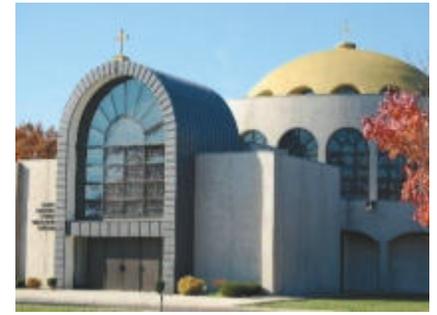


THE MESSAGE TO MHNYMA

February 2021 Newsletter



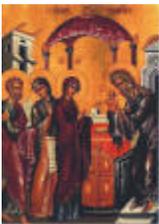
“BRING THE LITTLE CHILDREN UNTO ME”

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

**We
were made
for
WORSHIP!**

Some people regard church only as a place for social gathering, a place to meet their friends, to show off their new clothes, and to become friendly with well-known members of the congregation. They remind me of the story about a woman who lived in Washington D.C., and belonged to a church often frequented by the President. One day she called the pastor of her church and asked, “Do you expect the President to be in church next Sunday?” “I cannot promise you that,” replied the pastor, “But I expect God to be there, and I believe that should be sufficient incentive for attendance.”

On February 2nd, the Greek Orthodox Church commemorates the Presentation of the Lord into the Temple. As one of the great feast days dedicated to Jesus by the Church, it is a time of prayer and contemplation as we consider the One Who gave the Law to Moses being presented into the Temple fulfilling the Law which He gave. The Feast of the Presentation, along with the Feast of the Theophany, shows all too clearly that it took God Himself to show us how to bow before our Creator. It took a New Adam to give us the greatest example of how to truly be holy human beings.



At the Presentation, the young Mary brings her Son and our Lord to the Temple and in doing so shows us the best of our humanity. The Law must be fulfilled. God’s divine will must be fulfilled, not through force or deception, but rather through the humble obedience of a pious young woman. Certainly if the cares of a passing world and the knowledge of events to come would not discourage the young Virgin from proclaiming to God’s angel, **“Let it be to me according to your word”** (Luke 1:38); then, certainly there would be nothing to prevent her from observing all that the Law demanded.

In the Feast of the Presentation we see that even the Christ needed to be carried across the threshold of the Temple. Indeed, even saints, holy men and women who changed the world in which they lived and interceded for us before God had to be carried across the threshold of the Church to be presented to God.

The question that is before us now and every Sunday is, “Who will bring our children across the threshold of the Temple of God?” Will parents have the faith and obedience to offer their children to the worship of God? Will they have the humility and patience to be as the Theotokos and bring their children to Church? Will godparents be true to the responsibility entrusted to them and make sure that their godchild is raised in the teachings of the Orthodox Church, to receive Holy Communion frequently, and to live a life pleasing to the Lord? Will we as family and friends be examples ourselves of how important it is to present ourselves to God, not just once or twice a year, but at every opportunity?

These are questions we answer not only as individuals, but also as a community of faithful Orthodox Christians. The doors of Christ’s Church are always open; the threshold is always there for us to cross. Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary show us all how to do so in this great Feast of the Presentation. May we have the humility, faith and courage to follow their example and step into the Temple of God! *Fr. Ted*

**“COME LET US WORSHIP AND BOW
DOWN BEFORE CHRIST!”**

GODPARENT SUNDAY

In the infancy narrative of his Gospel, St. Luke is intent on showing that all was accomplished according to the Law of Moses. Jesus’ circumcision on the eighth day (Luke 2:21) and His presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:22-38) as part of the purification ritual were in line with Luke’s purpose.



As a Jew, Luke portrays Mary and Joseph and the child submitting to this covenantal sign. Two holy elderly people named Symeon and Anna rejoiced in this event. Symeon foretold of Christ’s mission, also warning Mary her heart would be pierced with sorrow. These words were balanced by his and Anna’s

rejoicing that they had witnessed the Savior. The Presentation foreshadowed the pain of the Crucifixion, which concluded with the joy of the Resurrection. We share in this dying and rising through our own baptism.

It is for this reason that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America has chosen the month of February, with the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, to celebrate Godparent Sunday. The purpose of such an observance is to stimulate and solidify the relationship of Godparents with their Godchildren through worshipping and receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion together.

St. Paul tells us, **“For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ”** (Galatians 3:27). If Orthodox parents take their faith seriously, one of the more important tasks they will face is choosing Godparents for their child’s baptism. Few relationships can be considered as important as the spiritual bonds between Godparent and Godchild. These bonds have to do with our life in Christ, our total world view, our place in eternity. Godparents share with natural parents the nourishing of a human being so that he/she may **“attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature adulthood, to the stature of the fullness of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:13).



