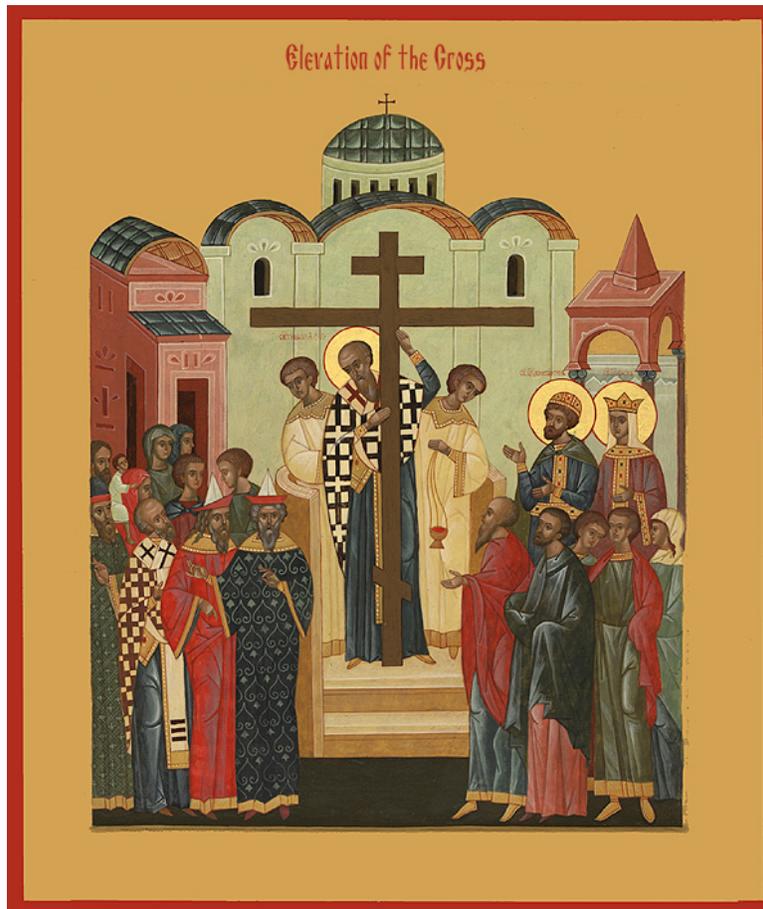


THE MESSENGER

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



EXALTATION OF THE CROSS, SEPTEMBER 14

MARK THE DATES

September 1: Church New Year; Choir Social

September 2: Ice Cream Social for Church School

September 3: Labor Day

September 8: NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

September 9: Church School Prayers; Classes begin

September 14: EXALTATION OF THE CROSS (Strict Fast Day)

September 15: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

September 15-20: Father John out of town

September 30: Special Parish Meeting; Election of Delegate to AAC

October 1: Protection of the Theotokos

Send email addresses and corrections to: frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

September 2012

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

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE		CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE		CHURCH NEW YEAR 1		
SEP 2: DRESKO/MURPHY SEP 9: WILKALIS/GERALT SEP 16: JOLEVSKI/MARESCA SEP 23: TSEHAY/ADHANOM SEP 30: ZARRET/MURPHY		SEP 2: BEA MAKUNEN SEP 9: GOITOM NEGASI SEP 16: SEP 23: SEP 30: BOKRE		CHOIR REHEARSAL, 4:00 PM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS CHOIR SOCIAL		
2 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: STRANSKY EPISTLE: YOUTH POST-COMM: BROPHY ICE CREAM SOCIAL	3 LABOR DAY	4	5 DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	6 COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM	7 VESPERS/LITIYA, 6:30 PM	8 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS BAPTISM, 3:30 PM WHEELER GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
9 CHRISMATION WHEELER, 8:45 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: DRESKO EPISTLE: STRANSKY POST-COMM: NORVILLE CHURCH SCHOOL	10	11 PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM	12 DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	13 COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM VESPERS/LITIYA, 6:30 PM	14 DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM ELEVATION OF THE CROSS (STRICT FAST)	15 RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9 AM SLAVONIC LITURGY 10:00 AM FR. JOHN OUT OF TOWN GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
16 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: HOOD EPISTLE: E. SAS POST-COMM: C. SAS CHURCH SCHOOL	17	18-19 FATHER JOHN OUT OF TOWN SEPTEMBER 15-20		20	21	22 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
23 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: NORVILLE EPISTLE: DRESKO POST-COMM: HOOD CHURCH SCHOOL	24	25	26 DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	27 COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM	28	29 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
30 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: SAS EPISTLE: NORVILLE POST-COMM: STRANSKY CHURCH SCHOOL						



The Messenger

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church
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SEPTEMBER 2012

CHURCH SHOPPING

Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for a church that 'suits' him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.

