



THE PARISH VINE



ПРИХОДСКАЯ ЛОЗА

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. John 15

The Youth Newsletter of St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church
Молодёжный Листок Прихода Св. Владимира
Ann Arbor, MI

September 2007

On the 9th of September, the youth group joined together at Father Gregory's house for our first monthly meeting of the fall. It was great to see new faces! Please invite your friends to our meetings; we are always happy to meet new people because they not only bring a wonderful presence to our group, but also enlighten us with the different perspectives everyone has on the various topics that we cover through the months.

For those of you who were not able to attend the meeting, Father Gregory talked to us about judging others, and whose job it is to do so. The first step one takes into sin is when they think "I am so much better than someone else." Instead, one should be quick to judge oneself and forgive everyone else around them for their sin. If one happens to judge another, they should take a step back and reflect - instead of criticizing them, pray.

A question was then raised by one of our members, which was "When does judging become a sin?" Father Gregory talked about the process in three steps. The first one is presentation of the sin/temptation. At this point, one can either accept or reject it. Then there is initial acceptance, which is when a person begins to sin.

At this point one should discuss this sin at confession. Finally, there is complete acceptance of the sin, which again should be discussed with one's spiritual father - here surely one must repent. In the midst of all this, "pride is unfortunately our default," as Father explained. We all have it and we all have to struggle with it.

Alongside with judging, we discussed gossiping. If one is in urgency to talk about someone in an inappropriate manner, they should pray about it first. The next step would be to go talk to the person that one has a problem with, not to anyone else. If this was not an option, and it was crucial for one to talk to someone, try to talk to a trusted person (like a parent or mentor) who doesn't care or know about the



person one is having the problem with. This has to be done in a careful manner and it's important to be critical of oneself first, just as when it comes to judging others. The only time it's ok to talk about someone else is when you have good things to say, or if you are sincerely inquiring about someone you care about, or if you are warning of a real danger that a person may pose to others.

If you have any questions about the topic, please contact Father Gregory and I am sure he'll be happy to answer them.

We missed all of you who were not with us and hope to see you next month! Please check out our parish photo album for pictures of our meeting!



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## **Please Save The Date!**

The next Youth Retreat will be held in Goshen, IN - Thanksgiving Weekend.  
*Just 2.5 hours from Ann Arbor!*

**The topic will be:**  
*"Orthodox Christian Marriage for the Newly Married or the Future Married".*



Bishop Peter will join us and we look to have a great lineup of speakers, including a priest's wife who has been married for at least 30 years.

Don't miss it! It'll be a great experience!

Details to come!

# The Law of God.

By Seraphim Slobodskoy.

## The Sacred History of the Old Testament.

### Introduction to the Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments.

God always abides in love. As God the Father loves God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, so God the Son loves God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and so God the Holy Spirit loves God the Father and God the Son.



**God is love** (I John 4:8).

Living in love is a great joy, the highest blessing, and God wished that all other living beings should receive this joy. For this, He created the world. God first created the angels and then our earthly world.

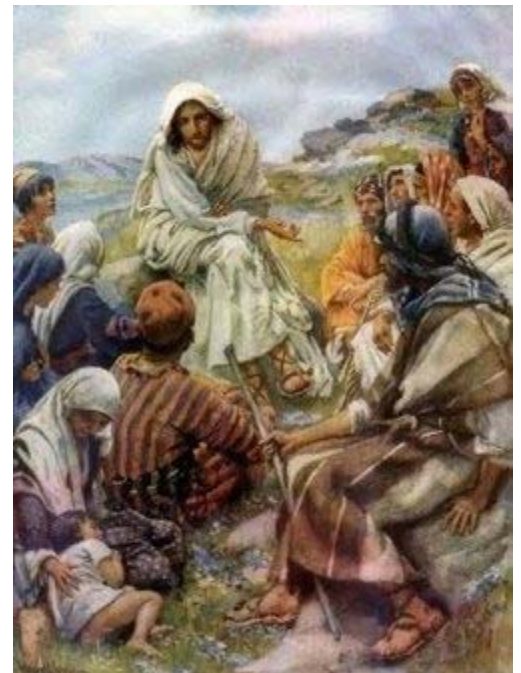
To us men, God gave intellect and an immortal soul and gave us a special purpose: to know God and to become ever better and more virtuous, that is, to be perfected in love for God and for one another and to receive from this ever greater joy in life. But people violated the will of God — they sinned. By their sin they darkened their mind and will, and introduced sickness and death into the body. They began to suffer and die. By their own efforts people were not able to conquer sin and its result in themselves, to set aright their mind, will, and heart, and to destroy death.