Unfortunately, too often the choice of Godparent has little to do with faith and more to do with friends and family, almost a “whose turn is it” mentality. Godparents need to be active witnesses of faith, giving each child the best possible example to follow as they grow in their love and understanding of God.

We are pleased to announce that Godparent Sunday will be celebrated in our parish on February 7th. Following the Liturgy on this day, we will offer the Rededication Service for Godparents and Godchildren. Also our Philoptochos Society will have a “Take Out” Loukoumades Sale in the Great Hall. Everyone is welcomed to attend and share in the celebration of the day!



“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:23)

We have missed seeing you at church during this COVID-19 pandemic crisis. We hope and pray that everything is well with you and your loved ones.

We as Orthodox Christians make up the Church, the Body of Christ. We belong to Him and to one another. As the Body of Christ, we experience the fullness of God’s love for us in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and partaking of the Eucharist. If you feel up to it, come and worship with us this Sunday and feel the fellowship, love, and saving grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If you are still leery because of the pandemic, feel free to follow our services on our Cathedral Facebook Page or our YouTube Channel. Orthros begins on Sundays at 8:00am and is followed immediately at 9:00am by the Divine Liturgy. We look forward to praying with you this week!

WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sunday, February 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th: Orthros 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

For the safety and well being of our parishioners, clergy and staff, our parish will continue following the protocols set forth by CDC and the Metropolitan of Chicago unless otherwise advised.

Remember, it is your choice whether you want to attend public worship. It is your choice whether you want to receive Holy Communion. If you feel uncomfortable about coming to church or receiving Holy Communion, please refrain from doing so until you do feel comfortable. Worship Services will be lived streamed on our Facebook Page and YouTube Channel. Everyone is invited to join us!

Tuesday, February 2nd - Presentation of the Lord into the Temple - Orthros: 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Wednesday, February 10th - St. Haralambos the Priest Martyr - Orthros: 8:00am & Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Monday, February 15th - St. Anthimos of Chios - Only Divine Liturgy 9:00am in the Cathedral. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

Monday, February 22nd - Paraklesis - 6:30pm in the Cathedral. This service is being offered for the health and well-being of all people, especially for those who are battling COVID-19. Names of the living to be commemorated should be submitted to the altar prior to the start of worship. Space is limited to 200 people. Please call the church office 219-769-2481 and register to attend.

THE MEANING OF SIN: What do we mean when we use the word “sin”? There are two ideas that have a place in the teaching of the Church about sinning on the practical level. The one is “rule-based” and the other is “goal-based”. The “rule-based” aspect of sin sees it as a violation of a pre-existing rule or commandment. An example is one of the Ten Commandments that says, “**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor**” (Exodus 20:6). If you tell lies about your neighbor, you break the rule and commit the sin of lying.

The other practical way of understanding sinning is when you don’t live up to the best that is expected of you as a Christian. An example of this is when Jesus instructed His followers in the Sermon on the Mount, to “**be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect**” (Matthew 5:48). We are to be “*God-like*” in our thoughts and behavior because we are created to be “**the image and likeness of God**” (Genesis 1:26). When we don’t live up to that goal of a Christian life, we “*sin*”.

In the Church’s mind both of these aspects of sinning are real and both should be avoided. But the “goal” based understanding of sin is more inclusive. It not only includes our actions, but also the quality of our inner dispositions. Further, our understanding of sin makes us give attention to the fundamental orientation of our lives.



THE TRIODION AND PREPARATIONS FOR LENT

We have once again come to that time period in the Church’s calendar where we begin our preparation for the start of Great Lent. On Sunday, February 21st, we enter the period of the Triodion, which gets its name from the book of hymns that mark the three periods of Lent. The first period is the preparation for the start of Lent. The second is Great Lent itself, which begins on Monday, March 15th this year. And the third is Holy Week (April 25th-May 2nd).

In Her wisdom, the Church provides a four week pre-Lenten period in which to allow the faithful the proper means to prepare for Great Lent. The focus of the pre-Lenten period is upon the four Gospel readings. The four consecutive Sundays and their Gospel readings are:

The Publican and Pharisee (Lk. 18:10-14).

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

The Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Sunday of Forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-21).

The themes of these four Sundays set the tone for the great journey of Great Lent. The Gospel lessons of these Sundays answer four basic and essential questions:

For whom is this Lenten journey?

How can we begin this journey?

When is this journey to begin?

What does this journey entail?