C.S. Lewis,
The Screwtape Letters
Chapter 16

For the past number of months, we have been studying *The Screwtape Letters* in our adult class. In this classic treatise of spiritual life and how the Devil and his angels use all sorts of tricks and subversions to tempt us away from God, one of the most troubling tricks mentioned is that of "Church Shopping." This phenomenon is not limited to the deeply spiritual mind and literary imagination of C.S. Lewis, but is a well-known temptation experienced in the Church since the dawn of time.

Church Shopping takes place at many different levels of spiritual life. It might begin as a genuine search of true faith in a family or a personal life devoid of faith.

It might begin as a movement away from falsehood to Truth. It might begin as a movement to a parish where you experience the embrace of the One for whom you have been looking and who has reciprocated that search. It might begin as a movement away from a Church that no longer answers your questions with "truth" and to the One True Church.

All of the seeds of Church Shopping have innocence and purity at their heart. But almost always the devil begins to pervert that innocence and purity. There are two great perversions to the search for Christ and His Church that turn an honest search for Him and His Kingdom into a caricature, a distortion almost invisible to the eye and certainly invisible to those not seeking with purity of heart. Inevitably, it starts with a decided lack of desire for Truth, and Truth is not just a fact, a what. Truth is a person and it is He alone that we should search for in our efforts. Every single breath, every single effort, every single search should be to fulfill His desires. But that simply does not happen for many.

The first great perversion of the search for Truth that turns it into mere Church Shopping is the desire to find the one place that meets **my desires**. This takes many forms. "I simply can't pray with those people." "I need a different language." "I can't believe that they use the New Calendar." "I need a parish with more openness towards **my** sexuality." "I need a parish with a pastor who will help **me** find **my** life partner, not insist that we live apart until marriage." "I need more young people." "I need no pews." "I need pews." And on and on and on....

This perversion changes the living Body of Christ given to us by the Lord into a group therapy, or worse yet, the local Elks club. We look at the Church and the local parish as existing to help me with my problems and difficulties. In addition, it must provide something clear and helpful in making me "feel" holy and peaceful. This perversion leads us to forget that we come to the Church to encounter Christ and His Truth, not the other way around. The Lord desires us with all His heart and grieves deeply

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Archpriest John Bruchok

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Juliana Dresko

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Laura Draskovic, Vice-President

Karen Short, Treasurer

Virginia Hood, Secretary

Harold Anagnostopoulos

James Brophy
Alan Buttell

Robert Conductor
Stephen Osburn
Catherine Wilkalis

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Building & Grounds
Harold Anagnostopoulos
Nikolai Melnikov

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach
Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth
Amy McAuley
Christina Sas

when we reject Him. But He doesn't "need" us to exist Himself. On the other hand, we could not take our next breath without His knowledge and permission. We forget that when we judge and dismiss those in the life of the Church, because He's the One who placed them there.

Our desire to have a parish "more in line with my thinking" means that we will never be at home in any parish or even Church. The lack of humility that allows me to approach God and find out if He offers what "I need" paradoxically means that He will never be able to offer that because I am blind to seeing it. Our lack of humility does not allow us to see that where God planted us is the best field in which we can grow. So we uproot ourselves, go off to someone or somewhere else where I can be "better cared for," only to be disappointed in that shortly thereafter. We don't see that the Church, the parish, the pastor, the people, the whatever, is not the problem. **We** are.

The second great perversion of the search for Truth that turns it into mere Church Shopping is despair at the "current state of things." This is closely attached to the first perversion because it also springs from my ego.

We have been buffeted with some very strong shock waves in the life of the Church the past few years. We are going to elect yet another Primate in a few months after Metropolitan Jonah's resignation. Three living former Primates. Clergy accused of various forms of misconduct. And in our own parish we have recently seen a son of our parish, baptized

into the Faith here, sent off to seminary from here, ordained to the Holy Priesthood at our altar, simply walk away after one year. He left the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Bride of Christ, whom he promised to serve the rest of his life, for a mistress. All of this can make one look at things and say, "It's got to be better somewhere else." How can this be the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Bride of Christ, when all these things happen, by leaders?