Only Almighty God could do this. The all-knowing Lord knew all things before the creation of the world.

When the first people sinned, He said to them that He would come into the world as Saviour — the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who would conquer sin, save people from eternal death, and return them to love, to eternal life — to blessedness.

The period from the creation of the world to the coming of the Saviour to earth is called the **Old Testament**, that is, the covenant or agreement of God with men, according to which God prepared men for the reception of the promised Saviour. Men were to remember the promise of God, to believe, and await the coming of Christ.

The fulfillment of this promise, the coming to earth of the Saviour, the Only-begotten Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is called the **New Testament**, since Jesus Christ, having appeared on earth and vanquished sin and death, made a new covenant with men. According to this agreement, everyone may again receive the blessedness that was lost: eternal life with God, through the Holy Church which He founded on earth.



## 1. Creation of Heaven, the Invisible World.

In the beginning, before the creation of any of the visible world and of man, God created **Heaven**, that is, the **spiritual, invisible world** of the **angels**, out of nothing.

Angels are bodiless and immortal spirits, gifted with a mind, will and strength. God created an innumerable multitude of them. They differ among themselves according to degrees of perfection and types of service and are divided into a number of orders. The highest of these are called the seraphim, cherubim, and archangels.

All the angels were created good, so that they would love God and one another and might have from this life of love continual and great joy. God did not will to make them love Him by force, and, therefore He allowed the angels to decide for themselves whether or not they wished to love Him and live in God.

One, the highest and mightiest angel whose name was Lucifer, became proud of his might and power and did not wish to love God and fulfill the will of God, but desired to become like God. He began to whisper against God, to oppose Him, and he became a **dark, evil spirit — the Devil, Satan**. The word "Devil" means "slanderer," and the word "Satan" means the "opposer" of God and all that is good. This evil spirit tempted and took with him many other angels who also became **evil spirits** and are called **demons**.

Then one of the highest archangels, Archangel Michael, came forth against Satan and said: "Who is equal to God? There is none like God!" There was a war in Heaven: Michael and his angels made war against Satan, and Satan and his demons made war against them.

However, evil power could not endure the angels of God, and Satan, together with his demons, fell like lightning down into the **nether regions, Hades**. "Hades," and "the nether regions," are names for the place of separation far from God, where the evil spirits now dwell. There they are tormented in their malice, beholding their powerlessness against God. All of them, because of their refusal to repent, have become so confirmed in evil that they can no longer be good. They strive by deceit and cunning to tempt every man, whispering false ideas and evil desires in order to bring him to damnation.

In this way **evil** appeared in God's creation. By evil we mean all that is done contrary to the will of God, all that violates the will of God.

All the angels that remained faithful to God, dwelling from that time in unceasing love and joy, live with God, fulfilling the will of God.



They have been so confirmed in good and love of God that they can no longer in any way wish to do evil. Therefore are called **holy angels**. The word "angel" means "messenger." God sends them to make His will known to men; for this, the angels take on a visible human form.

God grants to every Christian a **Guardian Angel** at Baptism, an angel that invisibly guards a person during his entire earthly life and does not leave his soul even after death.

**Note:** This brief account of the creation of the heavenly-angelic world is based on the accounts in Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Orthodox Church.

A detailed account of the life of the angelic world was set forth by **St. Dionysius the Areopagite**, a disciple of St. Paul and first bishop of Athens, in his book, *The Heavenly Hierarchy*, which was written on the basis of all the places in the Holy Scriptures that speak of the angels.

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The Next Youth Group Meeting is Scheduled for:

Sunday, October 28, 2007 @ 2 PM!

Trip to an orchard for a hay ride and cider at 2:00 p.m.

We will meet at the orchard at 2:00 p.m.

<http://www.wiards.com/>

A discussion meeting at Ksenia's house to follow right after.

Ksenia's address: 3358 Honeysuckle Dr., Ann Arbor, MI

Topic

"Living in the World - Striving for the Heavenly Kingdom".

Details to follow...

*"If God be for us, who can be against us?"
St. John Chrysostom*

"The Parish Vine"

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Do you like to help others?
Would you like to learn more
about your Orthodox Faith?
Do you like to meet new
people?
Join the Youth Group!

Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America Youth is a group for Orthodox young adults, which helps us stay united and in contact across the Midwest. Please join if you would like to know more about the Orthodox faith as well as be up to date on events/activities going on in our diocese.

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