

2022 Summer Sermon Series:

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out

Feast of SS Peter and Paul

6/29/22

Recently I came across the following quote from the German poet Johann von Goethe which reminded me of Orthodox spirituality, worship, and today's Feast.

“Nothing in nature is isolated; nothing is without reference to something else; nothing achieves meaning apart from that which neighbors it.”

We celebrated the Feast of SS Peter and Paul last night and today, but were prepared and connected along the way by the Feasts that came before it and all that comes afterwards. We heard on **Pentecost** how as Christ sent down the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, which enlightened them, so the Spirit – through them – has enlightened the world. Then we celebrated the **Feast of All Saints** and heard how through faith the disciples – each in their unique ways – became “instruments of the Spirit.” Then last **Sunday**, we celebrated the men, women, and children and “those known to us and known only to God” who have been sanctified in the local Orthodox Churches throughout the world.



In one sense, the **Feast of SS Peter and Paul** is the particular culmination of that process by which the Holy Spirit works – in broad ways, down to specific people in certain places and it always takes place on the same each year – June 29. But as I shared last evening, as part of every Divine and Vespereal Liturgy – whenever it is celebrated – the priest offers the following petition while cutting a small particle of bread as part of preparatory process called: *proskomedia*:

“Of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable apostles Peter and Paul, (of the Twelve and of the Seventy), and all the holy apostles.”

In other words, at every Divine Liturgy we remember and welcome the participation of Peter and Paul and “all the holy apostles” – ALL those who have and will continue to be – like us – “sent out” into the world (the literal translation of what it means to be an apostle).

In remembering and welcoming them, we receive and discover embedded within each Liturgy the message of their lives - that everyone is being prepared to be an "apostle" and to be "**sent out.**"

During the rest of the summer, starting this Sunday, I want to explore this theme in a series of Sermons that will follow the petitions and language of what is called, “**The Litany of Thanksgiving**” – which is offered after the reception of Holy Communion and just prior to the dismissal – when we will be instructed to “**depart or go forth in peace.**”

We’re going to consider in Goethe’s expression how being “sent out” will connect us to everything else that is expressed within the Divine Liturgy.

Friday, July 1, 2022

*Preparing for the Beginning of this Summer's Sermon Series:
"Among Those Who are Being Sent Out"*

Building on the liturgical experiences over the past few weeks in celebrating the **Feasts of Pentecost, All Saints, All Saints of North America, and SS Peter and Paul**, we'll consider in the Sermons over the course of the summer how we – like the saints and the apostles – are **"Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out."**

To help us in this exploration we'll look at the imagery and language from **"The Litany of Thanksgiving,"** which is offered after the reception of Holy Communion and before the Dismissal.

This Sunday, we'll look at the first petition in bold below.

Fr. John

The Litany of Thanksgiving

Priest: **Let us be attentive! Having partaken of the divine, holy, most pure, immortal, heavenly, life-creating, and awesome mysteries of Christ, let us worthily give thanks to the Lord.**

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Your grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Asking that the whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful, and sinless, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life to Christ our God.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

Priest: We thank You, O Master who loves mankind, Benefactor of our souls, that You have made us worthy this day of Your heavenly and immortal mysteries. Make straight our path; strengthen us all in Your fear; guard our life; make firm our steps; through the prayers and intercessions of the glorious Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, and of all Your saints.

For You are our sanctification, and to You we ascribe glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Let us depart in peace.

Choir: In the name of the Lord.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Lord, who blesses those who bless You, and sanctifies those who trust in You: Save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Preserve the fullness of Your Church. Sanctify those who love the beauty of Your house; glorify them in return by Your divine power, and do not forsake us who put our hope in You. Give peace to Your world, to Your churches, to Your priests, to all those in civil authority, and to all Your people.

