



Weekly Bulletin

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Witnessing to the Ancient Faith in Trumbull County for over 80 Years

Father Brian Crivella, Pastor

2021

Number 28

The Friend of the Bridegroom: "He Must Increase and I Must Decrease."

Sunday	July 11th	<i>3rd Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 2 / Sts Euphemia & Olga</i>
		Readings: Romans 5:1-10 Matthew 6:22-33
		9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Wednesday	July 14th	<i>Holy Apostle Aquila of the Seventy</i>
		Readings: Romans 11:2-12 Matthew 11:20-26
		9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Thursday	July 15th	<i>Holy Great Prince Vladimir Enlightener of the Rus</i>
		7:00 pm Moleiben followed by Anointing
Sunday	July 18th	<i>4th Sun after Pntcst / Tone 3 / Fr.s of the Ecumenical Councils</i>
		Readings: Hebrews 13:7-16 John 17:1-13
		Romans 6:18-23 Matthew 8:5-13
		9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Sunday	July 25th	<i>5th Sun after Pentecost / Tone 2 / Dormition of Rightous Anna</i>
		Readings: Romans 10:1-10 Matthew 8:28-9:1
		9:30 am Divine Liturgy

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / July 4th

Attendance: (Adults: 59, Children 12)	71
Weekly Offering	\$1520.00
Candle Offerings	\$106.00
Saint Herman House	\$50.00
Sausage Sale	\$0.00

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Our monthly Parish Council Meeting will be at 6:00 on Tuesday in the social hall.

FR. BRIAN ON VACATION

Fr. Brian will be on his very first family vacation with his parents to Topsail Island, NC from the 16th through the 25th. Fr. John Adamcio will be visiting to serve the Divine Liturgy on the 18th. There will be **no Great Vespers on July 17th and 24th** and there will be **no bulletin for the week of July 18th** while Fr. Brian is away. A Reader's Service for Divine Liturgy on the **25th** is tentatively scheduled until Fr. Brian confirms another Priest will be coming. If you have a pastoral emergency and need to get a hold of Fr. Brian while he's away, please contact Fr. Dcn John or Mark Malacky.

PRAYER CORNER + + + + +

Fr. Mark Leasure / Fr. Dcn. John Tutoki / Brother Andrew / Dana Ronyak/ Donnie & Cherie Davidson / Jennifer Brainard / Michael, Catherine, & Zoe Stan / Art Cogar Sr. / Dana Lutz / Ellen Marie / Leslie / Joanne Kaschak / Lilian / Alice & Matthew / Magie & Kenny Sanders / Bill Paluch / Nina Lowry / Alyssa Angle / Josephine Grabko / Peter Bolock / James Livermore / Helen Skovan / Sarah Crivella / Juliana and her unborn child (Fr. Andrew's Daughter) / Our Catechumen Christopher / The Faculty, Teachers, and Students of Holy Trinity Orthodox Academy

Memory Eternal: Phyllis (6/27)

Birthdays: Keira Denno (Sun), Martin Bakich (Mon), Alan Gyurek (Wed), Miles Cuckovich & Daria Fickes (Thurs), Patty DiGiacobe (Fri), & William Pacek Jr (Sat)

Anniversaries: Will & Gina Angle (Mon) & James & Karen Livermore (Sat)

Candle Commemorations

Theotokos	In Memory of John & Mary Sterchak
Altar	In Memory of Helen Bobosh
Christ	In Memory of Helen Bobosh

When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Genesis 22), there was no questioning on Abraham's part about what was intended. He understood precisely what was involved in such a thing. There was wood to be gathered, an altar of stones to be constructed, the victim to be bound, and then the slitting of its throat with the gushing forth of blood, all consummated in the burning fires of the now-completed offering. What Abraham did was repeated in a variety of forms throughout the ancient world. Homer writes about Poseidon being absent from the Hellenic scene in order to attend a massive sacrifice in Libya. Sacrifice itself was part of the universal language of ancient religion. What differed was what/whom was being sacrificed and to Whom/What the sacrifice was being made. This was worship.

Today, "sacrifice" has passed into more generalized cultural metaphors that have nothing to do with worship. "Worship" itself has become a vague concept, generally associated with prayer/praise and hymn-singing. As such it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish what many contemporary Christians describe as "worship" from the treatment of various Rock, Sport and Entertainment stars (or patriotism and ideological fetishes).

