

St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church

August 11th, 2024

7th Sunday After Pentecost

Afterfeast of the Transfiguration

Holy Martyr and Archdeacon Euplus of Catania (304)

Activities and Events this Week

- Wednesday 14 Great Vespers w/Litya 6:00pm
Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos
Festal Parish Dinner (We can have meat!)
- Thursday 15 St. John Brotherhood 6:00pm
- Saturday 17 Choir Rehearsal 3:30pm
Great Vespers 5:00pm

Announcements

Adult Education Books for the Fall Session are in. "Creation and the Patriarchal Histories, Orthodox Christian Reflections on The Book of Genesis." Patrick Henry Reardon. Ancient Faith Press. \$14.00 from the bookstore. Best price you are going to get! Your purchase also supports our fellowship.

Adult Education begins Wednesday August 21 from 6:00pm – 7:15pm. Required reading prior to the first class. Discussion question packets are located by the bookstore.

Catechism class will begin Saturday **Sept 28 @ 3:00pm – New Date – Calendar for Catechism is located by the bookstore.**

Dina Siriamphone – We will sing a full Panikhida for Dina in the near future. Once the date has been determined I will let everyone know. May Dina's Memory be Eternal!

School – I start school on Monday the 12th. As always, I am never too busy for you!

Do I Believe?

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. You have heard me say a number of times that the three reasons the Church is in the world is for healing, sanity and the “production” of Saints. In today’s Gospel we see Christ healing two blind men and a man who was mute and demon possessed. Jesus asks an important question of the two blind men; “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

As listeners of the Gospel, we have to be careful that we don’t place ourselves outside of what is taking place. It is demanded that we often place ourselves as the Antagonist. As such sometimes, we are also being asked the question; “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” Ask yourself, “Do I believe in the healing nature of the Church?” On the surface this may appear to be a dumb question.

God has given man free will. He loves and respects our freedom. So with that said, the question is not as dumb as it appears. Many, many Orthodox Christians do not want to be healed? “Really, you know this?” one may ask? The answer is yes! I know this and so do all of you as we collectively do not want to be healed, especially in times when the main focus of our lives is ourselves.

In Western Christianity, in particular, the Protestant and “Evangelical” type groups, they have a well-developed theory on hell. This theory features a legalist and judicial God who grabs you by the hair (those who have hair that is) and casts you into hell. This idea is actually closer to Islam than it ever has been to Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity.

In the Christian East, sin is not an issue of being cast into hell, but an issue of desiring to be in hell. When we sin, we walk away from God. Not the other way around. God is light, truth and holiness. He has always been this way as is His nature. When we decide to walk back toward light, truth, and holiness we begin to be healed, to be made whole... to be human. The Church through her Sacraments, the Scriptures, the martyrs and saints, the ascetical discipline – or in other words the embracing of Christ – is how one can be healed.

The two blind men and perhaps even the demon possessed mute all embraced Christ and His offer to do something for them. The Church is Christ’s very presence in the world today and by the power of the Holy Spirit – we too can embrace Christ and become fully human. Nothing can exist without God as He is the ultimate reality. When we decide to follow our own will, we cannot be healed because of our own will, God is excluded. Yet, He stays put – waiting patiently for our return. The trouble lies in if we walk too far away – we forget in which direction to turn to be healed – usually in the confusion to be turned around, we rely more and more on ourselves and thus end up in “hell.” Pain and misery, as man cannot live without God and experience freedom and healing. Those who are sane and healed are called Saints. They live truly as God intended man to live in this world. Brothers and Sisters, desire to embrace Christ. Only if we choose to get “over ourselves” and take the radical nature of our faith seriously, can we be healed by the one true Physician.