We discover through the Gospel reading of “The Publican and the Pharisee,” that the Lenten journey is for sinners. We find out from the “Prodigal Son” that in order to begin this journey we must recognize that we are sinners and repent, to turn away from our sin and turn to God. We learn on the “The Sunday of the Last Judgment,” that the journey begins now, for the judgment of God is at hand. Traditionally, fasting from meat begins this Sunday. That is why this day is also known as “Meatfare Sunday.” Finally, on the “The Sunday of Forgiveness” we are told that the journey entails forgiveness, to forgive others so that we may be forgiven. This day also goes by the name of “Cheesefare Sunday,” for this is the last day that we can partake of dairy products until Pascha – Easter. The theme of fasting is also stressed in the Gospel lesson. Forgiveness and fasting, together, help us turn our focus in life away from worldly cares and to our ultimate goal, the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is our hope and prayer that we utilize the tools provided for us in the pre-Lenten Sundays and that during Great Lent we truly focus our life away from worldly cares and look to God’s Kingdom. Let us, as the Body of Christ, properly prepare to walk with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to suffer His Passion; to die on His Cross; and to live again, with fullness in His Glorious Resurrection.



PRAYER is turning the mind and thoughts toward God. To pray means to stand before God with the mind, mentally to gaze unswervingly at Him, and to converse with Him in reverent fear and hope.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Saturday of Souls – March 6th, 13th & 20th

Great Lent begins – Monday, March 15th

Palm Sunday – Sunday, April 25th

Good Friday – Friday, April 30th

Orthodox Easter (Pascha) – Sunday, May 2nd

Ss. Constantine & Helen Feast Day Celebration –

Great Vespers – Thursday, May 20th

Feast Day – Friday, May 21st

Grecian Festival – Friday, Saturday & Sunday, July 9th, 10th & 11th

Memorials will not be celebrated on these Sundays in 2021:

March 21st, April 4th & 25th, May 2nd & 9th, June 20th, August 15th, and November 21st.

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS”

We live in troubled times. Wars and battles are currently being waged in several regions of the world, with the threat of conflict elsewhere always looming over the horizon. The frequency of political, ideological and religious disputes in our own nation underscores the fact that we are not following Christ's new commandment: **“that you love one another; as I have loved you”** (John 13:34).

Sadly, hostilities even break out within our own families and among our closest friends. We argue ... we hurt one another ... we sever relationships at times without even realizing the initial source of our displeasure. If this sounds remotely familiar, we would do well to remember the words of one of the Beatitudes that our Lord presented to us in His Sermon on the Mount: **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”** (Matthew 5:9).



Being Himself the source of peace, the Son of God found no price sufficient for peace other than that of shedding His own blood. In doing so, Christ reveals Himself to us as the Reconciler, the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit gives peace, the sign of God's presence, to those who meditate on Christ and imitate Him. Peace brings communion with God and concord with all creation, the sign of our sanctity. Thus *“peacemakers”* share God's peace with those around them, participating in the work of God's Son and becoming, by God's grace, *“children of God”* themselves.

It is God's will that we live in harmony with one another. To do so, we must be willing to reconcile with those who are in conflict with us. Sometimes, this means being willing to forgive. At other times, it may mean to bring ourselves to seek forgiveness. Remember: there are two sides to every disagreement!

Being a *“peacemaker”* is a noble attitude for us to have. It shows our desire to put aside past differences and look ahead to more tranquil times in the future. When we do so, we are truly imitating our Lord, Who came to earth to reconcile a turbulent society with a righteous God. Yes, if we strive to be *“peacemakers,”* we will be real *“children of God.”*

A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE HEART



Our Orthodox Church begins the Pre-Lenten season of the Triodion with the observance of the **Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee**, this year Sunday, February 21st. In the Gospel lesson of the day, Christ tells a wonderful parable of two men going to the temple to pray. The Pharisee proudly stands up and boasts of all his spiritual accomplishments: he pray he fasts ... he tithes. Indeed, the Pharisee did all that he was required to do by Jewish Law.

The Publican, however, probably did none of those things. His life was undoubtedly far from a shining example of virtue. The Gospel lesson tells us that this pitiful man couldn't even bring himself to lift up his head – all he had to say for himself was: **“God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”**

But Christ emphatically states that this is precisely what God wanted to hear, and because of his humble, heart felt prayer, the Publican was the one who found favor with God, not the Pharisee.

From this parable, it is clear that our Heavenly Father looks at what is really in a person's heart and soul. A contrite and humble heart is pleasing to Him, for it makes us receptive to repentance. We are reminded this day that without humility, there can be no change in our lives. Let us follow the advice in the words of the Kontakion hymn for today: *“Let us run from the words of the boastful Pharisee”* for as we also sing in that Sunday's Orthros service: *“Whoever lives like the Pharisee lives far away from the Church.”*

ORTHODOXY 101 - LET US DEPART IN PEACE



In the first part of the Divine Liturgy, we are instructed by God's Word that is heard through the readings of the Epistle and Gospel, and also the sermon. Then, in the second part of the Liturgy, when we receive Holy Communion, God gives us the strength we need to live our lives according to His teachings. Now

that we have been filled with the Lord, we are ready to depart in peace, inspired and strengthened to carry on His instructions.

