

The Arena



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The Newsletter of
SAINT KATHERINE THE GREAT MARTYR MISSION
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA
138 5th Avenue Kirkland, WA 98033
(425) 889 4558 info@stkatherine.org
Editor: Emily Lorelli ekslorelli@gmail.com

PASTOR'S COLUMN

by Father John Strickland

With the beginning of the liturgical new year our parish has now resumed the celebration of the Resurrectional Vigil on Saturday evenings. This service, a combination of Great Vespers and Matins, is part of the present-day liturgical tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church and other Orthodox Churches (such as the OCA) that have been influenced by

her (the Greeks and Antiochians serve the two services separately). It is, however, a part of the Church's earliest liturgical tradition, being shaped by fourth-century worship in Jerusalem at the Temple of the Resurrection (known in the west as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher). We know this because a female pilgrim named Egeria, probably from what is today Spain or France, traveled to Palestine in the 380s and recorded her experiences in a memoir. (Among the other holy sites she visited was Saint Katherine Monastery on Mount Sinai in Egypt). Her detailed description of ancient Christian worship, though only rediscovered in modern times, is fascinating to read.

It was written at a time during which the Orthodox Church was growing dramatically in numbers, despite the continued influence of paganism within the surrounding culture. This was, in fact, just a half-century (about as far away in time as World War II is in our experience) after the conversion of Emperor Constantine, the legalization of Christianity, the founding of Constantinople, and the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea.

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Among those momentous events, Constantine's mother Saint Helen had made her own famous pilgrimage to Palestine and had discovered there the True Cross and the place where Christ had been buried and raised, where she built the Temple of the Resurrection, known in Greek as the Anastasis.

This is where, a generation or two later, Egeria witnessed the Resurrectional Vigil that so many millions of Orthodox Christians have been celebrating in the darkness of Saturday evening ever since. And as in the twenty-first century, so in the fourth the experience was nothing short of Paschal. "Before cockcrow on the Lord's Day," she wrote,

the whole multitude assembles in as great numbers as the place can hold, as at Pascha, in the basilica which is near the Anastasis. . . . Now as soon as the first cock has crowed, the bishop arrives and enters the tomb at the Anastasis; all the doors are opened and the whole multitude enters the Anastasis, where countless lights are already burning. And when the people have entered, one of the priests says a psalm to which all respond, and afterwards prayer is made; then one of the deacons says a psalm and prayer is again made, a third psalm is said by one of the clergy, prayer is made for the third time and there is a commemoration of all. After these three psalms and three prayers are ended, Lo! Censers are brought into the cave of the Anastasis so that the whole basilica of the Anastasis is filled with fragrance. And then the bishop, standing within the rails, takes the book of the Gospel, and proceeding to the door, himself reads [a passage proclaiming] the Resurrection of the Lord. And when the reading is begun, there is are such heartfelt sobs and cries among all, with so many tears, that the hardest of heart might be moved to tears for that the Lord had borne such things for us. After the reading of the Gospel the bishop goes out, and is accompanied to the Cross by all the people with hymns, there again a psalm is said and prayer is made, after which he blesses the faithful and the dismissal takes place, and as he comes out all approach to his hand. . . . But of the lay people, whether men or women, those who are so minded, remain in the place until daybreak [when the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated], and those who are not, return to their houses and betake themselves to sleep.

We might pause here and consider how many elements of fourth-century worship are found in our customs today (such as the use of incense, the burning of lamps, and the blessing of the faithful by the clergy).

But the central experience of the Resurrectional Vigil has always been the Gospel message, proclaimed victoriously from the Tomb of our Lord (which the Altar Table in all Orthodox temples symbolizes), that Christ is risen. And this proclamation, surrounded by the numerous resurrectional hymns sung throughout the evening, can in turn be seen as the central

liturgical event in the Church's preparation for the Lord's Day and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on it.

