



Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church Bulletin
And Holy Transfiguration Chapel
A Parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
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We would like to welcome all of our visitors and friends to Saint Nicholas Orthodox Parish. We would like to ask all of our new visitors to please sign our register so that we might be able to keep in contact with you about Parish celebrations and events. Through the intercession of Saint Nicholas we hope and pray that our community might continue to grow in numbers and in service to the Lord. Through your prayers and dedication of time, talents and donations, this can become a reality in all faith and in love.

In case of an emergency, please call Father Stephen day or night at the above telephone number.

March 24, 2024
Volume 17: Number 12
Celebrating our 17th Year of Serving the Lord
Schedule of Services and Activities

Sunday, March 24 – First Sunday of the Fast - Tone 1
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Stephen

Thursday, March 28
6:00 PM – Presanctified Liturgy

Sunday, March 31 – Second Sunday of the Fast – Tone 2
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus

Thursday, April 4
6:00 PM – Presanctified Liturgy

Sunday, April 7 – Third Sunday of the Fast – The Holy Cross – Tone 3
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Gus

Thursday, April 11
6:00 PM – Presanctified Liturgy

Sunday, April 14 – Fourth Sunday of the Fast – Tone 4
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy for the Faithful – Father Stephen

ANNUAL MEETING

SCRIPTURAL READINGS

Sunday of Orthodoxy - Matins: Luke 24:12-35; Liturgy: Hebrews 11: 24-26; 32-12:2;
John 1: 43 – 51

Monday - Monday - Isaiah 4:2–5:7 Genesis 3:21–4:7; Proverbs 3:34–4:22

Tuesday - Isaiah 5:7-16 Genesis 4:8-15; Proverbs 5:1-15

Wednesday - Isaiah 1:19–2:3 Genesis 1:14-23; Proverbs 1:20-33

Thursday - : Isaiah 6:1-12 Genesis 5:1-24; Proverbs 6:3-20

Friday - Isaiah 7:1-14 Genesis 5:32–6:8; Proverbs 6:20–7:1

Saturday – Day: Hebrews 3:12-16; Mark 1:35-44; For the deceased: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-
17 John 5:24-30

2nd Sunday of the Fast – Matins: Luke 24:36-53; Liturgy: Hebrews 1:10–2:3; Mark 2:1-12
To St. Gregory: Hebrews 7:26 - 8:2; John 10:9-16

Icon Meditation

by Fr. Dennis Kristof)

The icon for this feast is filled with many figures and unless one knows a little about the historic situation this icon is depicting, sorting out the figures will be impossible!

Located centrally is a large icon of the Most Holy Birthgiver-of-God with her Son, the Incarnate Son of God. This emphasizes that belief in the necessity for icons is tied to the necessity of believing that God took on our human flesh and material form.

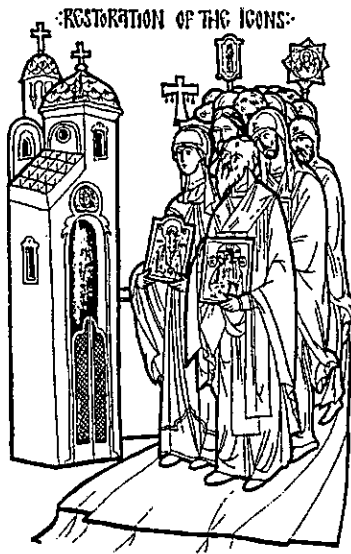
To the left of the icon are the bishops of the Church. The one closest, of course, is St. Methodios, Patriarch of Constantinople at the time when the images were restored. Other saints depicted are the various saints who suffered persecution by those who opposed the use of icons by

Orthodox Christians.

On the right side of the icon are the members of the royal family who established their support of icons in worship in the Byzantine Empire. The woman wearing the crown is the Empress-Regent Theodora, mother of Emperor Michael III who is depicted as the small boy with a crown next to her. Though depicted as a boy, he was actually only one year old at this time, which is why his mother was ruling the Byzantine Empire in his place. They are surrounded by court officials behind them.

The many people to the rear of the main characters are various monks, nuns, and the populace of the Imperial City of Constantinople. It was mainly the monastics and common people who most fearlessly and staunchly defended the use of icons in Orthodox worship and life. The two angels to the rear of the central icon remind us that icons are "windows to heaven" which depict the material and spiritual realities to which we both strive towards, and already have present due to divine grace and the presence of God in our lives through His Holy Church.

