



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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Orthodoxy Is Not a Religion of Fear

from Fr. John

In a recently posted interview Sister Vassa Larin, an Orthodox nun, responded to a question of what Orthodox Christians could learn from non-Orthodox teachers in the following way:

Let me first comment on the fear of the non-Orthodox that appears to have inspired the comment of our clergyman. It seems that some of our faithful experience Orthodoxy first and foremost as fear, while their faith remains largely uninspired, uncurious, and hence uninformed. Such an Orthodoxy often has no idea about its own tradition, about the wealth of history behind the liturgy one attends every Sunday, or even about scripture itself. At the same time, a fearful Orthodox is often willing to spend hours in the Internet, feeding on church politics and dulling the theological senses all the more. To such a culture of ignorance and fear, even the most brilliant non-Orthodox scholars of our Byzantine liturgy are seen as threats, rather than a humbling admonishment to our own negligence of Orthodox tradition.

The context of the question directed to Sister Vassa had to do with her own training in liturgical studies under a foremost Roman Catholic scholar. But what particularly interested me was the suggestion that Orthodox Christians might at times approach their own faith in a fearful, insecure, threatened kind of way. The result is a faith that seems to reach an impasse or even a wall, a faith that ceases to grow and so “remains largely uninspired, uncurious, and hence uninformed.” This can often be the situation that particularly those raised in the Orthodox Church can find themselves, but it can happen to anyone. She continues: “Such an Orthodoxy often has no idea about its own tradition, about the wealth of history behind the liturgy one attends every Sunday, or even about the scripture itself.”

It might be that one concludes not only that there is nothing a non-Orthodox scholar and even just a Christian can teach me, but also that there is nothing more that I even need to learn about

my faith. We can become satisfied. But beyond that, one may even come to believe that learning more might upset, challenge, or confront what I have come to believe and the level of the commitment I have chosen to make towards God, the Church, and my own spiritual life. So anything new or more becomes a threat to the stability I have come to accept and, therefore, something to be avoided and even feared.

But what a way to live? Is Orthodoxy really afraid of the world and are we as Christians afraid to learn more and to grow, afraid of what might happen to us, afraid of where we might end up? The same kind of challenges can confront us anytime we proceed more deeply in any kind of relationship, especially those that require love and commitment: we can be afraid of extending ourselves too far, afraid of getting hurt, afraid of being misled or betrayed, afraid of where we might end up.

So, it becomes not just a question of whether we can learn from those who are not like us, but if we are willing to be surprised, to be amazed, to wonder, and to grow in “life and faith and spiritual understanding.” Orthodoxy is not about instigating fear as a way of controlling our minds or habits. Orthodoxy does not inspire us to condemn all that which is around us, to simply say “no,” but from the deepest resources of our Tradition to acknowledge that which is good, true, and beautiful.

As we approach the last few weeks of the Paschal season (trying to hang on to the context of those images and expressions that will be imbedded in our liturgical life and language throughout the year), let us celebrate, be given strength and courage, and be illumined by the faith that “shines in the darkness” – and not be afraid.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – Saturday May 2 at 9:00.**
- **ST. HELENA’S GUILD MEETING – Sunday May 2 at 9:15.**
- **“OPEN PROSKOMEDIA” – Sunday May 17, at 9:30 AM, before the Liturgy**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING/2ND HALF OF YEAR SCHEDULING SESSION – Sunday May 17, after the Liturgy**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – Monday May 18 at 7 PM.**
- **SUMMER LITURGY SCHEDULE WILL BEGIN ON SUNDAY JUNE 7.**
- **PARISH PICNIC – Sunday June 14**

“OPEN PROSKOMEDIA” on **Sunday May 17** at 9:30. Fr. John will show how the preparation of the liturgy takes place, preparing the bread and wine on the center table.

LAST DAY OF CHURCH SCHOOL – WILL BE SUNDAY MAY 24.

SUMMER SCHEDULE WILL BEGIN ON SUNDAY JUNE 7 (PENTECOST) with the Divine Liturgy beginning at **9:00**.

ADDRESS FOR MARY SHIMCHICK:

18 McKinley Dr.
New Britain, CT 06053

PARISH GRADUATES:

- **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES:** Ethan Detwiler & Matthew Brook
- **COLLEGE GRADUATES:** Nicole Burns & David Petaccio

PARISH PICNIC – will be held on SUNDAY JUNE 14, at our church, following the Divine Liturgy. More info will be forthcoming.

A NEW APPROACH TO LAWN CARE: The *Parish Council*, given the difficulty in coordinating parishioner support in providing weekly lawn mowing, has decided to hire *Joe Drayton*, a local landscaper to do this work: it will cost \$75.00 a week. Given that this expense has not been budgeted and that there are other areas of landscaping that the Council is considering we would be grateful if those who are able may be willing to consider some additional donations that would be directed towards this effort.

ST. HELENA’S GUILD: St. Helena's Guild will be having a church **Yard Sale Saturday, June 13** so start cleaning out those closets, attics and cellars. This will be a "bring it; take it" yard sale meaning that unsold items must be taken back by the person who brought the items. Should anything be left, it will either be discarded or donated to a charity. The teens and/or other Sunday school groups are welcome to participate that day with a car wash or other event with monies staying within the group for future 'fun' outings. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING ITEMS TO THE CHURCH UNTIL THE DAY OF THE YARD SALE.**

PLEASE NOTE: THERE ARE SOME OPEN DATES FOR COFFEE HOUR. PLEASE CALL DIANE V. AT 609-288-6833 OR MARIE C. AT 856-482-1059 TO AD YOUR NAME TO THE ONCE-A-YEAR HOSTESS/HOST LIST.

SUMMARY OF THE April 29, 2009 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:

A number of landscape and site maintenance issues were discussed. These included: difficulties in getting the grass mowed weekly, over-grown weeds in the stone beds and other areas, and ruts in our lawn that were left by construction vehicles from the adjacent property. Gary Mosser will consult with a local landscape contractor regarding these problems and the feasibility of utilizing his services. Large cracks have also developed in the asphalt paving on our driveway. Gary will contact the original paving contractor to discuss the problem. Water damaged hardy planks (siding) have been observed on the church exterior in areas where it was placed directly on the concrete surface without appropriate flashing. In these places the planks have absorbed water and started to deteriorate. A bid for this repair work was received from Don Matlack (who did much of the elevator shaft preparation) and approved.

The on-going problem of irregular church attendance was discussed. Attrition over the long term has taken a toll on church attendance, and it was agreed that our congregation needs to grow to offset these losses. Better advertisement is required to promote growth, and several ideas were discussed, such as advertising Lenten and Easter services, and getting involved with local volunteer groups to increase our presence within our community.

In an effort to help in producing and updating our church records, as well as allowing us to pay bills online, an internet connection was completed at Holy Cross. Richard Wagar recently donated a computer to Holy Cross, and we thank Richard for his generous contribution. The church school is planning a hoagie sale and soup sale. The hoagies will be pre-sold during May and delivered to customers at our church on May 31st. The soup sale will occur this fall. The church school is also planning a summer school for the children. Details will be announced.

RESPONSIBILITIES for May, 2009

COFFEE HOUR:

May 3: Leslie Lane
10: Men of the Parish for Mother's Day
17: Ela Plachuta
24: Andrea Burns
31:

ALTAR SERVERS

May 3: Leo Weismantel & Stephan Shimchick
10 Anatoly Lane & Eli Nugent
17: Andrew Abdallah & Paul Clifton
24: Paul Abdallah & Paul Giovanni
31: David Hamaty & Brendan Detwiler

READERS

May 3: Gene Dubiago
10 Gary Mosser
17: Nataalka Weismantel
24: Don Dercole
31: Genie Skuby

COMMUNION USHERS

May 3: Sierra & Miranda McCleery
10: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta
17: Kristina Zanghi & Faye Nugent
24: Lauren Mosser & Natalia Rommen
31: Sierra & Miranda McCleery