

# THE MESSENGER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH  
SUMMER 2012



## DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS, AUGUST 15

### MARK THE DATES

July 1: PARISH PICNIC

July 9-20: Father John on Vacation

July 14: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

Aug 1: Dormition Fast Begins; Procession of Cross, Liturgy, 8:00 AM, bless honey

August 6: Transfiguration of the Lord; Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM, bless fruit

August 9: St. Herman of Alaska; Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

August 11: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

August 15: Dormition of the Theotokos, Divine Liturgy 8:00 AM, bless flowers

August 18: FEEDING THE HOMELESS PROJECT, 10:30 AM

August 28: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

August 29: Beheading of St. John; Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM; Adult Class resumes

Send email addresses and corrections to: [frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com](mailto:frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com)

# July 2012

## St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p><b>1</b>  <i>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</i>  <i>HOURS: HOOD</i>  <i>EPISTLE: OSBURN</i>  <i>POST-COMM: C. SAS</i>  <b>PARISH PICNIC</b></p>			<p><b>4</b>  <b>INDEPENDENCE DAY</b></p>	<p><b>5</b>          COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>		<p><b>7</b>  <b>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</b>          CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>8</b>  <i>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</i>  <i>HOURS: DRESKO</i>  <i>EPISTLE: NORVILLE</i>  <i>POST-COMM: BROPHY</i></p>			<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>12</b>  <i>ERITREAN SERVICE</i>          NO COFFEE CHAT</p>		<p><b>14</b>  <i>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9 AM</i>  <b>SLAVONIC LITURGY</b>          10:00 AM            BAPTISM, 3:30 PM  <b>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</b></p>
<i>FATHER JOHN ON VACATION, JULY 9-20, 2012</i>						
<p><b>15</b>  <i>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</i>  <i>HOURS: JARLSON</i>  <i>EPISTLE: E. SAS</i>  <i>POST-COMM: HOOD</i></p>			<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b>          NO COFFEE CHAT</p>		<p><b>21</b>  <b>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</b>          CONFESSIONS</p>
<i>FATHER JOHN ON VACATION, JULY 9-20, 2012</i>						
<p><b>22</b>  <i>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</i>  <i>HOURS: OSBURN</i>  <i>EPISTLE: JARLSON</i>  <i>POST-COMM: C. SAS</i></p>			<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>26</b>          COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>		<p><b>28</b>  <b>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM</b>          CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>29</b>  <i>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</i>  <i>HOURS: NORVILLE</i>  <i>EPISTLE: DRESKO</i>  <i>POST-COMM: OSBURN</i></p>			<p><b>Aug 1</b>  <i>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM</i>          PROCESSION OF THE CROSS    <b>DORMITION</b>  <b>FAST BEGINS</b></p>	<p><b>COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE</b>  <i>JULY 1: PICNIC/JOLEVSKI</i>  <i>JULY 8: MULU GEBRETINSAE</i>  <i>JULY 15: OSBURN</i>  <i>JULY 22: CAMPBELL/CHONG</i>  <i>JULY 29: AKEZA</i></p>	<p><b>CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE</b>  <i>JULY 1: HOOD/WILKALIS</i>  <i>JULY 8: SAMIA</i>  <i>JULY 15: OSBURN</i>  <i>JULY 22:</i>  <i>JULY 29: BEA MAKUNEN</i></p>	

# August 2012

## St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p><b>COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE</b></p> <p>AUG 5: BEA MAKUNEN  AUG 12: OSBURN/CAMPBELL  AUG 19:  AUG 26:</p>	<p><b>CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE</b></p> <p>AUG 5:  AUG 12: NUGURU  AUG 19: MULU  AUG 26: BOKRE</p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM  PROCESSION OF THE CROSS  BLESSING OF HONEY</p> <p>DORMITION  FAST BEGINS</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM  CONFESSIONS</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM  HOURS: OSBURN  EPISTLE: NORVILLE  POST-COMM:  VESPERS FOLLOW</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM  BLESSING OF FRUIT  TRANSFIGURATION</p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM  ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA</p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9 AM  SLAVONIC LITURGY  10:00 AM</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM  CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>12</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM  HOURS: HOOD  EPISTLE: OSBURN  POST-COMM: BROPHY</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>VESPERS/LITIYA, 6:30 PM  BLESSING OF FLOWERS</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM  BLESSING OF FLOWERS  DORMITION</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>17</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>FEEDING THE HOMELESS  10:30 AM</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM  CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>19</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM  HOURS: DRESKO  EPISTLE: HOOD  POST-COMM: E. SAS</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM  CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>26</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM  HOURS: NORVILLE  EPISTLE: JARLSON  POST-COMM: C. SAS</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM  BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN  (STRICT FAST)</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM  ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>31</b></p>	<p><b>Sep 1</b></p> <p>CHURCH NEW YEAR</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM  CONFESSIONS</p>



