

St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church

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"An Orthodox Presence in Northeastern Summit County"

www.sainthermanchurch.org



Important This Week:

Thursday, 18Jan— **7PM** Adult Study; Friday, 19Jan—**7PM** Enquirer's Class
Saturday, 20Jan, 6PM—Vespers; Sunday, 21Jan, **10AM**—Divine Liturgy

14Jan24

Leave of Theophany/Tone 7

Take Up the Sword of the Spirit, Which Is the Word of God

We know that our Lord is the Logos, the Word of God. He left us His words so that we might learn them, embrace them, use them to guide us from darkness to Light, use them for strength in times of weakness.

In today's Epistle to the people in Ephesus, St. Paul carries this imagery to its fullness. He describes this fullness of the concept of Christ as Word and uses the imagery to show us not a desire but a spiritual **need** to embrace and to be embraced by the Word.

He does this by describing the Word as 'armor.' What exactly is armor? Webster says it is "a defensive covering for the body." When one looks at a picture of a person wearing armor, one is struck by the sense that there is no vulnerable portion left on the body. The entirety of the body is covered with protection such that arrows or swords could not penetrate it to do harm to the one wearing the armor.

All of these references to war and battle. Are they real? Is it beneficial for us to think in this way?

If it were not, Scripture would not be leading us in this direction!

Perhaps we don't like thinking about it, but we are in a life and death battle—eternal life and eternal death! The extent to which we embrace our faith and seek to do the Lord's will

arms us against falling victim to the *principalities and powers* that St. Paul references—spiritual beings who are waging the spiritual war against us.

St. Anatoly of Optina teaches this: *Are you fighting against your passions? Fight, fight, and be good soldiers of Christ! Do not give in to evil and do not be carried away by the weakness of the flesh. During the time of temptation, flee to the Physician, crying out with the Holy Church, our mother: 'O God, number me with the thief, the harlot, and the publican (i.e. with the repentant) and save me!'*

This is the prayer of one wearing the aforementioned armor, and asking the Lord's blessing to make it effective in protecting us from all temptation and deceit.

Another aspect of a warrior is that they train for battle, so that when the enemy comes, they know how best to respond. What is the equivalent to this for us?

Our "training" is defined for us by St. Paul. *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* Our preparation for battle is being armed with a firm understanding of Holy Scripture.

We need to read. More than this, we need to absorb what we read. It

does not help to possess a tool if we do not know where to find it or how to use it!

Mostly, do not fear. Our Lord has already overcome our enemy, and in His love for us, He stands to help all who call on Him in faith and in love. St. Theophan teaches this:

You must never be afraid, if you are troubled by a flood of thoughts, that the enemy is too strong against you, that his attacks are never ending, that the war will last for your lifetime, and that you cannot avoid incessant downfalls of all kinds. Know that our enemies, with all their wiles, are in the hands of our Divine Commander, our Lord Jesus Christ, for Whose honor and glory you are waging war. Since He Himself leads you into battle, He will certainly not suffer your enemies to use violence against you and overcome you, if you do not yourself cross over to their side with your will. He will Himself fight for you and will deliver your enemies into your hands, when He wills and as He wills, as it is written: 'The Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you.' (Deut 22:14)

Live in Christ. Live without fear. Live seeking to do His will.

And fight the good fight!!

This Week's Prayer Requests

For Health—St. Herman's: Met. Joseph, Pat Blazosky, Sandra, Richard, Sam, Judy, Mitchell

Others: Fr.Dn.Basil, Nikandra, Don, Hannah, Natalie & Scott, Nora & Bob

For the Departed: Patriarch Maxim, Metropolitans Theodosius and Maxi-

mos, Archpriest Stephan, Popadia Marika, Matushka Illaria, Nun Theophania, Matushka Theodora, Stephen, Reader Charles, Betty Lou, Lainey Kay, Katherine, Jeanne

Weekly Statistics

Friday	Vespers	05Jan	6 faithful	9 views
Sunday	Divine Liturgy	07Jan	23 faithful	7 views
Thursday	Adult Study	11Jan	7 faithful	

In the News

Videos of services can be found at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAOKICLMmH_FIDe8SoWOWw

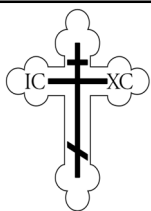
Adult Study continues this Thursday, 18Jan at 7PM. Join us!

