

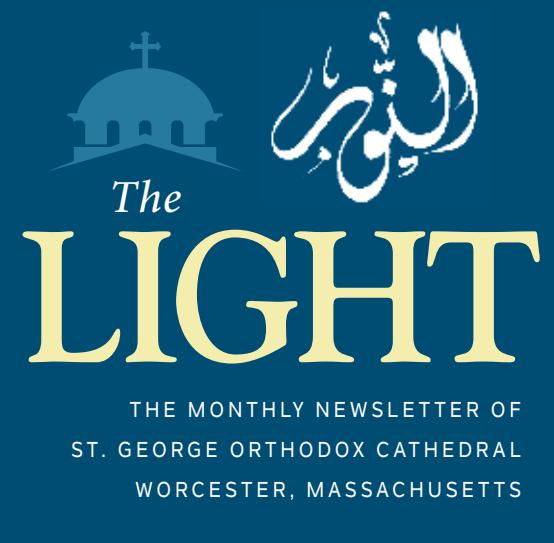
His Eminence
Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate

His Grace, Bishop JOHN
*Auxiliary Bishop for Worcester
and New England*

Rev. Fr. Milad Selim, *Dean*

Rev. Fr. Seraphim Solof
Assistant Pastor

Rev. Dn. Anthony Payne



Prayer of the Heart

Reflection



Fr. Milad Selim

One of the most common concerns I hear has to do with people's inability to connect with God through their prayers. They wonder how to truly feel the presence of God while praying. This requires a clear understanding of what prayer is so that one may

begin to pray. It also requires an understanding of what silence and solitude mean and their relationship to prayer.

As Orthodox Christians, we are taught that prayer is not primarily an action of the mind, but it is also an action of the heart. If we consider our prayers for a moment, we see that they are often simple conversations with God where we ask for something and/or thank Him for something He has given us. While this is appropriate and important, this type of prayer is usually one-sided and can become frustrating at times when we only hear ourselves speaking. In any conversation we enter into, we expect there to be a dialogue where we speak and the other person answers immediately. When that person does not answer, we become agitated and say things like, "Are you listening?" or "You are not listening!" This is a normal human reaction. We enjoy sharing outcomes of daily events with the people in our life and/or look for advice on how to proceed with a decision we are struggling to make, but when it becomes a one-sided conversation we feel neglected and uncared for. For those who solely practice the prayer of the mind, time and again, they experience this lack of connection with God and the ability to experience His presence when praying.

To truly experience God's presence and enter

into a personal relationship with Him, we must look to enter into the innermost part of our being where God dwells, the heart. In the words of the Russian mystic, Theophan the Recluse: "To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you." It is from the heart that all of our energies are generated and if we are able to descend our mind into our heart and witness the presence of God within us, we would allow our prayers to be transformed into a mystical experience and thus, enter into the Kingdom of God that is within us (2 Corinthians 13:5). One must also remember that where God is, the devil also seeks to be. Therefore, one must anticipate and learn to deal with distractions and temptations from the devil while praying.

Silence and solitude are also important aspects of one's prayer life. By this I am not referring to isolating ourselves from the world in a monastic form, but rather, isolating ourselves from our constant thoughts, daily tasks, desires, attachments and fear. This type of silence focuses on the heart more than the mouth as we may physically appear silent, but yet our heart may be full of hatred, envy and fear. Therefore, for us to truly connect with God through prayer, we must descend into our hearts and build a new relationship with our Creator whose abundant grace fills us with eternal joy.

Being able to pray in this way at all times requires practice, patience, humility and discipline. Next time you pray do not look to be long or repetitive, a simple phrase like: "Not my will, but Your will" or a humble petition like: "Lord have mercy on me" are far more effective. Remember, God knows the things we need before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8). +

Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul



Troparion, Tone 4

*Leaders of the Apostles
and teachers of the
world, pray to the Master
of all to grant peace
to the world and great
mercy to our souls.*



FR. SERAPHIM'S
fun facts

While there are no great feasts or extended fasts in July—we do keep the traditional fasts on Wednesday and Friday throughout the month—there are a number of especially noteworthy saint's days gracing our calendars. Let's talk, this year, about "the Equal of the Apostles, Great Prince Vladimir—in Holy Baptism Basil—the Enlightener of the Russian Land," whose feast day falls on July 15.