So, as our small parish continues to participate in this beautiful tradition, let us use it as an opportunity to bring the joy of Christ's Resurrection into our lives on a weekly basis. And as we do so, let us also recognize that not every one of us will be able to attend the Vigil in all its fullness on every occasion it is offered. Even in Egeria's time there were clearly some who departed before others. Those parishioners whose circumstances prevent them from being present at the entire Vigil do not need to feel compelled to stay for the entire service (which lasts about one hour and forty-five minutes). Appropriate times to depart include the blessing that brings Great Vespers to a conclusion, the completion of the Gospel reading, or the veneration of the Gospel and blessing by the priest that occurs during the Resurrectional Canon. But whatever practice one decides to follow, the goal should be to resolve to seek in some way the blessings brought to us and so many past generations of Christians by the Resurrectional Vigil.

1 PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

October 1: Protection of the Holy Theotokos

October 2: Orthodox Parents Night at Seattle Pacific University, 7:00 pm

October 4: Catechesis I: Orthodox Christianity: The Pearl of Great Price, 4:00 pm

October 5: Eve of Saint Thomas: Great Vespers at Saint Thomas Antiochian Church, Snohomish, 6:30 pm

October 6: Holy Apostle Thomas:
Orthros (8:00 am) and Divine Liturgy (9:00 am) at Saint Thomas

October 7-9: Diocesan Assembly in Milwaukee, Oregon (no Inquirer Course)

October 11: Charity Committee meeting, 5:00 pm

October 15: Parish Council meeting, 7:00 pm

October 16: Bible Study: Reflections of the Sunday Gospels I, 7:00 pm

October 18: Catechesis II: Why We Worship, 4:00 pm

October 23: Inquirer Course: The Age of the Great Schism, 7:00 pm

October 26: Great Martyr Demetrios
Divine Liturgy at Saint Demetrios Greek Church (TBA)

October 30: Bible Study: Reflections on the Sunday Gospels II, 7:00 pm

Coming in November

All-American Council (11/10-11/13)

Beginning of Nativity Fast (11/15)

Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (11/21)

Parish Altar Feast: Great Martyr Katherine (11/24)

Thanksgiving Day: Molebin of Thanksgiving (11/27)

IOCC ANNUAL PAN ORTHODOX VESPERS AND BANQUET SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2008

The local Metropolitan Committee for International Orthodox Christian Charities ("IOCC") has scheduled its annual event for Saturday, November 22, 2008, at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption located at 1804 13th Avenue in Seattle, Washington. Pan Orthodox Vespers will be at 5:30 p.m. with responses sung by the choir of the Saint Spiridon Orthodox Cathedral. A dinner and program will follow. The special honored guest will be His Grace Bishop Irinej, bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand. Bishop Irinej has been active in IOCC since its inception. For more information and to make prepaid reservations, please contact your local IOCC representatives): [Emily Stchur](#).

Please plan to attend this special event on the Saturday before Thanksgiving to give thanks for all that has been bestowed upon us and to help our brothers and sisters in need. IOCC was founded in 1992 as the official humanitarian aid agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in Americas (SCOBA) and has implemented over \$275 million in relief and development programs in 33 countries around the world.

CATECHETICAL CHALLENGES (Our Catechumens can answer them. Can you?)

- From what yearly feast do we take the hymn known as the Evlogetaria ("Blessed are thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes"), sung at Sunday Matins? (Hint: It is not a coincidence that the hymn is sung as we prepare to hear the Resurrectional Gospel).
- Which Ecumenical Council declared that Christ possesses two natures, one divine and one human?
- Where did Saint Tikhon the Confessor (commemorated on October 9) serve as a missionary before being elected Patriarch of Moscow?

Answers for September

- Paul preaches "Christ crucified" in I Corinthians 1:23, which is part of the Epistle reading for the Elevation of the Cross on September 14.
- The *Didache* is the late first-century or early second-century source states in a matter of fact way that Christians fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Psalms 134-135 provide the text for our hymn known as the Polyeleos, which is sung at every Festal Vigil and Resurrectional Vigil.

