

His Eminence
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and New England

Rev. Fr. Milad Selim, *Dean*

Rev. Fr. Seraphim Solof
Assistant Pastor

Rev. Dn. Anthony Payne



الكنيسة
The
LIGHT

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Reflection

Why?



Fr. Milad Selim

One of the most common words we hear and say is, why? This simple three-letter word leads to so much more. It provides information, brings on anxiety and corrects behavior. It has the power to unite and divide; to build up and to destroy. Take for example little children. They often ask “why” in response

to what their parents say or do. Sports fans shout, “why”, when their favorite team plays poorly. Citizens question the motive behind decisions made by their government. Investors question why the market behaves a certain way. Think of the last time something bad happened to you or someone you know; the first thing you asked was most likely, why. Even Jesus questioned His Father while on the Cross saying: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46) A powerful word indeed and given the fact that we just celebrated the Nativity of God, let us look into this question: Why did God become man?

Before answering this question, let us build a better understanding of “Who”, or more appropriately said, “What”, God is. When we describe Him, we express our limited knowledge of Him by sharing what has been revealed to us by Him and through His energies. We use what is known as positive (Kataphatic) and negative (Apothetic) theology to describe Him. Those two ways of describing Him do not refer to bad (negative) and good (positive), but rather, we use negation when describing what He is not, and affirmation when describing what He is. For example, we know that He is Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, sharing one undivided Essence, completely and mystically outside of space and time. He is Divine. He is love. He is the Creator of all things created. He is omniscient and omnipresent. He is Light and Life. By using negation, we can also say that, He is uncreated, indescribable, uncontainable,

unchangeable, unknowable and unfathomable. The early Fathers of the Church taught that positive theology is always inferior to negative theology, “which is a step along the way to the superior knowledge attained by negation”. According to Vladimir Lossky, an Eastern Orthodox theologian, “Outside of directly revealed knowledge through Scripture and Sacred Tradition, such as the Trinitarian nature of God, God in His essence is beyond the limits of what human beings (or even angels) can understand. He is transcendent in essence.”

If God is all of what we said above (in a VERY limited way), then why would he descend into a fallen world, take on flesh, submit to mockery, suffering and death and ultimately rise from the dead? Our three-letter word opens to us the door to a better understanding of God’s salvific plan. Scripture and Holy Tradition reveal to us that the Creator of our world was not pleased that His creation continues its path towards death and emptiness. Out of His love for His creation, God the Father, willed that His Only Begotten Son enter the world, thus entering time and space, through a Virgin Mother, by the Holy Spirit. He entered our world and was made man. He took on our humanity so that we may take on His Divinity. He suffered and died so that we may live in and through Him. He showed us what authentic and perfect humanity looks like. He revealed His absolute and unending love for us with His arms spread on the Cross. The uncountainable was contained inside of a womb that was created by Him. The indescribable was seen and touched. The Unknowable was revealed to all as a humble God Who with water, washed the feet of those who called Him Lord, and with His own blood, saved those whom He loved.

So why did God become man? Because He Is Who He Is (Exodus 3:14). The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. The God of our Fathers, Who out of abundant love, created all things and out of this same love redeemed all things. That’s why! +

Feast of the Theophany





FR. SERAPHIM'S
fun facts

On the Feast of the Theophany (January 6), we celebrate a special service called “The Great Sanctification (Blessing) of Water.” We do this every year, sometimes two or three times between the eve and the feast itself—but have you ever wondered why?

Well, in the first place, the Feast of the Theophany is the annual celebration of Jesus’s baptism in the Jordan River at the hands of St. John the Baptist. When He entered the water, He sanctified it by His very presence—so we’re doing what He did, in remembrance of Him. It’s very much like the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, where we bless bread and wine, as He did, in remembrance of Him.

But water has a bigger role to play here than “the stuff in which we are baptised.” Think about the very first words of the bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

Why do we bless water?

(Genesis 1:1-2) The very first element we hear of is water. And it is also the last: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” (Revelation 22:1) Water is the “primal element” of all creation—and even the primal element in us, as our bodies are about 60% water. And so when Jesus enters the waters of the Jordan, it is not just in order for Him, personally, to be baptised. It’s in order for Him to sanctify – through the waters – all of creation, from beginning to end, and us, first and foremost.

So, what happens when something—water, oil, bread and wine—is blessed or sanctified? Sometimes, I think we look at the act of blessing as a kind of “good spell” we ask the priest to cast on something, to make it holy or sacred when it had previously been “profane.” This is *really* not

Sometimes, I think we look at the act of blessing as a kind of ‘good spell’ we ask the priest to cast on something, to make it holy or sacred when it had previously been ‘profane.’ This is *really* not how it works.

how it works. In blessing something, we offer it back to God (“Thine own of thine own, we offer unto thee”), and ask Him to restore it to its original meaning and purpose, to realize the divine intent for it when He first made it. So we bless water to make it, once again, purifying for us. We bless

oil to make it healing for us (St. Luke 10:33-34). And we bless bread and wine to make them nourishing for us. But God always gives us more and better than we ask for. He blesses the bread and wine to become for us the food and drink of immortality, the body and blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. He blesses the oil to heal our souls as well as our bodies. And in blessing the waters, He gives them the power not only to purify us, but to be for us and in us “a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (St. John 4:14) +