"Few names in the annals of history can compare in significance with the name of Saint Vladimir, the Baptizer of Rus, who stands at the beginning of the spiritual destiny of the Russian Church and the Russian Orthodox people," reads his biography on the OCA website. St. Vladimir was born around the year 960, the son of Svyatoslav, the Great Prince of Kiev, and after the death of his father, he ruled from Novgorod one-third of his father's kingdom. "In his first years as prince, we see Vladimir as a fierce pagan," his biography continues, "who indulged himself in a wild, sensuous life." The Christian History Institute writes that

He is cruel and powerful, subjugating much of the region known as Rus to himself. Ignoring the increase of Christianity among his subjects, he has erected many statues to his people's ancient gods.

However, Prince Vladimir begins to recognize that pagan gods are unable to unify Rus. Becoming interested in the

July Saints: St. Vladimir, Enlightener of the Russian Land

question of faith while planning a campaign against the Eastern Roman Empire, he has sent embassies to the neighboring states of Bulgaria, Khazar, and Byzantium to examine their beliefs. The ambassadors return, declaring that the Islam of Bulgaria is too unhappy a religion to adopt. The fact that Islam bans fermented drink and pork does not set well with the Russians, who cannot imagine life without either—especially the drink. Vladimir himself rejects the Judaism of his Khazar neighbors, for he says the Jewish loss of Jerusalem and its temple proves that God has forsaken them. As for German Catholicism, the ambassadors describe it as plain and dour. Their impression of the faith of their Orthodox neighbors to the south is altogether different, however. Upon attending a service at the glorious Hagia Sophia cathedral in Constantinople, they report:

"And we went into the Greek lands, and we were led into a place where they serve their God, and we did not know where we were, on heaven or on earth; and do not know how to tell about this. All we know is that God lives there with people and their service is better than in any other country. We cannot forget that beauty since each person, if he eats something sweet, will not take something bitter afterwards; so we cannot remain any more in paganism."

Later, in return for providing military assistance to the Byzantine emperor, Basil II, Vladimir asks for the hand of Basil's sister, Anna.

Basil replies that Christian women are only allowed to marry Christian men. Vladimir agrees to be baptized and sends away his pagan wives. Anna is brought to him with several priests who instruct and baptize him.

The change in Vladimir is significant. He becomes kinder and is filled with zeal to depose the old gods and convert his subjects to his new faith. He hews down or burns the statues of pagan gods and drags the image of Perun, his people's chief deity, through the mud. He requires all of his subjects to embrace Christianity, which they do in a mass baptism.

His OCA biography describes the impact of the baptism of Russia:

It is difficult to overestimate the deep spiritual transformation of the Russian people effected by the prayers of Saint Vladimir, in every aspect of its life and world-view. In the pure Kievan waters, as in a "bath of regeneration", there was realized a sacramental transfiguration of the Russian spiritual element, the spiritual birth of the nation, called by God to unforeseen deeds of Christian service to mankind.

Through the prayers of St. Vladimir, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy upon us! Amen. **+**

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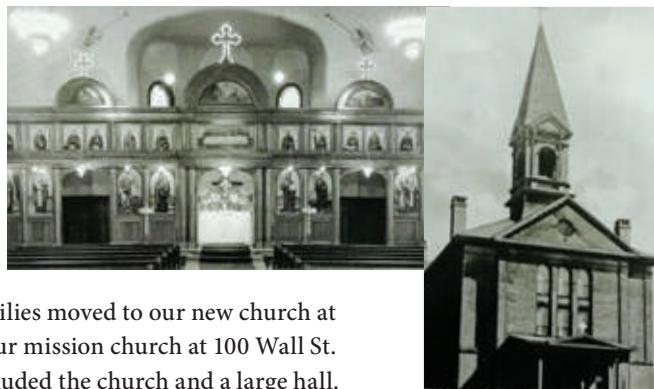
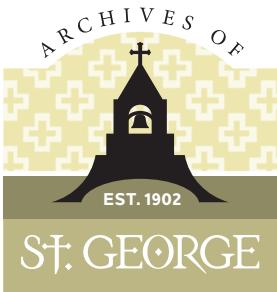
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PHOTOS: LAVANAGH MCDONALD