Similarly, the Enquirer's Class continues on Friday, 19Jan at 7PM. See y'all there!

Our Annual Meeting is upcoming in early February. We need people to volunteer for board and committee positions. Be prepared to commit some personal time and talent to the community!

Weird—I Understand This!!


**Right now I'm having
amnesia and deja vu at the
same time!
I think I've forgotten this
before.**



**Expect Satan's
attack when
you pray.**

**(St. John
Chrysostom)**

The Work of the Church (Abbot Tryphon)

The work of the Church is to seek the lost sheep and bring them into the fold. The modern mission of the Church is to go into the community and find the lost. Many who were previously Orthodox never made a commitment to assure they would remain in the Church and grow strong in their faith are out there waiting to be found. Those who've been lost to the Church demonstrate the clear reality that it is not enough to practice the externals, or to know how things should be done, but to know the deeper meaning as to why we do what we do, and why we believe what we believe.

It is not enough to fill our churches with people if they are not believers. Our people must be made strong in the faith if they are to withstand secular assaults that are gaining influence in our modern world. The traditions and services of the Church are meaningless until people have taken in Christ for themselves. The Lord said, "Marvel not that I said to you, You must be born again (John 3:7)". Belonging to the Church without understanding the teachings of the Church, and making them our own, is simply not enough.

The clergy fail in their service to the Church if they do not instruct the faithful. "This is the work of the Church: to help man to become aware

of his eternal vocation, to draw near to a higher power, to Christ our Savior (Metropolitan Meletios of Preveza and Nikopolis)." Too many clergy fail to look for opportunities to interact with people, being missionaries in our own homeland. The people of the Western World have abandoned Christianity in droves, making it imperative that the Church reach out with a renewed missionary zeal.

Even members of the Church are in danger of becoming lost sheep, being ill prepared for a secular and atheistic society that is increasingly Christianophobic. As priests we dare not let even one parishioner leave the Church without doing everything we can to bring them back into the fold. Priests must do everything in their power to seek out those who've stopped coming to church and love them back into the life of the Church. Christ Himself demonstrated, as the Good Shepherd, the need to leave the ninety-nine sheep, and go out to find the one who is lost.

Young people especially are turned off to the unauthentic. They can see when their parents, or even their priests, are simply going through the motions of religiosity. They will not commit to a life that demands sacrifice if they do not see it demonstrated, even lived out, in the lives of their elders. Priests must reach out to young peo-

ple, even going to college and university campuses, with Orthodoxy. We must not cheat today's youth of the knowledge of Christ.

I, like so many brother priests, weep with sadness when I see our youth turn their backs on the Church. I recall an encounter with an Orthodox man who's commitment to the Church had lapsed. He approached me with the request for a blessing, while his grown son stood by with a smile, and pleasant small talk, not asking for a blessing himself. This fine young man, gifted with a wonderful heart and a good mind, is estranged from the Church, and I found myself wanting to grab them both by the scruff of their necks, and usher them before the royal gates of the temple.

I am fully aware of how I've failed in my priestly duties. There are times I've given too harsh a sermon, or been parental when I should have been more accommodating. All I can do, in the aftermath, is to pray for the lost sheep, and keep my heart open with the love of Christ. Just like fathers in the flesh, I must leave the door open and not be too harsh. Surely no easy task when you worry about those you love, and who were placed in your pastoral care by God.

