

ATTENTION!

If you want a copy of *your individual 2019 contribution statement*, please fill out the form below and return it to church by, **Sunday, February 2nd**. Thank You! You can place this slip in the offering basket.

Name: _____

I DO WANT A COPY OF MY 2018 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT.

THIS WEEK'S USHER TEAM - Team B

OUR GIFTS TO GOD AND OUR CHURCH, JANUARY, 05, 2020:

SUNDAY OFFERING	\$ 553.00
LOOSE CASH	32.35
CANDLES	23.00
HOLY DAY	251.00
TOTAL	\$ 859.35

CATHOLIC TEACHING

II. CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE DEATH IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"Jesus handed over according to the definite plan of God"

Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: "This Jesus (was) delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." This Biblical language does not mean that those who handed him over were merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God.

To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore he establishes his eternal plan of "predestination", he includes in it each person's free response to his grace: "In this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." For the sake of accomplishing his plan of salvation, God permitted the acts that flowed from their blindness.

"He died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures"

The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of "the righteous one, my Servant" as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. Citing a confession of faith that he himself had "received", St. Paul professes that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures." In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed, Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles.

"For our sake God made him to be sin"

Consequently, St. Peter can formulate the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake." Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death. By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God "made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus did not experience reprobation as if he himself had sinned. But in the redeeming love that always united him to the Father, he assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Having thus established him in solidarity with us sinners, God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all", so that we might be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son".

God takes the initiative of universal redeeming love

By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins." God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." He affirms that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many"; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us. The Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer."

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED AND WAS BURIED.)

VISITATION OF THE SICK

The parishioners confined to their homes or nursing homes due to health reasons are visited monthly. Also, person who are hospitalized are visited when Fr. Vitalii is notified. It especially is important that a family member contact Fr. Vitalii whenever a loved-one is hospitalized.

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT: BOOK OF JUDITH



Author: Unknown; Date Written: c. 150 BC

Judith is often characterized as an early historical novel. Yet ironically, its content is unhistorical. The book begins by telling us that Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Assyria ruling in Ninevah. But Ninevah was destroyed seven years before Nebuchadnezzar became king. And he was king of Babylon, not Assyria. It would be similar to an author beginning a book, "In 1776, when Abraham Lincoln was the president of Canada..." The author of Judith clues us in that he is not telling a typical story. While the story is replete with proper names of places and people, many of them are not placed "correctly" and many of them are unknown from other sources.

The book of Judith is not trying to narrate an historical event nor is it presenting a regular historical novel with fictional characters in a "real" setting. Rather, Judith is iconic of all of Israel's struggles against surrounding nations. By the time of its writing, Israel had been dominated by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians and the Greeks. The name "Judith" means "Jewess." The character of Judith is therefore representative of the whole nation of Israel. In an almost constant battle against the surrounding nations, the Israelites depended on the Lord for their survival and sustenance. Judith represents the best hopes and intentions of the Israelites-the vanquishing of the oppressors and the freedom of the land of Israel.

The general Holofernes, whom Judith assassinates, represents the worst of the oppressors. He is bringing 182,000 troops against a small city in a corner of Israel to force them to worship the head of foreign oppression: Nebuchadnezzar. The city is terribly outmatched, but Holofernes opts for a siege rather than a battle. When the people are at the point of despair because they have run out of water, Judith volunteers to try an unusual tactic. She leaves the city with her maid and gets close to Holofernes because of her beauty. She uses a series of tricks and half-truths to find Holofernes drunk and vulnerable. Then she beheads him with his own sword!

It is crucial to see the irony of the story and of Judith's words. For example, the Ammonite Achior who Holofernes rejected was supposed to share the cruel fate of the Israelites at the hand of the Assyrians, but he is saved with the Israelites instead (6:5-9). Judith uses the phrase "my lord" (Adonai in Heb.) several times, but it is unclear whether she is referring to Holofernes or to God. The great nation is defeated by a humble woman. The story is similar to the famous David and Goliath episode. The reader should look for ironic moments where a character's intentions or statements are fulfilled, but in the way that he or she would least expect.

The book of Judith is divided into basically two sections, ch. 1-7 and 8-16. The first seven chapters lay out the "historical" background and describe the political situation which led to Holofernes attack on Israel. It is important to understand that the events are not historical, but they are full of details that one finds in a good novel. Achior plays a key role by narrating Israel's history and firmly believing in God's protection of his people (5). He eventually converts to Judaism after the Assyrians are defeated (14:10). The second half of the book (8-16) focuses on Judith herself and her heroic acts. Once the Assyrians discover Holofernes decapitated body, they flee in confusion and the Israelites rout them. Ch. 16 contains a hymn about Judith's deeds. Like Tobit, Judith is a deuterocanonical book.

