

St. Cyril Orthodox Church

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+ **September 5, 2021** +
11th Sunday after Pentecost

Holy Prophet Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth, parents of St. John the Baptist (1st cent.). Venerable Athanasius, Abbot of Breteuil (+1648).



MANY YEARS to **Kyle Afridi** and to **Kenny (Andrew) Hendrickson**, who celebrated their birthdays yesterday; to **Linda Woods**, who celebrates her birthday today; and to **Madeleine Hortman**, who celebrates her birthday on Wednesday.

BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN MARY (September 8) – Great Vespers of the feast on Tuesday at 6:30. Divine Liturgy on Wednesday, September 8, at 8:30 am. *No Liturgy on Thursday this week.*

HOLY BAPTISM – James Shannon will be baptized this Saturday, September 11, at 2:00 pm.

INQUIRER CLASS after Sunday coffee hour. Having missed last Sunday, we will try once more to look at “councils” as an aspect of the sacred apostolic tradition.

TREASURER UPDATE – Our final numbers for August were \$16,052 in income, including \$1,900 from the Diocese of the South and \$1,667 from the Orthodox Church in America. Our expenses were unusually high, \$19,638. This included \$7,900 that we spent on our new air conditioning unit for the church, which will hopefully last for many years.

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The Spirit of the Times

We have to be aware of the effects of the underlying nihilistic philosophy on the life around us, and on ourselves. Although many people give lip-service to God, they live as though He doesn't exist. And we ourselves, sadly, if we will only admit it, also behave sometimes as if God doesn't exist, being also under the influence of the spirit of the times.

If there is no God to whom we are answerable and who gives meaning and purpose to our lives, then our lives are all about “me”: what I want, my personal gratification, my personal fulfillment, my “quality of life.” According to this view, there is no absolute or objective meaning to life; there is only a relative and subjective meaning: what it means to me, how it suits me. This idea is very strong in our society; we breathe it in with the contemporary air, so to speak. - *Fr. Damascene of Platina*

Spiritual progress

Spiritual progress is nothing but the acquisition of humble-mindedness. Jesus, even though He is God, humbled Himself so much, and we who are lowly by nature exalt ourselves and fluff out the feathers of vainglory like a peacock. - *Elder Ephraim of Arizona (+2019)*

For September – A reflection on the Church Year

On September 1, the Orthodox Church begins its new liturgical year. Each liturgical year incorporates the various feast days and services of Christ's holy Church. The purpose of the Church Year is to bring the teaching of the Gospel and the main events of the life of Christ, His Mother, and the various saints and important events of Church history into a holy order before us. Through the prayers and divine services of the Church, we come to remember and even to experience the mystery of Christ on a yearly cycle. The holy rhythm of life has been the way of life for Orthodox Christians since the beginning of the Church, and for the Jews of the Old Testament for centuries before that.

Through the various feasts of the year, Christ and the Holy Spirit are revealed within the Body of Christ. We remember the promise of our Lord: "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). We are called to experience again the life of Christ and are inspired to unite ourselves to Christ, in His birth, His life, His suffering and death, and especially in His holy Resurrection. The Church Year revisits these sacred events, and through the feasts and holy days of the Church it allows us to live in continuous worship of the Holy Trinity.

The Church Year commemorates not only the events of Christ's life, but also His Mother and the saints who lived their life in Christ. The saints are our spiritual models who inspire and teach us and reveal to us how they lived as members and faithful servants of Christ. They can assist us, through their intercessions, in remembering who we are and who we can become, by example of their faith, courage and endurance.

The Church has established twelve "Great Feasts" - apart from Pascha, which is the greatest feast and the "Feast of Feasts." Eight of these Great Feasts are dedicated to our Lord Jesus Christ:

- The Lifting Up of the Precious Cross – September 14
- The Birth of Christ – December 25
- The Theophany or Baptism of Christ – January 6
- The Meeting of our Lord in the Temple – February 2
- Palm Sunday – the Sunday before Pascha
- Ascension – 40 days after Pascha
- Pentecost – 50 days after Pascha
- The Transfiguration of our Lord – August 6

Four of the Great Feasts are dedicated to the Virgin Mary:

- The Birth of the Theotokos – September 8
- The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple – Nov. 21
- The Annunciation – March 25
- The Dormition – August 15



Besides the Great Feasts, there are important secondary Feasts:

Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29), St. Nicholas (Dec. 6); St. Michael and the Holy Archangels (Nov. 8); the feasts of St. John the Baptist, including his Birth (June 24), Beheading (Aug. 29), and the general commemoration (Jan. 7); the feast of All Saints (Sunday after Pentecost); the Protection of the Theotokos (Oct. 1); the Circumcision of Christ (Jan. 1 – also the feast of St. Basil the Great); the feast of the Three Hierarchs (Jan. 30 – remembering St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Gregory); St. George (Apr. 23); St. Demetrios (Oct. 26); St. Elias or Elijah (July 20).

There are also special saints days for the Orthodox Church in North America : St. Herman (August 9 and December 13); St. Innocent of Alaska (March 31 and October 6); St. John of San Francisco (July 2); St. Alexis Toth (May 7); St. Raphael of Brooklyn (Feb. 27). Also, for our mission, the feast of our patron saint, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, on March 18 is important.

Each day of the calendar year commemorates various saints. The date of each is based on the day of their death or of their “glorification” (when they were officially recognized as saints). For some saints there are additional feasts that commemorate their “translation,” the geographical carrying of their holy relics from one location to another. Certain wonder-working icons also have their own specific days of remembrance.

The days of the week also have a specific dedication:

Sunday commemorates the Resurrection of Christ, and each Sunday is a small Pascha.

Monday is dedicated to the angels and archangels.

Tuesday is dedicated to the memory of St. John the Baptist.

Wednesday commemorates the day Judas betrayed Christ.

Thursday is dedicated to the Holy Apostles and to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Friday is remembered as the day on which Christ was crucified.

Saturday is dedicated to the martyrs, to all the faithful departed, and to the Virgin Mary.

In this way the Orthodox Church provides us with the liturgical year to offer us opportunities each day for worship and for the reception of the Holy Mysteries (sacraments) leading to our spiritual growth in Christ and to communion with the living God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All the services of the Church are likewise instructive, providing essential teachings of the Orthodox Faith. The liturgical life is a means to incorporate ourselves into the journey to reach our ultimate goal, the Kingdom of God. The Church is already a foretaste here on earth of God's heavenly Kingdom.

Thoughts about Our Thoughts from Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

From the book *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*

(1) “Our thoughts determine our whole life. If our thoughts are destructive, we will have no peace. If they are quiet, meek, and simple, our life will be the same, and we will have peace within us. It will radiate from us and influence all beings around us.”

(2) “Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility.”

(3) “Our starting point is always wrong. Instead of beginning with ourselves, we always want to change others first and ourselves last. If everyone would begin first with themselves, then there would be peace all around!”

(4) “I realized that we all worry about ourselves too much and that only he who leaves everything to the will of God can feel truly joyous, light, and peaceful.”

(5) “We must learn to ease the burden of thoughts that bears down upon us. As soon as we feel burdened, we must turn to the Lord and give our worries over to Him, as well as the worries and cares of our loved ones.”

(6) “The Lord has taken all of our sufferings and cares upon Himself, and He has said that He will provide for all our needs, yet we hold on to our cares so tightly that we create unrest in our hearts and minds, in our families, and all around us.”

(7) “The Lord is present everywhere, and nothing happens without His will or His permission, either in this life or in eternity. When we accept this idea, everything is made easier. If God would allow us to do everything the way we desire and when we desire, this would certainly result in catastrophe.”

(8) “A man who has within him the Kingdom of Heaven radiates holy thoughts, Divine thoughts. The Kingdom of God creates within us an atmosphere of heaven, as opposed to the atmosphere of hell that is radiated by a person when hades abides in his heart. The role of Christians in the world is to filter the atmosphere on earth and expand the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God.”

