

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

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, July 3, 2016

Gospel: Matthew 4:18-23

Saints: Matthew 4:25-5:12

Tone 1

Epistle: Romans 2:10-16

Saints: Hebrews 11:33-12:2

2nd Sunday after Pentecost; Synaxis of the Saints of North America

**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**



*Synaxis of the Saints of
North America*

**Glory
Forever!**

As the bountiful harvest of Your sowing of salvation, The lands of North America offer to You, O Lord, all the saints who have shone in them. By their prayers keep the Church and our land in abiding peace through The Theotokos, O most Merciful One.

(Troparion – Tone 8)

Today the choir of Saints who were pleasing to God in the lands of North America Now stands before us in the Church and invisibly prays to God for us. With them the angels glorify Him, And all the saints of the Church of Christ keep festival with them; And together they all pray for Us to the Pre-Eternal God.

(Kontakion – Tone 3)

Today's Commemorated Feasts and Saints

2nd Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 1. All Saints of America (All Saints of Russia). Martyr Hyacinth of Cæsarea in Cappadocia (108). Translation of the Relics of Hieromartyr Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow (1652). Ven. Anatoly (Anatolius) of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th c.), and Ven. Anatoly (another), Recluse, of the Kiev Caves (Far Caves—13th c.). St. Vasily, Bishop of Riazan' (1295). Rt. Blv. Princes Vasily and Constantine of Yaroslavl' (13th c.). Ven. John and Longinus, Wonderworkers of Yarensk (Solovétsky Monastery—1544-45). Bl. John of Moscow, Fool-for-Christ (1589). Ven. Nicodim (Nikodemus), Abbot of Kozhevezérsk (1640). Martyrs Diomedes, Eulampius, Asclepiodotus and Golinduc, who suffered with Hyacinth (2nd c.). Martyrs Mocius (Mucian) and Mark (4th c.). St. Alexander, Founder of the “Unsleeping Ones” (ca. 430). St. Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople (458). Monk Martyr Gerasimus (1812). Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos, the “MILK-GIVER” of Chilandari Monastery on Mt. Athos.

Weekly Bulletin Sponsors

For Health of:

Sub-Deacon Edward & Holly, on their wedding anniversary, offered by their family.

Mark DaGrosa, on his 11th birthday, offered by his parents with love.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, July 3rd

9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, July 9th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 10th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, July 16th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 17th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, July 23rd

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, July 24th

9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors:

*The Dawson Family;
Tatsiana DaGrosa*

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 1st Tone:

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee!
(*Psalm 33:22*)

vs. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just! (*Psalm 32:1*)

Another, Tone 7 (Saints):

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. (*Psalm 17:48*)

Epistle: Romans 2:10-16

Brethren, glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Saints: Hebrews 11:33-12:2

Brethren, by faith, the saints subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Alleluia in the 1st Tone:

God giveth vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me! (*Psalm 17:48*)
vs. He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with David, His anointed, and his seed forever. (*Psalm 17:51*)

Another, Tone 1 (Saints):

Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, O ye righteous! (*Psalm 31:11*)

Gospel: Matthew 4:18-23

At that time, as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left their boat and their father, and followed him. And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

Saints: Matthew 4:25-5:12

Great multitudes followed Him – from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Synaxis of the Saints of North America

On the second Sunday after Pentecost, each local Orthodox Church commemorates all the saints, known and unknown, who have shone forth in its territory. Accordingly, the Orthodox Church in America remembers the saints of North America on this day.

Saints of all times, and in every country are seen as the fulfillment of God's promise to redeem fallen humanity. Their example encourages us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us" and to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). The saints of North America also teach us how we should live, and what we must expect to endure as Christians

Although it is a relatively young church, the Orthodox Church in America has produced saints in nearly all of the six major categories of saints: Apostles (and Equals of the Apostles); Martyrs (and Confessors); Prophets; Hierarchs; Monastic Saints; and the Righteous. Prophets, of course, lived in Old Testament times and predicted the coming of Christ.

