
W^{the}onderworker

Saint George Orthodox Church

Third Quarter, 2011

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This issue of *The Wonderworker* includes a new feature. On pages 2 through 5 we have reproduced the first section of Fr. Thomas Hopko's series of books entitled *The Orthodox Faith*, both in English and Albanian. The Albanian text was prepared by the Autocephalous Church of Albania and translated by Fr. Joan (Pelushi), currently Metropolitan of Korce. We hope that this will help all of our readers, English-speaking and Albanian-speaking, increase their knowledge of the basics of their Orthodox Faith.

We are now in the middle of Summer: the weather is getting hot; school is out, and our thoughts turn to vacation and weekends on the beach.

It is important to remember, however, that while we can (and, perhaps, must) take vacations from work and school, we cannot take a vacation from God and the Christian life.

What do I mean by this?

I mean that, when we go on vacation, we should remember, first of all, the basics. Morning and evening prayers, regular Wednesday and Friday fasting; these are things that we can do wherever we may be, even on vacation.

In addition, wherever we go for vacation, it is quite likely that there is an Orthodox Church nearby. It may not be Albanian or OCA, but it *is* Orthodox, and we can attend the Divine Liturgy on Sundays.

To find such a parish, ask me before you go or check out the internet if you have a computer. Web sites to begin with would be the Orthodox Church in America (www.oca.org), the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (www.goarch.org) and the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America (www.antiochian.org).

If there is no Orthodox Church near your vacation site, be sure to set aside some extra time on Sunday morning for prayer and reflection and, if possible, Scripture reading.

The important thing to remember is that the Christian life is a full-time life — one which must be lived and practiced every day. Our eternal life depends on it.

Have a wonderful Summer!

Fr. Dennis

Revelation

Every morning at its Matins Service the Orthodox Church proclaims: "God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (Psalm 118:26-27) The first foundation of Christian doctrine is found in this biblical line: God has revealed Himself to us.

God has shown Himself to His creatures. He has not disclosed His very innermost being, for this innermost essence of God cannot be grasped by creatures. But God has truly shown what men can see and understand of his divine nature and will.

The fullness and perfection of God's self-revelation is found in His Son Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the gradual and partial revelation of God in the Old Testament. Jesus is the one truly "blessed...who comes in the name of the Lord."

The first title given to Jesus by the people is that of Rabbi, which literally means teacher. In the English New Testament the word Master also issued in relation to Jesus in the sense of one who teaches, such as a schoolmaster or holder of a master's degree. Jesus' followers are also called disciples, which literally means students or pupils.

Jesus came to men first of all as the Teacher sent from God. He teaches the will of God and makes God known to men. He reveals fully – as fully as men can grasp – the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

The coming of Jesus as teacher is one aspect of His being Christ the Messiah. The word Christ in Greek is the word for the Hebrew Messiah which means the Anointed of God. For when the Messiah would come, it was foretold, men would be "taught by God." (Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45)

Jesus comes to men as the divine teacher. He claimed on many occasions that His words were

those of God. He spoke as "one having authority" not like the normal Jewish teachers. (Matthew 7:29) And He accused those who rejected His teachings as rejecting God Himself.

He who believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me. And he who sees me sees Him who sent me. I have come as light into the world... For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has Himself given me commandment what to speak. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me. (John 12:44-50)

Jesus taught men not only by His words, but also by His actions; and indeed by His very one person. He referred to Himself as the Truth (John 14:6) and as the Light (John 8:12). He showed Himself not merely to be speaking God's words, but to be Himself the Living Word of God in human flesh, the Logos who is eternal and uncreated, but who has become man as Jesus of Nazareth in order to make God known to the world.

In the beginning was the Word (Logos) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father. And from His fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known. (See John 1:1-18. The Easter Liturgy Gospel Reading in the Orthodox Church.)

