



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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DECEMBER, 2018

ADVENT AND THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

by Fr. John

In developing last week's sermon theme on the Beatitude — "*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*" — it was affirmed that the word "meek" should not be heard as an indication of inability or weakness, but rather in the Old Testament sense of being "obedient" and having trust in God. Also, one would also want to learn from the example of Jesus who spoke of himself as being meek — "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:29).

We're in the midst of Advent, the time that prepares us not only for the "coming" of Jesus into the world, but for a deeper understanding of how He responded to the events and people in his life — how his obedience and trust in the Father emerged not from weakness, but from his inner strength — and how we might be formed by His example.

The sermon also offered the example of Brother Lawrence, a lay brother who lived during the 1600's in a Parisian monastery, focusing on what he called — "the practice of the presence of God." Speaking of himself he wrote: "I know of one who, for forty years, has practiced the presence of God intellectually, and he gives it several other names. Sometimes he calls it a simple act, or a clear and distinct knowledge of God; sometimes an impression or a loving gaze or a sense of God; yet other times he calls it a waiting on God, a silent conversation with Him, a divine response, the life and peace of the soul. He says, however, that all these expressions for the presence of God are synonyms, they express the same thing, that presence which has come to be natural to him."

Among those who were intrigued and encouraged by his words was Dorothy Day, the 20th century Roman Catholic social activist (who was specifically mentioned by Pope Francis in his 2015 address to the US Congress). This is taken from her introduction to a collection of Brother Lawrence's sayings entitled, "*The Practice of the Presence of God*" (1974):

Brother Lawrence evidently was not learned. He was a soldier, and was wounded "in a raid by the Swedes on the village of Rambervilliers in Lorraine where he was born." ...He went to work as a footman for a time, but his desire to live a religious life led him to join the Carmelite order. Donald

Attwater wrote that Lawrence spent the last thirty years of his life in the kitchen of a monastery. He lived and “had his being,” as the saying goes, in that lowly place in the kitchen.

Brother Lawrence undoubtedly grew in grace because he performed manual labor. “Orare et Laborare” is the Benedictine creed — to pray and to work. The lowliness of his work and the fact that it was necessary work for the Order of the Universe and the Order of the Carmelite monastery to which he belonged: this brought him the peace of heart which has made him the influence he has been from that day to this.

We forget that Jesus was a carpenter before he was a teacher. Thirty years of his life were spent in a small village of Galilee. He grew up learning and practicing carpentry...

Living today in a time of war, crying out Peace, Peace when there is no Peace, fearing age and death, pain and darkness, destitution and loneliness, people need to get back to the simplicity of Brother Lawrence...

We need this book today when we are overwhelmed by the vastness of today’s problems. We need to return to the simplicity of Brother Lawrence, whose “little way” makes our burdens light and rejoices the heart.

These days I can never look up at the sky and see the moon without thinking with wonder and awe that men have walked there. To conceive of such a thing — to desire such an adventure, to be capable of overcoming all fear, all doubt, to have faith in man’s ability to solve problems, and seek out the way to go about this great exploration — what dedication of mind and will!

“What is man that thou art mindful of him? Thou hast made him little less than the angels.”

It keeps coming into my mind — how much man would be capable of if his soul were strong in the love of God, if he wanted God as much as he wanted to penetrate the power and glory of God’s creation.

To know Him, to love Him and to serve Him — a personal God, who took on human flesh and became man and suffered and died for us.

To find the way, not to the moon, but to God — this is man’s real desire, because of his need for love, and God is love.

Brother Lawrence, who worked in the kitchen of a Carmelite monastery and died at the age of 80, found Him in “*The Practice of the Presence of God.*”

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By this practice the soul comes to such a knowledge of God that almost all her life is passed in making acts of love and of worship, of contrition and of trust, of thanks, of offering, of petition, and of all virtues; sometimes, indeed she seems engaged in one unceasing, endless act, for the soul is keeping herself continually in the divine presence. (*Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection*)

On the Way to Emmaus Icon Project



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2: ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING at 9:15.**
- **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6: PARISH COUNCIL MEETING at 7 PM**
- **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9: ADVENT VESPERS SERVICE – 6 PM (Choral Prelude starting at 5:30) — guest speaker, Ninita Birbilis.** She is an Orthodox counselor who coordinates – Staywhole (<https://www.staywhole.org>) who led a workshop at the recent OCAMPR Conference (*The Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology, and Religion*) on the topic of:
“**This Kind Does Not Come Out But by Prayers and Fasting.**”

THANKSGIVING MEAL: We appreciate the help of everyone who helped coordinate, bring food, and set and clean up after the wonderful meal on Sunday November 11!

