



from Father Anthony

The Quality of our Obedience

Obedience is an essential ingredient in the life of the “blessed” or “happy” Orthodox Christian. Throughout the Bible we are given commandments. By their nature commandments are to be obeyed, they are not suggestions to be pondered. The thought of obedience or submission to anyone or anything sends a cold shiver through the spine of most 21st century humans, but Orthodox Christians understand that it is the quality of our obedience that determines the quality of our happiness. The commands that God gives us are not the arbitrary whims of a capricious God but rather essential operating instructions for this creature called man. They are intended to transform us from passion filled animals to spirit filled gods.

For example we are commanded to love our enemies and forgive those who have sinned or trespassed against us. One could try and work around the directness of this command with sophisticated psychological techniques in order to avoid having to uproot the powerful feelings of hurt and betrayal in one’s heart. Or one could ignore the pain and go on with life and live as if there were a black hole on earth that has sucked the objects of anger into it so that they no longer exist. Or one could obey the command and disregard the strong emotions attached to the hurt and turn to God in prayer and obedience trusting in Him to eventually take away resentment and hurt feelings and replace them with genuine affection.

The alternative to forgiving is to remain bitter, imprisoned by thoughts of hatred and jealousy. But when you do that you are robbed of a peace-filled, Christ-filled heart. Rationalizations, justifications, a cold shoulder and tolerance for the offender are all distinct possibilities for the injured party, but the cost is high. These leave you sapped of peace and joy and love and vitality. True peace comes when you give up the right to “get even,” to embarrass, to punish with guilt, to intimidate, to avoid, to pity. All these desires are the product of a heart that is still hurting. But a heart that has recognized its own need for forgiveness, unworthy and undeserving as it may be, will be able to extend the same mercy to another unworthy heart. This is not an attempt to deny wrongdoing or to act as if nothing happened—that would lead us to insanity, not peace—rather it is obedience to God, surrendering the right to judge to Him, the ultimate judge. To the degree that we forgive we will be forgiven; so says the Lord’s prayer. Obedience is an act of the will. Feelings are emotions that we can not control, but the Holy Spirit will transform them as we obey God’s commands. It is the road to freedom, peace and happiness.

This is only one example of how obedience to God’s commands leads us out of the darkness of our natural reactions and into the brilliant light of God’s love and peace. Through meditation and reflection each of you can reflect on other commandments and discover the hidden mystery each is meant to unlock. We know, for instance, in marriage each spouse is given a command towards the other but they are not the same command. Husbands are commanded to “love” their wives and wives are commanded to “respect” their husbands. This is because wives need love and husbands need respect in order to function properly, and it is the first thing we forget to do in the heat of battle. Search God’s Word, pray to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment, and in the New Year resolve to increase the quality of your obedience so that the quality of your Christian life may also increase. Have a blessed New Year.

Sunday Epistle and Gospel Readings:

	<u>Epistle</u>	<u>Gospel</u>
Jan. 4	2 nd Timothy 4:5-8	Mark 1:1-8
Jan. 11	2 nd Corinthians 4:6-15	Matthew 4:12-17
Jan. 18	Hebrews 13:7-16	Luke 17:12-19
Jan. 25	Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2	Luke 19:1-10



Parish Family News

An update from the Miletkovs:

Nick has successfully completed his first semester at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. As Rachael says, "We're on our way..." Congratulations Nick! We certainly miss you both- please hurry back.

Na sas zisi, Madeleine!

Congratulations to Madeleine Gess who was baptized on December 14. Peter and Jennifer want to thank everyone for their love and support during this happy occasion. "May she live for you."

If you have any parish family news (birth, churching, graduation, award, engagement, marriage, retirement, etc.) that you would like included in a monthly bulletin, please e-mail Jennifer Gess: jklewis@mindspring.com

Parish Happenings

House Blessings

House Blessings will take place Saturday, January 10th and Saturday, January 17th following the Liturgy for St. Anthony the Great. Call Fr. Anthony to have him come bless your house for the New Year.

Covered Dish Luncheon

We will have our monthly covered dish luncheon Sunday, Jan. 4, following the Divine Liturgy. Please bring food to share.

Philoptochos

Philoptochos will hold its general meeting on Sunday, Jan. 18, following the Divine Liturgy.

Marietta Door Opening

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and Metropolitan Alexios will be in Marietta January 3rd and 4th to celebrate the opening of their wonderful new edifice. Please mark your calendar to help them celebrate this glorious event.

Parish Council

The new Parish Council will be sworn in on Sunday, Jan. 4.

Parish Council meetings will be held regularly on the second Sunday of every month following the Divine Liturgy. The next meeting will be Sunday, Jan. 11.

Finally, the Parish Council will hold a retreat with Fr. Nick Triantifilou at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 24, at Peter Gess' office. The theme of the retreat is parish leadership, and all are welcome to attend.

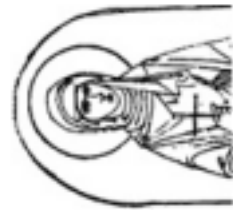
Special Liturgies in January

There are many important Orthros and Divine Liturgies this month:

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|---------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Jan. 1 | 9:00 a.m. | St. Basil the Great |
| Jan. 6 | 9:00 a.m. | Epiphany |
| Jan. 17 | 9:00 a.m. | St. Anthony the Great |

Mark your calendars!

***Happy New Year, Everyone!!
May 2004 bring you much joy and
many blessings.***



St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta

January 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
				9:00a St. Basil the Great, Orthros and Divine Liturgy		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy 12:00p Swear in new Parish Council 12:10p Covered Dish	9:00a Royal Hours for Epiphany 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy, Blessing of the Waters					House Blessings
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy 12:00p Parish Council						St. Anthony the Great, Orthros 9:00 Divine Liturgy 10:00, House Blessings
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy 11:30a Philoptochos General Meeting 12:00p St. Athanasios the Great		St. Maximos the Confessor				9:00a Parish Council Retreat with Fr. Nicholas Triantafyllou, all are welcome
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
9:00a Orthros and Divine Liturgy				Three Heirarchs		Pan-Orthodox Family retreat Atlanta

Rev. Fr. Anthony Salzman
Services held at: Church on the corner of 2nd Street and Barnett Shoals, Downtown Watkinsville GA 30677
For more information: 706/310-1304



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**Volume 10 – Issue 1
January 2004**