



The **St. Nicholas Navigator**

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Pastoral Epistle: Jesus Is the Archives

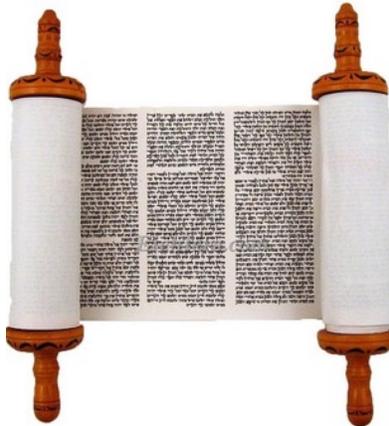
St. Ignatius of Antioch was the second bishop of Antioch, after the Apostle Peter. By tradition, he was the child the Lord held in His arms, saying, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:3) Later he became known as “the Godbearer” — having been carried by Christ as a child, he carried Christ throughout his life, in his heart and on his lips. In old age, he was seized in Antioch by Roman soldiers, and transported to Rome, where he was sentenced to be devoured by wild beasts for his Christian faith. On his journey to Rome, he wrote seven epistles, which are among the earliest Christian writings after those in the New Testament.

Among many inspiring teachings in his epistles, St. Ignatius spoke about the need to rightly interpret the Scriptures. Specifically, he was concerned to counter the claims of certain people that the gospel was not in line with the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). In his epistle to the church in Philadelphia, he wrote this:

“For I heard some people say, ‘If I do not find it in the archives [meaning, the Old Testament], I do not believe it in the gospel.’ And when I said to them, ‘It is written,’ they answered me, ‘That

is precisely the question.’ But for me, the ‘archives’ are Jesus Christ, the inviolable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which comes through him; by these things I want, through your prayers, to be justified.” (Phil. 8.2)

The archives are Jesus Christ. For St. Ignatius, and for all Christians throughout the ages, Jesus Christ *is* the Word of God. Of course, the Old Testament bears witness to Jesus as the messiah. If we reject Christ, though, our minds are blinded to the true meaning of what is written in Scripture. When we know Christ truly, we see Him everywhere we look. And we are amazed at how perfectly the Old Testament — every word of it — bears witness to Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the perfect revelation of God’s love.



While we may encounter people who disbelieve that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, we are probably more likely to meet the belief that the Gospel is irrelevant to life here and now. Or, perhaps, we hear the Gospel quoted completely out of context...pay attention and you’ll probably notice it soon. St. Ignatius’ words speak equally to these situations, and many others we may encounter. The “inviolable archives” — the measuring stick for reality — is the Person of Jesus Christ and “his cross and death and his resurrection

and the faith which comes through him.” If Scripture is used in such a way that it contradicts the message of the crucified and resurrected Christ, it is being abused. And if the Cross and the Resurrection are not relevant to my life, then nothing is.

Lastly, we should notice the profound humility in St. Ignatius’ words. And herein lies the secret to knowing Christ truly, in such a way that our hearts are purified and our minds illumined. “By these things,” he says, “I want, *through your prayers*, to be justified.” The words, “through your prayers” express nothing but the most total, perfect humility. Ignatius is a bishop on his way to die as a martyr for Christ. His faith in Christ is absolute. He begs the Romans not even to try to rescue him from death, because he wants nothing more than to die for Christ. Still, with all that, he sees himself as in need of the prayers of his brothers and sisters. Far from judging himself superior to the other members of the Church, he places himself in a position of dependence on their love. Such is the way of the extreme humility of the Cross in our life, through which we can also become “Godbearers.”

With love in Christ,
Fr. Daniel

Going Deeper **By: Sh. Monica Olsen**

My tiny garden stands 3 feet by 5 feet and holds just the essentials: mostly tomatoes and basil. It might be tiny, but it turns out that it is deep, and I might have never have known it. Let me explain. Back in March, I purchased a six pack of tomato seedlings from Lowes. Since the square footage of the garden bed is so small, I set several pots around it to hold extra seedlings. I put the same brand of top soil and the same brand of composted cow manure mixed into the earth and mixed into the pots, then planted the seedlings and watered them. Every time I watered, I scooped each plant two cups of water from my bucket. I put

pine straw on both the earth bed and in the pots for mulch. I put diatomaceous earth on both sets of plants when tiny bugs threatened. Despite all the same treatment from the outside, the tomato plants in the earth grew huge, with thick stems and green leaves; while the ones in the pots remained stunted and spindly, with yellow and brown leaves. I even measured, and you can see in the pictures: the ones growing in the earth are 47 inches tall but the ones in the pots grew to only 17 inches tall. The only difference in the tomato plants is that the roots had room to grow deeper in the earth of the garden but were confined to be shallow in the pots.