✝ THE LITTLE CHURCH

by Patty Rebne

"The Little Church" means to give our parish practical encouragement in bringing the Church home. I don't have the answers—I have a lot of questions! If you have topics you would like to read about, or suggestions for the "answers", send them along. I will include them in the next column. My email address is patty.r@comcast.net.

Last month, we looked at how we can use holy water and holy oil at home. This month, a reader asked a question related to both private and public worship: "Why do we light candles when we pray? I know it is beautiful, but is there some theological reason?" This response is entirely mine, and while it is not completely uninformed, I am sure it is incomplete, and I am sure I have as much to learn as anyone.

We light candles because they are a gift of beauty we give to God. We purchase the candles in a small sacrifice reminiscent of the widow's two mites, and then we offer the gift of a beautiful burning candle back to God. We take what He has given us (the two mites) and give it back in beauty of sight and smell. The fact that it is a gift of beauty is enough in its own right, without further symbolism needed.

We can draw symbolic meaning from the burning candle, as well. The flame reminds us of the light of the world, Christ, Who is our Light, Who brings illumination and beauty to the world. Now that summer is over and the sun is setting earlier, the candles are even more illuminating during Vigil. It occurred to me a couple of weeks ago that the candles in the sand boxes were askew, uneven in height and spacing. Imperfect. And so are we all—imperfect; sometimes askew. But united in prayer, beautiful.

In addition to light, a flame also gives warmth. So does the fellowship of those who pray with us—the Saints, and our family members and fellow parishioners. When I see the candles burning by the icons, I remember that my brothers and sisters have lit them as part of their prayers. I usually do not know the specific nature of the prayers, but I am reminded to join with them in bringing our worship and prayers to God.

The candle burns for more than an hour. When I stand in front of an icon, I pray for a few moments, but the lighted candle continues to remind me that God has heard—hears—my prayer.

Those are some of the reasons I could think of for lighting a candle when I pray, and why both the giver and the Receiver are blessed.

Next month, The Little Church will take a look at this question: "I received a piece of cotton that was used to capture myrrh from a myrrh-streaming icon. What is the best way to preserve this myrrh-soaked cotton for display?"

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

October 1st:

Saint Romanus the Melodist

Saint Romanus the Melodist was born in the fifth century in the Syrian city of Emesa of Jewish parents. After moving to Constantinople, he became a church sacristan in the temple of Hagia

Sophia. The monk spent his nights alone at prayer in a field or in the Blachernae church beyond the city.

St Romanus was not a talented reader or singer. Once, on the eve of the Nativity of Christ, he read the kathisma verses. He read so poorly that another reader had to take his place. The clergy ridiculed Romanus, which devastated him.

On the day of the Nativity, the Mother of God appeared to the grief-stricken youth in a vision while he was praying before her Kyriotissa icon. She gave him a scroll and commanded him to eat it. Thus was he given the gift of understanding, composition, and hymnography.

That evening at the all-night Vigil St Romanus sang, in a wondrous voice, his first Kontakion: "Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One..." All the hymns of St Romanus became known as kontakia, in reference to the Virgin's scroll. St Romanus was also the first to write in the form of the Oikos, which he incorporated into the all-night Vigil at his places of residence (In Greek, "oikos").

For his zealous service St Romanus was ordained as a deacon and became a teacher of song. Until his death, which occurred about the year 556, the hierodeacon Romanus the Melodist composed nearly a thousand hymns, many of which are still used by Christians to glorify the Lord. About eighty survive.

Troparion - Tone 4

You gladdened Christ's Church by your melodies
like an inspired heavenly trumpet.

You were enlightened by the Mother of God
and shone on the world as God's poet.

We lovingly honor you, righteous Romanus.

Kontakion - Tone 8

You were adorned from childhood with the godly virtues of the Spirit;
you were a precious adornment of the Church of Christ, all-wise Romanus,
for you made it lovely with beautiful hymnody.