The first Divine Liturgy in what is now American territory (northern latitude 58 degrees, 14 minutes, western longitude 141 degrees) was celebrated on July 20, 1741, the Feast of the Prophet Elias, aboard the ship Peter under the command of Vitus Bering. Hieromonk Hilarion Trusov and the priest Ignatius Kozirevsky served together on that occasion. Several years later, the Russian merchant Gregory I. Shelikov visited Valaam monastery, suggesting to the abbot that it would be desirable to send missionaries to Russian America.

On September 24, 1794, after a journey of 7,327 miles (the longest missionary journey in Orthodox history) and 293 days, a group of monks from Valaam arrived on Kodiak Island in Alaska. The mission was headed by Archimandrite Joasaph, and included Hieromonks Juvenal, Macarius, and Athanasius, the Hierodeacons Nectarius and Stephen, and the monks Herman and Joasaph. St Herman of Alaska (December 13, August 9), the last surviving member of the mission, fell asleep in the Lord in 1837.

Throughout the Church's history, the seeds of faith have always been watered by the blood of the martyrs. The Protomartyr Juvenal was killed near Lake Iliamna by natives in 1799, thus becoming the first Orthodox Christian to shed his blood for Christ in the New World. In 1816, St Peter the Aleut was put to death by Spanish missionaries in California when he refused to convert to Roman Catholicism.

Missionary efforts continued in the nineteenth century, with outreach to the native peoples of Alaska. Two of the most prominent laborers in Christ's Vineyard were St Innocent Veniaminov (March 31 and October 6) and St Jacob Netsvetov (July 26), who translated Orthodox services and books into the native languages. Father Jacob

“Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Joy of all the Sorrowful” founded in 1966

Netsvetev died in Sitka in 1864 after a life of devoted service to the Church. Father John Veniaminov, after his wife’s death, received monastic tonsure with the name Innocent. He died in 1879 as the Metropolitan of Moscow.

As the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, an event of enormous significance for the North American Church took place. On March 25, 1891, Bishop Vladimir went to Minneapolis to receive St Alexis Toth (May 7) and 361 of his parishioners into the Orthodox Church. This was the beginning of the return of many Uniates to Orthodoxy.

St Tikhon (Belavin), the future Patriarch of Moscow (April 7, October 9), came to America as bishop of the diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska in September 1898. As the only Orthodox bishop on the continent, St Tikhon traveled extensively throughout North America in order to minister to his widely scattered and diverse flock. He realized that the local church here could not be a permanent extension of the Russian Church. Therefore, he focused his efforts on giving the American Church a diocesan and parish structure which would help it mature and grow.

St Tikhon returned to Russia in 1907, and was elected as Patriarch of Moscow ten years later. He died in 1925, and for many years his exact burial place remained unknown. St Tikhon’s grave was discovered on February 22, 1992 in the smaller cathedral of Our Lady of the Don in the Don Monastery when a fire made renovation of the church necessary.

St Raphael of Brooklyn (February 27) was the first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated in North America. Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny was consecrated by Bishop Tikhon and Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) at St Nicholas Cathedral in New York on March 13, 1904. As Bishop of Brooklyn, St Raphael was a trusted and capable assistant to St Tikhon in his archpastoral ministry. St Raphael reposed on February 27, 1915.

The first All American Council took place March 5-7, 1907 at Mayfield, PA, and the main topic was “How to expand the mission.” Guidelines and directions for missionary activity, and statutes for the administrative structure of parishes were also set forth.

In the twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, countless men, women, and children received the crown of martyrdom rather than renounce Christ. Sts John Kochurov (October 31) and Alexander Hotovitzky (December 4 and August 7) both served the Church in North America before going back to Russia. St John became the first clergyman to be martyred in Russia on October 31, 1917 in St Petersburg. St Alexander Hotovitzky, who served in America until 1914, was killed in 1937.