One morning I was sitting outside enjoying a cup of coffee and looked over at the little garden, and the phrase I have heard a few times in Fr. Daniel and Dn. Nicholas’ homilies came to my mind: we must go deeper. When I looked at the tomato plants I understood why – I can either grow strong in Christ, bearing the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, and gentleness toward my family, or I could stop growing and start shriveling, with irritable sighs, too-harsh words, and anger-bent eyebrows. I could either be the tall healthy tomato mom who looks in my child’s eyes when he speaks to me – even at the end of a

long day -- or the limp tomato mom who looks at my phone instead, nodding, "uh, huh," telling myself that I was nice for most of the day but *now it is MY time, so leave me alone*. Of course parents need some time to themselves, but I know the difference between being healthy and being selfish. The difference between telling the kids that I need 20 minutes in my room to refuel verses ignoring them for the rest of the night once dinner is over because I am so tired. Usually my conscience points it out and I feel icky inside, a feeling on the inside like the dried up and shriveled leaves of the tomato plants in the pots outside. If I want to live the way I hope to live, I am going to have to find ways for spiritual roots to grow deeper in my heart. I am going to have to enlarge the pot, or maybe just ask God to knock the hard layers of crust off so I can enter deeper inside of it with Him. It seems that the first step is realizing I am shallow and wanting to go deeper.



Then what? Confession.

Confession – besides being a mystical means of healing in which the energy of the Almighty God lovingly connects to me through physical materials -- is a good practical way to help prepare my heart for going deeper. The sins that get in the way of me going deeper, really that are a part of me that does not want to go deeper, usually make an appearance during confession and often Fr. Daniel has a small bit of advice about how to combat them. Recently his advice turned towards how to help me fight distraction. This past summer I have realized just how distracted I am during services and during my own private prayers.

When we spend a family weekend at my parents' Lake House, I often awake before most of the others and look out over the calm dawn lake. The house is dark, but the coffee is already made because my brother-in-law wakes up before me, and he is the first thing I see when I look outside. At the end of the long dock sits a solitary white and dainty wrought iron rocking chair, the one he pulls to the end so he can catch a glimpse of the sunrise around the trees that encompass the property. He sits there for almost an hour and ponders thoughts about God.

I could sit in the beauty of the outdoors for an hour, but I couldn't ponder about God for the whole time. Not yet, anyway. There is a story of an English Bishop who once responded to a reporter's question of how often he prayed, that he prayed only two minutes per day. Everyone was scandalized! He clarified, "Oh, I stand at prayer for many hours throughout each day, but

for only two minutes does my heart truly focus on God and pray."

I can completely identify with this, as we sometimes sing in Orthros, "From my youth up, many passions have warred against me!" From my youth up, distraction has kidnapped my mind from going deeper into the Kingdom of heaven. When I was in the 5th grade, I would tune out during the homilies at my Roman Catholic parish, distracted by an imaginary adventure across the back wall behind and above the altar table. In a Roman Catholic building there is no iconostasis; however, a gigantic statue with the body of our Lord hanging on the cross guards the area. To the right I saw the piano, which the contemporary, 11:00 am (college student) service used. On the left sat the organ to accompany the 8:30

am Mass. Between the two instruments a textured background of wooden boards and stones transformed the surface - in my distracted mind - into a Ninja Warrior course. Would it be possible, I pondered, to traverse the chasm between the piano and organ without ever touching the floor or the alter instruments? My mind set to making the necessary hand and foot placements along the wall. By the end of the homily I was safely across, shaking my head to awake to reality and feeling a little guilty that I had just spent that last twenty minutes in distraction.

Now, thirty years later, I am beginning to see that I spend much more than twenty minutes of each day in distraction instead of being focused on the various tasks at hand. No one told me as a child (to be fair, I never confessed it - never brought it into the open to be aired out and healed by the Son) that distraction was a sin, though my guilty conscience should have been enough. The ten commandments I knew, but I never thought more deeply about them. I never had the great little red prayer book we have in our parish bookstore with the "Self-Examination" section on pages 39-43. Under the 2nd Commandment we are asked, "Have I been irreverent during Church Services, let my attention wander, or been insincere?" Um, yes.