32nd Sunday (*Chaplain Sarah Byrne-Martelli, stmaryorthodoxchurch.org*)

Today, a blind man, who has lived his life by the side of the road, asks our Lord for healing. Like the blind man, we all suffer with some form of blindness – if not perhaps with our physical eyes, then blindness within our hearts and minds. We focus on the wrong places and this leads us into suffering and despair. Perhaps we gaze ahead with extreme farsightedness, focused on what's in front of us: our calendars, our careers, our plans for next month, next year. Perhaps we stare at others too much: noticing what they have, what they do for a living, how they look and act; we develop envy, scorn, we judge and desire. Or we focus only on personal needs, while oblivious to the real needs of those around us.

When our eyes are closed, we miss what is right in front of us. When we look elsewhere, with envy or greed or mindless distraction, we miss what is right in front of us. We stare into space, we are scattered, we suffer and blindly fall into sin. Is this how God calls us to live?

Blindness of any type can be crippling, and this was true for the man who sat begging on the side of the road. He calls out to Jesus two times: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus orders the man be brought to him. And then – I always thought this was interesting – though He is the Christ, the son of living God, and it was probably pretty obvious what type of healing the man needed, Jesus doesn't just go ahead and heal him. Instead, Jesus says to the man, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Picture Christ walking up to you and saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" What would you say? Would you know where you need healing? Would you stammer? Would you be rendered silent, scrambling for a response?

What's funny is when you present it like this – Christ walking up to us and saying "What do you want me to do for you?" it seems kind of odd, like it might never really happen. We might have this idea that we will meet God only after death. We become complacent, forgetting that a life of prayerful repentance is ongoing. I see this in my work as a chaplain caring for people at the end of life. Ignoring our relationship with God, and our need for healing, is very tempting, and very normal. We are so caught up in everything else...it's like we're living with blinders on. When we find ourselves in a crisis, suddenly in need of God, we can't find the words of prayer. There is despair, regret, panic. We are so busy doing other things that we have no insight. We are rendered silent, with our spiritual eyes closed.

A wise mentor once relayed to me that it's a good idea, when offering prayers for a sick or dying person, to do so with your eyes open. I laughed and said to her, "Oh, no problem, I'm Orthodox Christian! We always pray with our eyes open!" Of course! But do we, really? Yes, we pray in the presence of icons, with their vibrant and colorful images. We see Christ and his parables, His miracles, His birth in a humble cave, His transfiguration. We see His crucifixion, His resurrection from the dead, His trampling down death by death. Colors, lights, shadows, lovingly written into the icons, every brush stroke writing a prayer of praise to God. The reds, blues, golds, greens: all of this, infused with God.

Do those colors fade when we exit the sanctuary? These colorful icons are windows into Christ's kingdom, images of God in our world. Do we see the icons around us? Do we see the heavens declaring the glory of God? God's glorious image imprinted in the very people before us? Perhaps it's easier to look away...even to keep our eyes closed.

We rely on God to open our eyes, to help us see the icons around us. Even more, we need God's help to see ourselves as His living icons. And we are offered this help every day of our lives. Christ always asks us this question, "What do you want me to do for you?" and He always wills that we answer Him with honesty. It is an ongoing dialogue, a conversation. Walking up to receive Holy Communion, we encounter the Christ who knows us and calls us by name. Participating in the Sacrament of Confession is a chance to name the places where we need healing. Even though God knows our hearts, and knows our needs, there is something in the asking, in giving voice, that is imperative in our relationship with God. We name it, even if it seems obvious.

The blind man names his request. He trusts that God is able to heal him. When his sight is granted, the first person he sees is...Christ! And when we pray for restored spiritual sight, we, too, may see Christ before us, in everyone! The blind man becomes a witness to God's power. In his gratitude and perseverance, he himself becomes an icon of praise, with Christ imprinted on him. And that gratitude is contagious! Those around him rejoice. The reds, blues, golds, greens of God's icons come to life in the people surrounding the healed man.

Asking for our sight to be healed, to see depth and colors and light, means living through joy and sorrow in the light of Christ. It means seeing everything in God's illuminating love: the real situation of our own sin, our own habits, our own judgments and failings. We do this by calling out to God, sometimes more than once, as the blind man did. It requires patience, perseverance.

And now that he is well, what defines the blind man? Not his burden. He can't call himself the "blind man by the side of the road" any more. Now he is a man with perfect vision, seeing Christ. The possibility of new life is here – right now – and what will he do with it? Does he stay in the safe, familiar – if dark – spot by the side of the road? Does he hold his breath, skeptical, thinking it's too good to be true? Does he, like the nine lepers, receive his healing and leave without thanking God? No! His belief gives him courage, joy, and gratitude.

Giving thanks to God and looking out with new eyes, instead of stumbling forward for worldly gain, we see the race that God has set before us. Looking at others with healed eyes, we see Christ in them. Looking at ourselves with healed eyes, we see ourselves as God does – as His children, worthy of love and compassion and healing.

In chaplaincy, we witness this healing – whether physical or spiritual – and it is a testament to our belief that with God, all things are possible. I have seen a critically ill young man sit up in bed, responding to hymns sung by his bedside. He had not spoken for weeks, but suddenly, he was singing. I have seen forgiveness flow among family members who were crippled by anger and pride. I have seen small moments of wholeness, flickers of joy in the midst of suffering. Even in the midst of ongoing pain, even in grief, we can offer acts of love to bring the image of Christ to those around us. As the eyesight of my 90-year old Hospice patient Rita failed in the last weeks of her life, her faith yet continued to grow. The darkness in her eyes increased, but the light in her soul helped her ask her daughter for forgiveness. The light in her heart guided her to be brave, to set her mind on God, and to shine with the peace that surpasses understanding. She believed that she would see God. She beheld the icon of God in her daughter, as she humbly sought healing in their relationship. In her faith, she beheld God ever more perfectly as she departed this life. We, too, believe that we will see God. We have heard the term "seeing is believing." With Christ, believing is seeing.

We welcome you to our humble church, and we pray that your experience here will be spiritually rewarding, calling you back to pray with us at our next scheduled service.

St. Herman of Alaska Eastern Orthodox Church is established with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH of New York, and is one of approximately 30 parishes or missions that are all part of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada and Australia, Bulgarian Patriarchate.

Our worship is exclusively in English, and we use "contemporary" English translations of liturgical texts wherever possible. Singing is congregational. The Divine Liturgy is literally "the work of the people", and as such your presence and participation in the service are essential parts of our worship. The worship of others here present is diminished when you are absent or unable to participate.

Participation in the Eucharist is important to us, and as such we ask you to recognize that it is limited to Orthodox Christians who have prepared for receiving the very Body and Blood of our Lord. Preparation includes fasting from the previous evening and recent confession. If you are not known to our priest, please let him know as you approach that you are Orthodox and prepared to receive! Please do not be offended if the priest so questions your approach—this is important, truly "our Life"!

Troparion of the Week: (Tone 7) *By Your Cross You destroyed death. To the thief You opened Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers, You changed weeping into joy, and You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen, granting the world great mercy.*

Troparion to Saint Herman: *O blessed Father Herman of Alaska,/ north-star of Christ's holy Church,/ the light of your holy life and great deeds/ guides those who follow the Orthodox way./ Together we lift high the Holy Cross/ you planted firmly in America./ Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ,/ singing His holy Resurrection.*

Troparion to Saint Sophia : *You blossomed in the courts of the Lord as a fruitful olive tree, holy martyr Sophia. In your contest, you offered to Christ the sweet fruit of your womb, your daughters Faith, Hope and Love. Together with them intercede for us all.*

Glory to the Father....

Kontakion of the Week: (Tone 7) *The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended shattering and destroying its power. Hell is bound while the prophets rejoice and cry: 'The Savior has come to those in faith! Enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!'*

Now and ever....

Kontakion to the Theotokos: *Steadfast Protectress of Christians, constant advocate before the Creator, despise not the entreating cries of us sinners, but in your goodness speedily come to help us who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you.*

Epistle: Eph 6:10-17

Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

Monthly Financial Tracker

November Total Income \$ 6219
November Total Expenses \$10,095
Month Net Income (Loss) \$ 3876

Yearly Financial Tracker

(based on year-to-date income/expenses)

Projected 12mo Income \$
Projected 12mo Expenses \$
Projected Yr Income (Loss) \$
[waiting for December's balance sheet to clear....]

Web Tracker

StHerman Google Bus Site 505 interacts/28 days
Blog Site Views 34867 Total Views
Web Site Views 13087 Total Views
Facebook Reach 5531 Total Likes

**St. Herman of Alaska
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**CURRENT WEEK
HIGHLIGHTED**

January 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Leave of Nativity 31 Divine Liturgy 10AM Moleben 6PM 2Tim 4:5-8/Mark 1:1-8 Synaxis StJohn 7 After Theophany T6 Divine Liturgy 10AM Acts 19:1-8 John 1:29-34	Feast of T5 Circumcision 1 Divine Liturgy 10AM Col 2:8-12 Luke 2:20-21,40-52 Jas 2:14-26 Luke 17:20-25	2 Heb 12:25-26, 13:22-25; Luke 14:25-35 Jas 3:1-10 Luke 17:26-37	3 Jas 1:1-18 Luke 15:1-10 Jas 3:11-4:6 Luke 18:15-17, 26-30	4 Jas 1:19-27 Luke 16:1-9 Adult Study 7PM Jas 4:7-5:9 Luke 18:31-34	5 Forefeast of Theophany Strict Fast-Vespers 6PM 1Cor9:19-27 Luke 3:1-18 Enquirer's Class 7PM 1Pet 1:1-2,10-12,2:6-10; Luke 19:12-28	6 Feast of Theophany Divine Liturgy 10AM Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7 Mat 3:13-17 Saturday 13 Aft Theophany Vespers/Conf 6PM Eph 6:10-17 Mat 4:1-11
Leave of Theophany 14 Divine Liturgy 10AM Eph 6:10-17 Luke 18:35-43	15 2Tim 2:20-26 Luke 19:37-44	16 2Tim 3:16-4:4 Luke 19:45-48	17 St. Anthony the Great Heb 13:17-21 Luke 6:17-23	18 Adult Study 7PM Titus 1:5-2:1 Luke 20:9-18	19 Enquirer's Class 7PM Titus 1:15-2:10 Luke 20:19-26	20 St. Euthymius Vespers/Conf 6PM Heb 13:17-21 Luke 6:17-23
33rd Sun 21 After Pentecost T8 Divine Liturgy 10AM Col 1:12-18 Mat 22:1-14	22 Heb 3:5-11,17-19 Luke 20:27-44	23 Heb 4:1-13 Luke 21:12-19	24 St.Gregory Theologian Adult Study 7PM 1Cor 12:7-11 John 10:9-16	25 Forefeast 1 Meeting XC in Temple Vespers/Liturgy 6PM Heb 10:35-11:7 Mark 9:10-16	26 Enquirer's Class 7PM Heb 7:18-25 Luke 21:37-22:8	27 Vespers/Conf 6PM Eph 2:11-13 Luke 13:18-29
34th Sun 28 After Pentecost T1 Divine Liturgy 10AM Col 3:4-11 Mat 22:35-46	29 Heb 8:7-13 Mark 8:11-21	30 Three Holy Hierarchs Heb 13:7-16 Mat 5:14-19	31 Heb 10:1-18 Mark 8:30-34	1 Forefeast 1 Meeting XC in Temple Vespers/Liturgy 6PM Heb 10:35-11:7 Mark 9:10-16	2 Righteous Simeon Vespers/Conf 6PM Eph 5:1-8 Luke 14:1-11	3 Righteous Simeon Vespers/Conf 6PM Eph 5:1-8 Luke 14:1-11