Jesus, the divine Word of God in human flesh, comes to teach men by His presence, His words and His deeds. His disciples are sent into the world to proclaim Him and His Gospel, which means literally the “glad tidings” or the “good news” of the Kingdom of God. Those whom Jesus sends are called the apostles, which means literally “those who are sent.” The apostles are directly inspired by God’s Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26), to “make disciples of all nations” teaching them what Christ has commanded. (Matthew 28:19)

The early Church, we are told, “devoted themselves to the apostles’ doctrine.” (Acts 2:42) Doctrine as a word simply means teaching or instruction. The apostles’ doctrine is the doctrine of Jesus and becomes the doctrine of the Christian Church. It is received by the disciples of every age and generation as the very doctrine of God. It is proclaimed everywhere and always as the doctrine of eternal life through which all men and the whole world are enlightened and saved.

At this point it must be mentioned that although God’s self-revelation in history through the chosen people of Israel – the revelation which culminates in the coming of Christ the Messiah – is of primary importance, it is also the doctrine of the Christian Church that all genuine strivings of men after the truth are fulfilled in Christ. Every genuine insight into the meaning of life finds its perfection in the Christian Gospel. Thus, the holy fathers of the Church taught that the yearnings of pagan religions and the wisdom of many philosophers are also capable of serving to prepare men for the doctrines of Jesus and are indeed valid and genuine ways to the one Truth of God.

In this way Christians considered certain Greek philosophers to have been enlightened by God to serve the cause of Truth and to lead men to fullness of life in God since the Word and Wisdom of God is revealed to all men and is found in all men who in the purity of their minds and hearts have been inspired by the Divine Light which enlightens every man who comes into this world. This Divine Light is the Word of God, Jesus of Nazareth in human flesh, the perfection and fullness of God’s self-revelation to the world.

It cannot be overstressed that divine revelation in the Old Testament, in the Church of the New Testament, in the lives of the saints, in the wisdom of the fathers, in the beauty of creation...and most fully and perfectly in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the revelation of God Himself. God has spoken. God has acted. God has manifested Himself and continues to manifest Himself in the lives of His people.

If we want to hear God’s voice and see God’s actions of self-revelation in the world, we must purify our minds and hearts from everything that is wicked and false. We must strive to love the truth, to love one another, and to love everything in God’s good creation. According to the Orthodox faith, purification from falsehood and sin is the way to the knowledge of God. If we open ourselves to divine grace and purify ourselves from all evils, then it is certain that we will be able to interpret the scriptures properly and come into living communion with the true and living God who has revealed Himself and continues to reveal Himself to those who love Him.

from *The Orthodox Faith*,
by Fr. Thomas Hopko



Zbulesa

Çdo ditë, në Shërbesën e Mëngjesit, Kisha Orthodhokse shpall: “Perëndia është Zoti dhe u shfaq ndër ne; i bekuar është Ai që vjen në emrin e Zotit” (Psalmi 118:26-27). Themeli i doktrinës së krishterë gjendet në këtë rresht biblik: Perëndia e ka zbuluar Vetveten tek ne.

Perëndia e ka shfaqur Vetveten tek krijesat e Tij. Ai nuk e ka zbuluar qenien e Tij më të thellë, sepse esenca e brendshme e Perëndisë nuk mund të kuptohet nga krijesat. Por, Perëndia ka treguar çfarë njeriu mund të shohë dhe të kuptojë nga natyra dhe vullneti i Tij hyjnor.

Plotësia dhe përkryerja e vetëzbulesës së Perëndisë gjendet në Birin e Tij Jisu Krisht, plotësimi i zbulesës graduale dhe të pjesëshme të Perëndisë në Dhiatën e Vjetër. Jisui është me të vërtetë “i bekuar Ai që vjen në emrin e Zotit.”

Titulli i parë që iu dha Jisuit nga populli, është titulli Rabi, që do të thotë mësues. Pasuesit e Tij u quajtën dishepuj, që do të thotë nxënës.

Pikësëpari, Jisui erdhi tek njerëzit si Mësuesi i dërguar nga Perëndia. Ai u mëson atyre vullnetin e Perëndisë dhe e bën Perëndinë të njohur tek ata. Ai i zbulon në mënyrë të plotë - të plotë, sa njerëzit mund të kuptojnë - misteret e Mbretërisë së Perëndisë.

Ardhja e Jisuit si mësues është një nga aspektet e të qenurit të tij Krisht, Mesia. Fjala Krisht është përkthimi në greqisht i fjalës hebraike Mesia, që do të thotë i Lyeri i Perëndisë. Ishte parathënë, se kur do të vijë Mesia, njerëzit “do të mësoheshin nga Perëndia” (Isaia 54:13; Joani 6:45).