The answer is simple, though. The Church is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The very Bride of Christ. And our parish is the local expression of that reality. But God has placed that divine reality into the hands of sinful human beings. Weak human beings. Broken human beings. And we all bring those sins, that brokenness, to the life of the parish and the Church. But it doesn't matter where we go, because we would have to work our way through all of that flotsam and jetsam no matter where we went.

We also forget the spiritual reality that very often God allows struggles and difficulties to be in our lives — individual, parish and Church — in order to strengthen us, allow us to be humble and love those whom we may find difficult to love, and teach us that He is God, not us.

Fr. Thomas Hopko one time told me a great truth: "The hardest thing for man to do is grow where God plants him." Take your pick — St. Paul's, the OCA, the Orthodox Church — it doesn't matter. As long as we seek anything other than Jesus

Christ and Him crucified, not anything else, not anything that will “help me,” not anything that appeals to my “tastes,” we are doomed to continually wander the earth looking for the perfect place. The perfect place does exist — it’s where God planted me.

Father John

FEASTDAYS

Please join us for the following festal celebrations during September.

Nativity of the Theotokos

September 8

Vespers/Litiya, 6:30 PM (FRI)

Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM (SAT)

Exaltation of the Cross

September 14 (Strict Fast)

Vespers/Litiya, 6:30 PM (THUR)

Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (FRI)

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE

Sept 2: Dresko/Murphy

Sept 9: Wilkalis/Geralt

Sept 16: Jolevski/Maresca

Sept 23: Tsehay/Adhanom

Sept 30: Zarret/Murphy

CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE

Sept 2: Bea Makunen

Sept 9: Goitom Negasi

Sept 16:

Sept 23:

Sept 30: Bokre

SAD CHANGE

With notification to His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, that he was to be received into the Episcopal Church, Aaron Oliver has deposed himself from the Holy Priesthood of the Orthodox Church. He is suspended from all priestly functions and his formal deposition from the Priesthood will be referred to the Holy Synod

of the Orthodox Church in America. May God have mercy on his soul.

FATHER OUT OF TOWN

Fr. John and Matushka Elizabeth will be away from the parish September 15-20. Fr. Aurel Sas will be serving on September 15-16 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 Laura Draskovic. Local clergy will handle emergencies.

SLAVONIC LITURGY

Because we have the parish celebration of the Nativity of the Theotokos on September 8, the monthly Slavonic Liturgy will be served **one week later than usual, on September 15**. Fr. Alexander will be hearing Russian language confessions at 9:00 AM. The liturgy is scheduled to begin at 10:00 AM.

SPECIAL PARISH MEETING

A special one-day All-American Council for November 13 will be held in Parma, Ohio. Per instructions of His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, we need to have a special parish meeting to elect a lay delegate. We will hold that special meeting after Divine Liturgy on September 30. All voting members of the parish are asked to plan on being with us. A voting member: 1) has a signed pledge form on file with the office; 2) Has been to the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Communion in our parish; and 3) is at least eighteen (18) years of age.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Registration for the 2012-13

school year continues through September 2nd, when we will have an Ice Cream Social during coffee hour for the students to meet their teachers. The Prayers for the Beginning of Instruction and first classes will be held on Sunday, September 9th.

Please note that with the start of church school, the room on the north side of the vestibule used as a “cry room” will be unavailable for use during services. If you need a time out for your child or a diaper change, please go to one of the restrooms or for a short walk in the courtyard.

FESTIVAL RECONSIDERED

Due to a number of transitions going on in the parish the annual International Food Festival will not be held this year. The parish council and parish leadership will retool the festival and the whole plan for next year and come back with a renewed sense of fellowship and accomplishment. **A different type of event will be held in early November** before the beginning of the Nativity Fast to give us a chance to share fellowship and support the parish.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- 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. Also needed:
- **Coffee Hour** volunteers are needed.
- **Bell-ringer** volunteers are needed.
- **Greeters** are needed.

Please offer some time and talent to the Lord in the care of His Church. Sign-up lists are available in the church.

ADULT CLASSES

We will conclude our discussion of *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis in the first three classes. On September 26th, the 2012-13 topic will commence, *Theology in Color: Iconography of the Orthodox Church*.