# The Messenger

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church  
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SUMMER 2012

## THE POWER OF PROPHECY

*Thus says the Lord Almighty: "Carefully consider your ways! Go up to the mountain and cut wood and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the Lord. Thus says the Lord Almighty: "You looked for much, but little came, and when it was brought into the house I blew it away, because My house is desolate while each one of you hurries to his own house..."*  
(Haggai 1:7-9 NKJV)

**A**h, the voice of prophesy! As Christians, I believe that we sometimes lose sight of the power and need for prophesy because we believe that it only refers to the Old Testamental pointing to the future coming of the Lord. But that is a mistake. Prophesy is the thundering voice of the Lord Himself through the prophet, speaking about eternal spiritual truths that transcend Old and New Testaments both. Prophesy is not "fortune-telling," but the discernment and proclamation of the Lord's message and will. In that sense, both the Old and New Testament are "prophetic," speaking to us today in ways that are eternal, vital

and necessary.

We are now in the heat and depth of summer, facing all the normal temptations that Americans face in every city and town: laziness, misplaced priorities and a general desire for summer diversions serious (vacation days, lengthy trips, etc.) and not so serious (finally time to clean the garage, and watch some of the shows I missed when busy with school, work, etc.). Our relationship with God and the Church, unfortunately, also falls victim to the temptations and decisions that we face and make at this time of the year.

**O**ur parish is not particularly better or worse than any other parish anywhere. We all struggle with the same things in the summer: lagging attendance, absent parishioners and a scary dip in contributions and support for the day-to-day obligations of the parish. People disappear for weeks at a time. Collections magically shrink by one-half. Our prayer life is not only **not** daily, it isn't even regular in any sense of the word. It is not a coincidence that

we pray for "travelers," because we are in grave spiritual danger when we travel.

But the words of the Lord spoken through the Prophet Haggai quoted above have three very valuable cautions and lessons for us as we think about our relationship with the Lord and the temptation to make it a "flirtation" instead of a "commitment," especially during the summer.

**F**irst, the prophet gives us the basic command of the Lord: "Go up to the mountain and cut wood and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and be glorified." Summer or not, we are given a basic commandment if we claim to be followers of the Lord. Build the house so God can take pleasure in it and be glorified. The house is the Church. Not just the building, not just the gathering place, but His Body given to us in the risen Christ. We are supposed to have a beautiful temple, beautifully appointed, and support it generously. But to really build the "house" takes effort, diligence and repentance. The laziness of summer is completely incompatible with



## St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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1747 Crystal Downs Ave  
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702.485.3810 (Home)  
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frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

### ATTACHED

Archpriest James Bertolini  
Archpriest John Bruchok  
Priest Aaron Oliver

### CHOIR DIRECTOR

Juliana Dresko

### PARISH COUNCIL

Laura Draskovic, Vice-President

Karen Short, Treasurer

Virginia Hood, Secretary

Harold Anagnostopoulos

James Brophy  
Alan Buttell

Robert Conductor  
Stephen Osburn  
Catherine Wilkalis

### SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds  
Harold Anagnostopoulos  
Nikolai Melnikov

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach  
Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach  
Natalia Minkoff

Church School  
Nadine Wood

truly building the house of Lord, both on Annie Oakley Drive and in the recesses of our hearts.

**T**hen we are convicted by the declaration of the prophet: “You looked for much...” Isn’t that always the case? We are lazy, we never turn to God in prayer unless we are in need, we don’t love each other, we don’t forgive each other, we don’t worship him gloriously and regularly, and then we “look for much.” But the Lord says through the prophet that although we look for much, little will come. The “much” that we seek is a kind of “spiritual barometer” that shows where our hearts truly reside — here or in the Kingdom.

