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# NEPSIS

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## From Fr. David

**My front page for the newsletter this month is taken from a monastery newsletter - Holy Transfiguration in Ellwood City, PA - from Pascha 1987. These words have much to say to our present situation.**

**W**e live today in a busy and noisy world. Wherever we go, we are protected from the risk of finding ourselves alone in silence: in stores, doctors offices, and on the telephone "mood music" welcomes us. Even at home, so often we find ourselves flicking on the TV or radio to keep us company. We get nervous if dinner-table conversation lags.

Paul Evdokimov, a theologian who writes specifically for people trying to live the Christian life in modern society, says that our ascetic discipline today could consist of giving up all our stimulants, including frantic activity and noise. We could then take on the "discipline of regular periods of calm and silence, when we could regain our ability to stop for prayer and contemplation, even in the heart of all the noises of the world; and could then listen to the presence of others."

Strange as it may seem, if we want to have true, deep encounters with other people and with God, we absolutely must spend time by ourselves in quietness. Why is this? First of all, if we want to get to know another, whether a human being or God, in a true, deep and personal way, we must at the same time get to know ourselves. For, as Saint Seraphim of Sarov noted, if we do not understand ourselves, how can we understand anything else? The human person, created in the image of the three divine Persons, is not just a set of superficial characteristics, but a rich and complex being. It takes time and care to get to know a person, even when this person is oneself.

For this reason, we must from time to time lay aside all our activities and even our speech - for while these are expressions of our inner being, they still remain external to us - in order to be alone with ourselves. When we lay aside all the things that we have and all the things that we do then we can look at what's left and find out who we are. This is not always enjoyable – sometimes we may be afraid that there will not be much left. But if we take the risk of continuing, over a long period, to explore our inner terrain, we will discover not only that we are not all we thought we were, but also that we are and can be more than we ever dreamed possible.

There is one caution, however, that we must observe on this inner journey. The human person is not a complete person in isolation; just as God, in whose image we are made, is One in three Persons, so human persons are meant to live in relationship with one another and with God. This brings us to the second reason for needing times of silence and solitude. If we are never alone with God, we will never get to know Him; if we are never silent with God, we will never hear Him. Of course, in our prayer

life, we must talk to God, even very simply, like children. But if we never stop chattering and spend time being silent before God, we will not develop a real relationship with him.

It is the same in our relationships with other humans – they develop best with an alternation of togetherness and solitude, of speech and silence, of expressing, listening and reflecting. In close relationships, some of the deepest communication takes place without any words at all, when to simply enjoy each other's presence, or realize that their connectedness continues through periods of absence.

What is more, although the intimacy between a human soul and God is a mystery which should, to some extent, remain private, there come times when we long to share the fruit of our most precious relationship – that with God – with the people who are also precious to us. At those times, only words which flow out of an inner silence, and inner peace, will bear the weight of what we have to say. As Archimandrite Vasileios says in his book Hymn of Entry:

“It is not a matter of finding what to say, but of how to be silent, how to hear the Spirit speaking in our silence or our speech: the question is, how can we become instruments of the Spirit?”

If we are to be clear-sounding Instruments playing the pure music of the divine Spirit and of our human spirit, we must learn first how to be silent; we must learn first to listen to that music with which we desire to resound. For this is true silence: not simply an emptiness, an absence of noise, a lack of sound, but a fullness, an attentive listening to ourselves, others, and God, all readiness to receive the beauty which is offered us.

## Ask Father | April 2020

### **Why is God allowing this - the Coronavirus pandemic - to happen? I know God doesn't interfere but I just can't understand this.**

**T**his is a great question. It may not be on everyone's mind, because most of us are doing our best to manage, and so far it hasn't been that bad. But for some people, this pandemic has brought very serious financial and health problems. And it's taken a toll in other ways too, I think. I read yesterday that online sales of alcohol have tripled.