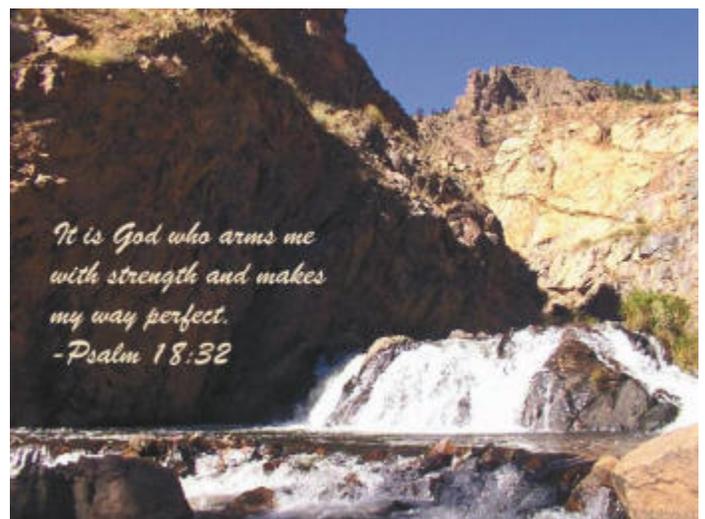
After we have received Holy Communion, the priest says, *“Save O God Your people and bless Your inheritance.”* We are the people of God. Jesus abides within us. His Body and Blood will protect us from the terrible effects of sin. In the Old testament, during the first Passover, the Jewish people were protected from death by putting lamb's blood on the doorpost of their homes. In the same way, Holy Communion protects us from spiritual death, which is far worse than the death of the body. For this reason, we call Holy Communion the *“medicine of immortality.”* It helps us live forever.

Next, we hear the choir or chanter sing: *“We have seen the true light.”* What does this mean? It means that we have actually come in contact with Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world. Not only have we heard Him talking to us through Scripture readings, and have seen Him in the icons which surround us, but we have also tasted and become one with Him in Holy Communion. Truly, we have seen the true Light! All around us everything is aglow. We feel like the buds of flowers that are bursting into bloom. Just like Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John, we, too, have seen and touched the resurrected Lord and shared in His glory.

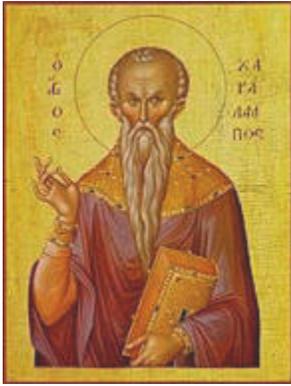
Having experienced the glory of the Lord, we are now ready to depart in peace. The priest reads the final prayers. One of which is said before the icon of Christ (*O Lord, bless those who bless You*). Another prayer is the prayer of dismissal, which is read by the priest from the Holy Gates as he faces the congregation. As the priest prays for us, let us be attentive to receive the blessing with open hearts.

At the end of the service, small pieces of bread are given to the people. This bread is primarily for those who have not received Holy Communion. We call this piece of bread *“antidoron”*, which means instead of the gift of Holy Communion. Those who were not prepared for Holy Communion still receive a blessing from the bounty of the Lord's Supper. God is merciful to all, even those who are not properly prepared that day. Hopefully, the next time the Liturgy is celebrated, they will be able to receive Holy Communion, which is the full banquet prepared for them by the Lord.

After the Liturgy, the Lord wants us to depart in peace, for He has already given us a little taste of the Kingdom. Now He wants us to go out to the world and share the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ with others. Let us depart in peace, carrying with us the blessing of God and sharing it with all those whom we meet.



**HEROES OF THE FAITH:
ST. HARALAMBOS THE PRIEST-MARTYR**



During the COVID-19 Pandemic we have heard stories how many of our elderly have fallen as innocent victims to this dreaded disease. Many have lamented how loved ones of such an advanced age would meet their end all alone in a hospital room with no family to hold their hands, to comfort them and to share their last moments of life on this earth.

The story of St. Haralambos, an elderly priest, brings to mind how someone faced death all alone and suffered martyrdom at the age of 113.

The Priest Martyr Haralambos lived in the town of Magnesia in Asia Minor in the 2nd century. He became a priest at a very early age and humbly served the Lord Jesus his entire life; first as a parish priest and later as a bishop. At a time when Haralambos was content to live out his life peacefully, the Roman Emperor, Servius launched a series of brutal persecutions against Christians. The aged bishop refused to hide from the persecutors. Instead, he openly preached Christ's Gospel, even after being arrested and ordered to denounce him.