Distracted mind. Shallow prayers. No deep roots.

But I do not have to be stuck there. I am beginning to try out a bit of Fr. Daniel's advice and I look forward to sharing with you next month some small gardening tools I have found helpful in going deeper. We have hope, because even if we do not know how to pray, the Spirit will groan for us the prayers we need to say to the Father. We have hope because of the prayer the Apostle Paul shares with the Ephesians:

...may (Christ) grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,

that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fulness of God.

I look forward to struggling side by side with you, my St. Nicholas family, to be strengthened in the inner man, to be rooted and grounded, to find the power to know the depths, to be filled with the fulness of God.



On Memorials and Prayer for the Departed By Fr. Daniel

One important aspect of Orthodox life and worship is what we speak of as "the communion of Saints." Because all members of the Church are united in Christ's one Body, and because in Christ even death is overcome, death is not a barrier separating the living and departed members of the Body. Thus, we pray for our departed loved ones, and we ask for the prayers of the departed Saints. Through prayer and the Liturgy of the Church, we

remain in connection with Christ, and with all the members of His Body.

There are abundant passages in Scripture showing that those who depart from this life remain conscious. Examples include the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the time of the Lord's Transfiguration (e.g. Matt 17:3), the Lord's parable of Lazarus and the rich man, and the descriptions of the "elders" and martyrs in the heavenly visions of the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation). In the Gospel, Christ speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as alive, saying that God is the God "of the living, for all live to Him." (Luke 20:38)

The Orthodox Church does not accept, therefore, the doctrine of "soul sleep" that is taught by some groups. According to this teaching, when someone dies, he becomes unconscious until the bodily resurrection. While we speak of our departed loved ones as "falling asleep" (following the example of Christ in John 11:11), what we mean is that the body "sleeps" while the soul remains aware. Death is the separation of soul and body (which is unnatural and temporary). The body rests in the grave, but the soul goes to meet the Lord. Those made righteous by Christ before us join that "great cloud of witnesses" that surrounds us. (Hebrews 12:1)

In the Old Testament, there were proscriptions against using "mediums and familiar spirits." (Leviticus 20:6) What is forbidden here is sorcery, which is always seen throughout Scripture and Christian tradition as something demonic. In any case, these warnings have no bearing on whether or not human beings remain conscious after death, or whether or not it is possible, in Christ, to know and be known by the departed.

In fact, it is the universal experience of Christians through the ages that those who die in Christ are not dead and gone, but are alive in Him. As the Apostle Paul says, "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. 14:8) In other words, if Christ is alive and with us, and if departed Christians are in Christ, then they, too, are alive and with us. It is also the experience of the Church that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16) even across the membrane of death. That means that we both ask the departed Saints to pray for us (and they do!), and we pray for our loved ones who have left this life.



Prayer for the departed has nothing to do with meriting or purchasing forgiveness on behalf of others. It has nothing to do with a doctrine of "purgatory" or anything like that. Rather it has everything to do with Christian love — the love of God for us, and the love of Christians for one another. For Christians, love and communion are expressed in many ways, but the highest way they are expressed is through prayer, which is both joined to the common worship of the Divine Liturgy and offered by each individual believer. Through prayer, the powerful, Spirit-birthing love of Christians rises as sweet-smelling incense before God on behalf of all for whom the prayer is offered.

Of course, our prayer cannot override a person's free will, or negate the entire shape of his life in this world. Nevertheless there is a very real sense in which the Church, and her individual members, can claim a person as belonging to her. Just as the Saints bore witness to Christ for us, and so brought us to faith in Him, so we bear witness on behalf of our departed loved ones before Christ. We say to Him, in effect, "we forgive this person; do Thou also forgive in Thy boundless mercy. We love this person; do Thou receive him (or her)

into Thy heavenly mansions in Thine abundant love for mankind.” According to our tradition (which means the revealed and lived experience of the Church), such prayer can mysteriously transcend time and death itself to contribute to the salvation and sanctification of those for whom it is offered.