In addition to the saints listed above, we also honor those saints who are known only to God, and have not been recognized officially by the Church. As we contemplate the lives of these saints, let us remember that we are also called by God to a life of holiness.

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, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles 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.

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: ChurchMotherOfGod@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.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News



Away on vacation! Have a good time! Don't forget to send in your contributions. The parish's bills and responsibilities don't take a vacation! ~From your Treasurer, Trudy



NY/NJ Diocese News

UPCOMING EVENTS: Department of Youth Ministry

The Department of Youth Ministry has several special events planned for the upcoming months: **YOUTH DAY** (August 25th), **SAINT ANDREW’S CAMP BIKE RIDE** (August 27th), **GIRLS RETREAT** (November 11th), **ALTAR SERVERS RETREAT** (February 10-12, 2017), and more! Additional information and registration will be available and listed in the "upcoming events" section of this website. See the 2016-2017 Upcoming Events flyer.

ROCHESTER NY: Recognition and Appreciation for DDBs

On the Sunday of All Saints, 26 June 2016, the **2015 Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of Saint John the Baptist Church in Rochester NY** received certificates of appreciation (*gramota*) signed by Archbishop Michael. To those present (8 of the parish’s 16 DDBs), Father Ken James Stavrevsky said: *“Your contributions provide seminarians with scholarships, mission parishes with essential support, and older parishes with revitalization.”* The parish community also contributed an additional \$1,000 last year in support of the DDB program. The 2016 DDB is now underway and, to date, \$92,000 has been contributed by DDBs from throughout the diocese and beyond.

Congratulations:

Congratulations to **Mary and Neil Brogan**, daughter and son-in-law of Father Daniel and Matushka Kathleen Degyansky, on the birth of their daughter **Fiona Catherine** -- born Friday, June 24, weighing in at 6 pounds, 15 ounces, and measuring 16.5 inches.

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, good health and salvation, visitation and good hastening in all things to Thy handmaiden, the newborn Fiona Catherine; and protect and preserve her for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"

With love,
+ vm

Memory Eternal:

Our deepest sympathies are expressed to Presbyter Nikolai Gulin and his family, on the falling asleep in the Lord of his father, + **Archpriest Boris Gulin**.

Grant rest eternal in blessed repose with the Saints, O Lord, to the soul of Thy newly-departed servant, the ever-to-be-remembered + Archpriest Boris, who has fallen asleep; and make his memory to be eternal! "Vechnaya Pamyat!!!"

With love,
+ vm



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News **Still time to register for “Youth Council” in Chicago July 22-25**

“There’s still time to register for the first “Youth Council,” slated to take place during the 90th annual Convention of the [Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America](#) [FOCA] in suburban Rosemont, IL July 22-25, 2016.

“We’re looking forward to this great youth event, which will include fellowship, education, worship, outings in the city, and time with our hierarchs,” said Andrew Boyd, who heads the Orthodox Church in America’s [Department of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry](#). “All youth—sixth graders through high school seniors—are welcome to attend, and they need not be FOCA members to do so!”

Detailed information, including prices, financial assistance, schedule—including “commuter” options for locals—and registration is [available on-line](#).

In addition to the FOCA and OCA Youth Department, the Diocese of the Midwest will be cosponsoring the unprecedented gathering. Priest Benjamin Tucci of Saint Mary’s Cathedral, Minneapolis, is overseeing the exciting program.

Questions and enquiries may be addressed to Mr. Boyd at aboyd@oca.org or Father Benjamin at frbentucci@gmail.com.

Learning the “deeper lessons of life” in Southwest Detroit neighborhood

“It’s not just about the meal, or even the guests,” says an 80-year-old who regularly volunteers for [Orthodox Detroit Outreach](#) [ODO]. “For those serving, young and old, this is ‘school’ where we can learn the deeper lessons of life.”

And for him, and the many others who offer their time, talents and treasures through ODO’s ministries in Southwest Detroit—a neighborhood hard hit over the past few decades—Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral has been “ground zero” for what the parish’s Pastor, Archpriest Paul Albert, Pastor, sees as an effort to proclaim “the fuller presence of the Gospel” in the inner city.