As a precious adornment, the Church of Christ has received the venerable and holy icons. Celebrating now their triumphant restoration, she is made bright with grace and splendor, driving away all heretics. This hymn chanted at Vespers on the Eve of the First Sunday of the Great Fast calls upon us to celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy. For over a thousand years now, Orthodox Christians have been observing this Sunday of true belief and worship in recognition of the fact that the holy images, which had been destroyed by government edict during the 8th century, were once again restored.



Even though the Seventh Ecumenical Council had confirmed the legitimacy of the holy icons and defined their proper use in worship, various emperors, under the heretical concept of Iconoclasm, forbade the public use and veneration of holy images. It was not until March 11, 843, in Constantinople-some 56 years later-that Empress Theodora and Patriarch Methodios, in great public procession, returned the holy icons to their rightful and fitting place, consonant with the words of St. John of Damascus: [we] do not worship matter but the Creator of matter, Who for [our] sake became material and, through matter, effected [our] salvation.

In condemning material representations of Christ the iconoclasts in fact denied the key fact and wellspring of their very salvation:

“AS THE PROPHETS BEHELD, AS THE APOSTLES TAUGHT”

For centuries, the First Sunday of Lent has been designated by our Holy Mother Church as the **“SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY.”** The term Orthodoxy was first used in connection with this Sunday in a fairly restricted sense, referring to the triumph of the Church over those who wanted to prohibit the use of icons in public or private devotions.

The controversy over sacred images raged from the early years of the eighth century until 843A.D. Despite the decree of the 7th Ecumenical Council in 787 A.D., which stated that it was proper to render HONOR, but not WORSHIP to icons, it was not until the Empress Theodora summoned a Synod to Constantinople on the first Sunday of Lent in 843 A.D. that this issue, was finally resolved. Icons were brought back to churches with great pomp and ceremony, thus inaugurating an annual commemoration of this important event.

In today's Church, the significance of the Sunday of Orthodoxy has been expanded to commemorate the preservation of all her dogmas and doctrines against heretical teachings. The Synodikon for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, a declaration of the 7th Ecumenical Council affirming the truths of the Orthodox Faith, sums up the spirit of this day in its final verses: **THIS IS THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES. THIS IS THE FAITH OF THE FATHERS. THIS IS THE FAITH OF THE ORTHODOX. THIS IS THE FAITH THAT HAS ESTABLISHED THE UNIVERSE.”**

THE GREAT FAST: Becoming Living Icons

As we begin the Great Fast, the Church would have us commemorate the victory over Iconoclasm and the restoration of the veneration of Icons in Constantinople in 843. Why? Because Icons are symbols of the purpose and meaning of this earthly existence. We are here, for whatever amount of time allotted to become living “Icons” of our living God.

There are several different ways that Orthodox Christians speak about Icons. First, it is frequently said that Icons are “portals” or “windows” into the fourth dimension - the Kingdom of God. Through them we catch a glimpse of what is to come. Second, many speak about Icons being “mirrors” that reflect the Divine Life within a person. Third, Icons are the roadmaps or blueprints of what we are to become - people that are transformed into “Temples of God”.

The unique thing about Icons is that while the personages they represent look human, they don't necessarily look real. This is the way the church indicates the result of “transformation” or when we “Reform your lives!” as we are directed by Jesus: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand”.

What is repentance all about? What happens when we truly “repent” or reform our lives? Repentance brings about a change in the way we live and behave. In Greek the word *metanoia* is used to indicate what happens to a person who takes time to work on their spiritual life and to repent.

What happens when we begin to live and behave in a different manner? When we act differently we, believe it or not, even begin to look different. To become living Icons of God means that we live in such a manner that our belief in God as a loving God shows forth for all to see. We experience/see this in several simple ways:

- ❖ We make an honest attempt not to judge others;
- ❖ We are more apt to be mellow and accepting of others.
- ❖ We put more things in God's hands and have less need to control things.
- ❖ We understand that there is not one right but many right ways to do things.
- ❖ It is more important to make others feel accepted and loved than to make them feel wrong.

Actually, this is just the beginning of a long, long list. If we truly *repent* and *change our lives* it means that we begin living, in a real way, the law of Jesus: *Love your neighbor as yourself*. So our goal in life is to change our natural behavior into Christ-like behavior. This will result in our appearance changing and us becoming “Living Icons”, that is, mirrors of God within us.