At a large gathering of some tens of thousands, hands are lifted in the air, people are singing, the music swells. If I stop the description at that point it is possible to assume that this is a moment of praise/worship. If, however, I note that the venue is a concert, then it's mere adulation of a celebrity. But the *grammar* of the action is utterly the same.

Fast forward to the setting of an Orthodox Church. Here there are numerous icons of holy men and women (saints) adorning the Church. Candles and lamps burn before them. A non-Orthodox contemporary Christian, visiting for the first time, becomes distinctly uncomfortable and thinks to himself, "They are worshipping saints!" Somehow, the psychological confusion that is contemporary culture can distinguish between the *worship* of God and the *adoration* of celebrities but accuses traditional Christianity of violating the second and third commandments.

What we have is a clash of grammars.

In the grammar of Orthodoxy, and in the grammar of Scripture, worship has a different definition. Worship may be defined as the offering of a sacrifice to a Deity.

The trouble comes when one grammar seeks to understand the other. That which the Orthodox render to saints and holy objects (relics, the Cross, icons, etc.) is understood to be honor or veneration. *No sacrifices are ever offered to saints as though they were gods.* This distinction is difficult for contemporary Christians because the notion of sacrifice, in its original meaning, has been lost. It is certainly the case that honor and veneration are given to God, but they do not, of themselves, constitute worship.

The contemporary roadmap of religion consists almost exclusively of various psychological states. The honor given to a Rock Star is understood to differ from that given to God based on the intention within the person who is giving the honor. To an outside observer, the actions might appear indistinguishable. But, "God knows the heart." And so, "God can tell the difference between the two."

Sacrifice has largely disappeared from the experience of contemporary Christianity. The Protestant Reformation mounted something of a frontal assault on medieval Catholicism's treatment of the Eucharist as a sacrificial offering. Catholics were accused of "re-sacrificing" Christ, despite the clear statement of Scripture that His sacrifice was once-and-for-all (Heb. 7:27). Catholics defended their practice by explaining that the Mass was not a re-sacrificing,

but the re-presentation of that once-and-for-all sacrifice. Their arguments fell on deaf ears.

It is all well and good to say that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was once-and-for-all, and to file it away as such. However, such historicizing of the Cross places ever more distance between the believer and the event. "Do this in remembrance of me," (as mere memorial) has come to be a means of *forgetting*.

The Scripture reminds us that the "Lamb" was "slain from the foundation of the world." That, is, the death of Christ occurs within history, but has an eternal reality that transcends history. The Catholic contention that the Eucharist is a re-presentation of that sacrifice in the present was, in fact, correct and a restating of the received teaching of the Church. The Orthodox to this day continue to emphasize this understanding. The Eucharist is described as the "bloodless sacrifice," meaning that there is no "re-shedding" of the blood of Christ.

The mystery of our salvation, as well as the mystery that we describe as worship, is found within the sacrifice of Christ. Abraham, and all of ancient Israel, would have understood worship to largely be identical with sacrifice.

Christians of the first millennium-and-a-half understood that the "bloodless sacrifice" of the Eucharistic offering was *the central act of worship*. Their hymns and psalms happened as part of that context. We no longer offer the sacrifice of bulls and goats, but we continue to offer the bloodless sacrifice of Christ's death. It is the single, perfect offering of all humanity, made through the Person of God's Son. Because he is also God, that sacrifice is eternal, always present and able to be offered and shared by His people.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices communicants of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:16-18)

St. Paul's entire understanding of the Eucharist is rooted in its sacrificial character. The Eucharist is the Christian sacrifice, once and for all. This is also at the heart of Christ's teaching that whoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood has communion with Him (Jn. 6).

By a strange twist of history, the praise that took its meaning from the sacrifice itself, by analogy, has come to displace the sacrifice and made praise itself the essential element of worship. This confusion not only creates false accusations against those who offer praise and honor to the saints of the Church as well as all holy things, but also makes all praise and honor, including that accorded to celebrities more than a little problematic.

Of course, the absence of ritual sacrifice in most modern religions does not mean that idolatry has ceased. However, our analysis of idolatry should remain focused on sacrifice rather than the objects of mere adulation. The ancients often made sacrifices to obtain favors or to avert disasters. Idolatry sought to control the outcome of history through the management of the gods. By that understanding, idolatry is alive and well and is the primary object of the Modern Project. Having abolished the ancient sacrifices, we have replaced them with science, technology, politics and war. Rather than learning how to live well, we make sacrifices to technology so that we might not need to live well. Modernity is building "heaven on earth" and needs no gods beyond itself.

Perhaps Modernity has itself become our god.