

2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9 (Epistle)

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Martyr Sergius in Syria Commemorated on [October 7](#)

The Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus in Syria were appointed to high positions in the army by the emperor Maximian (284-305), who did not know that they were Christians. Envious people informed Maximian that his two trusted counsellors did not honor the pagan gods. This was considered to be a crime against the state.

The emperor, wanting to convince himself of the truth of the accusation, ordered Sergius and Bacchus to offer sacrifice to the idols, but they replied that they honored the One God and worshiped only Him.

Maximian commanded that the martyrs be stripped of the insignia of military rank (their belts, gold pendants, and rings), and then dressed them in feminine clothing. They were led through the city with an iron chains around their necks, and the people mocked them. Then he summoned Sergius and Bacchus to him again and in a friendly manner advised them not to be swayed by Christian fables, but to return to the Roman gods. The saints refuted the emperor’s words, and demonstrated the folly of worshiping the pagan gods.

The emperor commanded that they be sent to the

governor of the eastern part of Syria, Antiochus, a fierce hater of Christians. Antiochus had received his position with the help of Sergius and Bacchus. “My fathers and benefactors!” he said. “Have pity on yourselves, and also on me. I do not want to condemn my benefactors to cruel tortures.” The holy martyrs replied, “For us life is Christ, and to die is gain.” The enraged Antiochus ordered Bacchus to be mercilessly beaten, and the holy martyr surrendered his soul to the Lord. They shod Sergius with iron sandals with nails in their soles and sent him to another city, where he was beheaded with the sword

Bishop Paul to host second annual “Virtual Youth Retreat” Friday, November 16

On the evening of Friday, November 16, 2018, His Grace, Bishop Paul will lead a discussion with pre-teens and teens during the second annual diocesan online “Virtual Youth Retreat.” Youth in grades six through 12 are invited to participate in this event, which will be hosted at five diocesan parishes — Saint Mary Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN; Holy Trinity Church, Overland Park, KS; Saint Joseph Church, Wheaton, IL; Archangel Michael Church, Broadview Heights, OH; and Holy Transfiguration Church, Livonia, MI.

“With such a geographically large diocese, it’s quite difficult to bring our youth together in one place as often as we’d like,” explained Priest Benjamin Tucci, Diocesan Youth Director. “His Grace has encouraged us to find new ways to connect with our young people, including the creative use of technology. Following the success of last year’s “virtual retreat,” we’re happy to host this year’s program to bring together our pre-teens and teens with Bishop Paul for an evening video chat.

“During the retreat, youth will have a chance to dialogue with Bishop Paul via teleconferencing, explore ways they can help the Church take the ‘#IAMORTHODOX’ statement highlighted at the 19th All-American Council and put it into practice, connect with other Orthodox Christian youth from around the Midwest Diocese, and explore what it means to be an Orthodox Christian in our daily lives,” Father Benjamin added.

The event will begin at 7:00 p.m. CST/8:00 p.m. EST with the opening prayer led by Bishop Paul, who then will address the topic of “Our Life in Christ.”

Bishop Paul encourages as many youth as possible to join him for conversation to understand the importance of keeping Christ at the center of our lives.

[Online registration](#) is now available. Questions and requests for additional information should be addressed to Father Benjamin at 612-599-1125 or frbentucci@gmail.com.

In the beginning of time, God created heaven and earth. Time proceeds from this world, not before the world.

The earth is not suspended in the middle of the universe like a balance hung in equilibrium: the majesty of God holds it together by the law of His own will.

Evil arose from us, and was not made by the Creator God. It is produced by the created thing; it does not have the dignity of a natural substance. It is a fault due to our mutability and is an error due to our fall.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters and let it separate the waters from the waters; .. and it was so," Genesis 1:6. Listen to the words of God, "Let there be," He said. This is the word of a commander, not of an adviser. He gives orders to nature and does not comply with its power. He does not regard its measurements, nor does He examine its weight. His will is the measure of things and His word is the completion of the work.

But since His word is nature's birth, justly therefore does He who gave nature its origin presume to give nature its law.

"Let the earth bring forth," God said, and immediately the whole earth was filled with growing vegetation. And to humanity it was said, "Love the Lord your God"; yet the love of God is not instilled in the hearts of all. Deaf are human hearts than the hardest rock.

The bramble preceded in time the light of the sun; the blade of grass is older than the moon. Therefore, do not believe that object to be a god to which the gifts of God are seen to be preferred. Three days [of creation] have passed. No one, meanwhile, has looked for the sun, yet the brilliance of light has been in evidence everywhere.

"Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures," Genesis 1:20, said the Lord—a brief statement, but a significant one and one widely effective in endowing with their nature the smallest and the largest animals without distinction. The whale as well as the frog came into existence at the same time by the same creative power.

Fish follow a divine law, whereas human being contravene it. Fish daily comply with the celestial mandates, but humans make void the precepts of God.

Moses saw that there was no place in the words of the Holy Spirit for the vanity of this perishable knowledge which deceives and deludes us in our attempt to explain the unexplainable. He believed that only those things should be recorded which tend to our salvation.

The Word of God permeates every creature in the constitution of the world.

The divine wisdom penetrates and fills all things. Far more conviction is gained from the observation of irrational creatures than from the arguments of rational beings. Of more value is the testimony given by nature than the proof presented by teaching.

(From the writings of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan +397AD)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

There is a legend of three trees that grew in the days of Christ. One said, "When I grow to be a big tree I will be cut down and made into lumber. That lumber will be used to build a big hotel where kings will lodge." The second tree said, "When I grow up I want to be cut down and made into lumber to build a big ship that will cross the ocean." The third tree said, "When I grow up I want to remain in the forest and point men to God."

None of the three trees got its wish. The first tree grew up and was cut down, but the lumber was used to build a little manger. The tree complained and complained, until one night the Son of God was born there. Then it was at peace.

The second tree was cut down and made into lumber to build a boat to sail on the Sea of Galilee. It complained and complained, until one day the Son of God stood on its deck and spoke wonderful words of life. Then it was at peace.

The third tree was cut down and made into a cross. The tree complained and complained, until one day the Son of God died upon that cross. Then it, too, was at peace.

Whatever our lot in life, God can use us. Let us be willing to

If the prayer "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me" is constantly on your mind and on your lips, and the name is always in your heart in the way that air circulates in our bodies or wax feeds the candle flame, how happy it will make you. The sun, as it rises over the earth, brings day, and the holy and venerable name of the Lord Jesus, when it begins to shine continually in our minds, produces countless mystical understandings, all as bright as sunlight.

~ St. Hesychios the Priest