Lent is a time dedicated to making repentance or “metanoia” a real part of our life. How are you using this period? Is your life any different during this time? If not, why not? Are you making an honest effort to keep Lent?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY - is expressed to Hayden Cuccinello, 3/26 & Frank Biddle, 3/30. May God grant them a very happy birthday and keep them for many, happy & blessed years!

REDNER FULL SALE SLIPS – are still being collected. Please save the whole slip.

READER MINISTRY: March 24 - Margaret Perkins; **March 31** – Subdeacon Kevin Minnich; **April 7** – Christina Mentis

ICON OF OUR LADY OF SITKA, ALASKA – is visiting ST. Herman Orthodox Church, 1855 Middletown Rd., Glen Mills, PA Sunday, March 31 @ 4PM

UOL LENTEN RETREAT – Basilian Spirituality Center 710 Fox Chase Road, Jenkintown, PA Saturday, April 6 – Retreat will focus on Confession – Speakers: His Eminence, Metropolitan Antony and Father Anthony Perkins. Early Bird Rate – Adults: \$40; (\$50 after March 27) \$30 for Adolescents (ages 13-18) (\$40 after March 27) Children \$20 (7 -12) \$30 after March 27) Registration includes breakfast, lunch and snacks. For more info: Oleh or Natalie at nsufler@aol.com.

FAMILY LENTEN RETREAT – Holy Ghost Orthodox Church, 70 Holy Ghost Way, Phoenixville, PA 19460 Saturday, April 6 from 9:30 AM – 5 PM, “Exodus from the World : A Scriptural Life” Speaker Fr. William Bennett & “The ABC’s of Orthodoxy” Speaker FR. Matthew Stagon Donation: Adults - \$25; Students: \$20 & Children: 6-12 \$10. Register online by March 25th <https://www.holyghostphoenixville.org/retreat>

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL – Metropolitan Antony, Father Geroge Bazylevsky, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Constantine Christo, Father Vasyl Dovhan, Father Oleh Hucul, Father Mark Leisure, Father John Nakonachny, Father James Norton, Father Paul Pappas, Father John Perich, Father Volodymyr Wronskyj, Pani Matka Lilly Lemar, Matushka Laura Odell, Matushka Lisa Weremedic, Jamison, Wakako Alexander, Theresa Barnes, Paul Calistor, Rita Cook, Dmitra Cookson, Davis William Doty; Steve Forte, Thomas Holt, Norma Husnick, Walter Katolic, Judith Kocinski, Denise Kolosky, Kristina Koutsoudes, Olympia Koutsoudes, Frederick McCarthy, Bruce McGloan, Patricia McGloan, Stephen McNulty, Chritina Mentis, Connie Mentis, Olga Moniodes, Margaret Perkins, Barbara Perrigina, Michael Previte, Sandra Ramondi,Carolynn Ritter; Jim Saturno, Clay Seman, Gail Sherman, Lorraine Sherman, Gerald Sovinski, Diane Staples, Nicholas Taylor, Kathy Theodorakos, Merryl Trader, Ralph Vurgich, Cheryl Zabowski, Edward Zabowski, Markos Zerefos.

THIS IS THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES

In 842 A.D., the Council of Constantinople decreed that the first Sunday of Great Lent should annually be celebrated as the **SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY**. The purpose of this yearly commemoration is to draw attention to the triumph of the Church over the iconoclasts, who attempted to eliminate the use and veneration of sacred images in all public and private worship.

In recent years, it has become a tradition for Orthodox of all national and ethnic backgrounds to come together in prayer at special Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers. While attention is still given to the original intent prescribed for this day by means of moving processions with holy icons, its scope has widened in significance. Today, we also pause to give thanks to God for our precious Orthodox Faith, which has

carefully preserved the theological, doctrinal and liturgical integrity of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

On the cover of today's Church Bulletin, the 12 Apostles are shown holding a church, a reminder to us that Christ entrusted His faithful followers with the enormous task of establishing and preserving His Church. With Jesus Christ being the "Chief Cornerstone," the Apostles laid the foundation for the Church. Their total commitment to doing the work Christ assigned them to do enabled this divine institution to rapidly grow in size and in impact on the world.

It is fitting, therefore, that the 12 Apostles are remembered on this Sunday of Orthodoxy, for the truths that they carried to all nations are still proclaimed by their successors today. Indeed, **THIS IS THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES!**

