for “person” is *prosopon*, which means literally “face” or “countenance.” I am only a person if my face is turned towards other persons, if I look into their eyes and let them look into mine. There is, that is to say, no authentic personhood without relationship; there is no true person unless there are at least two persons in dialogue with one another. I need you in order to be myself. If such is the true significance of human personhood, then exactly when we celebrate the Divine

Liturgy we are expressing ourselves as persons-in-relation. Of all the things which we human beings do, the Divine Liturgy is the most genuinely personal.

The interpersonal spirit of the Divine Liturgy is apparent in the fact that throughout the service, except on a very few occasions, the prayers are always in the plural, not in the singular. The pronoun employed is “we” not “I.” Here the Liturgy is faithful to the spirit of the Lord's prayer, which our Saviour gave us as the model for all our discourse addressed to God. The Lord's prayer uses 'we' once, 'our' three times, 'us' five times; but nowhere does it say “me,” “mine,” or “I”.

You will remember the folk-tale included by Fedor Dostoevsky in his masterwork *The Brothers Karamazov*. Once upon a time, there was an old woman who after death awoke, much to her surprise, to find herself in a lake of fire. Seeing her guardian angel walking on the bank, she cried out that there had been some mistake. The angel tried to remember some good action from her previous life, but could only think of a single occasion: once, when working in her garden, she had given an onion to a beggar. So he took the onion and she grasped hold of the other end, and he began to pull her out of the lake of fire. But she was not the only person there; and, when the others saw what was happening, they crowded round and hung on, in the hope of being pulled out as well. This did not please the old woman. “Let go,” she cried, “it's not you who's being pulled out, it's me. It's not your onion, it's mine.” When she said, “it's mine,” the onion snapped in two, and she fell back into the lake of fire; and there, so am I told, she still is.

Such is the story that Dostoevsky tells. If only, we may add, the old woman had said, not “it's my onion,” but “it's our onion,” might not the onion have been strong enough to pull them all out of the lake of

fire? But in saying, not “it's ours,” but “it's mine,” she was denying her true nature as *proson*, as a person-in-relation, as a human being after the image of God the Holy Trinity. For the Trinity is nothing else than a mystery of mutual love; and if we repudiate this mutual love, we are also rejecting our essential identity as human persons fashioned in the trinitarian image.

[More of this article will appear in issues of *Crossroads* and the whole article will be available in the vestibule.]

The old woman, moreover, in saying “it's mine,” was being profoundly unliturgical. The Divine Liturgy, as a shared action, is supremely the occasion when we seek to share together the uncreated noetic union.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- ***OCA TOWN HALL MEETING – SATURDAY AUGUST 2 - at SS PETER AND PAUL CHURCH, SOUTH RIVER – 10 AM – 1:00.***
- ***ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING – SUNDAY AUGUST 3 after the liturgy***
- ***SO WHAT'S IT LIKE? HIGH SCHOOL – COLLEGE STUDENT GET TOGETHER – SUNDAY AUGUST 3: 5 – 7 PM.***
- ***COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – SATURDAY AUGUST 9 at 9 AM –***
- ***FALL FESTIVAL MEETING– SUNDAY AUGUST 10,***
- ***SUMMER CHURCH SCHOOL – MONDAY-FRIDAY AUGUST 11-15***
- ***INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – SUNDAY AUGUST 17, AFTER LITURGY***
- ***PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY AUGUST 20 at 7 PM***
- ***CAREGIVERS – info will be forthcoming***
- ***FIRST FRIDAY TEEN GATHERING – further info will be forthcoming***

AN OCA TOWN HALL MEETING will take place on **SATURDAY AUGUST 2 at SS Peter and Paul Church, South River, NJ from 10:00 – 1:00.** A number of parishioners have expressed interest in attending. Please let Fr John, either by phone (856-665-2491) or email (frjs@aol) if you would like to go.

WEEDS: Usually despite any dry weather we annually have problems in dealing with weeds on our church property. With our watering system now in place the problem has become worse. A sign-up sheet designating areas of concern is posted in the basement. Please consider signing up and working on your area – it can be done on whatever day or time is convenient for you. See ***Gene Dubiago*** for more info.

SO, WHAT'S IT LIKE? A GATHERING OF OUR COLLEGE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS will take place on **SUNDAY AUGUST 3 from 5-7.** We had a great session last year, allowing our college kids to describe their college experiences (at least some of them!) and our high schoolers to ask questions. Please – this is for our kids – and not interested parents!

OUR SUMMER CHURCH SCHOOL PROGRAM will take place from **Monday August 11 – Friday August 15,** ending with the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Dormition. As usual, the teens will have a separate program that will include canoeing in the Basto area. See Margaret Little or Fr. John for more info.

WEDDING BANNES: **YVETTE ABDALLAH & BRANDON WOOD** will be getting married in our parish on Sunday September 7.

ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING:

- **NEXT MEETING** – **August 3** – following the divine liturgy.
- **COFFEE HOUR - Back to the Basics** – We are asking everyone to please keep it simple when you are hosting. We greatly appreciate all that you do- but please stick to the basics. Bagels/bread/cookies/veggies/fruit – it's just to help us refuel our bodies after the fast- it's not meant to be a full meal. We don't want anyone to feel put out and or feel they have to compete. Contact **Marie Clifton (856-482-1059)** if you want to host one of those week or if there has been a change in your coffee hour. ****Special note:** we have a few parishioners that are highly allergic to nuts, please label items if possible or keep all ingredient labels if purchased. Please don't be offended if we ask you to remove certain items from the table.** As always your generous donations are greatly appreciated as they help defer the cost of the supplies for coffee hour.
- **ACME GROCERY RECEIPTS** – Remember to save your grocery receipts from **ACME only**. Place them in the little bag on the bulletin board. We do all the leg work and get "cash" back from participating ACME stores.
- **FESTIVAL PREPARATION:** August 22 & 23 – Stuffed Cabbage and September 5 & 6-Pierogies. Sign Up Sheets located in Social Room. We are asking for anyone in the church who has even an hour to help on any of these dates. If you want to make a donation, contact Kathy Bisaga (856-983-3349) or Diane Vozdovic at (609-288-6833)

ICONS PREPARED BY YVETTE ABDALLAH:

Here is my list of completed icons and those in production.

Annunciation: 13 x 17 will be varnished on Holy Friday and for sale the first of second week of May
Price: \$950, for church family: \$800

Theotokos and Jesus: 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 completed. For sale now.
Price: \$800, for church family \$700

Holy Trinity: 11 x

4th ANNUAL OCHC GOLF TOURNAMENT – See the flyer enclosed with this month's Crossroads. If you know of anyone that would be interested in playing, please pass our flyer on to them. We are also looking for sponsors and separate forms are available through **Mark Skuby or Dan Dowiak**. We will be mailing out forms to our previous sponsors, but are always looking for new ones. Last year we realized a profit of \$1145. There is room for growth with this event, contact Mark (856-802-1664) or Dan (856-234-6318) if you can offer any assistance.



**Fourth Annual
Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross
Golf Tournament**

Best Ball Format (with mulligans)!

Date: Saturday, September 13, 2008 *Tee Time:* 1:00 PM

Where: Indian Springs Golf Club *Registration:* 11:30 PM
115 South Elmwood Road - Marlton, NJ

Cost: \$95/golfer (\$380/foursome)

REGISTRATION INCLUDES:

- 18 holes of golf with cart
- lunch ticket at snack bar
- bucket of balls on driving range
- banquet dinner during awards ceremony
- entry into all tournament contests (longest drive, straightest drive, closest-to-the pin on all par 3s)

All proceeds from the tournament benefit the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Medford, NJ and our efforts to pay down the mortgage on our new facility.

-----**Please Return Bottom Portion w/ Payment by September 8, 2008**-----

Name of Golfer #1 _____

Golfers 1 & 2 will ride together.

Name of Golfer #2 _____

Name of Golfer #3 _____

Golfers 3 & 4 will ride together.

Name of Golfer #4 _____



Point of Contact for Golf Group: Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone / Email: _____

Make checks payable to *Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross*
Please send registration information and check to:
Mark Skuby – 234 Belaire Drive – Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
856-802-1664 (home) / 610-348-2132 (cell) / skubydoo81@verizon.net



Fall Festival

September 27 11:00 to 6:00

September 28 Noon to 3:00

Donations of soda are limited to the following: Coke, Diet Coke, Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Sprite, Diet Sprite, Root Beer, Bottles of Water.

Baked Goods: Donations of baked goods would also be appreciated. Popular sellers are cookies, brownies, scones, cakes, pies, muffins. Sugar free baked goodies are extremely popular. Ethnic baked goods also a plus.

We need a volunteer to coordinate the baked goods for the festival.

Basket Raffle: Donations of gift baskets are also needed. Gift cards are also welcomed. Please solicit businesses that you know for donated items or coupons. Please check out the basket board located in the parish hall for ideas of basket themes. Please see Barbara Shimchick or Diane Pasca for details.

Pick-A-Pop: We will need donations of small dollar store items for this game.

Volunteers also needed!!!!

For more information on the Fall Festival, please see Valerie Olesnovich or Liz Gibbons.

RESPONSIBILITIES for AUGUST, 2008

COFFEE HOUR

August 3: Liz Gibbons
10: Diana Pasca
17: Donna Woodhull
24: Marianne Petaccio
31: Kathy Pierman
Sept 7: Svitlana Lane & Victoria Stephens

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READERS

AUGUST 3: Julia Mosser
10: Greg Sapnar
17: Mark Skuby
24: Donald D'Ercole
31: Genie Skuby

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ALTAR SERVERS

August 3: Stephen Shimchick & Brenda Detwiler
10: Anatoly Lane & Nicholas Zanghi
17: Matthew Brook & Paul Giovanni
24: Eli Nugent & David Hamaty
31: Andrew & Paul Abdallah
Sept 7: Stephen Shimchick & Brendan Detwiler

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COMMUNION USHERS

August 3: Faye Nugent & Elisabeth Graham
10: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta
17: Sierra & Miranda McCleery
24: Faye Nugent & Christina Zanghi
31: Elisabeth Graham & Anne Marie Brook
Sept 7: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta