

Pastoral Reflection, October 2024: Our Spiritual Life & The Peace of Christ: As individuals, our spiritual life is rooted in our heart as the “seat and center of spiritual life.” The heart is where we encounter the Holy Spirit. But the heart is also the place of the battle ground of good and evil. But God did not create us to be isolated individuals. We were created to be persons in community with each other through mutual love and compassion. As Christ says in... we are not just to be involved in an “I scratch your back, you scratch mine” life of mutual interest. We are to care and love everyone including our enemies.

That means that our spiritual life refers to our entire lives as animated by the Holy Spirit and our faith. Fr Boris Bobrinsky gave a pointed indication of what that means:

There is, in the ultimate reality of things, no nonspiritual life that is closed off to the Holy Spirit...The world that is called profane is in reality a profaned world and man is responsible for that...[all domains] of human work depend upon the creative work of man, seized, modeled, and inspired by the Spirit of God.

Central to this is living out the peace of Christ that we receive multiple times during every Liturgy: In his work, the *Divine Names*, St Dionysius the Areopagite (whose name day is Oct 3) offers this exquisite celebration of divine peace:

Come and let us praise the supreme divine peace – the sovereign source of bringing things together – with hymns of peace. For it serves to unite and bring about... the kinship of all together. Because of this, all are to desire it; it returns the divided multitude into a whole unity; and it unites [949A] the tribal warfare of all into a common life of the same form... But what are we to say of Christ’s peace-bestowing love of human kind [and creation]? Because of it, we learn to war no longer with ourselves, nor with others, nor with angels. Rather, we have learned to work together with them for divine things according to our power and according to Jesus’ providence who works “all things in all” (I Cor 12.6, Eph 1.23) and who produces an ineffable peace which is preordained from eternity and reconciles us again to himself in the Spirit, and through himself and in himself to the Father. (*Divine Names*, Chapter 11).

Desire and strive for modeling the peace of Christ in your daily lives: your liturgy after the divine liturgy!

(Fr John D. Jones, Priest-in-Charge, Holy Theophany Church – A Mission of the OCA)