Therefore, we entreat you, grant your divine gift to those who desire it,
that we may cry out to you: "Rejoice, all-blessed Father, beauty of the Church."



**Sermon on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary
by Saint Andrew, Archbishop of Crete**

The present Feast is for us the beginning of feasts. Serving as boundary to the law and to prototypes, at the same time it serves as a doorway to grace and truth. "For Christ is the end of the law" (*Rom 10:4*), Who, having freed us from the letter (of the law), raises us to spirit.

Here is the end (to the law): in that the Lawgiver, having made everything, has changed the letter in spirit and gathers everything in Himself (*Eph 1:10*), enlivening the law with grace: grace has taken the law under its dominion, and the law has become subjected to grace, so that the properties of the law not suffer reciprocal commingling, but only so that by Divine power, the servile and subservient (in the law) are transformed into the light and free (in grace), so that we are not "in bondage to the elements of the world" (*Gal 4:3*) and not in a condition under the slavish yoke of the letter of the law.

Here is the summit of Christ's beneficence towards us! Here are the mysteries of revelation! Here is the theosis [divinization] assumed upon humankind, the fruition worked out by the God-Man.

The radiant and bright descent of God for people ought to have a joyous basis, opening to us the great gift of salvation. Such also is the present feastday, having as its basis the Nativity of the Theotokos, and as its purpose and end, the uniting of the Word with flesh, this most glorious of all miracles, unceasingly proclaimed, immeasurable and incomprehensible.

The less comprehensible it is, the more it is revealed; and the more it is revealed, the less comprehensible it is. Therefore the present God-graced day, the first of our feastdays, showing forth the light of virginity and the crown woven from the unfading blossoms of the spiritual garden of Scripture, offers creatures a common joy.

Be of good cheer, it says, behold, this is the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin and of the renewal of the human race! The Virgin is born, She grows and is raised up and prepares Herself to be the Mother of the All-Sovereign God of the ages. All this, with the assistance of David, makes it for us an object of spiritual contemplation. The Theotokos manifests to us Her God-bestown Birth, and David points to the blessedness of the human race and wondrous kinship of God with mankind.

And so, truly one ought to celebrate the mystery today and to offer to the Mother of God a word by way of gift: since nothing is so pleasing to Her as a word and praise by word. It is from here also that we receive a twofold benefit: first, we enter into the region of truth, and second, we emerge

from the captivity and slavery of the written law. How so? Obviously, when darkness vanishes, then light appears; so also here: after the law follows the freedom of grace.

The present day solemnity is a line of demarcation, separating the truth from its prefigurative symbol, and ushering in the new in place of the old. Paul, that Divine Trumpet of the Spirit, exclaims about this: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things pass away and behold, all things have become new (2 Cor 5:17); for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw near to God" (Heb 7:19). The truth of grace has shown forth brightly.

Let there now be one common festal celebration in both heaven and on earth. Let everything now celebrate, that which is in the world and that beyond the world. Now is made the created temple for the Creator of all; and creation is readied into a new Divine habitation for the Creator. Now our nature having been banished from the land of blessedness receives the principle of theosis and strives to rise up to the highest glory.

Now Adam offers from us and for us elements unto God, the most worthy fruit of mankind: Mary, in Whom the new Adam is rendered Bread for the restoration of the human race. Now is opened the great bosom of virginity, and the Church, in the matrimonial manner, places upon it a pure, truly spotless pearl.

Now human worthiness accepts the gift of the first creation and returns to its former condition; the majesty darkened by formless sin, through the conjoining by His Mother by birth "of Him Beauteous by Goodness," man receives beauty in a most excellent and God-seemly visage. And this creating is done truly by the creation, and recreation by theosis, and theosis by a return to the original perfection!

Now a barren one has become a mother beyond expectation, and the Theotokos has given birth without knowing man, and She sanctifies natural birth. Now the majestic color of the Divine purple is readied and impoverished human nature is clothed in royal worthiness. Now, according to prophecy, sprouts forth the Offshoot of David, Who, having eternally become the green-sprouting Staff of Aaron, has blossomed forth for us with the Staff of Power: Christ.