Jisui erdhi tek njerëzit si mësuesi hyjnor. Ai thotë në shumë raste, që fjalët e tij janë të Perëndisë. Ai foli si “një që ka autoritet”, jo si mësuesit e zakonshëm Judej (Mattheu 7:29). Dhe Ai i akuzon ata që nuk pranojnë mësimin e tij, sikur nuk pranojnë Perëndinë Vetë.

Ai që më beson mua, nuk më beson mua, por atë që më dërgoi. Edhe ai që më vë re mua, vë re atë

që më dërgoi. Unë kam ardhur dritë në botën. Sepse unë nuk fola prej vetes, por Ati që më dërgoi, Ai më dha porosi çfarë të them, e çfarë të flas. sa pra flas unë, sikundër më ka thënë Ati, ashtu flas (Joani 12:44-50).

Jisui i mësoi njerëzit, jo vetëm me fjalët e tij, por gjithashtu, me veprat e tij; dhe për më tepër me vetë personin e tij. Ai thotë, se Ai është e Vërteta (Joani 14:6) dhe Drita (Joani 8:12). Ai e tregon veten e tij, jo vetëm që flet fjalët e Perëndisë, por që ai vetë është Fjala e Gjallë e Perëndisë në mish njerëzor, Logos, që është i përjetshëm dhe i pakrijuar, por që u bë njeri si Jisui i Nazaretit për ta bërë Perëndinë të njohur në botë.

Në fillim ishte Fjala (LOGOS) dhe Fjala ishte me Perëndinë, edhe Fjala ishte Perëndi. Ajo ishte që në fillim me Perëndinë. Të gjitha u bënë me anë të asaj, edhe pa atë nuk u bë asgjë që është bërë. Në atë ishte jetë dhe jeta ishte drita e njerëzve. Edhe drita ndrit në errësirë, edhe errësira nuk e kuptoi. Ishte drita e vërtetë, që ndrit çdo njeri, kur vjen në botë. Ishte në botë, dhe bota u bë me anë të atij, por bota nuk e njohu atë. Edhe Fjala u bë mish, edhe ndenji ndër ne (edhe pamë lavdin e atij, lavdi porsi të vetëmlinduri nga Ati), plot me hir e me të vërtetë. Edhe të gjithë ne muarrmë prej të mbushurit të atij, edhe hir mbi hir. Sepse ligji u dha me anë të Moisiut, por hiri dhe e vërteta me anë të Jisu Krishtit. Asnjë kurrë s’e ka parë Perëndinë, veç i Vetëmlinduri Bir, që është në gji të Atit, ai na e tregoi. (Shih Joani 1:1-18. Ungjilli i kënduar në Meshën e Pashkës, në Kishën Orthodhokse).

Jisui, Fjala hyjnore e Perëndisë në mish njerëzor, erdhi t’i mësojë njerëzit me anë të pranisë, fjalëve dhe veprave të tij. Nxënësit e tij u dërguan në tërë dheun të lëçitnin Atë dhe

vijon në faqjen 5

vijon nga faqja 4

Ungjillin e Tij, që literalisht do të thotë “lajmi i mirë” i Mbretërisë së Perëndisë. Ata që u dërguan nga Jisui u quajtën Apostuj, që do të thotë “të dërguar”. Apostujt u frymëzuan direkt nga Shpirti i Shenjtë i Perëndisë, Shpirti i së Vërtetës (Joani 15:26) “për të mësuar tërë kombet”, me mësimin që u kishte dhënë Krishti (Matheu 28:19).

Kisha e parë e kishte përkushtuar vetveten në “doktrinën e apostujve” (Veprat 2:42). Fjala doktrinë, do të thotë thjesht mësim ose instruksion. Doktrina e Apostujve është doktrina e Krishtit, që u bë doktrina e Kishës së Krishterë. Ajo pranohet nga nxënësit e çdo moshe dhe çdo brezi, si vetë doktrina e Perëndisë. Është lëçitur kudo dhe kurdoherë si doktrina e jetës së përyetshme, nëpërmjet të cilës të gjithë njerëzit dhe e tërë bota janë ndriçuar dhe shpëtuar.

