

PARISH BULLETIN

THE LEGEND OF THE SILENT CHURCH

Bishop Basil (Preobrazhenskiy)

The old legend explains why our prayers are sometimes left unheard. A long time ago there lived a starets who prayed a lot and in his prayers he asked God:

“Lord, do you answer our prayers? People pray to You to live in constant repentance and peace, but do not succeed in their prayers. Is it maybe that their prayers are full of vanity?”

One day he had fallen asleep with those thoughts on his mind. At once, an Angel came to him in all its glory, putting his wings around the old man and taking him up to heaven. The higher up they were flying the less the earthly sounds could be heard. The human voices and clamors of life waned. Only, from time to time, the harmonious gentle sounds could be heard from afar as if coming from a distant flute.

“What is that sound?” asked the old man.

“These are the holy prayers,” answered the Angel. “Only these prayers can be heard here!”

“Why are they so quiet? Why are there so little of those sounds?”

The Angel looked upon the old man with sorrow in his eyes.

“Do you want to know? Look!”

A long way down, there was a great church. By God’s will, the starets was able to see what was happening inside. The church was filled with people while the service was going on. What kind of service, they did not know for not a sound could be heard. A stout deacon stepped onto the amvon. With a brisk movement of his hand he smoothed down his hair, lifted the orarion, widely opening his mouth but no voice was coming out, not a sound!

In the church balcony the choir was preparing for chanting.

“Now, I will hear the choir for sure,” the starets was thinking to himself.

The conductor lifted his arms up in the air and gave a cue for the choir to begin — but the utter silence reigned. It was truly a strange spectacle the conductor was waving his arms around, the basses were red in the face from tension, while tenors were faltering; everyone was opening their mouths, holding their heads up, but no tune came out.

“What is this?” said the starets in bewilderment. He looked at the people praying and there were numbers of them of different ages and status: men and women, young and old, rich and poor. They were all

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

November 24.
Liturgy 10:00AM

December 1.
Liturgy 10:00 AM

December 4.
The Entry of the Theotokos
Liturgy 9:00 AM

December 8.
Liturgy 10:00 AM

December 15.
Liturgy 10:00 AM

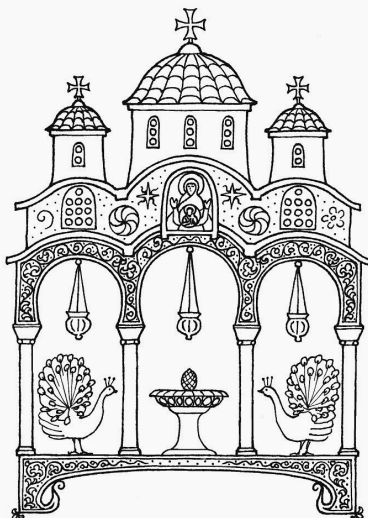
December 19.
St. Nicholas
Liturgy 9:00 AM

Reminder:
THE NATIVITY FAST
STARTS ON
NOVEMBER 27.

**ADULT RELIGIOUS
CLASSES ON FRIDAYS
4:00 PM**

Thank you to all who
attended and helped us
celebrate Our 65th
Anniversary!

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putting the signs of cross onto themselves, bowing, whispering, but nothing could be heard. The whole church was silent.

“Why is this so?” asked the starets.

The Angel replied, “Let us go down closer and you will understand.”

So they went down invisible to the people in the church. A simple dressed woman was standing near solea, looking as though she were in deep prayer. The Angel came closer and touched her with his hand. All of a sudden the starets was able to see her heart and hear her thoughts.

“That awful woman!” she thought, “...wearing a new dress! Her husband is a drunkard, her children are rude, and she does not care for that! She is so vain!”

Another gentlemen wearing a fine suit was dazing off into the iconostasis. The Angel touched his chest and the starets could hear his secret thoughts.

“What a bad luck! I made a bad trade.... lost a thousand and maybe more....”

A young man stood next to the gentleman. He was not praying at all, but was constantly looking at the left hand side of the church where the women were standing. The Angel touched him and the starets read his thoughts.

“Dunja is such a good girl. She is pretty and has a good job. This is a kind of woman I need! Would she go out with me?”

The Angel touched many people and all of them had similar empty and worldly thoughts. They were standing before God but their thoughts were far away from Him. They only seemed as if they were praying.

“Do you understand now?” asked the Angel. “Such prayers do not reach us at all. This is why people in this church are silent.”

At that moment they could hear a tiny little voice saying clearly:

“God, You are mild and merciful...Please, save and have mercy upon my poor mother, and heal her!”

There, against the wall, was a little boy kneeling in the corner. His eyes were filled with shiny tears. He was praying for his ill mother. The Angel had touched him and starets saw the child’s pure heart filled with love, care and prayer.

“Here is the prayer that reaches heavens!” said the Angel.

Prayers spoken without sincerity do not reach God and bear no fruit.