There are two parts to an answer to this question. The first part is that the world suffers because of sin. YOU don't (only) suffer because of YOUR sin, but rather, the entire world suffers because of the entire world's sin. Picture everyone riding in a bus. When one person does something foolish or selfish, or causes conflict, the whole bus suffers. And if the driver falls asleep and drives the bus off a cliff, the whole bus suffers in a different way. Sin is like throwing a pebble in a calm pond - there's a splash, then ripples radiate out from the splash. Now picture billions of people standing around a little pond throwing stones in the water. What a mess!

The second part is that Christians are not exempt from the suffering of the world. Picture the bus again. When the bus goes off the cliff, the children riding the bus who have done nothing wrong suffer just as much as the sinister adult in the seat across the aisle. That doesn't seem fair, does it? But

look at the alternative. What would happen if God said, “If you love me, I’ll keep you from the world’s suffering.” Everyone’s first question would be: how do I show that I love God? Let’s say the answer was - go to Church. Suddenly, the Church would be filled with people! But why? Because they love God? Because the love the Church? Not at all. They just want to avoid suffering. What if the answer was - light a candle. Suddenly the candle makers would all be millionaires. But it would have nothing to do with an authentic love of God.

So we all suffer as one race, the human race. What can we do? Be good citizens, be the best we can be, and pray.

## **Dear Philoptochos Members, Families and Friends of St. Sophia**

***So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

*Isaiah 41.10*

**I**n this time of the COVID-19 pandemic we may be apart, but we are in this TOGETHER. For our St. Sophia’s community and communities around the world, this is a new and frightening experience. We will rely on our faith, as individuals and as a faith community.

I have set below a beautiful Prayer for Protection Against a Pandemic, from the National Philoptochos. We are asked to pray this prayer TOGETHER every day at 3:00 p.m. EST. This time was chosen because Jesus’ death took place at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). Let’s pray together.

***Lord Jesus Christ our God, You Who created human beings with utter goodness, the healer of our souls and bodies, heed now the supplication of Your children, and save us from the impending threat against the world. For this affliction has spread ferociously and the fear of death has surrounded us. Many have suffered and many have passed on to repose, and there is none to save us, except You, O Lord.***

***We know, Merciful Lord, that all this will cultivate our faith, as we implore you, crying out in utter repentance. Undo, O Lord, the dangerous effects of the virus and heal all people, as a most Gracious Lord. For those, who repose in peace, give rest in Your heavenly abode. Grant peace to the world, so that all people know that You are the Only God, and your faithful are not bound by death, but live forever.***

***For you are our hope and our whole life is in your benevolent hands, and to You we give glory, as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.***

The National Philoptochos has an Instagram account **#PhiloStrong** for all on Instagram. Let's try to stay connected, most especially with family, friends and neighbors who are alone, elderly or incapacitated in some way. If you are looking for a phone or email for any of our members, please contact me at **(315) 558-4352** and I'll try to help get you contact information.

I don't know when we will return to "business as usual" but until then, we will attempt to stay in touch via email, snail mail (US postal service) or telephone. And don't forget to take advantage of all St. Sophia's services, Bible Studies, Jesus Prayer Group, etc., that are available to us via telephone and computer. They are a great blessing! Visit **stsophias.org** for detailed information.

**St. Sophia's Young Adult League (YAL)** has offered to grocery shop and deliver for anyone who is unable or shouldn't be out during this time of social distancing and quarantine. If you could use their services, please email them directly at **yalstsophia@gmail.com** or telephone Father David at **(315) 269-4940**.

May the Theotokos continue to protect us under her Holy Skepi and intercede for us, and the world, as she prays at the foot of her Son. We are St. Sophia's Philoptochos and yes, we are strong! Thank you for your patience and support.

***For God has not given us a spirit of fear,  
but of power and of love and of a sound mind.***

*2 Tim 1:7*

With love, your sister in Christ, Debbie Tzivani Politis.