For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from You, the Father of lights, and to You we ascribe glory, thanksgiving, and worship: to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen. Blessed be the name of the Lord, henceforth and forevermore. (3x)

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Notes from the Sunday Sermon of July 3, 2022:

***“Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out – Sermon 1:
Let Us Be Attentive / the Awesome Mysteries***

On Sunday we began our Summer Sermon Series entitled, **“Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out.”** I noted that we are now using the liturgical color **gold** for the vestments and covers, having moved through the colors of **purple** (with which we began Great Lent on Sunday March 6), **white** for the Paschal Season, and **green** for the Feast of Pentecost.

In coming to **gold**, we move to the color of normal time, or as it’s expressed liturgically – to the time measured in “Sundays after Pentecost” (which will take us again up to the beginning of Great Lent). My friend, Fr Paul Lazor, used to speak of himself as a priest for the “time after Pentecost.”



As we continue through the Summer Sundays, I want to keep in mind that image of time measured in connection to the gift of the Holy Spirit given on Pentecost and the following Sundays. On the Feast of All Saints – the Sunday after Pentecost – we recalled how the disciples “through faith became instruments of the Spirit.” On the next Sunday each Orthodox Church throughout the world remembered the Saints of their location, so for us it was the “Saints of North America.” Then on June 29 (or in our case during the Vespereal Liturgy held the night before), we remembered SS Peter and Paul – affirming that they represent the common vocation of each person in being “sent out” by the Spirit to places, people, and situations. These may take us to distant locations or to the locale deep within our own hearts and circumstances: to be an “apostle” means literally to be “sent.”

I reminded the community on Sunday that though the Feast of SS Peter and Paul is only celebrated once a year, as part of every Divine and Vespereal Liturgy – whenever it is celebrated – the priest offers the following petition while cutting a small particle of bread as part of preparatory process called: proskomedija):

“Of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable apostles Peter and Paul, (of the Twelve and of the Seventy), and all the holy apostles.”

The implication is that whether one is officially recognized as a Saint of the church or – as most of us – are “called to be saints,” we are ALL designated to be “sent out” by the Spirit and this recognition is embedded within every Liturgy.

We'll explore these themes of the time after Pentecost and "being among those who are sent out" by looking at the "**Litany of Thanksgiving**" which organizes our liturgical after receiving Holy Communion and before asking that we be able to "depart in peace."

We began last Sunday by considering the first petition:

Priest: Let us be attentive! Having partaken of the divine, holy, most pure, immortal, heavenly, life-creating, and awesome mysteries of Christ, let us worthily give thanks to the Lord.

This petition provides us with the language to describe - at least in some way - "what" we are experiencing when we receive Holy Communion.

First, when we hear the expression, "Let us attend" or "Let us be attentive" throughout the Liturgy, it reminds us that something significant is about to happen, it's time to wake up, and pay attention. We hear this at the time of the Scripture readings, before the Creed, in the opening expression of the Anaphora, and the final time - during this petition.

Actually, though it is often translated, "**Let us be attentive,**" the actual Greek word used before the Gospel and during this Litany is: "**Orthoi**" - which literally means "stand upright or straight." It's found in the word, "Orthodox" - which means "right or true" glory. An Orthodontist is someone who helps "straighten" our children's teeth. We hear the word used in the Letter to the Hebrews implying the straight path of righteousness:

"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so the what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:12-13).

So we are being made aware that our body and souls will need to be mobilized and brought to a state of being alert.

The remaining words remind us that the Lord's Body and Blood of which we have partaken can best be described as not ordinary food, but as:

divine, holy, most pure, immortal, heavenly, life-creating, and
awesome

We spent some time on the word, "**awesome**" - which culturally can often have a whimsical, even superficial meaning. But in this case the Greek word - "**frikτος**" is used, which is often more properly translated as "dread," implying "reverential holy fear and caution."