Në këtë pikë duhet përmendur, që ndonëse vetëzbuluesi e Zotit në histori, nëpërmjet popullit të zgjedhur të Izraelit — zbuluesi që arrin kulmin me ardhjen e Krishtit, Mesias — është e rëndësishme së parë, sepse është, gjithashtu, doktrina e Kishës së Krishterë, që thekson se tërë përpjekjet e njerëzve për të vërtetën janë përmbushur në Krishtin. Çdo depërtim i vërtetë në kuptimin e jetës arrin përkryerjen në Ungjillin e Krishterë. Etërit e Shenjtë të Kishës, na mësojnë, që dëshirat dhe përpjekjet e feve pagane dhe dituria e filozofëve të vjetër janë gjithashtu, të afta për të përgatitur njerëzit për doktrinën e Jisuit dhe janë rrugë të mundshme drejt së Vërtetës së vetme të Perëndisë.

Në këtë mënyrë, të krishterët i shikonin disa filozofë grekë të antikitetit, si të ndriçuar nga Perëndia, për t'i shërbyer çështjes së të Vërtetës dhe për t'i udhëhequr njerëzit drejt plotësisë së jetës në Perëndinë, meqenëse Fjala dhe Dituria e Perëndisë është zbuluar tek tërë njerëzit dhe gjendet në tërë ata, të cilët në pastërtinë e mendjes dhe zemrës së tyre kanë qenë

frymëzuar nga Drita Hyjnore, e cila ndriçon çdo njeri që vjen në botë. Kjo Dritë Hyjnore është Fjala e Perëndisë, Jisui i Nazaretit si njeri, përsosja dhe përmbushja e vetëzbuluesit të Perëndisë në botë.

Nuk mund të mos theksohet, se zbuluesi hyjnore në Dhiatën e Vjetër, në Kishën e Dhiatës së Re, në jetët e shenjtorëve, në diturinë e etërve, në bukurinë e krijimit... dhe më e plotë dhe më e përsosur në Jisu Krishtin, Birin e Perëndisë, është zbuluesi e Vetë Perëndisë. Perëndia ka folur. Perëndia ka vepruar. Perëndia e ka shfaqur Vetveten dhe vazhdon ta shfaqë në jetën e popullit të Tij.

Nëse ne duam të dëgjojmë zërin e Perëndisë dhe të shohim veprat e vetëzbuluesit të Perëndisë në botë, ne duhet të pastrojmë mendjet dhe zemrat tona nga çdo gjë që është e keqe dhe e rreme. Ne duhet të përpiqemi të duam të vërtetën, të duam njëri-tjetrin dhe të duam gjithçka në krijimin e mirë të Perëndisë. Sipas Besimit Orthodoks, pastrimi prej mëkatit dhe gënjeshtrës është rruga për të njohur Perëndinë. Nëse ne e hapim vetveten ndaj Hirit Hyjnor dhe e pastrojmë vetveten prej çdo gjëje të ligë, atëherë është e sigurt që ne do të jemi të aftë ta kuptojmë drejt Shkrimin dhe të arrijmë një kungim të gjallë me Perëndinë e Gjallë dhe të Vërtetë, që e ka zbuluar Vetveten dhe vazhdon ta zbulojë tek ata që e duan Atë.

nga Besimi Ortodoks (The Orthodox Faith)
i At Thomas Hopko



Coming Events

July

- 8, Saint Dimitrie Church Festival,
- 9, 10: Easton, CT
- 9: Cameron Dionis Baptism
- 31: General Parish Meeting

August

- 1: Dormition Fast begins
- 6: The Transfiguration of our Lord
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy and Blessing
of Fruit
- 8 -- New England Youth Rally,
- 13: Contoocook, NH
- 15: The Dormition of the Mother of God
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy
- 24: Saint Kozma of Berat

September

- 1: Ecclesiastical New Year
- 5: Labor Day
- 8: The Nativity of the Mother of God
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy
- 11: Church School Opening Day
Regular service schedule begins
- 14: Elevation of the Holy Cross
9:30 a.m. — Divine Liturgy
- 17: Sophie and Brooke Dionis Baptism
- 22 Albanian Archdiocesan Assembly,
- 24: Trumbull, CT

