

20th Week After Pentecost – Wednesday

Today's readings, followed by a few small pastoral and personal thoughts.

Philippians 2:24-30 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. 25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Luke 6:46-7:1 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. 1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Mat 7:21)

You have heard many times that all dogma is moral. We believe in God, only if, in acknowledging Him, we obey Him. It is useless and destructive to the soul to believe in God without obedience – the demons also believe! It would be good for us if every time we say “Lord”, we evaluate how much we are living according to Whom we speak of. EVERY TIME we say “Lord, Lord”, we must evaluate whether or not we are also confessing Him with our deeds.

Luke 6:47-48 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

It takes great effort and perseverance to “dig deep”. A deep foundation will stand, and a shallow one will eventually be broken. This deep digging includes the searching of the scriptures, to understand the depth of the profundity of their meaning, and also the searching of the conscience. Of course, the rock upon which we build is Christ:

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1Cor 3:11)

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; (2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; (3) And did all eat the same spiritual meat; (4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” 1Cor 10:1-4

At our present time, as we are beginning to actually build our new temple (after months of prayer, planning and fund raising), these words remind me of our present efforts. As your pastor, despite my own limitations, I have attempted to make the foundation of our church to be the rock that is Christ. I am not speaking of the concrete that will be poured this week or next, but the spiritual life of our community. Without spirit, the body is dead. Without effort and perseverance in our personal lives, we cannot expect God to bless our corporate lives in St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church.

I question myself daily, whether I am “digging deep”, and helping to provide a deep foundation for my small flock. I hope that you do this also. This “digging” consists of daily prayer for all of you, the searching of the scriptures, and my personal effort to be a better person. Everything we do privately affects our community corporately. If I do not pray with so much attention on a certain day, I weaken our community. The same is true for everyone in the community. Our fasting, and prayer, and efforts to follow the commandments are both personal and corporate.

The most important change I have made since we have begun seriously to talk of building has been to have a weekday Divine liturgy. We began this custom the week after Nativity this year, and have not failed to celebrate a Divine Liturgy at least once during the week (on Wednesday at the beginning, now on Thursday). Since then, with the one exception of when I was serving at our Diocesan Cathedral in Des Plaines, IL, for their patronal feast. Of course, at that liturgy, I made sure to commemorate everyone in the proskimidie.

We must continue to do all we can to make our building project successful. *It will not end when temple is finished*. The building we are doing is to build up the body of Christ. A new temple is critical to our success, but more critical is our personal involvement in the life of Christ. If we struggle spiritually, we will succeed physically and financially.

