

The Confessor's Tongue for November 19, A. D. 2017

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: Prophet Obadiah

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

Parish Development: What We Must Do

Continued from Last Week

Having an all-time record in attendance last Sunday (146) underscores our need to push forward to get a permanent temple built. Here are the options as they now stand.

Our first, quickest, and likeliest least expensive option is to build wherever we can on our current property. The current plan up on the bulletin board reflects this option. It offers about 1600 square feet in the nave: enough to accommodate 177 people at 9 square feet per person (a figure I picked up years ago from somewhere that defines optimal space). Some of that space, about 200 square feet, would be lost to benches along the walls, analogia, candle stands, the kliros and ambon in front of the iconostasis, candlestands, and analogia, leaving us with 1400 square feet for people which translates to 155 people at 9 square feet per person. For comparison, our current nave offers about 660 square feet (NOT including the ambon and kliros, but including the analogia, candlestands, choir stands, and chairs) enough for 73 people at 9 square feet per person). When the narthex is added, we have about 800 square feet—which was occupied by 146 people last week (5.5 square feet per person).

This plan has the new church built behind our existing building. There is a preference to put it in front, but the Historical Landmark Committee would have to be persuaded, and that looks dicey. Whether the church were built in front or back, parking would extend down the east side of the property all the way to the back (about 40 spaces). It would be more than we have now, but still limited. Our current building would serve for hall, classrooms, and office. We could probably build the church in this plan a little larger, but not much.

A second option would be to acquire the 2.5 acres down the street across from the priest and build there. That would allow us to remain on Oak Street. The current building would serve our needs until the new facility was built. If we were only able to build a church initially, the old building is close enough that it could serve as a hall until a new hall could be built. Then the old building could be sold, could be part of a deal with our neighbor to acquire his property, or could remain parish property. The primary obstacle here is that our neighbor so far does not appear inclined to sell the property to us but prefers to keep it. We must pray that God changes his heart for this option to be viable.

A third option would be to find land elsewhere in Denton on which to build. It could be raw land, or could include a suitable existing building which could be used for a church hall and classroom. The Rayzor Ranch development between Bonniebrae and I-35

might offer a site. Others may be found on the north loop or elsewhere in the city, but costs are high for suitable properties in town.

Options two and three will require additional steps and money to execute, but they will also give the parish more space for the long term.

Yet another question relates to the quality of construction. Orthodox church construction in the United States tends to be a cheap affair. While poor countries like Serbia and Greece normally build traditional masonry buildings to last for centuries, Americans tend to build frame buildings with sheetrock. Our initial plan was to build a concrete building stuccoed on the outside and plastered on the inside. The original cost was estimated to be at \$800,000, but I expect that it could not be built for less than \$1.2 million now. Done properly, such a building not only is durable reflecting the durability and solidity of the Church but also helps keep heating and cooling costs down. Our current plan is for frame construction but no sheetrock. It was designed to fit specifically in the space behind our current building. Thus, if we built somewhere else, another plan will be in order, giving us opportunity to reconsider how to build. Our current plan was adopted for two reasons: first, because it did not appear we would be able to build in front of our building where our first plan was designed to go and, second, to reduce overhead and debt so that we would have more flexibility financially to help establish missions in nearby places. Whatever we build, it must be traditional, beautiful, and durable. It should preach the Gospel in its very structure and move people with its beauty.

Starting missions elsewhere in our area has always been part of our vision. People should not have to drive long distances through traffic to get to church. Places that should be served by parishes include Frisco, Keller, Decatur, Gainesville, Lewisville/Flower Mound. What is more, Denton continues to grow. There is no reason that there should be but one Orthodox parish in Denton.

There may be other options for us, but our immediate tasks are clear. First, we must pray fervently for God's guidance and provision. To this end, we have inserted petitions into the Augmented Litany and will be serving more frequent Moliebens to St. Maximus to pray for these needs. Second, we must give. We have a bit over \$100,000, but we shall need much more. As of now, all gifts designated "building fund" go here. So does all money that comes in each month over our monthly budget. So does the interest that accrues on money we have deposited with the Diocese of the South. So in giving, the first thing is to tithe (give 10% of our monthly income). If we all do this, we shall have several thousand a month coming in over our budget going into the building fund. Many of us could, on top of our tithe, make and

additional special offering to the building fund periodically or each month. The more we have in hand, the easier it will be to move forward when the opportunity comes.