**F**inally, the Lord tells us that His house is desolate (i.e., abandoned, ignored, even abused) while each of us hurries to our “own house.” During the Divine Liturgy, at the moment when the priest is processing with the bread and wine offered that day from the Table of Oblation to the Holy Altar, we sing “now lay aside all earthly cares...” Those words are the prayer that we all stop “hurrying to our own houses” while ignoring the House of the Lord. When we don’t place our hearts, minds and souls on the altar of the Lord before we place them anywhere else, we have desecrated and insulted the House of the Lord.

The power of prophecy is the power to open eyes, inspire and illuminate those who have “eyes to see” and “ears to hear.” As we move deeper and deeper into summer, it is good to listen to the words of the prophet and do a spiritual assessment. Have

I really gone to the mountain to cut wood and build the house of the Lord? Do I always look for much from the Lord while offering little? And have I spent far too much time and effort hurrying to my “own house” no matter where in the depths of my heart that house resides?

The Prophet has thundered. Have we heard?

*Father John*

### FEASTDAYS

Please join us for the following festal celebrations during the summer.

*Procession of the Cross*

*August 1*

Divine Liturgy,

Blessing of Honey, 8:00 AM (WED)

*Transfiguration of the Lord*

*August 6*

Vespers follow liturgy, (SUN)

Divine Liturgy,

Blessing of Fruit, 8:00 AM (MON)

*Saint Herman of Alaska*

*August 9*

Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (THUR)

*Dormition of the Theotokos*

*August 15*

Vespers/Litija, Bless flowers

6:30 PM (TUES)

Divine Liturgy,

Blessing flowers, 8:00 AM (WED)

*Beheading of St. John the Baptist*  
(STRICT FAST DAY)

*August 29*

Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (WED)

### COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE

July 1: Picnic/Jolevski

July 8: Mulu Gebretinsaer

July 15: Osburn

July 22: Campbell/Chong

July 29: Akeza

Aug 5: Bea Makunen  
Aug 12: Osburn/Campbell  
Aug 19: Hood  
Aug 26:

### CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE

July 1: Hood/Wilkalis  
July 8: Samia  
July 15: Osburn  
July 22:  
July 29: Bea Makunen

Aug 5:  
Aug 12: Nuguru  
Aug 19: Mulu  
Aug 26: Bokre

### FEASTDAY/PICNIC

In celebration of our feastday, our church school children and Independence Day, we will have a parish picnic following liturgy on Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>. Please join us!

### FATHER ON VACATION

Fr. John and Matushka Elizabeth will be away from the parish July 9-20. Fr. Aurel Sas will be serving on July 14-15 and services will follow their normal schedule. During Father's absence, he will be checking voice and email. In the event of an emergency, please contact Secretary Ginny Hood. Local clergy will handle emergencies as appropriate.

### SLAVONIC LITURGY

The monthly Slavonic Liturgy is scheduled for both July (14<sup>th</sup>) and August (11<sup>th</sup>). Fr. Alexander will be hearing Russian language confessions at 9:00 AM. The liturgy is scheduled to begin at 10:00 AM.

### DORMITION FAST

The annual Dormition Fast, preparing us for the Great and Holy Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, begins on August 1<sup>st</sup>

and ends with our celebration of the feast on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

### SEMINARIAN SUPPORT

On August 12, we will have a farewell luncheon for Stephen and Lindsey Osburn, who will be leaving for St. Vladimir's Seminary. We ask you to consider a pledge above and beyond your usual support of the parish to offer financial assistance. He can get 100% of his tuition covered by matching grants if we offer regular support for tuition and living expenses. Forms are at the candle desk.

### SUMMER CARE

Although summers can be very difficult here in the desert, the life of the Church and the parish go on. If you are travelling and need a parish recommendation at your location, please ask Father or check out oca.org.

**It is also vital and imperative that you remember the parish during these months with your financial gifts.** The summer is traditionally a very lean time in all parishes, but expenses do not go down. In fact, some go up in the summer. Please remember to continue your support of our parish even if you are away at times!

### SUMMER BLESSINGS

The Church sanctifies everything in our lives, especially during the summer months. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, we will bless honey. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, we will bless fruit after Vespers on Sunday and liturgy on Monday. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, we will bless flowers after Vespers on Tuesday and liturgy on Wednesday. Please bring the fruits of this world for a blessing!