Judith is a book of the Bible that is meant to be enjoyed. By enjoying the story and the Lord's victory over the great nations through Judith, we can appreciate the paradoxical way God chooses to work on earth, using the weak to conquer the strong, the poor to outdo the rich.

ALL SOULS SATURDAYS – HRAMOTAS

The first All Souls Saturday is February 15th. The remaining Saturdays will be March 7th, 14th, 21st, and May 30th. We will celebrate a Divine Liturgy with a Panahida ***on each of the Saturdays at 11:00 a.m.*** If you wish to remember deceased loved ones, please use the envelopes provided in your envelope box.

If you wish to remember loved ones, write them on a piece of paper and enclose in the envelope provided in your box of envelopes (***first names only***). You **MUST** make up a new list. **Please submit your list by Sunday, February 9th.**

GENERAL INFORMATION

For security reasons, during 11:00 AM Sunday Liturgy, **the back door will be locked at 11:15 AM.** Also, please remember during the Weekly Liturgy, the back door will be locked. Please park your car in front of the church.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

We welcome anyone to become a parishioner of Sts Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church. Only those who are registered are considered members of the Parish. When one registers to become a parish member, they assume the responsibility of rendering stewardship of time, talent and treasure to this parish family. Worship at this parish is always expected. Registration is done only by the pastor.

SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY

In the Gospel reading today, on this Sunday after Theophany, we hear the very first sermon that Christ ever gave in his public ministry: “Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand!”

With just these few short words, Christ begins His earthly ministry, and he summarizes all of the Gospel that is to come. Yet the first word He says is “repent.” “Repent” in the original Greek literally means to “change one’s mind – to change one’s heart” and to “turn God-ward.” In order to see Christ and to believe in Him, we must repent. In order to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, we must repent. In order to take even the first step, we must repent.

Repentance is not a one-time thing, or some grand. We who sin, if not in our actions, then in our thoughts, must constantly turn back to God and repent. To repent, we must die to ourselves and live to God. And we must die daily. And many times daily. Maybe thousands of little deaths each and every day – but death to sin and death to death. Repentance is a death that brings life!

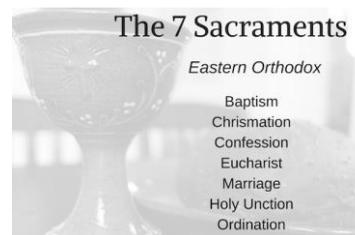
Repentance is not simply an emotional state. It isn’t simply feeling sorry, although this is part of it. Repentance is a turning from darkness to the light of Christ. It is about moving away from selfishness to selflessness, moving away from death to life. It is not some protracted, morose state of being. Instead, repentance brings true joy. When we truly repent and truly turn to God, then we receive the grace of God and we are joyful! When we turn to Christ in repentance, this turning brings life, light, joy and peace – the very fruits of the Holy Spirit. Our lives are new and different – full of joy. Full of life and vigor. This is what it means to repent. This is what Christ is saying when He says, “the Kingdom of God is at hand.” This Kingdom can be experienced here and now, if we repent and turn to God.

Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life – the Living Kingdom. Christ sets for us a banquet table, and He calls us together with Him and to dine with Him. He feeds us with His own self – His own sacrifice – the Body and Blood of our Lord.

And why are these two statements linked together: “Repent” and “the Kingdom of God is at hand”? It is this way because Christ is “the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world”. He has accomplished everything for us and for our salvation. He has reconciled us to God and has prepared and acquired for us the Heavenly Kingdom. All God requires of us is that we accept it. Our salvation is given to us by God free and complete, but we must accept it.

Christ offers us salvation, if only we will turn to Him. The Kingdom of Heaven and Christ the King are ineffably close to us – much closer than we can imagine. Closer to us than the beating of our own heart. Closer to us than our next breath. It is only through repentance that we can open wide the doors of our heart to our Saviour, the Heavenly King. On this first Sunday after Theophany, let us recall our own baptism, and our own baptismal promises. Let us turn from our sins and fix our gaze on Christ. Through a true repentance let us open wide the doors of our heart to Christ and to the Kingdom of Heaven as we look ahead towards Lent – that great season of repentance. “Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” Amen.