In saying that we partake of the "mysteries" of Christ, we acknowledge having the reality of an experience which will continually be more fully revealed to us. Once Holy Communion was distributed the choir sang a hymn from the Paschal Service:

"O Christ! Great and most holy Pascha! O Wisdom, Word, and Power of God! Grant that we may more perfectly partake of You in the never ending Day of Your Kingdom."

Finally, we affirm that the reception of the Eucharist is a gift for which we are always unworthy. This is summarized and acknowledged again in the first “Prayer of Thanksgiving of Thanksgiving After Holy Communion”:

“I thank You, Lord my God, for You have not rejected me, a sinner, but have made me worthy to be a partaker of Your holy things. I thank You, for You have permitted me, the unworthy, to commune with Your most pure and heavenly Gifts.”

In this first petition from the **Litany of Thanksgiving**, we are provided with the essential vocabulary for understanding what has happened to us as partakers of the Mysteries of Jesus Christ.

This is where we need to begin.

Notes from the Sunday Sermon of July 10, 2022:

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 2

“Keep us, O God, by Your Grace...Commending and Entrusting Ourselves and Each Other to Christ our God”

We began this past Sunday’s Sermon with 3 stories:

1) The children’s book author, **Maurice Sendak and the monks of New Skete:**

The monks raise and train German shepherd dogs and they are very particular about the person or family to whom they will entrust their dogs. On their website their relationship with Maurice Sendak and the establishment of “The Maurice Sendak Training Building at New Skete” were discussed:

“Maurice Sendak was a dear friend of New Skete for many years. Not only was he a lover of all things dog, he saw clearly their spiritual importance and how they can enrich our lives when they are cared for and loved. Maurice included his dogs in each of his books, and their presence reflects just how vital they were to his inspiration.

We are blessed to have known his friendship and support, and through the generosity of the Maurice Sendak Foundation we honor his legacy and keep his memory eternal.”

The slogan of the fundraising campaign for the “Sendak Training Building” was:
“Where Wild Things Become Best Friends.”

2) Sunday was the Feast Day of **St. Anthony, founder of the Monastery of the Kievan Caves (The Kiev-Pechersk Lavra).**

Anthony was born in 983 in Chernigov - at that time called generally the land of “Rus” (which coming from Old Norse means, the Scandinavian people who entered the area “and rowed boats” down the river). Anthony was from the area now considered Ukraine, the countries of Russia and Belarus acquired their names from this derivation. After spending time on Mt. Athos and learning to love the particular kind of monastic life there, he desired to return to his own area and share with others his rich experience of monasticism. He found monastics who lived in caves around Kiev and eventually established a community there which would become a center of monastic and spiritual life throughout the broader area.

3) SUNDAY’S GOSPEL (Mt 8:5-13) – The Healing of the Centurion’s Paralyzed Servant: The Centurion, a non-Jew and Roman soldier, asked Christ to heal his servant and Jesus offered to come and do that. But the Centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.” It was noted that this expression is used several times in the Prayers Before the Reception of Holy Communion (the choir even sang a liturgical version of it during the Liturgy).

The Centurion, though not even a Jew, understood that Jesus's power had no limitations and even his word had healing capabilities – so he entrusted his servant into Jesus's care.

These three stories provided the essential example of those who commended or entrusted those and that which they loved to others: the monks of New Skete understood that Maurice Sendak would love and care for their beloved dogs; St. Anthony longed to share his experience of monasticism with those in his homeland; the Centurion knew that Jesus could care for and heal his servant.

This summer we are exploring the language and imagery from **“The Litany of Thanksgiving,”** which is offered following the reception of Holy Communion and before “departing in peace,” – language which helps us understand what has been presented to us in the gift of Holy Communion and how we can see ourselves like the apostles as **“Among Those Who are Being Sent Out.”**

We began again with the images presented to us in the first petition (that was discussed last week) of Holy Communion as being:

divine, holy, most pure, immortal, heavenly, life-creating, and awesome.

