



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

11 Wilkins Station Road - Box 805 - Medford, NJ 08055
web version

Rectory Phone: 856-665-2491

Fr. John's Cell Phone: 609-315-2894

Email: frjs@aol.com / Website: www.holycrossmedford.org

January, 2009

Developing a Scriptural Mind

by Fr. John

How could, should, or do we read the Bible? I frequently talk with people and think to myself about why and how we should be reading the Bible – and I've concluded that there is no easy answer. Some people say that they just open it up to some random place and read for a while. Historically, we know that this method has actually worked for some people. St. Augustine in his autobiography, *The Confessions*, recalls hearing a child chanting over and over the words, "take and read." He opened a bible only to find these words: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:13-14). He was never the same again. Others just come to church and hear the "right" words. St. Anthony the father of monastics entered a church and heard the words from the Gospel of St. Matthew: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (19:21). He did just that, sold his belongings and went out and lived in the desert. There are times when a particular passage is given at just the time we need or are able to hear it, and we can find ourselves likewise – never the same again.!

But other times reading the Bible comes as more of an effort, and a difficult one at that. If we're honest – and I know this feeling myself at times – we don't know what to do, where to begin. All we know is that our past efforts have been less than satisfying, so we stop completely. Should we just start at the beginning of the Bible and try to read all the way through, or maybe the just the New Testament. Should we try rather just to read the daily passages assigned in the liturgical calendar we receive? For some, this may be all they are able to do. But sometimes many have observed that while this is better than not reading the Scriptures at all, it can be less than satisfying. Often the texts seem to begin and end with no context, with disconnected sections appearing in unclear ways. Sometimes we just aren't sure how we are supposed to understand certain texts – this is particularly true if we find ourselves working through passages

of the Old Testament.

Recently being involved in such an effort in reading I came across this observation by Walter Brueggemann, it is “clear that this text is not only about itself, as Israel’s texts never are; it insists on making contact with other texts. The narrative invites reflection on the way in which this believing literature requires reference to other texts.” Modern theorists about language, literature, and culture speak of the way that the meaning of a text is shaped by other texts as “*intertextuality*” and it has all kinds of technical implications. But for Christians, especially the Orthodox, this is the way we’ve actually been taught by the Church Fathers to think about the Scriptures, especially as developed through liturgical, sacramental, and spiritual texts. We are meant to read the Bible not as a series of independent passages or in a way that just gathers proof texts by which to defend ourselves or our Faith. Rather, we are to read in a “holistic” way, considering that “the narrative of the Bible is a continuous, deeply connected story from Genesis through Revelation” (Christopher Hall).

Reading in such a way, acquiring a “scriptural mind” that seeks to hear words, images, concepts in broader, interconnected ways – realized in the person of Jesus Christ - would, I am convinced, not only change how we read the Bible, but how we understand and participate in our liturgical life, and how we might acquire a richer, more experienced-based praying language.

While this is what I hope to focus on throughout this new year it is precisely the motive behind our Adult Class’s study of *Christ in the Psalms*, reflecting on how individual Psalms are used consistently in our worship and prayer life. We will be focusing particularly during Great Lent on how the Old Testament provides the essential stories and imagery that prepare us for the saving work of Christ’s death and resurrection. As we shall see, it will be not just a study to see how the old has led to the new, but how looking from the perspective of the new – from the position of the new life provided by the Resurrection of Jesus, everything else finds its place and is held together. This is what we will explore together.

For those interested in resources for this study, go to:

- Ancient Faith Radio (<http://ancientfaith.com>)
- Biblegateway (www.biblegateway.org – wonderful for Scriptural word searches and for checking various translations).

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – Saturday January 10 at 9:00.**
- **ST. HELENA’S GUILD MEETING – Sunday January 3, at 9:15.**
- **TEENS BOWLING PARTY - Friday January 16**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Wednesday January 21**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING –**
- **CAREGIVERS’ MEETING – Thursday January 29, at 7 PM**

PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD: We are grateful for the generosity of those who participated in our Christmas Card project which received donations of nearly \$1,000.00. Special thanks to

the coordinator, Wally Loza, to our design team of Greg & Maureen Sapnar, Lee Ann Detwiler, and to Diane Vozdovic for her efforts in mailing the cards.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at OCHC for their hard work this past year. We had several successful fund-raisers and, were able to help many people in the Orthodox Community as well as people in the surrounding towns. I would also like to thank you all for your generous donations to the Church throughout the year. I know these are hard economic times we all face which make your donations even more appreciated. I would like to assure you that the Parish Council is doing everything in its power to keep expenses down, and to use our donations wisely. We are reviewing insurance policies, talking to vendors about better rates for services, and canceling un-needed services.