Now from Judah and David is descended a Virgin Maiden, rendering of Herself the royal and priestly worthiness of Him Who has taken on the priesthood of Aaron according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:15). Now the renewal of our nature is begun, and the world responding, assuming a God-seemly form, receives the principle of a second Divine creation.

The first creation of mankind occurred from the pure and unsullied earth; but their nature darkened its innate worthiness, they were deprived of

grace through the sin of disobedience; for this we were cast out of the land of life and, in place of the delights of Paradise, we received temporal life as our inheritance by birth, and with it the death and corruption of our race.

All started to prefer earth to heaven, so that there remained no hope for salvation, beyond the utmost help. Neither the natural nor the written law, nor the fiery reconciliative sayings of the prophets had power to heal the sickness. No one knew how to rectify human nature and by what means it would be most suitable to raise it up to its former worthiness, so long as God the Author of all did not deign to reveal to us another arranged and newly-constituted world, where the pervasive form of the old poison of sin is annihilated, and granting us a wondrous, free and perfectly dispassionate life, through our re-creation in the baptism of Divine birth.

But how would this great and most glorious blessing be imparted to us, so in accord with the Divine commands, if God were not to be manifest to us in the flesh, not subject to the laws of nature, nor deign to dwell with us in a manner known to Him? And how could all this be accomplished, if first there did not serve the mystery a Pure and Inviolable Virgin, Who contained the Uncontainable, in accord with the law, yet beyond the laws of nature? And could some other virgin have done this besides She alone, Who was chosen before all others by the Creator of nature?

This Virgin is the Theotokos, Mary, the Most Glorious of God, from Whose womb the Most Divine came forth in the flesh, and by Whom He Himself arranged a wondrous temple for Himself. She conceived without seed and gave birth without corruption, since Her Son was God, though also He was born in the flesh, without mingling and without travail.

This Mother, truly, avoided that which is innate to mothers but miraculously fed Her Son, begotten without a man, with milk. The Virgin, having given birth to the One seedlessly conceived, remained a pure Virgin, having preserved incorrupt the marks of virginity. And so in truth She is named the Mother of God; Her virginity is esteemed and Her birth-giving is glorified. God, having joined with mankind and become manifest in the flesh, has granted Her a unique glory. Woman's nature suddenly is freed from the first curse, and just as the first brought in sin, so also does the first initiate salvation also.

But our discourse has attained its chief end, and I, celebrating now and with rejoicing sharing in this sacred feast, I greet you in the common joy. The Redeemer of the human race, as I said, willed to arrange a new birth and re-creation of mankind: just as the first creation, taking dust from the virginal and pure earth, where He formed the first Adam, so also now, having arranged His Incarnation upon the earth, and so to speak, in place of dust He chooses out of all the creation this Pure and Immaculate Virgin and, having re-created mankind in His Chosen One from among

mankind, the Creator of Adam is made the New Adam, in order to save the old.

Who indeed was This Virgin and from what sort of parents did She come? Mary, the glory of all, was born of the tribe of David, and from the seed of Joachim. She was descended from Eve, and was the child of Anna. Joachim was a gentle man, pious, raised in God's law. Living prudently and walking before God he grew old without child: the years of his prime provided no continuation of his lineage. Anna was likewise God-loving, prudent, but barren; she lived in harmony with her husband, but was childless. As much concerned about this, as about the observance of the law of the Lord, she indeed was daily stung by the grief of childlessness and suffered that which is the usual lot of the childless -- she grieved, she sorrowed, she was distressed, and impatient at being childless.

