

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.



ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

OCA – Diocese of New York & New Jersey

The Most Reverend Michael, Archbishop of NY & the Diocese of NY/NJ

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searforce, Temporary Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Dean Inferrera

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Resurrectional Troparion in Tone 5

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Troparion Sunday of Orthodoxy in Tone 2

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One; and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God. Of Thy good will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the Enemy. Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee: “Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior, for Thou alone hast come to save the world.”

Kontakion from the Lenten Triodion in Tone 8

No one could describe the Word of the Father; but when He took flesh from thee, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described, and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. We confess and proclaim our salvation in words and images.

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Emilita Poling, who is gravely ill with sepsis, offered Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Archpriest Paul Kucynda, recovering from an injury sustained last Wednesday, requiring him to be hospitalized, just two days before the unexpected falling-asleep in the Lord of his beloved + Matushka Barbara, offered Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

In Memory of:

Daniel Metz, who fell asleep in the Lord on February 4, after a serious illness, offered by Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ

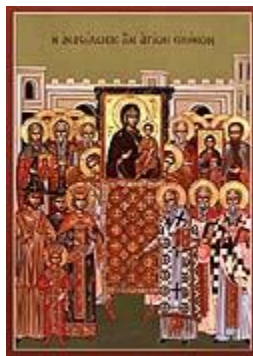
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Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ

SAINTS AND FEASTS OF THE DAY

FEBRUARY 25, 2018

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY



1st Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of Orthodoxy

Originally, the Prophets Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were commemorated on this Sunday. The Alleluia verses appointed for today's Liturgy reflect this older usage.

Today we commemorate the "Triumph of Orthodoxy," the restoration of the holy icons in the reign of the holy Empress Theodora (February 11).



St. Tarasius the Archbishop of Constantinople

Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople was of illustrious lineage. He was born and raised in Constantinople, where he received a fine education. He was rapidly promoted at the court of the emperor Constantine VI Porphyrogenitos (780-797) and Constantine's mother, the holy Empress Irene (August 7), and the saint attained the rank of senator.

During these times the Church was agitated by the turmoil of the Iconoclast disturbances. The holy Patriarch Paul (August 30) although he had formerly supported Iconoclasm, later repented and resigned his office. He withdrew to a monastery, where he took the schema. When the holy Empress Irene and her son the emperor came to him, Saint Paul told them that the most worthy successor to him would be Saint Tarasius (who at this time was still a layman).

Tarasius refused for a long time, not considering himself worthy of such high office, but he then gave in to the common accord on the condition, that an Ecumenical Council be convened to address the Iconoclast heresy.

Proceeding through all the clerical ranks in a short while, Saint Tarasius was elevated to the patriarchal throne in the year 784. In the year 787 the Seventh Ecumenical Council was convened in the city of Nicea, with Patriarch Tarasius presiding, and 367 bishops attending. The veneration of holy icons was confirmed at the council. Those bishops who repented of their iconoclasm, were again received by the Church.

Saint Tarasius wisely governed the Church for twenty-two years. He led a strict ascetic life. He spent all his money on God-pleasing ends, feeding and giving comfort to the aged, to the impoverished, to widows and orphans, and on Holy Pascha he set out a meal for them, and he served them himself.

The holy Patriarch fearlessly denounced the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos when he slandered his spouse, the empress Maria, the granddaughter of Saint Philaretos the Merciful (December 1), so that he could send Maria to a monastery, thus freeing him to marry his own kinswoman. Saint Tarasius resolutely refused to dissolve the marriage of the emperor, for which the saint fell into disgrace. Soon, however, Constantine was deposed by his own mother, the Empress Irene.

Saint Tarasius died in the year 806. Before his death, devils examined his life from the time of his youth, and they tried to get the saint to admit to sins that he had not committed. "I am innocent of that of which you accuse me," replied the saint, "and you falsely slander me. You have no power over me at all."

Mourned by the Church, the saint was buried in a monastery he built on the Bosphorus. Many miracles took place at his tomb.

GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READINGS

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon, Tone 4 (Song of the Fathers):

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers / and praised and glorified is Thy name forever! (*Song of the three Holy Children, v. 3*)

vs. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (*v. 4*)

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews:

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign enemies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated -- of whom the world was not worthy -- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Alleluia, Tone 4:

Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His Name. (*Psalms 98:6*)

vs. They called to the Lord and He answered them. (*Psalms 98:6*)

Gospel Reading

The Reading is from John

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and he said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Communion Hymn:

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise befits the just!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

PARISH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today, February 25th, there will be a council meeting, following Divine Liturgy.

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Sunday, February 25th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Wednesday, February 28th

6:30 pm: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 3rd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, March 4th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Wednesday, March 7th

6:30 pm: Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 10th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, March 11th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
After Communion: Sunday School pre-K -
Grade 3

Request & Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles can be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Receiving Holy Communion: Holy Communion is offered to those baptized Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves for the reception of the Sacrament by prayer and fasting. Blessed Bread is available for all our visitors at the very end of the Divine Liturgy.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail: OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



The main reason Christianity spread so rapidly following the Resurrection of Christ, was the power behind the resurrection. The truth of Christ's resurrection empowered believers to joyfully embrace martyrdom, knowing that they would be joined in eternal bliss with their resurrected Saviour. Although their martyrdom would involve both mental and physical anguish, they were almost joyful in their willingness to go to their deaths, rather than betray their faith. Not the kind of thing one would do just to be part of some "religion". Many contemporaries observed that these Christians were facing their martyr's death as though they were about to be married. They were not grim faced, but shown a certain light in their countenance, embracing, as they did, their crown of martyrdom.