However, our Parish does face an immediate challenge. As most of you know, our Church sustained water damage in November from a pipe that broke. The original bill from *Mark1*, the water remediation contractor, was \$9,600.00. Father John, Richard Wagar and I were able to negotiate the bill down to \$7,600.00. Also, we had a contractor in to repair the actual damage caused by the water, at a cost of \$1,350.00. So, we have a bill of roughly \$9,000.00 to pay. Insurance did not cover the water damage because the water came in from outside, and is considered flood damage. We do not have flood insurance but we are talking to our insurance agent about it.

We will be mailing out an appeal in January to each Parishioner asking for donations towards these bills. Some of you have already donated money to this, and for that we thank you for your generosity. Any amount that you can donate to this cause would be greatly appreciated. With everyone's help, I'm sure we will make it through this difficult time.

Once again, thank you all for your support throughout the year, making OCHC, a wonderful place to worship. I would like to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

Thank you for your help,

Gary Mosser
Warden, OCHC

FROM CHRISTINA SEMON:

Dear Fr John & Parishioners:

With great rejoicing, we have received Christ on earth!

We have done it! You are among the first to know that my OCMC missionary budget is full funded and pleasing to God. Thank you for your generous participation because that is what made this mission service physically possible.

Thank you, God, for your compassion and spark of fire within our open hearts to glorify You in our lives!

Glory to God!

Christina Semon

Note: Christina Semon, who visited our parish in November, 2008, will leaving soon to begin her missionary efforts in Romania. To follow more of her story and to learn about the work of OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center, go to: www.ocmc.org)

TEENS BOWLING PARTY, FRIDAY JANUARY 16: See **Tim Rommen** for more information.

CAREGIVERS: The next caregivers meeting will be Thursday night, Jan. 29 at 7 p.m. Anyone interested should call Genie Skuby at 802-1664 to RSVP. ideas for location and topic are welcome!

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.

PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES SUMMARY: *from the 12-10-08 Parish Council Meeting*

The Meeting convened with the singing of “O Heavenly King.” The monthly financial report was presented by our Treasurer Richard Wagar, and indicated that income for the OCA assessment is under budget. Capitol improvements have also not been funded. Profit for the Fall Festival was reported to be \$6,713.80. The financial report was approved.

Bob Flanagan expressed concern about the parish finances, and advised the Council to address this issue as soon as possible. A discussion followed and it was agreed that this problem is not caused by parish expenses, but instead is caused by parish income. Parish income is consistently under budget, and this problem is attributed to a decrease in regular church attendance and declining membership. Ideas for increasing church membership were discussed, and will be discussed more in future meetings.

Father John reported that Metropolitan Jonah will be enthroned on December 28th 2008. Our Parish received a letter from our Diocesan Chancellor, Fr Joseph Lickwar, requesting every church in our diocese to make a \$200.00 dollar contribution toward a new panagia as a gift for Metropolitan Jonah. It was agreed to have a special church collection for this purpose.

Now that the street repair to Wilkins Station road is complete, the requirements for the performance bond have been satisfied. However, Medford is now requiring our Church to pay a retainer for a maintenance bond. Our Parish Warden Gary Mosser, sent a letter to Medford asking them to waive this requirement. We have occupied our facility for more than four years, have made many improvements, and have maintained our property well; therefore the maintenance bond seems unnecessary. Gary is waiting for a response from Medford.

We are looking for a snow removal contractor and Gary Mosser is investigating cost. If anyone knows a good snow removal contractor, please contact Gary Mosser or anyone on the

Parish Council.

Five new exterior benches made from recycled plastic were delivered to our church recently and appear to be strong, durable and aesthetically pleasing.

