

St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance
University of Mt. Union Library Building - Room KHIC 003
Divine Liturgy: 9:00 am.
Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (Bulgarian Diocese OCA)
Mission Phone # 330 768-7633
Mission Website "<http://www.stnikolaiorthodoxmission.com/>
August 17, 2014:10th Sunday after Pentecost/Martyr Myron



Tone 1 Troparion (Resurrection)
When the stone had been sealed by the Jews,
while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure ^body,
You rose on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world.
The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O Giver of Life:
“Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your ^Kingdom!//
Glory to Your dispensation, O Lover of mankind!”

Tone 1 Troparion (Feast of the Dormition)
In giving birth you preserved your virginity.
In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos.
You were translated to life O Mother of Life,//
and by your prayers you deliver our souls from death.

Tone 4 Troparion (Martyr Myron)
Your holy martyr Myron, O Lord,
through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God.
For having your strength, he laid low his adversaries,
and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.
Through his intercessions, save our souls!

Tone 4 Troparion St. Nikolai
In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of
abstinence; your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you. Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ
our God that our souls may be saved!

Tone 1 Kontakion (Resurrection)

As God, You rose from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Yourself.

Human nature praises You as God, for death has vanished.

Adam exults, O Master! Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to You://

“You are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!”

Tone 4 Kontakion (Martyr Myron)

From childhood you longed for Christ, all glorious one, keeping His divine commandments and running to Him with all your being, all-honored Myron.

Now you zealously pray with the Angels, asking remission of sins for those who celebrate your memory.

Tone 2 Kontakion (Feast of the Dormition)

Neither the tomb, nor death, could hold the Theotokos,
who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions.

For being the Mother of Life, //

she was translated to life by the One Who dwelt in her virginal womb.

Tone 1 Prokeimenon

Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on You!

v: Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!

Tone 3 Prokeimenon (Song of the Theotokos)

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

Tone 1 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

v: God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me..

v: He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever.

Tone 2

v: Arise, O Lord, into Your resting place: You and the Ark of Your sanctification!

Gospel: Matthew 17:14-23

(Instead of “It is truly meet ...,” we sing:) Tone 1

(Refrain):

The Angels, as they looked upon the Dormition of the Virgin,
were struck with wonder, seeing how the Virgin went up from earth to heaven.

(Heirmos):

The limits of nature are overcome in you, O Pure Virgin:
for birthgiving remains virginal, and life is united to death;
a virgin after childbearing and alive after death,
you ever save your inheritance, O Theotokos.

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!

I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

News: If you have not heard, last week, an Icon of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, housed at St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, Canton, miraculously wept. The following is an article about weeping Icons written by *Father Paul O’Callaghan Dean of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Wichita, Kansas.*

WHY DO ICONS WEEP?

THE PHENOMENON

What happens when icons “weep?” In most cases, a moist dew-like substance begins to form on the icon and then begins to stream down it. On many weeping icons, the moisture develops in the eyes only, and then wells up like tears do in a persons eyes, before flowing down the icon in distinct streams. The substance itself is of an oil-like consistency, and at times has a distinctly fragrant odor to it. It is akin to the— myrrh that has flowed from the incorrupt bodies of certain deceased saints. (i.e.. St. Demetrios the Myrrhstreaming, and others). In the case of the weeping statues, however, that have occurred in the Roman Catholic tradition, it has been reported that the “tears” are of a watery consistency like natural tears.

THE ICONS

Weeping icons are of every conceivable type and origin. Some have been painted icons on iconostasis. Others have been reproductions. Some have been inexpensive paper prints mounted on wood. Some have been painted by accomplished iconographers, while others are in the non-Byzantine “Western” style. In fact, the Resaca icon is a common reproduction of poor artistic quality marketed by a heterodox monastic group!

The fact of weeping statues in the Roman Catholic world adds to the diversity of styles in which the phenomenon exhibits itself.

To the best of my personal knowledge, all the recent weeping icons have been of the Theotokos. I have not heard of any of Christ, or of any other saint. If they do exist, it is certain that they are far less widespread than those of the Theotokos.

How are we to account for these facts? Assuming for the moment that the Phenomenon is a manifestation of the grace of God, the diversity of styles and forms may well be a reminder to us that God is not in the “art appreciation” business. While it is important that we decorate our churches with icons written according to the traditional canons of iconography, we know that God can and does use what is humble, despised, and unworthy to communicate His grace. This undercuts our pride, stuffiness, and legalism, and our tendency to draw boundaries outside of which we presume God cannot be at work.