COFFEE CHAT

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

FEED THE HUNGRY

Our next scheduled date is Saturday, October 27th. 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!

STROLLERS

All strollers are to be kept on 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 fol-

low 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 AUGUST 21, 2012 MEETING

Rector's Report:

Father will be out of town September 15-20.

Vice President: Laura Draskovic will be keeping the inventory of crosses low. Anyone can order one of the crosses through our bookstore.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short distributed reports to council members earlier via e-mail. Finances are in good shape considering past summer problems. We are behind in assessments but should be caught up in early fall. Income for June was: \$15,521.50, and expenses of \$18,306.35 for a deficit of \$2,784.85. Income for July was: \$18,076.95, and expenses of \$17,963.47 for a surplus of \$113.48.

YTD 7/31/12

2012 YTD Inc \$ 138,761.26

2012 YTD Exp \$ 126,734.08

Inc over Exp \$ 12,027.18

Buildings and Grounds:

- Front doors have been repaired and filters changed.
- The threshold in the men's bathroom is being repaired.
- Leak in vestibule next to south door needs to be repaired.
- Window on north side of church has been replaced.
- A/C was repaired for \$800.00 dollars.
- Nevco recommends another 5000 BCU unit be added on the north side of the church. It would need contractor and construction. We currently have 16 tons, but the tech advises we should have 20 tons. Our units are 17 years old, well past their longevity.

Church School:

- Nadine Wood has stepped down as the church school and youth coordinator. Amy

McCauley and Christina Sas have accepted the positions.

- There is to be an ice cream social on September 2nd as a meet and greet for the children, parents and teachers.

Youth: no report.

Charity:

- Non-perishable food donations up for August for the Friends of the Desert.
- Feeding the Homeless went from 10:30 -1pm. There was a good turnout. 175 bags were put together. Hygiene packs were put together with what we had left from previous donations.
- This project has a budget of \$250.00. Total spent was \$86.51 (50 cents per bag).
- October 20th is tentatively slated for the next Homeless Feeding.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: No report.

Outreach/Website: Father John has the software programs used by Stephen Osburn for recording, editing and posting sermons on the website. Father will do it on this end. Stephen will offer assistance as appropriate.

Russian:

- ROCOR Mission: Jon Failla has informed us that a ROCOR (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia) mission has been blessed to start in the north valley. No blessing was sought from any local pastors. The local priests received copies of the official decree signed by the bishop. The name is All Saints Orthodox Mission. At this time there is no priest assigned.
- Father Alexander Shkalov will

continue to serve a Slavonic Liturgy monthly at St. Paul's.

Stewardship:

Mid-year statements have been distributed. September pledge drive begins again. Want to see an increase in pledges for this coming year.

OLD BUSINESS

Bell Tower: Power wash still needs to be done. Cathy Wilkalis has a sign-up sheet to recruit other bell ringers. There is going to be a bell-ringing class.

Wine tasting/Cook-off Fundraiser: status quo.

Iconography Project: Father John has made contact with Vova Krassovsky, our iconographer. Vova guaranteed the icons would be installed this fall.

25th Anniversary: The "Save the Date" magnets are at the printers. When done there will be a mailing party.

Seminarian Funding: The parish has \$800/mo. in pledges, with \$2,260 already sent to SVS.

NEW BUSINESS

Bishop Visit: His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, will be visiting St. Paul's on the weekend of October 13-14.

Diocesan Assembly: Moved and seconded that James Brophy serve as delegate to the Diocesan Assembly in October. Passed.

All-American Council: Special All American Council has been called for November, in Parma, Ohio. The purpose is to elect a new Metropolitan. Question is, are we able to pay for 2 people to go? May need to meet to decide.

Safety Issue: Harry Anagnostopoulos suggested the side bolts be unlocked during services for safety purposes. The ushers would be responsible to unlock and lock at the end of the service.