### FEED THE HUNGRY

Our next scheduled date is Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. Join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches, it would be appreciated. **We also have a need for basic toiletries: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, etc.** If you have any *travel* size items, leave them in the bin in the church vestibule. Thank you!

### ADULT CLASSES

The adult faith forum discussions will resume regular meetings on Wednesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, and continue each Wednesday after that. We will conclude our discussion of *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis in that first class. The following week (i.e., September 5<sup>th</sup>), the 2012-13 topic will commence, *Theology in Color: Iconography of the Orthodox Church*.

### CHURCH CLEANING

Our schedule for the **weekly** clean-up of the church needs volunteers. The duty is easy, takes two hours at the most, and you can do it at your convenience as Father will provide a key and entry instructions. Please offer some time and talent to the Lord in the care of His Church. A sign-up list is available in the church.

### COFFEE CHAT

**We meet on Thursdays, at 10:00 AM at El Rancho on Pecos and Russell unless otherwise announced. Everyone is invited.**

### STROLLERS

We have a wonderful problem: many families with young children are attending the services and need their strollers. We ask that you be considerate of those around you and bring the stroll-

ers, if needed in the church, up to the front of the north side of the church to allow free flow of the traffic. Not only will this help with crowd movement, it is safer for you, your child and those around you. Thank you!

### PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:

*Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts — time, talent and treasure — which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

### CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. *Special needs at this time: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken.* Thank you!

### SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

• **Baptisms.** A date and time must be requested at least three weeks in advance. In addition, a personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary.

• **Matrimony.** A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will

be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.

• **Memorials (Panikhida).** Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should not be served on Sunday, the Day of the Resurrection, when all departed have already been remembered in the Liturgy.

### PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS JUNE 26, 2012 MEETING

#### Rector's Report:

- All are urged to continue good example during summer.
- Father will be out of town July 9-20. Fr. Aaron will be on military duty. Fr. Aurel Sas will be serving the services July 14-15.
- Father John is the signator for the sale of LGS retreat center.

**Vice President:** Laura Draskovic reported that the bookstore was broken into again. A parishioner generously donated the replacement crosses.

**Treasurer's Report:** Karen Short distributed reports to council members earlier via e-mail. Council approved having a base amount of \$5,000 in checking which we would try not to go under. Income for May was: \$15,953.58, and expenses of \$17,756.10 for a deficit of \$1,802.52.

#### YTD 5/31/12

<b>2012 YTD Inc</b>	\$ 105,162.72
<b>2012 YTD Exp</b>	\$ 90,819.90
<b>Inc over Exp</b>	\$ 14,342.82

#### Buildings and Grounds:

- Father has worked with Nedco AC to draw up a comprehensive plan for our HVAC

units in the church. Should be ready for the next council meeting.

- Theresa Pechonis has been doing an **outstanding** job in cleaning the hall and offices!

**Church School:** School year completed on June 10. We are now looking at plans for next year, including summer activities.

#### Youth:

Christina Sas and Amy McAuley will plan youth activities. We are looking at a pool party for the youth of our parish at Father's house.

**Charity:** Status quo on the food pantry.

Feeding the Homeless next on August 18. We need toothbrushes, toiletries and socks.

**Eritrean/Ethiopian:** No report.

**Outreach/Website:** Stephen Osburn reported no major changes.

**Russian:** Fr. Alexander will be here in July and August. Laura will be away in July, so Natalia Minkoff will take collection.

**Stewardship:** Mid-year reports of pledge vs. giving will be distributed.

### OLD BUSINESS

**Bell Tower:** status quo.

**Wine tasting/Cook-off Fundraiser:** status quo.

**Iconography Project:** Fall 2012 is now the projected date. Council agreed to inform the iconographer that if the dome cannot be completed in time for our anniversary celebration, we will contact other iconographers.

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** "Save the Date"



magnets will go out in September 2012. Anniversary Ad Book will be done. Tickets will be \$50, which is our cost.

*Seminarian Funding:* The parish has \$700/mo. in pledges, with \$1,000 already received.

## NEW BUSINESS

*Next Meeting:* Tuesday, August 21, 2012, 6:00 PM.