If such an answer must remain tentative, even more so is the one concerning the question of why weeping icons of the Theotokos are predominant. Certainly, the Theotokos is presented in the Church’s liturgy as the one who is our most fervent intercessor in heaven, a well-spring of compassion for the human race, our helper and aid. That her icons weep could be symbolic of her closeness and concern for human affairs. However then the following question arises: Would this not be true of her Son as well? Is He to be thought any less close and concerned with our affairs?

Perhaps it would be inappropriate to consider Christ as weeping now, since He has completed His sufferings once and for all for the sins of the world, and has entered into the Holy Place and is seated at the right hand of God. (See Hebrews 5:5-9, 10:12). In any case, we are dealing with a mystery, and all attempts at explanation must be considered provisional at best, (and perhaps impious at worst!)

THE SOURCE OF THE PHENOMENON

Above, I mentioned the assumption that the weeping icons are a manifestation of Divine Grace. Can this, however, be assumed? There are skeptics who would have us believe that the whole thing is an exercise in fakery and trickery. They wish to search for the hidden reservoirs, pumps, and conduits that would prove it all to be a hoax. However, if such were true, there would have to be a widespread conspiracy of deception that reaches back for centuries shielding this arcane technology, as weeping icons have been known for that long. Such a theory stretches credulity far beyond the weeping icons themselves! And what would

it all accomplish? Anyone who knows the life and history of the Orthodox Church must know that this is entirely ludicrous.

Another skeptical theory is that there is some natural process that explains it all. However, how does one account for the great diversity in materials found in the weeping icons (and statues). No one process could account for it all, when such dissimilar materials are involved. And why would the subject be restricted to the Theotokos? The constitution of her icons is no different than any other. And of course, such naturalistic theories have even more difficulty in explaining the healings, heavenly fragrances, and profound spiritual atmosphere many people experience in the presence of the weeping icons. And what natural theory explains the myrrhbearing incorrupt bodies of many saints throughout the centuries?

Another explanation of the weeping icons is that they are a counterfeit spiritual phenomenon produced by demonic spirits. We certainly know from Scripture and the tradition of the Church that Satan is capable of producing spiritual manifestations that appear to be holy and good for the purpose of deceiving people. Could weeping icons be a spiritual deception? Those who would uphold this theory would argue that the phenomenon itself produces enthusiasm for the miraculous but few genuine conversions to Christ. They hold that weeping icons distract people from the real concerns of the Gospel (repentance, faith in Christ, growth in divine grace, the glorification of God) and amount to nothing more than a spiritual "sideshow" that cannot be from God.

However, some of these same objections could have been leveled against the ministry of Jesus himself His earthly ministry had exactly the effect of generating much enthusiasm for the miraculous but very few actual conversions to God. Even his eleven most devoted converts deserted Him when the going became rough! So even if some people show an hysterical preoccupation with miracles coupled with a lack of interest in the heart of the Gospel, it does not mean that a particular spiritual manifestation is not from God.

Although it is not impossible that a particular manifestation of weeping could be a demonic counterfeit, such a suggestion must be weighed against the fact that the tradition of the Church as a whole has accepted this phenomenon as a blessing from God for centuries. This, together with the fact that the weeping icons have been a source of spiritual and physical blessings and healings for many believers, would seem to nullify the assertion that the phenomenon is demonically orchestrated.

However, it is important to recognize that belief in such manifestations can never be equated with divine faith (i.e., belief in the central articles of the faith, trust in Jesus Christ, etc.). Christians may decide to leave aside or even reject phenomena like weeping icons without imperiling their souls. In such a case, one may simply miss out on a blessing that is offered by God.

THE WEEPING

One of the most frequently discussed aspects of this topic has been the question of what the weeping means. One common opinion is that the Virgin is weeping because of the increase in the sins of the world. However, the concept that the sins of the world have greatly increased in modern times is questionable. Is the Theotokos sadder now than when thousands of Christians were being martyred by the pagan Romans? Do the sins of modern America eclipse the murderous persecutions of Stalin and Hitler's genocide of the 1930's and 40's? Is there currently more cause for the Theotokos to weep than when millions of Orthodox Christians were oppressed by hostile Islamic rulers for centuries? Or by Communism in recent years? Or to focus again on the American scene, are our modern sins greater than when millions of African Americans were forcibly enslaved in our land, or when genocide was being waged against Native Americans?