## Our TV schedule



### On Spectrum channel 98

#### Sunday programs at 7 pm:

- **April 5** - Fly Fishing and the Spiritual Life
- **April 12** - Homily on the Passion of our Lord by St. Epiphanius, part 1
- **April 19** - Homily on the Passion of our Lord by St. Epiphanius, part 2
- **April 26** - Creation History in Genesis, part 1

#### Monday programs at 8 pm:

- **April 5** - Gospel of St. John, part 11
- **April 12** - Gospel of St. John, part 12
- **April 19** - Gospel of St. John, part 13
- **April 26** - The Epistle to the Romans, part 1

#### Family Classics TV sponsored by St. Sophia's:

- **Sunday at 6 pm** - Sir Lancelot
- **Sunday at 6:30 pm** - The Adventures of Robin Hood
- **Sunday at 8 pm** - The Cisco Kid (2 episodes)
- **Thursday at 8:30 pm** - Sherlock Holmes
- **Friday at 8 pm** - Jim Bowie

### On Verizon FiOS channel 29

#### Sundays at 6:30 pm with a repeat on Thursdays at 8:30 pm:

- **April 5** - Holy Relics and the Deification of the Human Body in the Christian Tradition
- **April 12** - St. Innocent of Alaska
- **April 19** - St. Athanasius
- **April 26** - St. Nektarios

#### Sundays at 7 pm with a repeat on Thursdays at 9 pm ...

- **April 5** - The Sunday of St Mary of Egypt
- **April 12** - Palm Sunday
- **April 19** - The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom
- **April 26** - St. Thomas Sunday

## Church schedule

### Sunday, April 5:

- 9 am - Orthros
- 10 am - Divine Liturgy for St. Mary of Egypt

### Monday, April 6:

- 6 pm - Jesus Prayer Group

### Tuesday, April 7:

- 10 am - Bible Study (only available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)

### Wednesday, April 8:

- 6 pm - Presanctified Liturgy

### Thursday, April 9:

- 6 pm - Choir rehearsal (available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)
- 7 pm - YAL book club (available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)

### Saturday, April 11:

- 9 am - Orthros
- 10 am - Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday
- 6 pm - Great Vespers

### Sunday, April 12:

- 9 am - Orthros
- 10 am - Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday
- 6 pm - Bridegroom Orthros

### Monday, April 13:

- 6 pm - Bridegroom Orthros

### Tuesday, April 14:

- 10 am - Bible Study (only available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)
- 6 pm - Bridegroom Orthros

### Wednesday, April 15:

- 6 pm - Holy Unction

### Thursday, April 16:

- 10 am - Divine Liturgy for Institution of the Eucharist
- 6 pm - Service of the 12 Passion Gospels

### Friday, April 17:

- 10 am - Royal Hours of Pascha (in English)

- **3 pm** - Vespers
- **6 pm** - Epitafios service

**Saturday, April 18:**

- **10 am** - Divine Liturgy (Proti Anastasi)
- **TBD** - Pascha

**Monday, April 20:**

- **6 pm** - Jesus Prayer Group

**Tuesday, April 21:**

- **TBD** - Bible Study (only available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)

**Wednesday, April 22:**

- **6 pm** - Choir Rehearsal (available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)

**Thursday, April 23:**

- **9 am** - Orthros
- **10 am** - Divine Liturgy for St. George

**Friday, April 24:**

- **7 pm** - I.Can.Ography

**Sunday, April 26:**

- **9 am** - Orthros
- **10 am** - Divine Liturgy for Thomas Sunday

**Monday, April 27:**

- **6 pm** - Jesus Prayer Group

**Tuesday, April 28:**

- **10 am** - Bible Study (only available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)

**Wednesday, April 29:**

- **6 pm** - Choir rehearsal (available at <https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)
- **7 pm** - Youth Committee meeting (<https://meet.syntela.com/meet/25624617>)



NOTE: **TBD** means that program times have yet **to be determined**.