## PARISH DIPTYCHS

*This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.*

### MONTH OF JULY

Emma Mantsakanian  
July 5, 2006

Josephine Buduris  
July 6, 1990

Tzahanesh Habtom  
July 9, 2009

Charles Joseph St. John  
July 19, 1998

Eugene Pater  
July 25, 2003

Anna Allee  
July 27, 1991

Alexander Korobkov  
July 27, 1995

Ronald John Sufana  
July 29, 1994

Mary Skirpan  
July 30, 2002

Veronica Pavelle  
July 30, 2003

### MONTH OF AUGUST

Eugenia Shevchenko  
August 1, 2011

Linda Elaine Miller  
August 2, 1992

Ingrid Mary Earp  
August 4, 1999

Verna Ruth Schulz  
August 5, 2002

Jane Papazis  
August 6, 2002

Antonina Onufrijew  
August 7, 2004

Helen Vuranovich  
August 8, 1995

Nicholas Vuceta  
August 13, 2002

John Maravich  
August 14, 2000

Edward Benson  
August 15, 1992

Alganesh Tasfazion  
August 15, 2008

Charles Kulina  
August 16, 1994

Sabina Maria Boldescu  
August 19, 2003

Alexandra Kurakina  
August 24, 2005

Ziad Madanat  
August 27, 2000

### MORAL ISSUES ON FORNICATION

#### "IT'S STILL A SIN"

*by Father Lawrence Farley*

*It is still and forever a sin, but just as important, it destroys the soul.*

Our present secular culture has fixed a great gap between people of my generation (i.e. those from the Jurassic period) and modern young people. And this gap is most easily observed when looking at our divergent understandings of fornication. Indeed, I remember once giving

instruction to a young (chaste) catechumen, and casually mentioning that the Church opposed fornication. The eyes of the young'un glazed over a bit before asking me what fornication was. The person wasn't asking for a more precise definition; rather, the person had no idea what the word meant. The word had effectively vanished from modern vocabulary and could only be recovered by looking it up in the Oxford English Dictionary. The current phrase used to describe the practice is, I am told, "hooking up".

So, the question remains, "Why does the Church oppose 'hooking up'?"

Why does the Church insist that sexual congress (I told you I was from the Jurassic period) be reserved exclusively to married couples? What's the problem with having sex with someone to whom you are not married and have no intention of marrying?

It will not do to simply quote Scripture, for its authority has long since ceased to function effectively as far as our secular culture is concerned. If things in Scripture (like the commandments, "Love your neighbour" or "Take care of the poor") find an echo and confirmation in secular culture, that is fine—and entirely coincidental. But Scripture can no longer function to inform or correct our secular culture, and people who quote Scripture to worldlings as if the Scriptures were an effective authority are simply wasting their breath and blowing their credibility. If I were to respond to the question "Why should I not hook up?", by saying "You should not 'hook up' because Scripture forbids it", they would simply respond in turn, "Why on earth does it forbid it?" Young people are looking for inner rationale, and for a real and sensible reason, not for proof-texts. And, given our present culture, they have a point.

The answer is: the Church forbids fornication because fornication gets in the way of one of the main purposes of authentic human sexuality. It frustrates the first intended goal of sex, and is a dilution of it. I deliberately use the phrase, "authentic human sexuality" to differentiate it from animal sexuality. Obviously, "hooking up" presents no moral problems for animals. Cats and dogs regularly "hook up", and that is pretty much the beginning and end of it. All things being



equal, lots of feline and canine hooking up produces lots of kittens and puppies, but apart from the release of the moment and the eventual birth of offspring, nothing more is involved. Cats and dogs do not feel the necessity to exchange phone numbers afterward, or to call in a few days to see how the other is doing. There is no emotional baggage, and no psychological or spiritual connection. In other words, there is no possibility for love, self-transcendence, sacrifice, or growth. After the moment is concluded, Fido and Mitzi go their separate ways, and that's about it.