THE SACRAMENTS



The sacraments in the Catholic Church are officially called the “holy mysteries.” Usually seven sacraments are counted: baptism, chrismation (or confirmation), holy eucharist, penance, matrimony, holy orders and the unction of the sick.

The Church may be defined as the new life in Christ. It is man’s life lived by the Holy Spirit in union with God. All aspects of the new life of the Church participate in the mystery of salvation. In Christ and the Holy Spirit everything which is sinful and dead becomes holy and alive by the power of God the Father.

And so in Christ and the Holy Spirit everything in the Church becomes a sacrament, an element of the mystery of the Kingdom of God as it is already being experienced in the life of this world.

Viewing the Church as the new and eternal life of the Kingdom of God given to man by God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, we understand first of all that for life to exist there must be birth. The birth into the eternal life of God is the mystery of baptism. But birth is not enough for living; there must be the ongoing possibility of life: its power, energy and force. Thus, the mystery of chrismation is the gift of the power to live the life of Christ which is born in man by baptism. It is the gift of the “all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit” to man.

Life also must be sustained. This is normally done by eating and drinking. Food is the nourishment which keeps us alive. It is man’s communion with creation which keeps him existing. But, naturally speaking, our normal eating and drinking does not keep us alive forever. Our natural communion with the world is a communion to death. We need eating and drinking of a special food which nourishes us for eternal life. This food is the “mystical supper of the Son of God,” the body and blood of Christ, the mystery of the holy eucharist—the communion to Life Itself.

For life to be truly perfect, holy and good, there must also be a particular mystery about marriage. In this world all who are born are born to die, and even the most perfect of human love stands under the condemnation: “. . . until death do you part.” The mystery of Christian marriage transforms human love, childbearing, and family communities into realities of eternal proportion and significance. In marriage we are blessed by God for unending friendship and love. We are blessed so that the fruit of our love, the begetting of our children and the life of our families will be not “unto death” but unto life everlasting.

Until the final establishment of the Kingdom of God, our life remains under the attack of its demonic enemies: sin, sickness, suffering, sorrow and death. The mystery of penance is the remedy for spiritual sickness. It allows us to turn again to God, to be taken back, to be forgiven and to be received once more into the life of God from which our sins have separated us. And the mystery of holy unction is the remedy for our physical sickness which is the power of sin over our bodies, our inevitable union with suffering and death. Holy unction allows us to be healed; to suffer, not “unto death” but, once more, unto life everlasting. It is the incorporation of our wounds into the life-creating cross of Christ.

The mystery, finally, which allows the perfection of divine life to be ours in all of its fullness and power in this world is the mystery of the Church itself. And most specifically within the Church, we have the mystery of holy orders: the sacrament of priesthood, ministry, teaching and pastoral care. The clergy of the church—bishops, priests, and deacons—exist for no other purpose than to make manifest, present and powerful in the Church the divine life of the Kingdom of God to all men while still living in this world.

Thus, from birth to death, in good times and bad, in every aspect of worldly existence, real life—life as God has created and saved and sanctified it to be—is given to us in the Church. This is Christ’s express purpose and wish, the very object of his coming to the world: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”.

The Church as the gift of life eternal is by its very nature, in its fullness and entirety, a mystical and sacramental reality. It is the life of the Kingdom of God given already to those who believe. And thus, within the Church, everything we do—our prayers, blessings, good works, thoughts, actions—everything participates in the life which has no end. In this sense everything which is in the Church and of the Church is a sacrament of the Kingdom of God.

Sunday after Theophany

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 4:12-17

W Z F P D O N C D U J E S U S
A D Z R I V X H X B H E A R D
P F M O Z E B U L U N M H I H
R C A P E R N A U M D W Z H L
M Q N H A S F D I A R I S E N
Y Z A E G H U S S W T T W T S
O F P T A A L J A J B H N X E
J B H P L D F K I N G D O M A
O H T L I O I Q A A X R R H R
H A A I L W L A H Q X E E H R
N N L G E E L Q I Q O W P M E
Z D I H E D E D A R K N E S S
O X D T K C D H E A V E N U T
R E G I O N T D E A T H T L E
M Z H T C E N A Z A R E T H D

JESUS	HEARD	JOHN
ARRESTED	WITHDREW	GALILEE
NAZARETH	CAPERNAUM	SEA
REGION	ZEBULON	NAPHTALI
ISAIAH	PROPHET	FULFILLED
DARKNESS	OVERSHADOWED	DEATH
LIGHT	ARISEN	REPENT
KINGDOM	HEAVEN	HAND