Certainly sexual immorality (with the resultant AIDS epidemic) has become increasingly acceptable in recent decades, but the other sins mentioned above were no less vicious. Perhaps the only other phenomenon that one could argue has uniquely grieved the heart of God and the Holy Theotokos in our time is the wholesale apostasy in many of the churches. This indeed should cause anyone who loves Christ to weep.

The immediate association connected with tears of course is sorrow. However, the fact that what comes from the eyes of the Theotokos is not a watery, tear-like substance is worthy of note. As mentioned above, the tears are of an oily type and consistency generally referred to as "myrrh" in the tradition of the Church. This myrrh is considered a healing balm: the fact that the Virgin weeps myrrh would then mean she is pouring out mercy and compassion for the human race in need of healing and grace. So, in this line of interpretation, the weeping is not so much a statement that the world is in a uniquely evil condition, but a reminder that the mercy, grace, and healing power of the Holy Spirit are still with us in the Church, by the intercessions of the Theotokos.

There are those who feel that the weeping should be seen in this context as a manifestation of grace to call those outside to return to the fold of the Orthodox Church. In the present American scene, the exclusive location of this phenomenon within the Orthodox Church may be a call to other Christians to recognize that Orthodoxy has remained grace-hearing, while other communions have been anxious to rapidly jettison as much of the Christian faith and tradition as they can.

Tears are pivotally associated in the tradition of the Church with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Those who strive for perfect prayer recognize genuine tears of compunction (not emotional tears) as a great gift of the Spirit. In this connection, the weeping icons are a call for all of us to reawaken to the Spirit-filled and grace-bearing nature of the Orthodox Church.

CONCLUSION

A general examination of the phenomenon of weeping icons leads to the conclusion that it is a manifestation of grace within the Church. The acceptance of weeping icons, (and, one must add, many other miraculous phenomena associated with icons), by the tradition of the Church indicates this is a divine activity and should generally be received as such. However, this is not to endorse every absurd and superstitious opinion that may be offered concerning each particular instance of the phenomenon. The Scriptures warn us to "test all things and to hold fast to what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

Ultimately, the significance of weeping icons must be measured from within the perspective of the entire tradition of the Church. An unusual preoccupation with such things cannot be a sign of spiritual health. While huge crowds will flock to view a weeping icon, many of the same people will be missing from the regular Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, and will have little or no interest in hearing the Word of God. Yet in every Liturgy, a greater miracle occurs as the Lord comes to us as our food and drink in the Eucharist. Moreover, the lives of many are miraculously transformed every day by the power of the Gospel. Yes these miracles, although far more significant, receive few headlines and no fanfare. The weeping icons may indeed be a sign that the grace of God is with us and the Holy Theotokos cares for us, but if our interest in them eclipses the essentials of Christian faith, we have strayed into spiritual delusion.

PRAYERS are requested for:

Candi (friend of John and Lynette Baier)

Wendy (friend of Lana Baier)

Jim (Cousin of Fr. David)

George Borojevich (brother of Wally and Debby)

Ava Cooper (infant who is undergoing surgery for heart defects)

Mother Ana Nanci Stradley (Pancreatic Cancer)

Dawn Shaheen

Sharon Budd (Teacher from Perry, injured when rock thrown from overpass)

Father Joe Cervo

+Emily Waseman (with Parents and family)

- +Zora Penovich (with Bob and family)
- +Bertha (Friend of Jaga Radosevic)
- + Proto Milan Zubenitsa (newly departed Kum of Father Dragan)

COFFEE HOUR:

Coffee Hour Sunday, August 10 was provided by the Dan Ralich and Jaga Radosevic. Thank you!!

Coffee Hour on Sunday, August 17 will be provided by Father Joe and Linda Cervo.

Coffee Hour Hosts for Sunday, August 24 and Sunday, August 31 are still needed.

Please see Cathy or Tom Baier if you would like to help. Coffee Hour for the summer needs to be very simple (i.e. coffee, donuts, juice) due to facility constrictions. Any leftovers will need to go home with the host.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS:

Jacob Baier 8/22

Greg Cervo 8/23

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES:

None

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