Looking at the (limited) components of animal sexuality (or "mating", as most people call it), gives us an opportunity to better understand the components and possibilities and goals of authentic human sexuality. The tragedy and glory of being human, of course, is that nothing is automatic with us, as it mostly is for the animals. We are not compelled by our human natures to grow, or to become holy, or even to become nice. We can become self-sacrificing and loving, or we can refuse. We can use our sexuality as a vehicle to grow in authenticity, or we can choose otherwise. Animals have no choice. Moral choice (and with it, the possibility of sin) is peculiar to humanity. We can treat our sexuality as a part of what separates us from the animal kingdom, or we can simply "hook up". But God invented sex as a pathway to human growth, and merely hooking up does not set us upon this path to authenticity. (People tend to forget that the Church teaches that God is the One who invented sex, and that He thought it was a good idea. Read Genesis, and the Song of Solomon.)

The reality is that sex involves what was once called "becoming one flesh". This mingling occurs whether one is married or not, and whether one intends it or not. Presumably those deciding to casually hook up have no intention of becoming one flesh with the partner, or of having any real long-term relationship. But becoming one flesh (or "one organism", to use more modern language) occurs anyway, even if the hooking up is simply with a paid prostitute. St. Paul informs us that this is the case in 1 Cor. 6:16:

"Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute [Greek

pornē] becomes one body with her? For He says, 'The two will become one flesh.'"

One can deny St. Paul's assertion all one likes, but the heart and the emotions know differently. "Casual sex" is a contradiction in terms. All sexual union involves opening up parts of one's innermost self to another at a tremendously intimate and vulnerable level. That is why one instinctively seeks to "get a room" for privacy. That is why one feels the obligation afterward to say, "I'll call you", even when there is no real intention of doing so. Our secular culture does its best to deny this, and bombards us with movies, celebrity examples, books, and magazines which insist that casual sex is possible, and that no such inner connections are established by the sexual act. The secret inner history of young people, however, tells a different story, one of heartbreak, misunderstanding, and longing. In this as in so many other areas, our secular culture is lying. Any sexual act unites on a basic and lasting level.

As said above, nothing is automatic for human beings. The sexual act establishes an inner emotional connection with the partner, but one is not forced to nurture it. One can choose to instantly sever the connection, to pretend that it was never established and does not exist, and so to go cheerfully from partner to partner. But there is a cost attached to such pretending, and by this I do not refer to the possibility of unwanted pregnancy or sexually-transmitted disease, though these should not be discounted. I refer to the secret cost to the inner ability to make connections, to the creeping insensibility to the other, and the denied possibilities for growth. When it is used the way God intended, repeated sexual union opens up the possibility of mutual long-term enrichment. By having sex with one's marital partner, one has the possibility of investing in the other person, so that each is strengthened by the other, moulded by the other, given deeper identity by the other. Of course this is not automatic, and can be thwarted by selfishness and sin. But the possibility remains, and this is the goal of sexual union. (Having children is of course another goal, but I am speaking now merely the unitive power of sexuality, not its ultimate fruitfulness in creating other persons.) Even our

culture recognizes this to some degree, in its fascination for couples who have been married to each other for many years and retain their love for each other.

Casual sex, therefore, involves sundering the act from the relationship and from love. Love is almost completely misunderstood in our culture. We define it as a feeling, an emotion, and speak of infatuation as "being in love". In fact, love is not an emotion, but an action. We love the other not by feeling strong emotions of attachment, delight and infatuation (lovely as these emotions are), but by serving them and meeting their needs. If we love someone, we refuse to abandon them, but will stay with them despite the cost. This is the definition of marriage—to commit oneself to another in service and self-sacrifice, "for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer".

This commitment provides the framework and the possibility for love to endure. Love says, "Even if you become old, and sick, and wrinkled, and poor, I will not abandon you. Nothing but death will drive me from your side."

Since we may become poor, and certainly will become old and sick and wrinkled, this assurance and the promise are necessary if love is to endure. Sex is meant to serve this love, and to bring the two lovers closer in a continually-reinforced emotional bond. That is why the Church insists that sex be reserved for marriage, for sex was created to lead the couple to this lasting fulfillment. Fornication short-circuits the real purpose of sex.

One last word about sex: the center of Christian morality is not here. Fornication is a sin, since it takes sexuality and wastes it on lesser things, and lessens our capacity for lasting joy. (That is partly what St. Paul means when he says in 1 Cor. 6:18 that the fornicator sins against his own body.) But there are worse sins than the sexual ones, and these involve the spirit and its temptations to pride more than they involve the body. To quote C.S. Lewis, "a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But of course," he says, "it is better to be neither."

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