On December 23rd a Nativity play was held after the Divine Liturgy after weeks of preparation. Grades Preschool through 6th shared with all of us the story of Christ’s birth. They were also

assisted by the older classes in singing Christmas songs. It was a perfect way to welcome our Lord and savior into our world. +

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Celebrating 50 years—St. George Cathedral Ground Breaking—1968 to 2018

A Reflection by George Wood, Chairman

First I would be remiss without telling you how this began...A Sunday morning a few months ago during Matins, Fr. Milad and I were chatting along with Fr. Seraphim... I made comment that we had a 50 year milestone this year since the cornerstone was laid in 1968...Fr. Milad remembered that the consecration was in 1970...He was right...May 26, 1970 to be exact.

There's a reason why I remembered this...

Before this ground breaking day in our parish took place...I played in this large lot called 'The Oval' as I grew up down the street...A storied field in the history of Worcester believe it or not...

As construction began and continued in earnest I felt a pride as this was to be my new church...Up the street from my house...I was young and fairly foolish...Lynn, my wife would say I'm still a goofball...

Well I would constantly watch the construction and when the men would leave...Well, play time began...I did climb the staging under the dome and through the building and did in fact climb as only a monkey would do...to the top...My mom Olga only knew I was up the street at the church...What harm could happen...These were different days...There were no fences or obstructions to the site...What a view from up there!

As the time passed I grew to love my new church...As to this feeling...Nothing has changed for me 50 years later...

I had what I thought was a perfect bridge from the origin of the Cathedral here on Anna Street to today...I had photos from

the 25th Celebration that I had co-chaired with Michael Dowd in 1995...

As you looked at the photos from the ground breaking they are unique and historical and show the love of a community in its faith...Fr. George Ghannam, GBG as we called him with love had such an infectious smile...He was our Father and he took us on this ride to Anna Street...

When looking at the totality of these photos and listening to the music chosen, 'Thanks for the Memories' and Can You Feel the Love Tonight'...It makes you a bit nostalgic and melancholy even... Remembering a 'picture is truly worth a thousand words'...

In looking around our hall today there is an exception or two or three or well you've seen them...The missing are our family... Our loved ones...Our friends who aren't here any longer...Gone too soon...

As I always said of history, knowing your past can enlighten you to your future...You don't know where you are going unless you know from whence you've come...

Yes, so many are passed...So much has changed in 50 years and if you remember the final photo of the Pantocrator we are all His children...This vision of Christ is why we are all here...

Can you imagine how many eyes have looked at Christ in our dome over the years and knew He was in us and with us and now those past are with Him...I do Believe!

We are now Fr. Milad's flock...He is our Father and he is truly a man who looks to Christ and brings us to do the same as those taught us in the past...Fr. Milad has taught



us His word...He has helped us to feel His hand in our lives...Christ truly has His eye on a parish that has so much ahead in goodness and ministry and fellowship to each other...

Our fabric of our family has changed from the past...This I know...I won't be here in 50 years...With an eye to above I can only pray...I can also pray by His blessing that I and us all are here again and again and again to be with and for each other in His love of our Orthodox Christian Faith... Here at St. George Orthodox Cathedral on 30 Anna Street...

We shall be His children always ... Thank You. +



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UPCOMINGEVENTS

Contact the Cathedral office or organization members for more details.

JAN 5 Feast of Theophany Service & Luncheon

JAN 18-24 Winter Family Camp at Antiochian Village

FEB 15-18 Teen Camp at Antiochian Village



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Recent Holy Sacraments Celebrated at St. George Cathedral



BAPTISMS

Rita Wehbe
December 16
Father: Elias Wehbe
Mother: Dany Dahrouj



FUNERALS

Salwa Elmaalouf
November 19
Michele (MacKoul) Heenan
December 6



CHRISMATIONS

Matthew Palmer—November 11



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| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Diocesan Feast of the Theophany Service and Luncheon Orthros 9am Hierarchical Liturgy 10 am |
| 6 Theophany of our Lord - Spiritual Brew Church School: 9 am Orthros: 9 am Liturgy: 10 am | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 Vespers 5pm |
| 13 Church School: 9 am Orthros: 9 am Liturgy: 10 am Stewardship Reflection #1 | 14 Parish Council Meeting 7pm | 15 | 16 Arabic Bible Study 6:30 PM (Bi-weekly) | 17 | 18 | 19 Vespers 5pm |
| 20 Church School: 9 am Orthros: 9 am Liturgy: 10 am Stewardship Reflection #2 | 21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 Vespers 5pm |
| 27 Church School: 9 am Orthros: 9 am Liturgy: 10 am Stewardship Reflection #3 | 28 | 29 Endowment Fund Committee Meeting 7 PM | 30 Arabic Bible Study 6:30 PM (Bi-weekly) | 31 Men's Club 6pm | 1 | 2 Presentation of our Lord into the Temple Liturgy 10 AM Vespers 5pm |