Then we looked at the next two petitions - focusing particularly on the words – **“keep”** and **“commend”**:

Priest: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Your grace.

Priest: Asking that the whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful, and sinless, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life to Christ our God.

From the beginning to end of every Liturgy (for these petitions appear several times), we are continually reminded that we are helped, saved, experience mercy, and are preserved or “kept” by God's grace.

But all that happens so that being “kept” by God's grace we may be sent out and capable of doing something: to be among those (like the monks of New Skete, St. Anthony, and the Centurion) who long to commend or entrust everything and those which are important into the hands of one who will care for them. It may start with an individual person, or a community, but in the end it should lead ultimately to the person and hands of Christ our God.

And that can make all the difference.

Notes from the Sermon of August 28, 2022

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 3

"The Heavenly and Immortal Mysteries / The Journey"

In this Sermon I shared some of the things I had been finishing up and thinking about for the future while I spent hours and days under the butterfly bush in my yard recovering from COVID:



1) Among the books I finished reading - the second try and after months of effort - was **Moby Dick**. This was in anticipation for the trip my wife and I would make on our vacation to New Bedford, MA where Ishmael begins his journey (preparing to head to Nantucket where he'll board the Pequod, meet Captain Ahab, and end up on more of an adventure than he could have ever imagined. By the way, I hadn't realized that one of the main characters is Starbuck, for whom the coffee chain is named.)

2) But first we headed about 45 minutes west of New Bedford to **Plymouth Rock**.

Here's the **rock**:



Here's the **Mayflower II** which had its own adventure in coming here from England in 1957:

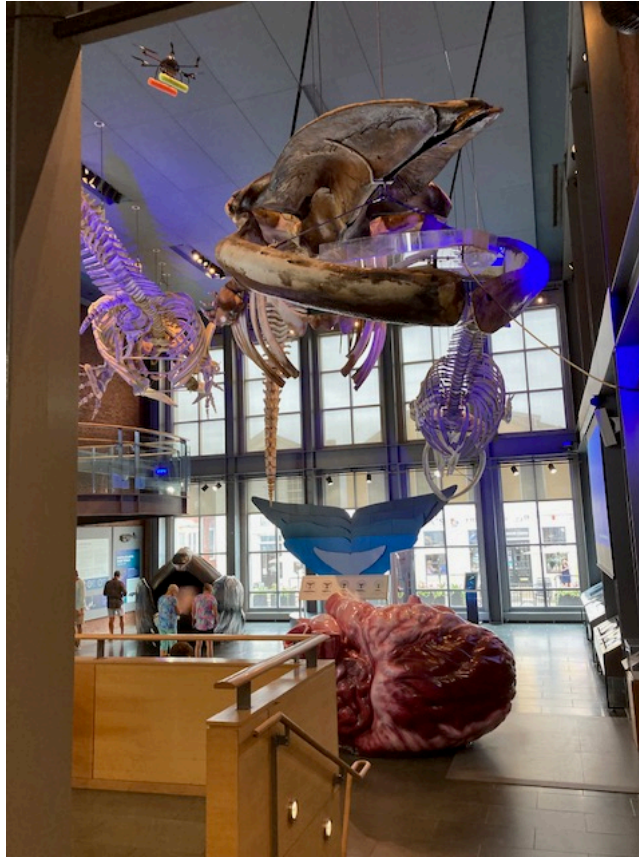


3) Here's New Bedford



Here are some scenes from the wonderful **New Bedford Whaling Museum**:





4) I also spent considerable time thinking about an appropriate part of Scripture for us to explore over the course of the upcoming year as we prepare for our community's 50th anniversary in September, 2023.

I kept returning to the text and commentaries on the Old Testament book of **Exodus**, where, among many important themes, the Jewish people discover their identity in their relationship (their covenant) to and with God - as "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (19:6).