Looking ahead

- October 1: Orthodox Education Day,
St Vladimir's Seminary,
Crestwood, NY
- October 2: FORCC Annual
Scholarship Banquet,
Holy Trinity Greek
Orthodox Church,
Bridgeport, CT
- October 31
— November 4: 16th All American
Council, Seattle, WA
- February 27, 2012: Great Lent begins
- April 8, 2012: Western Easter
- April 15, 2012: Pascha
- June 9, 2012: Food Festival



Natural Church Development

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a program that has been used in churches around the world to determine the overall health of their parish community and develop ways of improving that health. The basic idea of the program is that healthy churches grow.

Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff, a priest of the Orthodox Church in America from Long Island, NY, has adapted this program for use in Orthodox parishes and has extensive experience working with communities to implement it.

Fr. Jonathan will visit St. George Church on Saturday, July 23rd, to conduct an introductory workshop on NCD for our parish council and any interested members. The meeting will begin in the Church Hall at 10:00 a.m.

Please join us!

Feasts and Saints of the Orthodox Church

July 1: Holy Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian of Rome

The Holy Martyrs, Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian were born at Rome, brothers by birth, and physicians by profession. They suffered at Rome in the reign of the emperor Carinus (283-284). Brought up by their parents in the rules of piety, they led strict and chaste lives, and they were granted by God the gift of healing the sick. By their generosity and exceptional kindness to all, the brothers converted many to Christ. The brothers told the sick, "It is not by our own power that we treat you, but by the power of Christ, the true God. Believe in Him and be healed." Since they accepted no payment for their treatment of the infirm, the holy brothers were called "unmercenary physicians."

Their life of active service and their great spiritual influence on the people around them led many into the Church, attracting the attention of the Roman authorities. Soldiers were sent after the brothers. Hearing about this, local Christians convinced SS Cosmas and Damian to hide for a while until they could help them escape. Unable to find the brothers, the soldiers arrested instead other Christians of the area where the saints lived. SS Cosmas and Damian then came out of hiding and surrendered to the soldiers, asking them to release those who had been arrested because of them.

At Rome, the saints were imprisoned and put on trial. Before the Roman emperor and the judge they openly professed their faith in Christ God, who had come into the world to save mankind and redeem the world from sin, and they resolutely refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. They said, "We have done evil to no one, we are not involved with the magic or sorcery of which you accuse us. We treat the infirm by the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we take no payment for rendering aid to the sick, because our Lord commanded His disciples, 'Freely have you received, freely give.'" (Mt. 10: 8)

The emperor, however, continued with his demands. Through the prayer of the holy brothers, imbued with the power of grace, God sud-

denly struck Carinus blind, so that he too might experience the almighty power of the Lord, who does not forgive blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:31). The people, beholding the miracle, cried out, "Great is the Christian God! There is no other God but Him!" Many of those who believed besought the holy brothers to heal the emperor, and he himself implored the saints, promising to convert to the true God, Christ the Savior, so the saints healed him. After this, SS Cosmas and Damian were honorably set free, and once again they set about treating the sick.

But what the hatred of the pagans and the ferocity of the Roman authorities could not do, was accomplished by black envy, one of the strongest passions of sinful human nature. An older physician, an instructor, under whom the holy brothers had studied the art of medicine, became envious of their fame. Driven to madness by malice, and overcome by passionate envy, he summoned the two brothers, formerly his most beloved students, proposing that they should all go together in order to gather various medicinal herbs. Going far into the mountains, he murdered them and threw their bodies into a river.

Thus these holy brothers, the Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian, ended their earthly journey as martyrs. Although they had devoted their lives to the Christian service of their neighbors, and had escaped the Roman sword and prison, they were treacherously murdered by their teacher.

The Lord glorifies those who are pleasing to God. Now, through the prayers of the holy Martyrs Cosmas and Damian, God grants healing to all who with faith have recourse to their heavenly intercession.

The Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Rome should not be confused with the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Asia Minor (*November 1*), or the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Arabia (*October 17*).

taken from "Feasts and Saints of the Orthodox Church" on the website OCA.org.

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FORWARD AND ADDRESS CORRECTION



The Wonderworker

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