Festival demonstrates the love of community

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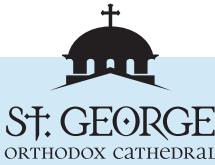
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**OCT
5**

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work than raising the dead."
- St. John Chrysostom*



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Event Date October 5, 2019

July 2019

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7 Oak Barrel Tavern \$25	8 Supercuts Gift Basket	9 Price Chopper \$25	10 Silpada Earrings Donated by Tracey Casey	11 Wormtown Brewery \$25	12 Stop & Shop Supermarket \$25	13 Leo's Ristorante \$25
14 Meze Estiatorio Restaurant \$25	15 La Scala Restaurant \$25	16 Goretti's Supermarket \$25	17 Applebee's Gift Card \$25	18 Vintage Grill \$25	19 Buffalo Wild Wings Gift Basket \$25	20 Chioda's Trattoria \$25
21 Mac's Diner \$25	22 Mexicali Cantina Grill \$25	23 Stop & Shop Supermarket \$25	24 Hyder's Market \$25	25 Brew City Grille \$25	26 Qdoba 3 free entrees Panera \$20	27 Ciao Bella Restaurant \$20
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HOLY TRINITY NURSING & REHABILITATION CENTER

25th Anniversary
Dinner Dance Celebration

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HOLY TRINITY NURSING AND REHABILITATION CENTER

25th Anniversary

Dinner Dance Celebration

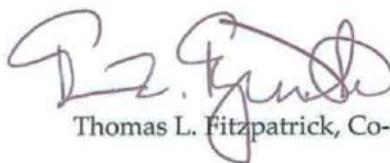
Holy Trinity Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (HTNRC) is blessed to be celebrating its **25th Anniversary** as a skilled nursing facility. In celebration of this great milestone, HTNRC will be hosting a Dinner Dance on Saturday, August 24, 2019.

Over the past 25 years HTNRC has received many awards and high marks by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and US News. Most recently HTNRC was recognized by the Department of Public Health as a **Deficiency Free Nursing Home**. As a nonprofit institution, HTNRC relies greatly on the generosity of donors like you to support our efforts to provide the best possible care and services to our residents.

We ask you to join us as we celebrate 25 years of providing compassionate, qualitative skilled nursing care and rehabilitation services to those in need in Central MA. Consider placing an Ad in our Program Book. We would be honored to feature you and/or your business. Your participation will go a long way in helping us continue to provide the programs and services that are so important to our residents.

The Program Book will be distributed to all attendees that evening along with being available on our website and social media. Your support will be greatly appreciated!

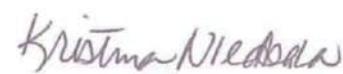
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Thomas L. Fitzpatrick, Co-Chair



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HOLY TRINITY NURSING AND REHABILITATION CENTER

25th Anniversary

Dinner Dance Celebration

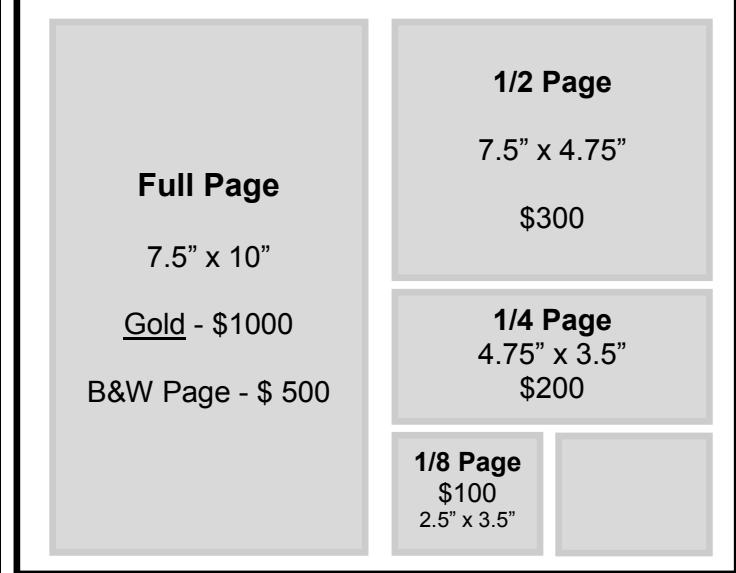
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