



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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web version

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December, 2008

***Hearing, Responding, and Bearing Witness:
An Advent Meditation***

by Scott Cairns

(Suggested readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14)

A voice says, "Cry!" And so I prepare to lift my voice to cry. But, like the holy prophet, even as I take in breath to make my cry, I wonder, "*What shall I cry?*"

I'm guessing that this must be the unceasing prayer of the prophet; it is certainly the unceasing prayer of the poet. I would suppose that very few poets turn out to be prophets, but what I gather, even so, is that the two share a common *complex of desires*; both are driven *to hear* and *to respond*; both are compelled, that is, *to witness*.

As a poet hovering over the open page, I know in my bones the ache to find the words; I know, as well, the ache of uncertainty about *which* words.

It could be that we all share these complementary desires. We want very much to apprehend God's will, and we hope to respond to it in a way that will please him.

We ache to receive and we ache to give.

Like the prophet, we would seek to comfort his people. We would speak tenderly to those of the holy city, that their warfare might come to an end, that their iniquities and our own might be pardoned. We, too, would "prepare the way of the Lord," had we any clear sense of how that might be done.

In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, we find a stunning account of the Father's compassion for the wanderer in the wilderness. Jesus asks, "If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the nine-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one?" Jesus tells us that "if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that even one of these little one should perish."

Does the answer to our puzzle wait for us here?

Is there a clue here as to what it is that we should cry?

Isaiah writes, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way." For most of us, this isn't exactly news, and it isn't exactly comforting. But Isaiah follows

this cry with another: “and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”

That the Shepherd should condescend to become one of the sheep is as appalling now as then. That the God of All should condescend to take on what was, until that moment, all-corrupted flesh is a fearful notion. That *therefore, our own bodies partake of his perfection* is what I now wish to cry aloud, and often as I may.

[Scott Cairns is Orthodox and a poet, teaching at the University of Missouri. This passage is taken from: *Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas: God with Us*. (Paraclete Press, 2007).

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – Saturday December 6 at 9:00. Vegetable Lasagna**
- **ST. HELENA’S GUILD MEETING – Sunday December 7, at 9:15.**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Wednesday December 10**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – to be announced**
- **CAREGIVERS’ MEETING – to be announced**

OUR NEW METROPOLITAN JONAH AND THE ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL by Fr. John.

Many of you followed or have now read the proceedings of our All-American Council in Pittsburgh and know the extraordinary events that took place, given an initial context of cynicism and suspicion. While much remains to be seen, we are cautiously hopeful that the selection of Metropolitan Jonah and the support provided him by the recently organized new administration will allow the OCA to move in a healthier and positive direction, one marked by “healing and accountability.”

What struck me and no doubt many others instantly on Tuesday evening, November 11 as then Bishop Jonah spoke at the end of long and frustrating day, was the sense that something “real” was taking place. Someone from our hierarchy spoke not just in spiritual and lofty platitudes, but in a way that indicated the recognition of what has been going on in the life of our Church. There was the affirmation that our Christian lives were not about ritual or the performance of religion; it was also not just about worship (which he felt represented only 5% of our time). It was not about preaching or words necessarily, but about what we do and how we treat both our neighbors and those around us. Metropolitan Jonah in that Tuesday evening talk, and then the next day in his sermon during the divine liturgy, in his banquet presentation that evening after being elected Metropolitan, and again in his sermon on Thursday morning serving during the liturgy now as Metropolitan – called us all to a life that we all recognized, but on that we had not heard about so directly or forcefully for a long time.

We want to believe that he is capable of not just using “real” words, but of leading us in real ways that can make a difference. There is a great deal of expectation placed upon him, it’s hard to imagine how he can know exactly what needs to be done so soon.

So let’s pray that he can be open and accessible to God’s will for him and our Church. Let’s pledge our desire to work with him. Let’s hope that he is the real thing.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY: As usual, we ask that everyone bring some of their favorite Christmas cookies to share as part of the fellowship.

OUR FLOOD: On Monday evening November 24 we learned that an outside sprinkler system pipe

had broken, discharging water and silt into a nearby air return duct and throughout our kitchen area and entire basement through what we discovered to be an unsealed duct. Special thanks to Paul Denko & Diana Pasca who originally discovered the problem and began taking action and to Gary Mosser and Richard Wagar who arrived soon after. We were able to call the **Mark 2 Restoration Service** immediately and their representatives brought dehumidifiers and air circulators that evening (these ran until Friday morning). A duct cleaning subcontractor came the next day and began work on the ductwork behind the kitchen. The amount of silt still remaining will require the replacement of several feet of the return duct (this was determined to be easier than trying to get all of the silt out). Otherwise, except for the replacement of the vinyl trim on the bottom of the basement wall area there was little significant damage. We may choose to repaint the basement walls at this time as well.