Thus, Joachim and his spouse lamented that they had no successor to continue their line; yet the spark of hope was not extinguished in them completely: both intensified their prayer about the granting to them of a child to continue their line. In imitation of the prayer heard of Hannah (*1 Kings 1: 10*), both without leaving the temple fervently beseeched God that He would undo her sterility and make fruitful her childlessness. And they did not give up on their efforts, until their wish be fulfilled. The Bestower of gifts did not contemn the gift of their hope. The unceasing power came quickly in help to those praying and beseeching God, and it made capable both the one and the other to produce and bear a child. In such manner, from sterile and barren parents, as it were from irrigated trees, was borne for us a most glorious fruition -- the all-pure Virgin.

The constraints of infertility were destroyed -- prayer, upright manner of life, these rendered them fruitful; the childless begat a Child, and the childless woman was made an happy mother. Thus the immaculate Fruition issuing forth from the womb occurred from an infertile mother, and then the parents, in the first blossoming of Her growth brought Her to the temple and dedicated Her to God. The priest, then making the order of services, beheld the face of the girl and of those in front of and behind, and he became gladdened and joyful, seeing as it were the actual fulfillment of the Divine promise.

He consecrated Her to God, as a reverential gift and propitious sacrifice -- and, as a great treasury unto salvation, he led Her within the very innermost parts of the temple. Here the Maiden walked in the upright ways of the Lord, as in bridal chambers, partaking of heavenly food until the time of betrothal, which was preordained before all the ages by Him Who, by His unscrutable mercy, was born from Her, and by Him Who before all creation and time and expanse Divinely begat Him, and together with His consubstantial and co-reigning and co-worshipped Spirit -- this being One Godhead, having One Essence and Kingdom, inseparable and immutable and in which is nothing diverse, except the

personal qualities. Wherefore, in solemnity and in song I do offer the Mother of the Word the festal gift; since that He born of Her hath taught me to believe in the Trinity: the Son and Word Without-Beginning hath made in Her His Incarnation; the Father begetting Him hath blessed this; the Holy Spirit hath signed and sanctified the womb which incomprehensibly hath conceived.

Now is the time to question David: in what did the God of all forswear him? Speak, O Psalmist and Prophet! He hath sworn from the fruit of my loins to sit upon my throne (*Ps 131/132:11*). Here in this He is forsworn and will not break His oath, He hath forsworn and His Word is sealed with a deed! "Once -- said he -- I forswear by My Holiness, that I lie not to David; his seed will prevail forever, and his throne, like the sun before Me and like the moon coursing the ages: a faithful witness also in heaven" (*Ps 88/89:35-38*). God hath fulfilled this oath, since it is not possible for God to lie (*Heb 6:18*). Consider this: Christ in the flesh is named my Son (*Mt. 22: 42*), and all nations will worship my Lord and Son (*Ps 71/72:11*), seeing him sit upon a virginal throne! Here also is the Virgin, from Whose womb the Pre-eternal One issued forth, incarnated at the end of the ages and renewing the ages, likewise sprung forth from my loins! All this is so!

People of God, holy nation, sacred gathering! Let us revere our paternal memory; let us extol the power of the mystery! Each of us, in the measure given by grace, let us offer a worthy gift for the present feast. Fathers -- a prosperous lineage; mothers -- fine children; the unbearing -- the not-bearing of sin; virgins -- a twofold prudence, of soul and of body; betrothed -- praiseworthy abstinence. If anyone of you be a father, let him imitate the father of the Virgin; and if anyone be without child -- let them make harvest of fruitful prayer, cultivating a life pleasing to God. The mother, feeding her children, let her rejoice together with Anna, raising her Child, given to her in infertility through prayer.

She that is barren, not having given birth, lacking the blessing of a child, let her come with faith to the God-given Offshoot of Anna and offer there her barrenness. The virgin, living blamelessly, let her be a mother by discourse, adorning by word the elegance of soul. For a betrothed -- let her offer mental sacrifice from the fruits of prayer. All together rich and poor, lads and maidens, old and young (*Ps 48:2, 148:12*), priests and levites -- let all together keep the feast in honor of the Maiden, the Theotokos and the Prophetess: from Her has issued forth the Prophet, foretold by Moses, Christ God and Truth (*Dt 18:15*). Amen.