Haralambos was forced to endure tortures that are almost too terrible to describe. He was tied to a post and lashed repeatedly with knives. He was dragged through the streets by his beard. To the dismay of his persecutors, Haralambos survived all this, and eventually the people called him "the man they cannot kill." Haralambos responded to his tormentors with these words: "Thank you, my brothers, for scraping off the old body and renewing my soul for eternal life." People spoke of

the many miracles attributed to him during his imprisonment. Thousands came to jail to seek his blessings. Hundreds of afflicted souls came to be healed of their sicknesses. Haralambos became known also as the "miracle worker."

Seeing that the example of the bravery of Haralambos was actually winning converts rather than discouraging them, Emperor Servius ordered Haralambos to be executed by beheading. As the two executioners raised their swords to kill the saint, a voice was heard from heaven saying, "well done My faithful servant, enter into the kingdom of heaven." Miraculously, at this time, the saintly bishop gave up his soul to the Lord only minutes prior to his appointed execution. It is said that the two men commissioned to carry out this sentence, Porphirios and Baptos, knelt at the body of the St. Haralambos asking God for forgiveness. They became Christians after witnessing the blessed manner in which the saintly Haralambos was called to his eternal home. Emperor Servius became more enraged and ordered the two would-be executioners of Haralambos beheaded. They are commemorated, along with St. Haralambos, on February 10th.

FROM GOD'S WORD: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

(1 Timothy 6:12).

These words are a remarkable challenge for all who serve God, especially the ordained clergy, for effective Christian living requires a daily walk with the Lord. Our Father in heaven has called us to cling to His loving power and resist the control of lingering sin.

FAITH in an all-seeing and personal God, elevates the soul, purifies the emotions, sustains human dignity, and lends poetry, nobility and holiness to the commonest state, condition and manner of life.

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our church office hours are from 9:00am to 3:00pm, Monday through Friday. The church office is closed on Saturday and Sunday. Our church office staff is Maureen Dresh and Kalliope Bikos. Our Banquet and Hall Rental coordinator is Denise Komorowski. Please make a note of this.

Announcements for the Sunday bulletin and names to be commemorated for Memorials on Sunday need to be submitted to the church office by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Articles or announcements for the monthly newsletter "The Message" need to be submitted to Fr. Ted by the 1st of each month for the upcoming month (i.e. February 1st for March).

BIBLE STUDY: Bible Study will be held via Zoom on Tuesday evenings beginning at 7:00pm. Fr. Dimitri will lead the discussion on the topic of the Gospel according to St. John. Everyone is welcomed to tune in live and review it afterwards on Facebook or You Tube. For specific details, contact Fr. Dimitri.

HELPING HAND FUND: This fund was established to help families in our parish with financial hardships. Many of our very own require financial assistance during difficult times. It is a very comforting feeling knowing that you can go "home" and find help that is given freely and with love. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Fr. Ted at the church office 769-2481.

FOOD PANTRY: Our Cathedral Food Pantry, which is held each Friday from 9:00-11:00 a.m., is the core of our Outreach Program. Each week, numerous families and individuals come to us for assistance. Many of these families have four or more children. We try to provide the basic food stuffs for at least one week.

JC'S CLOSET IS BACK! Our Outreach Project of JC's Closet will be starting up again. Specific date and time TBA. Check out the weekly bulletin for details. However, due to COVID, it will be back with limits and restrictions. If you are able to donate, we are currently ONLY accepting NEW & PACKAGED underwear and socks, new or clean, gently used coats for men, women and children (all sizes), new or clean, gently used sweatpants for men and women only (sizes large to 3XL). At this time, we are unable to accept other items due to limited storage and restrictions. If you are uncomfortable shopping due to COVID, Target or Walmart gift cards would be appreciated. Thank you!

ATTENTION PARISHIONERS: If you are planning to move to a new location, or if you have already moved, please inform the church office so that we may change our records. It costs our parish money for every piece of mail that is returned as "Address Change Requested." PLEASE let the church office know of any changes to your address, home or cell phones, email address, etc. Your help in this matter is truly appreciated!

Remember, before making any firm plans for baptisms, weddings, funerals or memorial services, please check with the parish priest first to see if dates and times are permissible.

Also, please refrain from scheduling baby or bridal showers during the Lenten fast. Great Lent begins Monday, March 15th and Orthodox Easter is Sunday, May 2nd.

When scheduling a Sunday Memorial Service, kolyva (boiled wheat) is needed (COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted). People are once again scheduling memorials without bringing kolyva, let alone sacramental wine (St. John Comanderia), bread, olive oil or a donation for the poor. Please follow our Orthodox practices!