However, we learned from our insurance agent that our policy does not cover damages caused by external water entering the building (a special flood rider would be required). The total amount of damages has yet to be determined. We are also uncertain as to whether we have an legal options.

THE BOY SCOUT TEN COMMANDMENT HIKE: On **Friday November 28**, the **Burlington County Council of the Boys Scouts of America** stopped by our parish as part of their Annual Hike, this year through parts of Medford. The group of around 75 scouts and chaperones started at the Masonic Lodge in Medford and walked to our parish, where **Fr. John, Rev. Stephen Braddock** (Crossroads Assembly of God), and Suleman M. Shaikh, preacher from the *Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam* (community in Willingboro) spoke about 3 of the Ten Commandments.

Following the presentations, lunch (provided by the Scouting organization) was served to the group in our fellowship area. All of the work and cleanup themselves! We provided some drinks. Afterwards they walked on to the chapel of St. Mary of the Lakes school, the Quaker meeting, and the Medford Baptist Church.

Thanks to Richard Wagar for organizational help and to Gary, Barbara & Lauren Mosser and Diana Pasca for help in preparing the fellowship area.

OUR ANNUAL ADVENT VESPERS will take place on **SUNDAY EVENING DECEMBER 7**, beginning with Advent selections from our choir at 6:30. **Fr. Milorad Orlic**, from St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia will preach.

AN ADVENT WOMEN'S RETREAT: ROLE OF WOMEN IN AN ORTHODOX PARISH led by **Matushka Olga Atty** at St. Stephen's Orthodox Church, Philadelphia on **SATURDAY DECEMBER 13** from 9:00 – 3:00. Please contact Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk at 215-745-3232 , registration: \$10.00

See the flyer on the bulletin board downstairs.

OUR ADULT EDUCATION CURRICULUM, Upon completion of the Bible Study currently taking place, the class will be reading *Christ in the Psalms* by Fr. Patrick Reardon. Copies are available from Bob Flanagan.

MARY MCLAUGHLIN has moved to the home of her son, George. Her new address is:

35 Barry Dr.
Mantua, NJ 08051
(856) 464-9342

CAROLING: We would like to visit shutins on **SATURDAY DECEMBER 28**, from late morning until around Vespers time 5 PM. Please contact **Josef Gulka** if you are interested.

The Most Eco-Friendly? One Viewpoint

by Julia Mosser

Styrofoam. Paper. Plastic. In today's "green" world, people never seem to know which one is the most eco-friendly thing to use. Different people have their own opinions on which is best: Paper degrades the best; plastic can be chopped up and used for other things; Styrofoam has the least amount of emissions into the environment. Well, the time has come to set the records straight.

In November of 2006, a *Univeristy of California San Diego Senior Seminar* was held regarding the topic of paper, plastic or Styrofoam. At the seminar, reusability, chemicals produced during production, and maintenance were all taken in to account to figure which was best. Blowing everybody out of the water, they chose *Styrofoam* as the winner. While some were genuinely surprised, the reasons behind the decision make sense: Even though Styrofoam takes about 20,000 years to degrade, it doesn't emit harmful chemicals into the air, when it's being made, production is less harmful to the environment than paper and plastic, and it's less expensive to buy.

But, some people would say that using mugs at coffee hour and just washing them off after is better. A study showed that compared to the amount of water, soap and chemicals used to clean the mugs, Styrofoam was still better. So, it would appear at Holy Cross, we're doing the right thing by using Styrofoam. Of course, a mix of all cups would be the ideal situation. But, with our resources and time, Styrofoam is the best.

PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES: The Meeting for November was cancelled and will take place on Wednesday December 10 at 7 PM.

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Beloved Lover of humankind,

Softener of our hearts so that we too may have compassion for those who suffer,

So that we too may give gladly of our time and treasure to those in need.

May nothing we do be done in strife, but in confidence and in peace.

May nothing we do be done in foolish pride, but in lowliness of mind let us esteem others as greater than ourselves.

May we esteem the needs of others as greater than our own.

May we look with kindness and compassion upon their burdens.

May our hearts become as tender wombs prepared to receive your grace, that in due time may bring forth the joyful fruit of your Spirit.

May this mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus: That being God he made himself impoverished, and took upon himself the form of a servant,

humbled himself, and was obedient unto death –

yet a death that has brought all to life.

May we suspect our own power to say yes to whatever our God asks of us.

We ask this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

- Scott Cairns

**BE PART OF OUR
2008
PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD!**

Your names and donation can be left at the church office or sent to:

**Wally Loza
229 Boxwood Lane
Cinnaminson, NJ 08077
(856) 829-9511**

Deadline: December 14, 2008

**Parish Christmas Card 2008
Please print clearly**

Name(s): _____

Phone: _____

Donation: _____