Sources of Christian Doctrine: The Fathers

There are in the Church a number of saints who were theologians and spiritual teachers who defended and explained the doctrines of the Christian Faith. These saints are called the **holy fathers** of the Church and their teachings are called the **patristic teachings** (*patristic* is from the Greek word for *father*).

Some of the holy fathers are called **apologists** because they defended the Christian teachings against those outside the Church who ridiculed the faith. Their writings are called **apologies**, which means "answers" or "defenses."

Others of the holy fathers defended the Christian faith against certain members of the Church who deformed the truth and life of Christianity by choosing certain parts of the Christian revelation and doctrine while denying other aspects. Those who deformed the Christian faith in this way and thereby destroyed the integrity of the Christian Church are called the heretics, and their doctrines are called heresies. By definition **heresy** means "choice," and a **heretic** is one who chooses what he wants according to his own ideas and opinions, selecting certain parts of the Christian Tradition while rejecting others. By his actions, a heretic not only destroys the fullness of the Christian truth but also divides the life of the Church and causes division in the community.

Generally speaking, the Orthodox tradition regards the teachers of heresies as not merely being mistaken or ignorant or misguided; it accuses them of being actively aware of their actions and therefore sinful. A person merely misguided or mistaken or teaching what he believes to be the truth without being challenged or opposed as to his possible errors is not considered to be a heretic in the true sense of the word. Many of the saints and even the holy fathers have elements in their teachings which Christians of later times have considered as being false or inaccurate. This, of course, does not make them heretics.

Not all of the holy fathers were defenders against falsehood or heresy. Some of them were simply the very positive teachers of the Christian faith, developing and explaining its meaning in a deeper and fuller way. Others were teachers of the spiritual life, giving instruction to the faithful about the meaning and method of communion with God through prayer and Christian living. Those teachers who concentrated on the struggle of spiritual life are called the **ascetical** fathers, **asceticism** being the exercise and training of the "spiritual athletes"; and those who concentrated on the

way of spiritual communion with God are called the **mystical** fathers, **mysticism** being defined as the genuine, experiential union with the Divine.

All of the holy fathers, whether they are classified as theological, pastoral, ascetical or mystical gave their teachings from the sources of their own living Christian experience. They defended and described and explained the theological doctrines and ways of spiritual life from their own living knowledge of these realities. They blended together the brilliance of the intellect with the purity of the soul and the righteousness of life. This is what makes them the holy fathers of the Church.

The writings of the Church Fathers are not infallible, and it has even been said that in any given one of them some things could be found which could be questioned in the light of the fullness of the Tradition of the Church. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the writings of the Fathers which are built upon the biblical and liturgical foundations of Christian faith and life have great authority within the Orthodox Church and are primary sources for the discovery of the Church's doctrine.

The writings of some of those fathers who have received the universal approval and praise of the Church through the ages are of particular importance, such as those of Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Photius of Constantinople, and Gregory Palamas; and those of the ascetical and spiritual fathers such as Anthony of Egypt, Macarius of Egypt, John of the Ladder, Isaac of Syria, Ephraim of Syria, Simeon the New Theologian, and others.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to read the writings of the fathers of the Church since their problems were often complicated and their manner of writing very different in style from our own. Also most of the spiritual and ascetical writings are put in the monastic setting and have to be transposed in order to be understandable and usable to those of us who are not monks or nuns. Nevertheless, it is important to read the writings of the fathers directly. One should do so slowly, a little at a time, with careful thought and consideration and without making quick and capricious conclusions ... the same way that one would read the Bible. Among the church fathers, Saint John Chrysostom's writings are very clear and direct and can be read by many with great profit if the proper care is given. Also the **Philokalia** -- an anthology of spiritual writings -- exists in English, at least in part, and with proper care, it can be helpful to a mature Christian in search of deeper insights into the spiritual life.