Here is Moses receiving the Law from God on Mt. Sinai (this gift from Donna Woodhull came from the Orthodox Monastery on Mt. Sinai) - this icon and that of Moses by the burning bush (as described in Exodus 3) will remain on our center table during our anniversary year preparation).



5) I thought of the pilgrimage of the Jewish people for 40 years in the wilderness, the Pilgrims coming to America, and the adventures of Moby Dick from the context of the “**Litany of Thanksgiving**” offered at the end of the Divine Liturgy that I have been using as the basis for this past summer’s Sermon Series, particularly this line:

“We thank You, O Master, who loves mankind, Benefactor of our souls, that You have made us worthy this day of Your **heavenly and immortal mysteries.**”

Each of the above mentioned examples presents the **whole story** within the **mysterious context** of the experience of life, the journey, that is encountered: there’s a whole world being presented on the Pequod in its search on the high seas for the white whale; the Pilgrims saw themselves precisely as people, like the Jews in the wilderness, on a pilgrimage and being guided by God

CONCLUSION: Each week, at each Liturgy we are offered the experience of

- the mystery of the Eucharist and within every sacramental moment
- the mystery of every community gathering, connected to
- the mystery of who we are individually

Each of us is invited, as we enter into the coming year (which liturgically begins on September 1), to commit ourselves to the courageous exploration of what the **mystery and journey** of the Liturgy and community might mean for us.

Notes from the Sunday on September 4, 2022

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 4

Being Guided on the Mystery of our Journey Each Day by the Scriptures and the Saints

In this Sermon it was mentioned that our new liturgical year begins on **September 1**. Each day is like a piece of a mosaic that provides insight into the whole year.

It does this in two particular ways:

1) **OUR CHURCH CALENDAR** offers us the **daily Scriptures** (readings primarily from the Letters of St. Paul and the Gospels) and the **Saints** commemorated on that day.

The Scripture Readings and information about the Lives of the Saints can be found on the website of the Orthodox Church in America:

- **Daily Readings:**

<https://www.oca.org/readings>

- **Saints of the Days:**

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives>

I encourage everyone to begin each day looking at the Scripture Readings and the Lives of the Saints commemorated because they can broaden our resources for being guided by God. If you do this before you check your email and have a cup of coffee, I assure you that there will usually be enough time.

2) **Last Sunday**, using the examples of the Jewish people wandering through the wilderness for 40 years as described in the Book of Exodus, the pilgrims journey to America, and the story of Moby Dick I suggested that we as a community are likewise on a **journey** in preparation for the celebration of our 50th Anniversary as a parish.

In the language and context of the Liturgy we explored how we enter into the significance of the word “**mystery**” as it relates to the Sacraments, to the community, and to ourselves.

3) **THE SCRIPTURE AND THE SAINT we remembered yesterday helped us understand more about the mystery of our journey.**

In the Scriptures, St. Paul reminded us that the journey we are on is guided by the testimony of **those who first received it – to whom it was handed down** (1 Cor 15: 3) - what we call “tradition”) and was made possible by “**the grace of God**” (1 Cor. 15:10). In the Gospel story,

Christ assured his disciples that the things which are “**impossible for men are possible for God**” (Mt 19:26).

4) **PROPHET MOSES**: On this Sunday, it was providential that it was the Feast of the **Prophet Moses** – who we will hear much more about over the course of the next year as we study the Book of Exodus. Among all the things for us to consider about Moses, the most important is **how he came to experience God’s presence**. He knew God in a personal way.



It was said that, “**The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend**” (Exodus 33:11).

In this context, I reminded the community of the interview with **Metropolitan Kallistos Ware** who in speaking about his experience with the Jesus Prayer stated,

“What the Jesus Prayer has done for me and is doing is to **convey a sense of presence**. That’s a phrase I’ve already used and it sums up for me the essence of prayer. **Prayer is sense of presence**, so that through the Jesus Prayer my Christian faith becomes not just something that I hold with my reasoning brain, not something that is just a set of ideas, a theory of life, and not simply a set of moral rules. Through the Jesus Prayer I have a feeling, and not just a feeling – a conviction, a knowledge – that I am one with Christ, my Savior.