An exterior water pipe broke in early December and caused a flood in our basement. Mud and other debris also entered our basement through an illicit and concealed opening through the basement wall, apparently left open by the original building contractor. Mud also accumulated in an air duct. A contractor was hired to clean up the mess and repair damages. The contractor submitted their bill to Holy Cross; however their bill was more expensive than anticipated. Gary Mosser and Father John are negotiating with the contractor to reduce the bill. Painting is required in some areas of the basement because of water damage; and we will do the painting ourselves to save \$1,900.00. A letter will be sent to our parishioners asking for donations to help pay these costs.

On November 30th, Christina Semon, an IOCC missionary, visited Holy Cross and spoke during the Divine Liturgy. \$964.00 was collected from our parish on Christina's behalf. Our church will send Christina a check for \$1,000.00. The parish choir will make up the difference. We are very grateful to our parishioners and Holy Cross Choir for their generosity. Also, Saint Helena's Guild donated \$1,000.00 to Holy Cross and \$100.00 to the Inreach/Outreach committee. We are very thankful to Saint Helen's Guild for their continued hard work and generosity.

Paul Denko's wife, Mary, shampooed the carpets at Holy Cross as a gift to our Parrish. The carpets look really great. We are very thankful, and it was agreed to pay for her materials costs and give her a gift in appreciation of her hard work.

+++++

Reading the Bible Holistically

The fathers insist that the narrative of the Bible is a continuous, deeply connected story from Genesis through Revelation. The Old Testament is not discontinuous with the New. Rather, the themes presented in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in the narrative structure of the New Testament. Continuity and fulfillment characterize the entire story. Most importantly, the fathers insist that the biblical narrative reaches its culmination, its thematic climax, with the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God. Indeed, the incarnational, soteriological and eschatological foci of the New Testament further clarify and deepen the Old Testament witness itself. We will read the Bible ineffectively and incorrectly, the fathers warn, if we fail to read the individual parts in the light of its overarching, unifying message. Echoing this sentiment, Robert W. Jenson asserts that:

All Scripture's detours and extensions and varieties of literary genre are to be read as moves Within the telling of a single story. Therefore, for example, the single most important task of the Preacher working on a parable-text is to ask what it means that *Jesus* told this parable, and that The one who told this parable is the risen Lord of all, and that it was *Israel* who heard and believed or did not believe, and that it is the *church* that retells it. (Christopher Hall)

2009 HOUSE BLESSING SCHEDULE

As has been the usual practice, Fr. John will assume that he will be visiting all parishioners. If, for any reason, someone would not like their home to be visited please give him a call or leave a message in the church office.

Each home will be called in advance and those who are home during the day may be called on a different day. Homes not included in the general areas listed below will be contacted to set up a time.

- January 6-8: Cherry Hill / Maple Shade / Pennsauken / Somerdale
- 9: Haddonfield/Deptford/Collingswood
- 10-11: Medford/Tabernacle
- 12-13: Marlton/Mt. Laurel
- 14: Cinnaminson / Delran
- 15: Moorestown
- 17: Elm/Folsom/Atco
- 18: Willingboro/Burlington
- 19: Leisuretown
- 20 - Makeup
- 21: Make up

Here are some ways of preparing for the blessing of your home:

- * Set aside a place for the service (usually a table in the dining room or kitchen).
- * On the table place an icon, a candle, a bowl for Holy Water, and a list of the names to be remembered - divided into two lists, living and departed.
- * A person holding the candle may lead Fr. John throughout the home.

TROPARION

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You
and called You His beloved Son.
And the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ, our God, who have revealed Yourself
and have enlightened the world, glory to You.

RESPONSIBILITIES for January, 2009

COFFEE HOUR:

January 4: Maureen Sapnar
11: Barbara Mosser & Nellie Kuzmenchuk
18: Bonnie & Bob Flanagan
25: Jessica Siragusa

READERS

January 4: Greg Sapnar
January 11: Gene Dubiago
18: Diana Pasca
25: Julia Mosser
February 1: Mark Skuby

.

ALTAR SERVERS

January 11: Eli Nugent & Paul Abdallah
18: David Hamaty & Brendan Detwiler
25: Leo Weismantel & Stephen Shimchick
February 1: Andrew Abdallah & Paul Clifton

COMMUNION USHERS

January 4: Kristina Zanghi & Faye Nugent
11: Julia & Lauren Mosser
18: Sierra & Miranda McCleery
25: Natalia Rommen & Elisabeth Graham
February 1: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta