



St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church

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Pastoral Message from Fr. George for Friday, May 23, 2025

This Sunday's Gospel Lesson – Thoughts from St. Tikhon of Zadonsk* on *The Spiritual Blindness of Sin*



*St. Tikhon of Zadonsk was an 18th-century Russian Orthodox Bishop and spiritual writer whom the Eastern Orthodox Church glorified (canonized) as a saint in 1861.

Whatever physical darkness is for the eyes, so is sin for the human soul. The spiritual darkness so darkens and blinds the eyes of the soul, that the sinner walks like the blind: he doesn't know where the path leads him; he doesn't see before him the torment of an eternal death in which he might fall; he doesn't distinguish vice from virtue, evil from good, truth from lies, true good fortune from evil fortune, and, thus, seeing he does not see and acts by touching like the blind.

Does he live in good fortune? He becomes violent, as an untrained and unrestrained horse, and does not see that with this good fortune God draws him to Himself as a father of a little child draws an apple. Will misfortune visit him? He grumbles, is indignant and blames that as if he told a lie; he makes complaints and says a malicious word: “Am I a liar? In what have I sinned? Am I really more sinful than others? Am I worthy of this? Does my work deserve this?” He justifies himself, being full of every kind of untruth; he cleanses himself, being all besmirched; he considers himself unworthy of temporal punishment, but worthy of the eternal; he praises his merits, which stand for nothing.

All of creation, the heaven, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and its fulfillment, as if by mouth “tells of the glory of God” (Psalm 16:2); but the blind sinner does not feel the majesty of His glory and does not tremble. God, both through creation and by His word, reveals Himself for everyone; but the sinner, like a deaf person, does not hear His word and does not recognize the Lord. He hears the name of God, but he does not recognize God: he hears the

voice of the Lord only with carnal instead of spiritual ears, and therefore, “hearing he does not hear and seeing he does not see”.

When God is preached by His holy word, then His sacred will is also preached; but the sinner doesn't know it and does not make it his own. His omnipotence and majesty are preached, before which the sinner is not humble. His righteousness is preached before which the sinner is not afraid and does not honor. His truth is preached before which the sinner does not believe. His omnipresence is preached, before which the sinner does not show reverence. He does not show it because he does not recognize Him. His most wise reason is preached, in which the sinner does not discern. His highest holiness is preached which the sinner does not honor. His supreme authority is preached which the sinner does not obey. His awesome glory is preached which the sinner does not honor. His timeless goodness is preached, in which the sinner makes no effort to participate. His fearful judgment is preached before which the sinner does not tremble, and so forth. Thus, the sinner is like “the man out of his mind who cannot know, and the stupid who cannot understand” (LXX Psalm 91:7) God and the acts of God.

And not only in relation to God, but also in relation to his neighbor, i.e. to any human, the blind man is a carnal and unenlightened man. We see that a person does evil to his neighbor, which he himself does not want; and does not do good to him, which he himself wants. We see that he is indignant and angry at the one who offends him; he abuses, abases, blames, discredits, lies about him, steals, kidnaps, takes away that which is his, and does other offenses; but he

himself does such evil, or repays evil with evil, and is not ashamed and does not sense this. On the other hand, he wants his neighbor to be merciful to him and not leave him in need, for example: to quench his thirst and to give him drink when he thirsts, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger into his home and to comfort the sick and visit those in prison and do other works of mercy for him. All of this he wants, this truth is indisputable, but he himself does not want to do the same for a neighbor. We see that this evil is self-love, an untruth and blindness in Christians, who either silently pass by his neighbors living in misery as if not seeing them, or is ashamed to ask: "what can I do for him?" Many have plentiful food and a magnificent table for themselves, but do not care about a hungry neighbor; others wear all kinds of expensive clothes, and do not care about their naked neighbor; others build rich, large and tall houses and decorate the rest of the building, but for their neighbor who does not have a place to lay his head and to rest they do not care; they have silver, gold and other riches, comfortable for soul and life, that is kept whole and is saved, but there is no care for their neighbor who is burdened with debt and it is torment or prison for him for his shortfalls or sitting debts and suffering. We see this self-love and untruth in Christians: for not only they do evil, but also, they don't do good for their neighbors, there is the untruth.

But what it is even worse, we see that many Christians are not ashamed and are not afraid to steal, to kidnap and to be cunning, to flatter, to lie, to deceive, to slander, to scandalize, to denounce, to abuse, to commit adultery and make other offenses against their neighbor that they themselves would not want. All this comes from blindness.

We Praise God for Our Youth & Their Faithfulness in Growing in the Grace of God

Sunday, May 18th, was the last day of religious education classes for 2024-2025. **Katie Wilson**, Religious Education Chair, led the recognition service for our high school graduates and on behalf of our parish family thanked our teachers for their important ministry, our parents for supporting their students this past year, and our students who faithfully participated. We look forward to their return to classes in August.



During Sunday's prayer, **Fr. George** prayed, *"As these new graduates of our Religious Education Ministry of St. Christopher Church set out from the safe harbor of our parish family across the ocean of their lives, may the Precious Holy Cross be their shining and guiding star."* Fr. George then gave a special commemorative cross from His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to our two graduates, Stella and Laina, to reinforce the prayer offered in their behalf.