UPCOMING COLLECTIONS:

- 1) **THANKSGIVING COLLECTION FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES AND ST. VINCENT DE PAUL:** Thanks to all those who donated towards this Collection.
- 2) **COVENANT HOUSE STOCKINGS — Deadline Sunday December 16:** There will be a sign-up sheet by the displayed (shown in the photo) and we are asking parishioners to purchase the suggested sizes and after signing up bring 5 of the selected items. (The hats and gloves will be purchased by the choir).
- 3) **PRINCETON UNIVERSITY IS COLLECTING CHRISTMAS CARDS THAT WILL BE SENT TO DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS.** You may (or may not) include a greeting and word of encouragement to a “Dear Soldier.” See the announcement on the bulletin board in the basement. *Card Collector: Ann Marie Piotrowski. Deadline: Sunday, December 9.*



CONGRATULATIONS to BANKS SAPNAR in being selected to the *All National Jazz Ensemble* which will perform in concert with other top high school musicians in various categories at the Disney Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando, Florida between November 25-28. Banks is also in the *TRI-M Music Honor Society* (the National Honor Society for Student Musicians). See the list of Jazz Musicians at: <https://nafme.org/2018-all-national-honor-ensembles-jazz-ensemble-roster/>

WOMAN2WOMAN ACTIVITIES: **Thursday, Dec. 13: Parish Cookie Exchange, 6:30 p.m., in church hall.** (Details to follow. Please join us to prepare cookie trays for our local medical services and to add to your holiday supply!)

Thursday, Dec. 20, Ladies' Luncheon at Kettle and Grille Restaurant in Crispin Square.

Please RSVP with Genie for all of the above activities! 856-802-1664

STEWARDSHIP KICK-OFF FOR 2019:

Pledge cards are now available for parishioners to use in prayerfully considering your financial commitment for 2019. The goal is to have all pledge cards submitted to the treasurer by the end of this year – December 31st - so that we can better prepare the budget for our annual meeting in February.

In 2018 we saw about 35% of our parish use the pledge card system. These pledges accounted for around 50% of our annual budgeted income for calendar year 2018. This means that 50% of our income came from 60% of our parish family who did not communicate their anticipated contributions, but still gave through cash donations or the envelope system.

Our goal for 2019 is to have 50% of our parishioners utilizing the pledge system. Again, by using the pledge system you are just formally communicating your financial commitment to the parish for the calendar year. The suggested proportional giving percentages on the back of the pledge card are just that – suggested giving guidelines.

Why complete a pledge card? First it allows parishioners to review their giving practices from year to year and formally communicate their commitment to the parish. Secondly, it allows the treasurer and parish council to better plan and meet our financial obligations.

Our envelopes for 2019 will continue to look like those used in 2018 – no minimum amounts printed on the envelopes, allowing you to give proportionately according to your means. The amount pledged in 2019 will continue to go toward our operating expenses including our commitment to the diocese / national church and mortgage.

What ever your giving pattern was in 2018, we hope you will consider increasing that in 2019. If not, we hope you will communicate to our treasurer or Fr. John that your financial commitment will be the same as in 2018. It is anticipated that semi-annual statements will be sent out during 2019 to advise parishioners of their pledge status.

If you have any questions relating to this proportional giving model, contact Fr. John or any stewardship committee member (Mark Skuby, Wally Loza, or Michelle Zissimos).

2018 PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD – DEADLINE DECEMBER 9

As usual, we are preparing our special and uniquely designed Christmas card that will be sent to everyone on our mailing list.

Forms are available in the vestibule or contact the card coordinator, Wally Loza at:

Wally Loza
229 Boxwood Lane
Cinnaminson, NJ 08077
(856) 829-9511
wloza@comcast

COFFEE HOUR ASSIGNMENTS: (* Denotes Fasting)

December 2* Diana Pasca
December 9*
December 16* Josef Gulka
December 23
December 30 Diana Bisinger



CROSSWALKS

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross Youth Ministry Newsletter
November 2018



at top: kids, friends and families enjoy the annual hayride.

at left: visiting with Archbishop Michael



Saturday November 10 -- **Alzheimers' Walk** See SignUp Genius invitation for information.

Advent -- We are lighting the Advent candles on each Sunday during the Nativity fast.

Friday November 16, and Friday December 21 -- **Youth Activity Meeting** 6:00 -- 9:00 PM.
Sign Up Genius invites will be sent. Please join us!

Community Service Opportunities

Monthly Community Luncheon with Diana Pasca to help prepare food for a shelter in Mt. Holly, NJ. They are usually about 2 hours on a Saturday morning. All dates are listed in Crossroads on the church calendar. (eligible for community service hours)



Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross – DECEMBER, 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 <i>Community Luncheon – 9:00</i> NO <i>Great Vespers:</i>
2 <i>St. Helena's Meeting – 9:15</i> <i>DIVINE LITURGY—10:00</i>	3	4	5 <i>Vesperal Liturgy for St. Nicholas — 7 PM</i>	6 <i>Parish Council Meeting 7 PM</i>	7	8 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
9 <i>DIVINE LITURGY—10:00</i> <i>Advent Vespers (choir starts singing at 5:30)</i> <i>Service at 6:00</i>	10	11	12	13 <i>Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Herman – 9 AM</i> <i>Woman2Woman – Cookie Exchange 6:30 at the church</i>	14	15 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
16 <i>DIVINE LITURGY 10:00</i> <i>Last day for Covenant House Stocking Collection</i>	17	18	19	20 <i>Woman2Woman Luncheon at Kettle and Grille</i>	21 <i>Youth Group</i>	22 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
23 <i>DIVINE LITURGY—10:00</i> <i>Church School Christmas Program</i>	24 <i>Christmas Eve Vesperal Liturgy 9:00</i> <i>Complines & Matins for Christmas — 4:00</i>	25 <i>Christmas Liturgy — 10:00</i>	26	27 <i>[Fr. John will be away from 12/27-12/28]</i>	28	29 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>

