

Orthopraxis

Spiritual Health Warning - *Skipping too much church over the summer is hazardous to your spiritual health!*

By Archpriest Basil Rhodes

"Summertime, and the livin' is easy," sings Billie Holiday. As the weather warms up, our thoughts turn to vacation, relaxation, and the "laying aside (of) all earthly cares." The problem with this is that sometimes we are also tempted to listen to that little guy with the horns sitting on our left shoulder who encourages us to "lay aside" all spiritual cares as well. It's an established fact that church attendance plummets in the summer months – not just here at St. Nicholas, but universally. Folks forget to "plan" about "church" in the midst of all their other summertime plans, (about which they are very careful indeed!) But our church attendance, our church giving, our prayer life, our Scripture reading, all of these should also be taken into account as we prepare for our hiatus from work, school, etc.

Like all of life, our spiritual life is lived in a certain rhythm. Over the Church year, with all of its fasts and feasts, a certain momentum is developed in our souls. This momentum is a result of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in us -- guiding our decisions, nourishing our souls, and leading us to a personal communion with our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, if this momentum is not kept up, all that we gain begins to be lost. The Christian life is often compared to a spiritual ladder which all of us must climb if we desire to see Christ. I would like to suggest that the Christian life is more like a "descending" escalator which we must "ascend." Making progress is difficult, but not impossible, because we are aided by the power of God. But as soon as we stop climbing, we immediately begin a rapid descent backwards, down to the very bottom. As a parish priest, I have sadly seen more people than I would like to

count who had grown greatly over the winter and spring seasons of the Church year, only to fall right back to square one because they took "time off" from church over the summer. The result of their "breather" was a loss of this Spirit-driven momentum (ironically, the Greek word for "breath" also means "spirit"). Like a muscle, when our souls are left inactive they atrophy.

If you are going away this summer, go online and find where there may be Orthodox churches near where you will be. If you need help with this, feel free to ask me for assistance. Are you going to Antarctica? No worries! Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church is there for you! If you are going out to the wilderness, or a remote cabin or on a camping trip, take along a Bible and a prayer book; read the prayers and services and celebrate the glory of nature with its Creator. Every day is a "day that the Lord has made". Every season, every moment of our lives is a gift from God. Any time is time to spend with the Lord.

Lives of the Saints

Ss. Peter and Fevronia of Murom - June 25 Patron Saints of Love, Marriage and Family

Holy Prince Peter (David in monasticism) and Holy Princess Fevronia (Euphrosyne in monasticism), Wonderworkers of Murom.

Prince Peter was the second son of the Murom prince Yuri Vladimirovich. He entered upon the throne of Murom in the year 1203. Several years before this St Peter had fallen ill with leprosy, from which no one was able to heal him. In a vision it was revealed to the prince that the daughter of a bee-keeper would be able to heal him: the pious maiden Fevronia, a peasant of Laskova village in Ryazan gubernia. St Peter sent his emissaries to this village.

When the prince saw St Febronia, he fell in love with her because of her piety, wisdom and virtue, and vowed to marry her after being healed. St Febronia healed the prince and became his wife. The holy couple loved each other through all their ordeals. The haughty boyars did not wish to have a princess of common origin, and they urged that the prince leave her. St Peter refused, and so they banished the couple. They sailed off on a boat from their native city along the River Oka, and St Febronia continued to console St Peter. Soon the wrath of God fell upon the city of Murom, and the people begged the prince return together with St Febronia.

The holy couple was famous for their piety and charity. They died on the same day and hour, June 25, 1228, having received the monastic tonsure with the names David and Evphrosyne. The bodies of the saints were put in the same grave.

From the Fathers

From St. John of Kronstadt (died 1908, glorified by Russian Orthodox Church June 8, 1990)

"The problem of our life is union with God, and sin completely prevents this; therefore flee from sin as from a terrible enemy, as from the destroyer of the soul, because to be without God is death and not life. Let us therefore understand our destination; let us always remember that our common Master calls us to union with Himself."

"Watch your heart during all your life - examine it, listen to it, and see what prevents its union with the most blessed Lord. Let this be for you the science of all sciences, and with God's help you will easily observe what estranges you from God, and what draws you towards Him and unites you to Him."

"Keep a strict watch against every appearance of pride: it appears imperceptibly, particularly in time of vexation and irritability against others for quite unimportant causes."

"When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means."

Upcoming Events

June 5 – Fund raising lunch for St. Eugene's Children's Camp
Please come help raise money for kids to go to the camp.

June 25 – Rummage Sale from 8 am to 12 noon

The Church really needs your help to raise money to continue operating. Please gather those items that you've been keeping around the home but don't use much and bring them to the Church. Items should still look ok and work.

We seriously need volunteers to organize, price and sell.

We are not going to sell clothes this year. Adult's clothes don't sell well. Children's clothes sell for so little that we don't make a profit. Children's toys and games are great.