IF YOU STUDY THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE YOU WOULD KNOW:

1. Romans: We are justified in Christ.
2. Corinthians: We are dignified in Christ.
3. Galatians: We are sanctified in Christ.
4. Ephesians and Colossians: We are unified in Christ.
5. Thessalonians: We are glorified in Christ.
6. Timothy: We are qualified in Christ.
7. Titus: We are purified in Christ.
8. Hebrews: We are magnified in Christ.
9. James: We are amplified in Christ.
10. Peter: We are edified in Christ.
11. Jude: We are fortified in Christ.
12. Revelation: We are beautified in Christ.



PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

LOUKOUMADES SALE: On Sunday, February 7th, following worship services for Godparents Sunday, our Philoptochos will sponsor a "Take Out" Loukoumades Sale in the Great Hall. The cost is \$7.00 per container of these mouth-watering delicacies. Demand is always high when Philoptochos has a Loukoumades Sale. Call ahead to Frances Klimis 219-776-3091 and place your orders to go so as to cut down on waiting time and insure that you will be able to get some of these treats for home. Proceeds raised benefit our Philoptochos' charitable endeavors.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING UPDATE: Tentatively the monthly meeting of our St. Helen's Philoptochos Society will be Monday, February 8, 2021, 6:30 pm in the Great Hall. Due to COVID-19 restrictions all those attending must wear a mask and keep social distancing.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEMBERSHIP is ongoing throughout the year. Philoptochos needs YOU to fulfill its mission! You can support Philoptochos either as an active member or as a supportive member. For those too busy to attend a monthly meeting or be involved in any of its ministries or activities, your yearly \$30 or more membership is a meaningful way to participate and offer your assistance. Help us to help others by becoming a Philoptochos member of the largest Christian women's philanthropic organization in America!

THANK YOU to all who participated in our St. Helen's Philoptochos Vasilopita Celebration last month. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic our celebration was scaled back some with limited attendance for the Cutting of the Vasilopita and no luncheon. A little under \$5,000 was raised to benefit St. Basil's Academy. Also, our Outreach Ministry, was blessed to find the coin! May they continue to receive the blessings of the Lord as they assist those in need. Again thank you one and all for your generosity!



"THE LORD IS MY LIGHT & MY SALVATION"

Throughout our lives, we find that candles are an integral part of the Orthodox Christian worship experience. Candles are held at baptisms and at weddings. A candle adorns our table when our homes are being blessed at Theophany. Likewise, when we celebrate the great Feast of Pascha, it is a candle that ignites the joyful commemoration of our Lord's resurrection. The first thing we do upon entering a church as Orthodox Christians is to light a candle.

What does this mean? What is the symbolism behind the use of candles in the Orthodox Church? Simply put, candles always remind us of Christ, Who is the "Light of the world." Scriptural references that testify to this are found throughout the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah the Prophet writes: "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). These words are now a meaningful part of the divine services that herald the Nativity of our Lord. The Evangelist John begins his Gospel with these words: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:4-5). Christ also reminds us: "Walk while you have the light with you, lest the darkness overtake you" (John 12:35).

While a candle will eventually burn out, and its light dimmed, the "Light" of Christ can never be extinguished! He will always illumine the path of those who follow Him faithfully. He is always in our midst – guiding us, comforting us and constantly lighting our way. Those who seek the warmth of His light have nothing to fear, for He offers us endless hope. When we see a candle in church, then we must always think of Christ. May His Divine Light touch us all!

TO LIGHT A CANDLE (red, votive or white) for worship services or a special need, you can go directly to the link: <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1385847> pay for your candle and it will be lit for you at the next worship service by either our clergy or parish council. For questions, contact the church office 219-769-2481.

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

Christian Stewardship is the systematic and proportionate giving for the mission of the Lord and His Holy Church. It includes three things which we oversee for God, which are given to us by Him!

1. Our Time. 2. Our Talents (abilities). 3. Our Money. The Bible teaches that **“it is blessed to give”** and that God **“loves a cheerful giver.”** Our Lord gave one of His highest compliments to the widow who gave out of her poverty (Mark 12:41-44). Each person, from teenagers to senior citizens, pledges as his/her faith and ability allows.

A pledge to the Church is an affirmation of a Christian intention. It is a promise to respond to God’s love by committing a portion of one’s income to Christ’s Church, given on a regular, systematic basis. We make our Church pledge freely, willingly, without compulsion and in love: Christians give with the firm conviction that God honors and blesses those who give in love. A pledge is not a legal contract. Good will and love and belief in Christian Stewardship motivates Church people to pledge and keep to their commitment.

Our parish ministries continue to grow annually. With its expanding ministry, the church’s budget also increases correspondingly (attend the General Assembly and see). An active, dynamic parish can never stay at the same place. As people get excited about the potential of the Gospel, they want the Church to render additional services for the people.