5) CONCLUSION:

- The nature of the journey we are on is renewed again by the beginning of the Liturgical Year.
- Each day provides us with the resources of the Scriptures and the examples of a variety of saints who tried – each in their own way – to receive the message of the faith that was handed down to them.
- Despite failures they came to know that in the end the success of their journey was not related to their own abilities or strengths, but was made possible by “the Grace of God.” In addition, whatever might have seemed at times impossible to men, became possible through God.
- The destination of the journey and the goal and benefits of hearing the Scriptures and the lives of the Saints – each day – are not the accumulation of knowledge, but the possibility of preparing ourselves for the encounter with God.
- The last petition of the “**Litany of Thanksgiving,**” reminds us that we ask not only God to guide our journey, but we hope for the companionship of all those – the Virgin Mary and the Saints – who have desired and come to know God’s presence:

Make straight our path; strengthen us all in Your fear; guard our life; make firm our steps; through the prayers and intercessions of the glorious Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, and of all Your saints.

+

The Prophet Moses

Tone 2 Troparion (Prophet Moses)

You ascended to the heights of the virtues, O Prophet Moses;
therefore, you were deemed worthy to see the glory of God.
Having received the grace-filled tablets of the Law,
and bearing the grace of the writing within yourself,
You were the honorable praise of prophets,//
and a great mystery of piety.

Tone 2 Kontakion (Prophet Moses)

The choir of prophets rejoices with Moses and Aaron today,
for the fulfillment of their prophecy is in our midst:
the Cross, by which You have saved us, shines forth today.//
By their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Notes from the Sunday Sermon of September 11, 2022:

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 5

“For You Are Our Sanctification” - What Can It Mean to Be Truly Human

1) **PROFESSOR JAROSLAV PELIKAN** told this story in 2003 about his friend, Stephen Jay Gould:

“My late friend Stephen Jay Gould would insist with dogmatic fervor that he wasn’t a believer. In addition to being a distinguished paleontologist and a terrific communicator, Steve Gould was a member of the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston. He sang all this ancient music. In an interview several years ago, that we were both involved in, he was asked about communication with other planets and other worlds. How should we try to reach people who do not know our language or anything else? And he said, we should play the Bach B-Minor Mass, and we should say in as many languages as we can, “This is the best that we have ever done. And we would like you to hear it. And we would like to hear the best that you have ever done.” He would want broadcast systems blaring across our solar system and beyond it with the B-Minor Mass including “Credo in Deo Patre” (I believe in God the Father).”

This statement reminded me of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann’s opening words in his Sermon on the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos which we continue to celebrate this weekend:

“The Orthodox Church has always emphasized Mary’s connection to humanity and delighted in her as the best, purest, most sublime fruition of human history and of man’s quest for God, for ultimate meaning, for the ultimate content of human life.”

As we celebrate the birth of the Virgin, we first acknowledge her as the best that we as humans have to offer and the example of what we would want to be: one who freely cooperates with God and long to “hear God’s word and keep it” (Lk 11:28).

2) **TODAY, ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2022** we remember the terrorist attacks led to the deaths of thousands in buildings and planes: we witnessed the worst in human behavior and the best among those who gave their lives in their efforts to provide care and support among those under attack.

3) **IN TODAY’S GOSPEL** – John 3:13-17 we heard the following words of Jesus, meant for the Sunday Before the Elevation of the Cross – our parish feast day which will take place on September 14:

John 3:13-17 (Gospel, Sunday Before)

13

No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

14

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15

that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jesus reminds us that He was born – “sent into the world” – to save people. His humanity, acquired from the Virgin Mary, becomes the image for all of us who long as Fr. Schmemmann said, “for ultimate content of human life.”