Festival: Nadine Wood cannot coordinate the festival. Father John has approached several individuals and has found no one to take over. He recommended that the festival be placed on hiatus for this year, retooled and reinstated with a clear plan. Council agreed. Suggestion was made having an Italian dinner night with wine tasting. Discussion followed.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 11, 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 SEPTEMBER

Oscar Thomas Abdoulah
September 3, 2001

John Vukmanovich
September 9, 2006

Milana Popovich
September 10, 1998

Darinka Janjic
September 12, 1994

Lucian Stefanescu
September 14, 1999

Theodore Shimsky
September 15, 2002

Dawit Kahassai
September 16, 2001

Yekaalo Gebremeskel
September 16, 2010

Tatiana Paul
September 17, 2003

Ruslan Zhgenti
September 17, 2010

Christina Manteris
September 25, 1992

Valentina Petrovna Demchenko
September 25, 2001

Norman Daniel Kuka
September 26, 2001

WHAT DOES GOD WANT?

by Father Lawrence Farley

In the view of many people, what God wants is for everyone to become religious. And given the fact that some religious people are (to be frank) something of a pain in the neck, not surprisingly this view is a hard sell in the world. By “religious” I mean the state whereby a person holds certain private opinions about God and the world, and performs certain rituals which they think will make them acceptable to God. These religious people (as I am using the term “religious”) believe and proclaim that the world is sharply divided into two categories: religious people who are acceptable to God because of their beliefs and rituals, and non-religious people who do not share these beliefs or perform these rituals and who therefore are not acceptable to God. It is often further held that the non-acceptability of the non-religious people means that God will send them to hell when they die. You can see why this view is a hard sell.

The New Testament in general and the words of Jesus in particular give no support to this view. In fact our Lord reserved His harshest criticism for religious people (such as the Pharisees, who were spectacularly religious), and was comparatively easy on such non-religious people as prostitutes and tax-collectors. Indeed, as the late Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

never tired of reminding us, Christ was killed by religious people. One might almost say that He was killed by Religion. I would therefore suggest that God is not that interested in anyone becoming religious.

Notwithstanding the words of the New Testament, one can still find many in the Church who insist that what God wants from us is religion, if not religiosity... So, what is our acceptability to God and our salvation based on? What does God want from us? In a word, love.

In the Gospels, someone once asked Christ what He thought God was fundamentally interested in — in Jewish terms, what was “the first and greatest commandment of the Law”. Christ responded, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength’” (Mark 12:29, quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5). That is, God wants relationship.

The answer shouldn’t have come as a surprise, since it is found in the Hebrew Scriptures as well. In Psalm 50 for example, the psalmist pours scorn on the notion that God is fundamentally interested in external sacrifice.... Even back then sacrifice only held value to God when it was offered as the expression of gratitude within the context of relationship.

What God wants is our love. This means that God is the greatest victim of unrequited love in all the world. For He loves everyone, every single soul that ever existed, and everyone living today. Yet most of us simply ignore Him, and live as if He didn’t exist. We take all His gifts — life and air, food and water, children and grandchildren, rainfall and sunshine — and never once say “thank you.” He loves us passionately, deeply, relentlessly, tragically, and many people never give Him a second thought. In fact we prefer almost anything to God — money (or “Mammon”), sex, popularity, entertainment, Facebook, golf or jogging or sleeping in on a Sunday morning instead of going to church. We have filled our world with idols, turning these divine gifts into alternatives to God who gave them to us in the first place.

We can see God’s perplexity at this perversity when we read the Scriptures. In the prophecies of Isaiah 5:1f,

for example, we find the song of the vineyard belonging to God’s “beloved” (i.e. His people): “My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it, and he looked for it to yield grapes — but it yielded wild grapes.” In this song, God is the farmer, taking infinite trouble and care over His vineyard so that it would produce fruit — the spiritual fruit of love for God and of a righteous life. He did everything necessary, and it should’ve produced grapes. But, strangely, with almost miraculous perversity, it produced worthless wild grapes instead. God’s perplexity can be seen in His plaintive question in verse 4: “What more was there for Me to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?” This divine perplexity and anguish (to speak boldly) can be seen in Psalm 14:2f: “The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God.” He looks in vain: “They have all gone astray; they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one”. God’s universal love for us largely goes unrequited.

Love for God, however, has another aspect to it as well. In Christ’s answer to the question of which was the first commandment, He not only said that the first commandment was to love God. Though not asked what was the second commandment, He went on to say as well, “The second is like it: you shall love our neighbour as yourself.” (He cites Leviticus 19:18). Why give the second commandment when He was only asked about the first? Because the first contains the second; it is “like it” as a kind of corollary. Loving God involves also loving His children. Saint John the Evangelist is clear about this too, and speaks with his customary bluntness: “If any one says, ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

Religion is okay. But it is not the fundamental thing that God wants. What He wants is for us to love Him back, and to love our neighbour for His sake. Religion has value only insofar as it helps us do these things.