When Saint Polycarp was sentenced by the proconsul, he responded by asking why they were delaying his death by burning. These believers were rejoicing as they faced their immanent death, for their knowledge of the bodily resurrection of Christ, was proof enough to have giving them an invincible courage as they faced certain death. Grand Duchess Elizabeth and Nun Barbara were said to have been singing hymns, after having been thrown into the well, by the Bolsheviks, as the prepared for eternal life with Christ.

Early Christian apologists cited hundreds of eyewitnesses, many of whom willfully and resolutely endured prolonged torture and death rather than repudiate their testimony. Their willingness to suffer death, ruled out deception on their part. According to the historical record most Christians could have ended their suffering simply by renouncing the faith. Instead, most opted to endure the suffering and proclaim Christ's resurrection unto death.

What makes the earliest Christian martyrs remarkable is that they knew whether or not what they were professing was true. They either saw Jesus Christ alive-and-well after His death or they did not. If it was all just a lie, why would so many Christians perpetuate a myth, given their circumstances? Why would they all knowingly cling to such an unprofitable lie in the face of persecution, imprisonment, torture, and death?

Immediately following Christ's crucifixion, His followers hid in fear for their lives. Yet following Christ's resurrection they boldly proclaimed the resurrection despite intensifying persecution. Only a true resurrection could have accounted for a sudden change that would lead believers to give up everything, including their lives, to preach Christ's resurrection.

One skeptic, Paul, was of his own admission a violent persecutor of the early Church. Yet after an encounter with the resurrected Christ, Paul underwent an immediate and drastic change from a vicious persecutor of the Church to one of its most prolific and selfless defenders. Following his encounter with the Risen Christ, Paul suffered impoverishment, persecution, imprisonment, beatings, and finally execution for his steadfast commitment to Christ's resurrection.

The sorrow we Christians experience during our lenten journey, is tempered with the knowledge that Christ is conquering death by His death, and that His resurrection is our resurrection. We look to the future with the same faith of the saints and martyrs that have gone on before us, and we've experienced the truth of Jesus Christ's teachings, for our hearts have been transformed by the power of His message. Our sins have been forgiven, and we are guests at the Eucharistic banquet, awaiting our time when the gates of paradise will be opened to us. We fear nothing, just like the martyrs, because we know the truth of the Holy Resurrection of Christ our God.



Daily Reflection The Prayer of St. Ephrem



"O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of idleness (ἀργίας), despondency (περιεργίας), love of power, and idle talk (ἀργολογία).

But give rather the spirit of whole-mindedness (σωφροσύνης), humility, patience, and love to Your servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen." (Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem)

One of the great paradoxes of the cross-carrying journey, (the cross itself being the greatest paradox, as something that brings victory through defeat), is that I learn to embrace God's Spirit, of whole-mindedness, humility, patience, and love, through being confronted with, and turning away from, "other" or opposing "spirits," like idleness, despondency, love of power, and idle talk. That's why these harmful, other "spirits" are mentioned first in the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem, that I may profess my decision, my desire, to turn away from them.

This learning or growth-process, of stretching upward, toward light and peace, while certain voices are calling me downward, toward darkness and chaos, is often painful (another paradox). For example, a "whole-minded" approach to my life, to my God-given vocation, means following that calling by channeling the "whole" picture of who I am in God's eyes, with "all" my gifts, God-given desires, character, background, challenges and shortcomings, toward Him, by "doing" what and how He calls me to "do." But "whole"-minded doing is challenged by fragmentation, when God-given desires and gifts are "called" by other voices to take on a life of their own, outside of God and His vision of me. Whole-minded doing is particularly challenged by "idleness" ("argia," from "a" or the alpha-privative that means "not," + "ergo" that means "to do"), which means "not" doing what I am supposed to be doing; and "despondency" ("peri-ergia," from "peri" that means "around" or "beyond," + "ergo" that means "to do"), which means doing "around" or "beyond" the scope of my vocation. If I embrace these spirits, I "miss the point" of my existence (i.e., I "sin"), losing sight of my God-envisioned purpose.

Conversely, if I turn away from these voices, which may involve pain, like severing an unhealthy relationship or activity, I grow in understanding and knowledge of my God-envisioned self and purpose. That is to say, I "see" myself more clearly. That's why the above-quoted prayer ends with these words: "Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed unto ages of ages." Amen!

Orthodox Quote of the Day

Let us do all in our power to expel demons that have entered us through our negligence by the prayer of Jesus. It has the property of reviving those deadened by sin, and it has the property of driving out devils.

**St. Ignatius Brianchaninov
On the Prayer of Jesus 29**