This prayer may also benefit us as much as it benefits the departed. Our hearts are softened, our gratitude is awakened, and our consciences are enlivened by the prayerful remembrance of those who, going before us, have blessed us and taught us. Even those who have in some way caused us harm may thus benefit us through our prayer for them: as we forgive them and commend them to God with a wish for their salvation, we are practicing Christ-like love for our enemies, and again, our consciences are pricked if in some way we have also harmed or failed them.

We may pray for our departed loved ones at any time, in our own private prayers. Some Orthodox faithful pray a form of the Jesus Prayer on behalf of those who have died, such as, “O Lord Jesus Christ, grant rest to the soul of Thy departed servant.” At the same time, there are specific, more formal ways to remember the departed within the liturgical life of the Church.

First of all, we can light a candle when we come to services at the Church. We can give the names of our departed loved one to the priest for commemoration at the Liturgy or other services. We can also request that memorial services (Trisagia) be done for Orthodox who have departed this life. Note that because a memorial service is a public declaration that a person belongs to the Church, we do not serve memorials for non-Orthodox loved ones who have died. However, there is a service called the Akathist for the Repose of the Departed, which is designed to be prayed for anyone and everyone who has died. You might request that this service be prayed for your departed loved ones, or ask for a copy to pray it on your own.

When an Orthodox Christian dies, it is customary to pray the Trisagion Prayers of Mercy as soon after the death as possible. Before and after the funeral service, these prayers may be repeated multiple times. They are used at the burial, on the 3rd day (if that is different from the day of burial), on the 9th day, and on the 40th day. Some offer Trisagion prayers at the six-month point, and it is usual to pray them at the one-year anniversary, and at each anniversary after that. At these services, we sing “memory eternal,” commending our loved ones to the eternal memory of God; for if God remembers them, they will never cease to exist.

When Trisagion prayers are done, someone (usually a family member, or a member of the parish) makes “Koliva.” Koliva is boiled wheat, which is normally sweetened and decorated, and offered for the memorial service. The boiled wheat is a reminder of the Lord’s words in the Gospel of St. John: “unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” (John 12:24) Christ, through offering Himself as a sacrifice for us, becomes the grain of wheat that dies and rises, raising us as well. In Him, we also become grains of wheat that fall into the ground, but are destined to rise. This speaks to us of the bodily resurrection of the dead. When we make and partake of the koliva, it is as a reminder of the hope of the Resurrection.

As Orthodox Christians, we “look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come,” as it says in the Nicene Creed. Every memorial service and every prayer we offer on behalf of our departed loved ones, is a way of joining our voice with the voices of all Christians throughout the centuries who have proclaimed, “Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!” It is an act of love for Christ, who died and rose for us, and for all those whom He loves and calls to His Heavenly Kingdom.

Parish News & Announcements

- **The St. Daniel (of Pereyaslavl) Burial Fund** has been established to provide a decent and holy burial for those who lack the means. To contribute to the fund, you can send a check, or drop it in the offering basket, with the earmark "Burial Fund."
- **Liturgy in Texarkana!** God willing, we will begin having Liturgies in Texarkana on a regular basis. With out bishop's blessing, we will meet at the Christ the Savior chapel on the side of St. James Episcopal Church in Texarkana. Our first Liturgy there is planned for Saturday, Oct. 20, at 9:30am.
- Mark your calendar! **His Grace, Bishop BASIL is coming** to visit Nov. 30 - Dec. 2.



Contact Us! Let us know what you'd like to see in the newsletter! Call, text, or email us at:

tel: (903) 949-1239
email: jones.c4@gmail.com

September Birthdays

September 1 - Annaliese Floyd
September 5 - Fran Presley
September 6 - Cheryl Floyd
September 7 - John Crichton
September 9 - John Moufarrej
September 11 - Christina Freeman
September 17 - David Freeman, Gulnar Moufarrej
September 18 - Dorothy Gouletas
September 22 - Terri Busada

September Name Days

September 2 - Russell Mamas Jones
September 4 - Haley Hermione Filipek
September 5 - Elizabeth Filipek, Ashley Busada, Liz Gouletas
September 14 - Tina Edmiston
September 17 - Whitney & Vela Sophia Busada
September 24 - Dorothy Gouletas
September 30 - Lyuba Olenina, Nadia & Sophia

October Birthdays

October 7 - Gia Frank, James Worthington
October 8 - Will Wise
October 15 - Michael Busada
October 16 - Nancy Bourdaras
October 17 - Elias Filipek, JJ Frank
October 23 - Donna Triperinas
October 31 - Haley Filipek



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