4) **CONCLUSION:** We hear all of these themes in the context of our ongoing Sermon Series based on the “**Litany of Thanksgiving**” from the end of the Liturgy – today’s text being:

“For Your are our Sanctification....”

In offering these words we affirm that Christ is the one who not only sanctifies us, making us “holy” – little by little, liturgy by liturgy, but also that He makes us more like himself; He makes us more truly human, providing us the image of what the best of humanity could be like.

Notes from the Sunday Sermon of September 18, 2022:

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 6

“Let Us Depart/Go Forth in Peace”

Yesterday’s Sermon explored the expression presented to us in the instruction towards the end “**The Litany of Thanksgiving,**” that we are to:

“Depart or Go Forth in Peace”

It was developed in 3 ways:

1. **“A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, A HOLY NATION”** – we were reminded from the account in **Exodus 19:1-6** of how God announced to Moses that “if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. **6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’**

Every Liturgy affirms that:

- there is only **ONE** priest, Jesus
- **SOME** are called to be liturgical priests
- **EVERYONE** is called to be a priest in the sense of offering their lives to God

2. **THE LITURGY PREPARES US TO WORK OUT THIS MINISTRY OF OFFERING BY**

**RECEIVING IN OURSELVES THE PRESENCE OF JESUS,
RECOGNIZING HIM IN OTHERS
AND SHARING HIS PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER**

– Fr. Alexander Schmemmann said that, “the Christian is the one who, wherever he or she looks, sees Christ everywhere and rejoices in him.” We are to go out, then, from the Liturgy and see Christ everywhere.

– While as individuals we will each need to respond to the presence of Christ in others as well as we can, as a community we have tried to do this in these specific ways:

– in **August** we supported the “*Helpers of God’s Precious Infants*” and in October we’ll be providing resources in a **Crop Walk** for *Church World Services*.

3. **THE FOUNDATION OF OUR "PRIESTHOOD" IS THE COMMON EXPERIENCE OF THE CROSS:**

– In this Sunday's Gospel we heard Jesus say:

"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:34-35)



4. **CONCLUSION:** In this way, the final words of the Liturgy mark not the end of the Service, but the beginning of the "*Liturgy after the Liturgy.*"

Notes from the Sunday Sermon of September 25, 2022

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 7

“Depths, Peace, and Liturgy”

Three words were considered in yesterday’s Sermon. The first word, **depths/deep** comes from the Sunday Gospel; the second, **peace**, is featured at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of the Service; and the final word, **liturgy**, holds them all together.

1) **DEPTHS/DEEP**: Jesus said to Simon and the other fishermen who had worked unsuccessfully through the night that they should

“Cast out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4)

The word and Gospel story, in this case, indicate something which needed a different kind of effort than just hard, extended work: to go into the deep implies a mystery and unfathomable quality about the place, about the catch (implying not just fish, but people), and God. Moreover, the knowledge or experience keeps expanding and becoming more interrelated and connected:

The following texts were shared:

Where shall we sinners flee from You, Who are in all creation?
In heaven You dwell!
In hell You trampled on death!
In the depths of the sea?
Even there is Your hand, O Master! (Lord, I Call: Tone 6/Psalm 139)

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

9 But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything,
even the depths of God. (1 Cor 2:9-10)

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other

created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

2. **PEACE:** “In peace, let us pray to the Lord...” is the first petition of The Great Litany and priest offers the gift of Christ’s peace throughout the Service. At the end of the Liturgy, we are commanded to “depart or go forth” in peace. And then we focused today on these words from the prayer of “**The Litany of Thanksgiving**”:

O Lord, who blesses those who bless You, and sanctifies those who trust in You: Save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Preserve the fullness of Your Church. Sanctify those who love the beauty of Your house; glorify them in return by Your divine power, and do not forsake us who put our hope in You. Give peace to Your world, to Your churches, to Your priests, to all those in civil authority, and to all Your people.