Helen Psihountas, on behalf of our Philoptochos Society, gave them spiritual tool kits to nurture them during their college years. **Stephen Sarantis** gave them a monetary gift

from the Parish Council on behalf of our parish family. Our Philoptochos offered a beautiful reception with congratulatory cake in honor of Stella and Laina.



Parents, grandparents, and Godparents, as an affirmation of your critically important reinforcement, Fr. George asks that each family pray the following pray now that we have completed the academic year – both the religious one and the public and private schools our youth attend. This past Sunday, we prayed as a parish family. Today, let each family join hands like in the photo above in thanksgiving that we have a nearby parish to offer the eternal water that refreshes us forever. Let us thank our religious education as well as our public and private schools' teachers and staff that nurture our youth and build them up. With the conclusion of the academic year, we have an opportunity to thank the Lord for the blessing of His wisdom and knowledge, and to ask Him to preserve our students and those who support them.

Prayer at the End of the Academic Year

O Lord, we are grateful for Your numerous blessings that You have richly bestowed upon us in Your loving-kindness. We praise and give thanks to You, and we ask You to look graciously upon us and our students. Pour into their hearts, minds, and upon their lips, the spirit of wisdom, understanding, piety, and godly fear. Enlighten them with the light of Your knowledge, and protect them with strength and steadfastness, so that they may quickly apprehend and willingly embrace all that they have received which is good and beneficial, and in accordance with Your divine law.

Grant that they grow in wisdom and understanding. May they prosper in everything for the glorification of Your Holy Name. Give them health and long life that they may labor for the building up and glory of Your Holy Church, this nation, and of all Your people.

For You are our God, Who is mighty in mercy and gracious in strength, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.



Monogram

means "Jesus Christ conquers"
IC XC are the first and last letters of the Greek words *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* (Jesus Christ)
NI KA comes from the Greek verb "to conquer"

5 CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS



BASILICA.RO



Monogram

the first two letters, X and P (pronounced chi-rho), of the Greek word *Χριστός* (Christ)



the Holy Cross

the symbol of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection



Alpha and Omega

the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet
symbol of Christ, the beginning and end of all things



the Fish

the Greek word for "fish", *ἰχθύς*, is an acronym of the phrase: Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour

Welcome to our Newest Parish Council Member...



We thank **Steve Theodorakis** for his noteworthy ministry to our Parish Council and Building Committee as its Chair. Recently, Steve asked us to reassign these responsibilities to other parishioners so he could fulfill other needs. The Parish Council selected **Stephen Sarantis** as the new Building Committee Chair and it chose **Jim Sliwinski** to serve out Steve's remaining parish council term ending December 2026. This week, Jim completed his Parish Council training and other requirements. This Sunday, Fr. George will administer the Oath of Office to Jim after church services. Earlier this week, Stephen Sarantis chaired a combined Building Committee and Parish Council Meeting with our church architect to further plan for our new church. ***Congratulations, Steve, Stephen, and Jim... we appreciate you generously offering your time and talents to serve our Risen Lord's Vineyard at St. Christopher Church. We are blessed with many talented parishioners and thank all.***



**MY BRETHREN, DO ALL THAT IS IN YOUR POWER
NOT TO FALL, FOR THE STRONG ATHLETE SHOULD
NOT FALL, BUT, IF YOU DO FALL, GET UP AGAIN AT
ONCE, AND CONTINUE THE CONTEST. EVEN IF YOU
FALL A THOUSAND TIMES, BECAUSE OF THE
WITHDRAWAL OF GOD'S GRACE, RISE UP AGAIN AT
EACH TIME, AND KEEP ON DOING SO UNTIL THE
DAY OF YOUR DEATH.**

ST. JOHN OF KARPATHOS

ORTHODOX CHURCH FATHERS

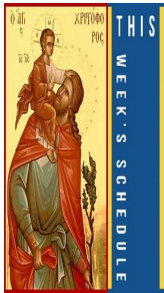
The devil does not hunt after those who are lost; he hunts after those who are aware, those who are close to God. He takes from them trust in God and begins to afflict them with self assurance, logic, thinking, and criticism. Therefore, we should not trust our logical minds. (St. Paisios of Mt. Athos)



The one who gets up and keeps going after every fall reaches paradise.

St. John Chrysostom

Join Us This Sunday with Your Family



Sunday, May 25th – Sunday of the Blind Man

7:45 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy

11:30 Let's EAT!

Monday, May 26th – Memorial Day

9:00 Trisagion Service at Georgia National Cemetery, Canton, GA

[Fr. George will offer a Trisagion Service for our departed brethren on Memorial Day at Georgia National Cemetery. He will visit the graves of our loved ones, beginning at the gravesite of Marion Lindstrom, SECTION 11, SITE 2746 at 9:00 a.m. If you wish to join him, please meet there at 9:00 a.m. May the memory of our departed brethren who served our country be eternal.]

Thursday, May 29th – Holy Ascension of our Lord

9:00 Divine Liturgy

Sunday, June 1st – Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council

7:45 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy & Memorial Service (*Pat MacDougall – 3 years & Manuel Rozakis – 3 months*)

10:30 Blessing of Five Loaves (*offered by Presbytera Marinda and Fr. George Tsahakis*) & June Commemorations

11:30 Philoptochos General Meeting