It is good news to know that we belong to a parish that shows steady growth in its ministry, as well as increasing maturity in its commitment to the Gospel.

If you have not made your 2021 Stewardship Pledge to our Cathedral of Ss. Constantine and Helen, please think about this:

Give to your Church not because you expect to receive, but because you have received blessings from God beyond calculation.

Giving always requires personal sacrifice just as our Father in heaven gave His only begotten Son who in turn gave His life for our salvation.

Give because you believe that you are a disciple of Christ and that only you and others like you can fulfill the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world.

God bless you for your support!

To make giving easier for all our faithful, we have established an online program called [Tithe.ly/give](https://tithe.ly/give). This will allow those who have internet accessibility to continue to make offerings for stewardship payments, candles, Helping Hand, Food Pantry, Fall Greek Fest and other donations that help cover the costs of operating our parish with just a click of your computer keys. Here is the link: <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1385847>. It is a profession of faith when we all work together and help our church to better plan for its various financial needs and expenditures. Thank you!



BE A GOOD STEWARD – PLEDGE FOR 2021!

Our Cathedral’s Stewardship Goal for 2021 is to raise \$800,000. As of January 15, 2021 the church office has received 254 pledges out of a possible 850 for a total of \$201,654. As you can see we have a great way to go to reach our goal. It is the sacred obligation of every Orthodox Christian, 18 years of age and older, to contribute towards the progress of the Church’s holy mission.

We sadly report that as of January 15, 2021 we still have 115 pledges for 2020, totaling \$21,524, which have not been completed. We ask all those who have failed to meet their pledge to complete them by Sunday, February 14, 2021.

ARE YOU STILL “WEARING” CHRIST?



Does that sound like an odd question? After all, it’s not liking asking, “What’s in style this year?” or “What are you wearing to the party Saturday night?” But it is perfectly valid, and most appropriate, for us to ask ourselves that very question every day. Why? Because at our baptism, while we circled the baptismal font, and for great feasts (when baptism originally took

place in the liturgy) this hymn is sung:

“As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, Alleluia!”

This is one of the oldest hymns of the Church, and comes directly from the New Testament. In St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he writes, **“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put Christ on”** (Gal. 3:25-27).

So what does it mean to *“put Christ on”*? At our baptism, we literally put on a white outfit that stand for the purity and holiness that is of Christ. No spots, no stains, no tears or rips. That is the condition of our very being at that moment: without sin. And that is what Christ is eternally: the only sinless one. That is what we want to be by “wearing” Christ. It means we want to live our lives that way every day. Our very being, the way we choose to act each moment of our lives should show the world the presence of Christ. And that becomes even more important when we consider that most of us wear a cross (putting the symbol of Christ’s followers) around our necks and make known to the rest of the world around us that we call ourselves “Christians”.

There is a story concerning Alexander the Great, who in the 4th century B.C. was the world’s greatest warrior and ruler. It seems he heard about a soldier whose name was Alexander, and was a pretty lousy soldier. He did whatever he wanted and refused to do what was asked and required of soldiers in Alexander’s army. Alexander sought him out, confronted him about what he had heard and very simply told the soldier, “Change your act or change your name!”

Wouldn’t this be equally appropriate for us and our relationship with Christ? If we have put on Christ, if we bear His name, and claim to be one of His followers, shouldn’t we act as He would want us to, or else change our names?

So what can we do concretely to show that we have put one Christ? For starters, we can be forgiven and restored to the purity of the day of our baptism by going to confession! Then we can participate in the life of the Church as we experience Christ in the liturgy. Accept God’s invitation to be with Him in His house and receive the food that gives eternal life and the strength to live a life that keeps that garment white: take Holy Communion often. Find out who this Christ is that you have put on. That means reading the Bible. The more you know Him, the more you will love Him, and want to live as He wants us to live. And you will come to realize that no matter how many times we fall and get our garment dirty, He will be there to help us up and try again.

PERSEPECTIVE: There’s analogy to be found in the experience of a young couple who went on a vacation to a resort for a week. One afternoon the husband looked out their room’s front door at the swimming pool and exclaimed to his wife, “Let’s change our clothes and go get some exercise!” His wife, glanced out the bedroom window and saw some people playing tennis, and quickly agreed. While she dressed for a tennis match, he put on his swimming trunks. The window a person chooses to look out at the world often determines that individual’s perception of reality.

CHUCKLE: A young boy had just been vaccinated. The doctor was getting ready to put a stick-on bandage on his arm.

“Please put it on the other arm,” the boy pleaded.

“Why do that?” the doctor asked. “This will let everyone know you have been vaccinated and they won’t hit your sore arm.”