Peace, like “depths,” is comprehensive and expanding - we pray that the peace we have entered into and received during the Liturgy might be taken out into the world, to the churches, be present to the priests, civil authorities, and to all the people.

3. **LITURGY:** During yesterday’s Coffee Hour we began showing the documentary, “**Parallel Love: The Story of a Band Called Luxury.**” This past week, I spoke with Fr. David Bozeman one of the subjects of the film about church life and ministry to those who are searching and are looking for healing. He stated that an important affirmation for him has been that the working out of brokenness is more than just peace, but is the liturgy itself which brings together all of the deepest aspirations contained within each person: the Liturgy is where Christ becomes the physician and healer of our souls and bodies.

4. **Conclusion:** Exploring the deep places in our hearts, the depth of the riches in coming to know God, and the peace which Christ continually offers are continually affirmed at each Divine Liturgy.

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NOTE: The first half of the documentary, **Parallel Love: The Story of a Band Called Luxury**, which we watched during yesterday’s Coffee Hour could be summarized in the following review:

The 1990s, alt rock band, **Luxury** was skyrocketing toward national fame, until a life-threatening tour bus wreck shakes each band member to his core.

Next Sunday, we’ll watch the conclusion.

Notes from the Sunday Sermon of October 2, 2022

Among Those Who Are Being Sent Out: Part 8

“Every good gift and every perfect gift...”

Every Sunday Liturgy, in its own way, reminds us of the movement of the liturgical year: we never simply arrive, rather there is a constant progression of preparation and fulfillment, coming towards and moving away. At the beginning of the Divine Liturgy we hear about and approach our destination - “Blessed is the Kingdom...” and at the end we are reminded that having been filled to the extent possible with the experience of the Kingdom we must return and “depart or go forth” back into the world.

But, hopefully, we do this in a different way and do not assume that it’s all up to us.

1) **“WORKING TOGETHER WITH HIM”** – In the words from St. Paul’s 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians that we heard today, we are always invited to **“work together with Him”** so as to “not to receive the grace of God in vain.” For **“now** is the acceptable time, **now** is the day of salvation.”

2) **THE END:** Throughout the summer and early Fall we have been exploring how this is possible by reviewing the imagery and texts from the **“Litany of Thanksgiving,”** offered at the end of the Liturgy. We have now come to the text in bold from the final prayer:

O Lord, who blesses those who bless You, and sanctifies those who trust in You: Save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Preserve the fullness of Your Church. Sanctify those who love the beauty of Your house; glorify them in return by Your divine power, and do not forsake us who put our hope in You. Give peace to Your world, to Your churches, to Your priests, to all those in civil authority, and to all Your people.

For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from You, the Father of lights, and to You we ascribe glory, thanksgiving, and worship: to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

These words come from the Epistle of St. James and therefore provide us with a context:

Chapter 1:

12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. **13** No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. **14** But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; **15** then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. **16** Do not be deceived, my beloved, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. **16**

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. **18** In fulfilment of His own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

The point here is that as we depart and go forth from the church and the liturgy we will either be “working together” with God in being guided and motivated by the goodness of His grace or we will be subject to our “own desire, being lured and enticed by it.”

3) TODAY’S GOSPEL REMINDS US AS WELL ABOUT THE “GOLDEN RULE” that we should do to others, as we would have them do to us, realizing that God offers all things and possibilities to everyone, even to the “unthankful and evil,” so - in a sense - no one can have an excuse.

4) CONCLUSION: Every liturgy prepares us for an experience of God’s Kingdom, for the opportunity of being fellow workers in receiving and not accepting His grace in vain, and in being prepared to be sent out as witnesses and expressions of His goodness and mercy.

SUNDAY’S GOSPEL

Luke 6:31-36 (Gospel)

31

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

32

But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

33

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

34

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

35

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36

Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.