So Where Is Heaven Anyway?

Rev. Fr. Anthony Cook

Last time we talked about the marvelous truth that the Most High God, concerning Whom we have been talking, entered into His Creation “for us men and for our salvation,” that the reason for His presence in the world is, fundamentally, that He loves us. From here, we continue with the account of His coming, beginning with the statement that “He came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.”

This verbiage, that Jesus came down from heaven, is one that is rooted deeply in our shared language and consciousness. It reflects deeply seated assumptions and conventions about where God lives, and thus where He would have to come from to enter into the Creation. But this can lead to problems - for one example, some of you may remember that when the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin first went into space, he was reported to have said, upon his return, that he had looked for God up in the heavens, and had not found him. But this idea is not limited to communist spacemen; we who are clergy often hear jokes about such things all the time - “Hey Father, we need good weather for the Festival - put in a good word with the man upstairs, wouldja?”

This is funny, of course…but not very funny, considering what an important matter is being made light of. This joke reveals a faulty understanding of the nature of things, and repetition of this faulty understanding strengthens its hold on our minds and hearts, for it feeds into the idea that God is distant from us, what Fr. Stephen Freeman (whose podcast and blog “Glory to God” are excellent, by the way) calls the two-story universe, the idea that God, the angels, and spiritual matters in general, exist on a different and distant level of existence from that which we ourselves occupy. Fr. Stephen explains how wrong this idea is, and teaches the truth of the one story universe, that everything that exists is imbued with the presence of God, that He is deeply immanent in the Creation, upholding all that is by the Word of His Power. You can find this discussed much more fully in Fr. Stephen’s podcast, especially in the first several episodes, and then again in his book, “Everywhere Present”. I won’t re-hash his points any further, but I want to point out at a more straightforward level that this portion of the Creed is specifically aimed against the idea of the two-story universe.

For Jesus Christ, our God, being by nature infinitely above and beyond our nature and plane of existence, has taken our nature upon Himself. He has condescended to us, lowering Himself, to be with us. And thus He is NOT the man upstairs - He is Christ in our midst, and He will be with us forever. We may not be particularly comfortable with this truth - a God who is near to us, who knows all that we do and are, is a troubling idea to most of us, because so much of what we do is unworthy of His presence. But nonetheless, it is true. God is with us, and our entire life is imbued with significance and import. Every decision we make echoes in eternity, because the Eternal One is here, and and we cannot escape His presence, even if we wished. As the Psalmist says, “Where shall I go from Your spirit? And where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall...
SAINT GEORGE
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Website: www.stgeorgesouthgate.org

Outside of office hours, parishioners may leave a voicemail for Fr. Anthony or the office. In case of emergency, they may call Fr. Anthony directly on his cell. Please leave a message if Father does not answer, and he will return your call shortly.

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Peter Vougioulakis

The above is the twenty-sixth installment of Fr. Anthony’s catechetical podcast, updated semi-weekly at http://theruleoffaith.typepad.com. We also have a weekly Bible Study each Tuesday at 6 pm - all are welcome.

Please note, as well, that we live stream each Sunday’s Orthros & Divine Liturgy on our parish Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/c/franthonyyc-stgeorgesouthgate. A recording of the Sunday Sermons is also posted on the YouTube channel.

As we are speaking of our internet offerings, please remember to check the parish website: http://www.stgeorgesouthgate.org, for announcements, and for an updated calendar of feastdays, readings, services, and events.

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**Presanctified Liturgy**

- Holy Ascension
- Apodosis of Pascha
- Mid-Pentecost
- Memorial Day
- Baptism of Christ
- St. Thomas Sunday
- St. George Calendar of Events • MAY 2019

**Great Vespers**

- 5:00 pm
- 6:00 pm

**Orthros/Liturgy**

- 8:50 am
- 10:00 am

**Fish/wine/oil allowed**

- 8:30 am

**Presanctified Liturgy**

- 8:00 am

**Akathist/Paraklesis**

- 8:00 am

**Great Vespers**

- 6:00 pm

**Orthodox Life**

- 6:00 pm

**Deaconess**

- 7:00 pm

**Byzantine Chant**

- 4:00 pm - 5:45 pm

**Greek School**

- Make-up (10am - 12pm)
- (5:30pm - 7:30pm)

**Orthros/Liturgy**

- 8:50 am
- 10:00 am

**Liturgy**

- 10:00 am

**Greek School**

- (5:30pm - 7:30pm)

**Philoptochos Elections**

- 12:30 pm

**Sunday School Teachers**

- 12:15 pm

**Sunday School Picnic in Park**

- 2pm

**Church School**

- Yearly Clean-up (10 am - 12 pm)

**Holy Ascension**

- 8 June

**St. George Calendar of Events**

- May 2019
AHEPA FAMILY GLENDI in the PARK

Fr. Karamanos Park at the St. George Grecian Center -
16300 Dix-Toledo Hwy, Southgate, MI
Friday, May 17th 6-11pm

Adults $20
Youth 7-12 $10
Kids Free!

JOIN US FOR A NIGHT OUT!

DINNER SERVED
6-9pm
LIVE MUSIC!
CASH BAR

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