Though the parish has been in the process of building since its foundation sixteen years and four months ago, all of us have the opportunity to be founders of a new parish in the sense of seeing to the construction of a permanent, beautiful church to bear witness to Christ, His Gospel, and the fullness of His Church until He returns. The founders and benefactors of a church are explicitly remembered in prayer at every service

21 November:

Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

We keep the feast for four days until it leavetaking November 25. We may use the Troparion of the feast before meals in place of our usual prayer and the Kontakion after meals in place of our usual giving of thanks.

Entrance of Theotokos, Troparion, tone 4

Today is the prelude of the good will of God, / of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. / The Virgin appeareth in the temple of God, / in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. / Let us rejoice and sing to her: / Rejoice, O Fulfillment // of the Creator's dispensation.

Entrance of Theotokos, Kontakion, tone 4

The all-pure Temple of the Savior, / the precious Bridal Chamber and Virgin, / the sacred treasure of the glory of God, / is led today into the house of the Lord, / and with her she bringeth the grace of the divine Spirit. / Of her God's angels sing in praise: // "She is indeed the heavenly Tabernacle."

When the Most Holy Virgin became three years old, her parents, true to their vow to the Lord to dedicate their child to Him, solemnly led their Most-pure Daughter into the Jerusalem Temple "to be brought up in divine grace" "before the Lord." Though at that time the Most Holy Virgin, as expressed in church hymns, was yet "three years old in the body" she was already "many years in the spirit" although still "a child in the flesh, she was already perfect in soul". She looked at the temple of the Lord as at a paradisiacal dwelling of the glory of God, as at the most cultivated haven, for which Her soul thirsted more than the home of her parents, is why she entered into the temple majestically and rejoicing. The Holy Virgin was put on the first step of the temple and to the surprise of everyone, with no one supporting her, being encouraged by the spirit of love for God, climbed firmly up the fifteen steps of the temple.

At this time, on the outside in front of the Jerusalem temple there were about were ninety apartments. In these apartments there were rooms for various persons: separately the maidens who lived there during the time they were dedicated to the services to God; separately widows lived there, promising God to keep the premises clean until their

death; separately men, called supervisors, in the image of unmarried monks resided there. There were also other apartments for the comfort of pilgrims and strangers who came from a distance for worship in the temple. All of them served the Lord in the temple and had their livelihood from the church estates. The Most Holy Child Mary was lodged at the Jerusalem temple in the apartments where the maidens lived.

The Holy Young Child, living in the temple, spent all her time in prayer, reading the Word of God and thinking about God. She occupied half her time with her own needlework, especially loving to prepare clothes dedicated to serving in the temple; which she fulfilled while growing up, and occupied the other half with works of charity at the temple, serving the needy, the crippled and the infirm which tradition says, to whom she also gave all her food, herself eating only the "most glorious bread from heaven", brought to her by the angels", and "conversing with them". Living at the temple and devoting all her time to pious occupations, the Most Holy Virgin was continually used to being before the all-seeing, omniscient Lord God and His almighty will in soul and body, in mind and heart, in thought and desire, having formed in herself a living and firm faith in the word of the Lord, a fervent love for the Lord and for neighbor, an all-perfect fidelity to the will of God, the deepest humility and meekness, inscrutable patience and obedience to the word of the Lord. "

In the early years of her life she lost her parents. After their death, she all the more turned to the One God with all her soul, and with all the desires of a pure heart and singularly sought Him out for joy and consolation.

When the time has come for the Most Holy Virgin, according to the then existing custom, to leave the sacred dwelling of her pious formation and like other maidens to marry, she declared to the high priest and to the priests her vow to remain virgin and with their advice and consent, for the protection of virginity, at that time being 11 years old, was betrothed to her relative, the aged righteous Joseph, and moved from the temple into his house which was in Nazareth.

The example the Saints Joachim and Anna teaches us to fulfill pious vows. And the deeply instructive example of the upbringing of the Most Holy Virgin explains to us our duties to our children that we must as early as possible and to take them to the temple of God more often, to accustom them to the full complement of prayers at home, teaching them in the law of the Lord, particularly in their growth to properly use their time to develop in them love for their neighbor and diligence to inspire obedience in them to the church rules (Ustav), and to waken and strengthen in them the spirit of piety and the fear of God .

Upcoming Events 2017

21 November: Entry of the Theotokos

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!