 HYMNOGRAPHY: SEPTEMBER

Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ (Paschal Matins and Sunday Matins)

Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ,
Let us worship the Holy Lord Jesus,
The only sinless One.
We venerate Thy cross, O Christ,
And we praise and glorify Thy holy resurrection
For Thou art our God,
And we know no other than Thee;
We call on Thy name.
Come, all you faithful.
Let us worship Christ's holy resurrection,
For behold through the cross joy has come into all the world.
Let us ever bless the Lord,
Praising His resurrection,
For by enduring the cross for us
He has destroyed death by death.

TROPARIA & KONTAKIA: OCTOBER

October 5: Martyr Charitina of Amisus

Troparion - Tone 4

Your lamb Charitina,
calls out to You, O Jesus, in a loud voice:
"I love You, my Bridegroom,
and in seeking You, I endure suffering.
In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in You,
and I died so that I might live with You.
Accept me as a pure sacrifice,
for I have offered myself in love."
Through her prayers save our souls, since You are merciful.

Kontakion - Tone 2

Having fortified your soul with faith and strengthened by understanding
you openly put the enemy to shame, O Charitina;
you stood before Christ wearing a robe empurpled by your blood, All-
Blessed One,
and now you rejoice with the angels, praying for us, O passion-bearer.

October 12: Sunday of the Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council

Troparion - Tone 8

Thou art most glorious, O Christ our God.
Thou hast established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth.
Through them Thou has guided us to the true faith.

O greatly Compassionate One, glory to Thee!

Kontakion - Tone 2

The son who shone forth from the Father was ineffably born, two-fold in nature of a woman.

Having beheld Him, we do not deny the image of His form,

But depict it piously and revere it faithfully.

Thus, keeping the True Faith, the Church venerates the icon of Christ Incarnate.

Martyrs Probus, Tarachus, and Andronicus in Cilicia

Troparion - Tone 5

The heavenly powers were amazed at the triumph of the holy martyrs Probus, Tarachus, and Andronicus.

For having fought the good fight with their mortal bodies, they conquered bodiless enemies by the power of the Cross.

Now they intercede with the Lord that He may save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 2

The brave warriors of Christ, the martyrs Probus, Tarachus, and Andronicus, revealed to us the glory of the Trinity.

They refuted the godlessness of their torturers by bravely contending for the Faith.

October 19: Prophet Joel

Troparion - Tone 2

We celebrate the memory of Your prophet Joel, O Lord; Through him we beseech You: save our souls.

Martyr Varus

Troparion - Tone 4

Your holy martyr, Varus, O Lord,

through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God.

For having Your strength, he laid low his adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.

Through his intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion - Tone 4

Following Christ, O Martyr Varus, you drank of His chalice;

you received the crown of martyrdom and now rejoice with the angels. Pray for our souls unceasingly.

October 26: Holy, Glorious Demetrius the Myrrhusher of Thessalonica

Troparion - Tone 3

The world has found you to be a great defense against tribulation and a vanquisher of heathens, O Passion-bearer.

As you bolstered the courage of Nestor,

who then humbled the arrogance of Lyaios in battle,
Holy Demetrius, entreat Christ God to grant us great mercy.

Kontakion - Tone 2

God, who has given you invincible might,
has tinged the Church with streams of your blood, Demetrius!
He pre-serves your city from harm,
for you are its foundation!

PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – OCTOBER

None

PRAYER REQUESTS

Note: If you wish to have someone included on our parish prayer list for remembrance during the divine services, please notify Fr. John before the end of the month. This list will in most cases be cleared at the beginning of each month.

Please keep the following people in your prayers this month:

LIVING

Charles

Robert

Mark

Sarah

David

Patricia

Flore

Emily and the child to be born of her

Olga and the child to be born of her

Cat. Deborah

Patricia

Arne

Child Ben

Nika and the child to be born of her

Heather Mary and the child to be born of her

Cory Stephanie and the child to be born of her

Fiorella

Barbara

Steve

Shawn

DEPARTED: