

Wise Priest Con't

are always destructive. Saint John Chrysostom warns us in Homily 11 on Ephesians that to create a schism is as bad as heresy.

Finally, and in closing, I implore you: stay away from so-called Orthodox blogs, videos and social media posts that trade in conspiracies, fear, hatred and anger, ultimately leading to schism and the loss of faith. In so many instances people who have been Orthodox a matter of months or a few years set themselves up as experts in canon law, church history and theology and seek to teach and lead others. "Armchair bishops" without the grace of the episcopacy are leading people to their spiritual ruin.

I do not ask you to have faith in me, but I do ask you to have faith in the Church which Christ established and has kept these 2000 years through epidemics, schisms, and heresies.

Synaxis of All Saints Commemorated on [June 14](#)

The Sunday following Pentecost is dedicated to All Saints, both those who are known to us, and those who are known only to God. There have been saints at all times, and they have come from every corner of the earth. They were Apostles, Martyrs, Prophets, Hierarchs, Monastics, and Righteous, yet all were perfected by the same Holy Spirit.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to rise above our fallen state and to attain sainthood, thereby fulfilling God's directive to "be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16, etc.). Therefore, it is fitting to commemorate All Saints on the first Sunday after Pentecost.

This feast may have originated at an early date, perhaps as a celebration of all martyrs, then it was broadened to include all men and women who had borne witness to Christ by their virtuous lives, even if they did not shed their blood for Him.

Saint Peter of Damascus, in his "Fourth Stage of Contemplation," mentions five categories of saints: Apostles, Martyrs, Prophets, Hierarchs, and Monastic Saints (PHILOKALIA [in English] Vol. 3, p.131). He is actually quoting from the OCTOECHOS, Tone 2

for Saturday Matins, kathisma after the first stichology.

Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (July 14) adds the Righteous to Saint Peter's five categories. The list of Saint Nicodemus is found in his book THE FOURTEEN EPISTLES OF ST PAUL (Venice, 1819, p. 384) in his discussion of I Corinthians 12:28.

The hymnology for the feast of All Saints also lists six categories: "Rejoice, assembly of the Apostles, Prophets of the Lord, loyal choirs of the Martyrs, divine Hierarchs, Monastic Fathers, and the Righteous...."

Some of the saints are described as Confessors, a category which does not appear in the above lists. Since they are similar in spirit to the martyrs, they are regarded as belonging to the category of Martyrs. They were not put to death as the Martyrs were, but they boldly confessed Christ and came close to being executed for their faith. Saint Maximus the Confessor (January 21) is such a saint.

The order of these six types of saints seems to be based on their importance to the Church. The Apostles are listed first, because they were the first to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

The Martyrs come next because of their example of courage in professing their faith before the enemies and persecutors of the Church, which encouraged other Christians to remain faithful to Christ even unto death.

Although they come first chronologically, the Prophets are listed after the Apostles and Martyrs. This is because the Old Testament Prophets saw only the shadows of things to come, whereas the Apostles and Martyrs experienced them firsthand. The New Testament also takes precedence over the Old Testament.

The holy Hierarchs comprise the fourth category. They are the leaders of their flocks, teaching them by their word and their example.

The Monastic Saints are those who withdrew from this world to live in monasteries, or in seclusion. They did not do this out of hatred for the world, but in order to devote themselves to unceasing prayer, and to do *Con't Next Pg*

All Saints Con't

battle against the power of the demons. Although some people erroneously believe that monks and nuns are useless and unproductive, Saint John Climacus had a high regard for them: "Angels are a light for monks, and the monastic life is a light for all men" (LADDER, Step 26:31).

The last category, the Righteous, are those who attained holiness of life while living "in the world." Examples include Abraham and his wife Sarah, Job, Saints Joachim and Anna, Saint Joseph the Betrothed, Saint Juliana of Lazarevo, and others.

The feast of All Saints achieved great prominence in the ninth century, in the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI the Wise (886-911). His wife, the Holy Empress Theophano (December 16) lived in the world, but was not attached to worldly things. She was a great benefactor to the poor, and was generous to the monasteries. She was a true mother to her subjects, caring for widows and orphans, and consoling the sorrowful.

Even before the death of Saint Theophano in 893 or 894, her husband started to build a church, intending to dedicate it to Theophano, but she forbade him to do so. It was this emperor who decreed that the Sunday after Pentecost be dedicated to All Saints. Believing that his wife was one of the righteous, he knew that she would also be honored whenever the Feast of All Saints was celebrated.

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MOSES AND NOAH HAVING AN ARGUMENT

Hebrews 11:33-12:2 (Epistle)

who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30 (Gospel)

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Being afraid of love con't

metropolitan Detroit. My family and I were motivated by fear. We never bothered to get to know our new neighbors as they moved in, which was sad. We prejudged the people moving in, making assumptions not based on any actual experience of having known them. We were not mean to anyone, nor did we mistreat anyone; but we avoided getting to know each other. I think this is racism. We were afraid to love, and that, in a nutshell, was the problem.

So for those parents today who are going about the challenge of forming the life of Christ in their children, what can we do overcome the subtle forms of racism that impact our lives? I will continue this next week.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you,
The unworthy Archbishop Paul

Masks, and Other Changes

These are stressful times for us. We are in the process of cautiously re-opening our churches. When I issued my May 5th directives along with those of the Holy Synod, I said we were going at 10mph. Now that number has gone up to 20-25 mph – a faster speed but still not at the speed limit of many roads (30 mph or more). I have blessed more churches to up their attendance from 20 to 30+ attendees based on stats on the virus in their local areas or modifications in state directives. But with these increasing numbers, I have also directed that masks be worn at services, and I have offered different variations of how communion is to be given with the spoon. This has caused some concern among some parents, so I want to explain my motivations to you in my weekly note. I begin with St. Paul and Romans Chapter 15:

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. (Romans 15:1-2)

Nothing has been done on my part that has been motivated by fear or lack of faith. Fr. Paul Lazor of blessed memory would often tell seminarians at

our common meals during Great Lent: “we set our table for our weaker brother.” So in directing that we wear masks at services (especially as our numbers increase to over 20), I am motivated by two factors.

One is the knowledge I have gained from reading and advice received from various sources that tell me the most effective way of minimizing any risk of the virus spreading in our churches is through a combination of wearing masks and social distancing. Second, my motivation for directing that masks be worn is motivated by my love for all of you. I don't want us doing anything as a fallen people seeking salvation that would bring harm to our brothers and sisters.

So when you are speaking to your children about wearing masks (especially to those over 7 years old), tell them we are doing this because of love, not fear. When people go to hospitals now to visit the sick, everyone is told to wear a mask so that we reduce the risk of spreading something to patients that might cause them to get sicker. The challenge the Covid virus still presents is that people can be feeling fine and have no symptoms to report, but be infected with the virus and pass it on from person to person. Plus, the longer we are together in church, the less effective social distancing is. Thus, we wear the facemask out of love for others as an added precaution to cause no harm to others. I don't want people to get used to wearing masks, because I believe there will be a time in the near future when we will not need to do so.

In regards to the way we receive communion in our churches, I have the following thoughts to share. Some believe strongly that we should not change the practice we have been following for the last 800 years. That is certainly a powerful argument. However, I have heard from others that while they believe they can't get sick from the Eucharist itself, they worry that they might get the disease from the communion spoon. This has caused anxiety on their part to approach the cup. They are still people of faith, but they are perhaps like the Father who cried out to Jesus in Mark 9:24, “Lord I believe, help my unbelief.” So I **temporarily** required either sanitizing communion spoons with alcohol, or using a different, clean spoon for each communicant. Recently, I have also blessed using just one spoon and allowing the Eucharist to be given in

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Mask & other changes con't

wide-open mouth without touching one's mouth to the spoon. All of this has been done to mitigate the anxiety people of faith may have to enable them to come to the cup. All of the Bishops on the Holy Synod are of one mind to eventually return to the practice of one spoon as was done prior to the outbreak of Covid 19.

I want to end by relating a story from the TV show "The Love Boat." A man (played by Louis Nye) came aboard the cruise ship wearing a life jacket, and he wouldn't take it off for fear of the water. Many tried to convince him to take off the life jacket, but he became more adamant and refused out of fear. Eventually, all the other passengers on the cruise ship started wearing life jackets to express their love for this fearful man and to stand with him. He was so grateful for people showing this expression of love and understanding towards him. The story ends with him taking off his life jacket of his own free will and joyfully jumping into the pool.

It is with this attitude in mind that I ask you to approach these issues we are addressing for the short term. The blessing of the Lord be upon you.

With love in Christ,
The unworthy Archbishop Paul

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Prayer is an all efficient
panoply, a treasure
undiminished, a mine
never exhausted, a sky
unobstructed by clouds,
a haven unruffled by
storm. It is the root,
the fountain, and the
mother of a thousand
blessings.

ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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**COMMENTS RECEIVED REGARDING
ARCHBISHOP PAUL'S ARTICLE**

Most Reverend Archbishop Paul thank you for the love and concern of your flock expressed in this weeks reflection. As a Registered Nurse who is concerned about the health and welfare of the patients I care for working in Oncology I certainly welcome the precautions and cooperation in the fight to contain this virus that our Orthodox Church leadership has adopted. It is a minor inconvenience to wear this mask comparing that to the major suffering someone might go through contracting the disease. As for the communion spoon I appreciate again the care and concern for your flock by making the eucharist more accessible for those that might be hesitant to approach the chalice in this time of pandemic. Now nothing will hold them back from receiving the healing blood and body of our savior. Nothing has changed in the Eucharist or really how it is received. In our church Father is distributing it with a different spoon for each person. It is my hope and prayer that this would become a permanent change that would forever put an end to the question regarding the common spoon. You are right in saying this question has nothing to do with lack of faith and I appreciate that because sometimes one can be made to feel guilty when your faith is questioned. It seems sometimes the ritual becomes more the focus than the content. Making this minor change (meaning the eucharist is still distributed by spoon -albeit separate) would be for the good of all and our Holy Church.

Love in Christ, Evelyn Wick

ARCHBISHOP'S RESPONSE

Thank you for you thoughtful comment Evelyn. I said in the note it was the intent of Holy Synod to return to the practice of one spoon once things subside with the virus. I know you expressed your hope the using individual spoons would become a permanent practice. At this point I don't see that happening.

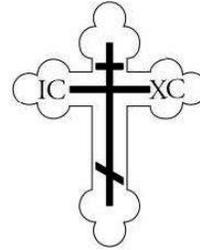
God bless you, +Paul

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