“Please put it on my other arm! Please!” the boy shouted. “You don’t know those kids at school.”

A CHRISTIAN has not lost the power to sin, but the desire to sin.



“I WAS HUNGRY, AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD...”
The importance of service in the Orthodox Christian Family
 By Fr. Dimitri Burikas



This year, our Sunday School curriculum has centered on the practices of an authentic Christian life and how our Cathedral families can instill these practices in their day to day. We began with gratitude, a crucial action and quality of the true Christian spirit that allows us to overcome many challenges and experience joy. In November and December, we looked at that very theme of joy and how it can be cultivated by searching for God all around us.

In the month of January, our attention turned to the topic of service. When we serve others, we connect with them in an intimate way and walk with them through whatever struggle they are dealing with. It is one of the basic Christian practices because this is exactly what Christ Himself did.

Did He not come down from Heaven to be one with us, to be one of us? Did He not walk alongside us and heal our physical and spiritual brokenness? Did He not suffer with us during His Passion and die with us on the cross? Did He not resurrect from the dead on the third day so that we too might live eternally?

The answer, of course, to all of these questions is yes. All of the saving acts of God through His Son Jesus Christ were acts of true service to mankind, making us equal with God and lifting us into Heaven itself. As Christ told His disciples before His life-giving Passion, **“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28).

Christ, however, did not only serve but calls us to serve one another as well. In the famous parable of the Last Judgement, God separate the righteous from the wicked like sheep from goats, inviting the good into Paradise but condemning the evil ones to darkness. What was the distinguishing characteristic between the sheep and goats? The service they offered to their fellow man.

Jesus Taught us how to Serve Others

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:34-40).

There are many ways that we can serve the people around us. Orthodox families can find ways for their children to serve their siblings (i.e. doing chores for the others, cleaning up after dinner, walking the dog, etc.). Service can take place for or through the Church, which offers many service opportunities through the Outreach ministry, Food Pantry, and Helping Hand Fund. Service can be showing kindness to a stranger or someone in need that you may meet running errands. Service can be as simple as offering a prayer for someone

who is sick or hurting.

Serving others doesn’t have to be a big gesture or anything grand. Many times, the people around us simply need our presence, a smile, or a kind and comforting word. What’s important is that we give of ourselves to build up the other. In that way, we imitate and Lord and become His hands and feet in the world, carrying on the work of service that He did during His earthly life and making the world a better place in His name.

YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

If there were such a thing as a *“Parent’s Manual,”* the first entry undoubtedly would read: *“We only want what is best for our children.”* While there may be great differences of opinion over what *“the best”* really is, we can safely say that most parents try to set their children on a path that will lead them to a life of happiness and prosperity.

God, of course, is the *“Supreme Parent,”* and we are all His children. Have you ever wondered what He wants for us? It’s really quite simple: Our Heavenly Father wants us to be obedient, loving children. He expects us to remember that we were all created in His image and likeness. Therefore, our lives are to be as *“God-like”* as possible.

How can we be like God? This sounds like an impossible quest. He is divine; we are human. He is immortal; we are not. We must remember that God knows all our faults, shortcomings and weaknesses. That is why He became a man in the person of Jesus Christ: to show us just how well we can live if we set our mind to it. God does not ask us to do anything we are not capable of doing. Every commandment...every rule...every discipline we are asked to follow...we must keep in mind that Christ Himself humbly and obediently submitted to them first.

“God became Man so that man can become like God.”

HAVE YOU SIGNED UP TO RECEIVE YOUR FAITH BOX?:

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reimagined our Sunday school to bring meaningful Christian ministry into your very own home. Introducing: *Faith Box*. Each month, families will have the opportunity to register to receive a box packed with activities, readings, discussion questions and games for the whole family! Families can pick up their box after church on Sunday or during the week from the church office and complete the different elements at their own pace. That way, everybody can have a few no-stress, faith-centered family nights each month focused on a particular Christian virtue. Just open the box, and the work is done! Have questions or want to register for the February box? Email Fr. Dimitri at frdimitri@ssconstantineandhelen.org or call the church office 219-769-2481.

YOUTH MEETING DATE: For the month of February GOYA, Jr. GOYA, HOPE & JOY will be meeting Monday, February 1st, 6:30-7:30pm. These programs are open to the youth of our parish. GOYA: 8th-12th grade; Jr. GOYA: 5th-7th grade; HOPE & JOY: Kindergarten-4th grade. We encourage all the young people of our community to take advantage of these ministries that allow you to meet other Orthodox Christians in a fun environment, as well as learn about our Orthodox Faith and yourselves through discussions, social events and service projects. Come on out and see! You will be glad you did!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Hope is putting faith to work when doubting would be easier.