“There is much more happening here than simply running a soup kitchen,” Father Paul explains. And while the cathedral—the oldest Orthodox Christian parish in the state of Michigan, planted in 1907—had dwindled to less than 50 members over the years, in part due to factors affecting many “rust belt” cities and towns, the tenacity of its members had led to “a gradual meshing of parishioners, neighbors, and faithful from a number of parishes embracing the Orthodox ethos and the neighborhood’s environment—an experiment in a more pastoral approach to community building.”

Nearly five years ago, a tenacious group of parishioners began reaching out to those living in the cathedral’s neighborhood.

“There are so many people ‘on foot’ in the neighborhood, and the cathedral provided an ideal ‘access point’ for neighborhood outreach,” Father Paul added.

Initially, the cathedral’s faithful prepared and served Sunday meals for the neighborhood’s individuals and families. As word spread about their efforts, faithful from sister parishes of the Orthodox Church in America, the Serbian Diocese, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, and other jurisdictions displayed an interest in helping, signing up to provide meals after the Sunday Divine Liturgy on designated weeks. With excellent networking and a drive on the part of a small leadership team to put Matthew 25 into action, ODO was born. In addition to serving weekly meals, volunteers repair neighbors’ homes, offer activities for neighborhood children, and maintain a community garden.

“We’re attempting to help families, one by one,” said Father Paul, “while ‘repurposing’ the inner city parish by using the cathedral to address the often neglected needs of the inner city.”

With Father Paul’s assignment as Pastor in January 2016 and with the blessing and encouragement of His Grace, Bishop Paul of Chicago and other hierarchs, ODO’s ministry continues to grow.

“On the last weekend of June 2016, some 35 volunteers from parishes across the area turned out for a Saturday work day,” Father Paul added. “We completed some work for neighborhood families, provided some much needed fresh paint to our community center space where our weekly meal takes place, worked in the community garden,

and shared our love for God and one another. Nearly 100 individuals attended Vespers that evening, at which Father Andrew Yavornitzky, Michigan Dean and Pastor of Saint Mark Church in suburban Rochester, MI concelebrated. A dinner was held to thank and further encourage past and current volunteers. After the Sunday morning Liturgy, some 100 neighbors gathered under an outdoor tent to enjoy a picnic as we blessed the community garden, located on the cathedral property.”

Known as the “Garden of Saints,” the site includes several outdoor shrines with icons of saints, such as the New Martyr Elizabeth, who were especially known for their charitable ministries to the poor, needy and forgotten.

“In a very real way, our neighborhood efforts are an extension of the Divine Liturgy,” said Father Paul. “When I look at the faces of our neighbors, especially the children, I cannot help but experience tears of joy.”

Those not living in the Detroit region may participate in ODO’s ministry by donating equipment and supplies. An [on-line store](#) enables those who cannot participate personally to be a part of ODO’s efforts to bring the fuller presence of the Gospel to southwest Detroit.

View the photo gallery of the weekend’s services and events may be viewed on the OCA [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



OCMC News - Memory Eternal to the Servant of God, Taki Kobuzi (1953 – 2016)

On June 20, 2016, the humble servant of God, Demetri (Taki) Kobuzi, reposed in the Lord. He was a man deeply integrated in the Orthodox faith in a quiet yet powerful way. Taki was Archbishop Anastasios’ car driver. He was his chauffeur from the early 90’s until the time of his repose. Archbishop Anastasios has made incredible strides rebuilding the Orthodox Church in Albania over the past 25 years, and Taki was by his side through all of it.

In the earliest chapters of post-Communism in the Albanian Orthodox Church, from 1991-1992, it was still very dangerous to be a Christian. Although Communism had fallen, Orthodox people were still afraid of being arrested for their faith. It was hard to know who to trust. One out of ten people were part of the Secret Service and were turning people in for being a Christian, a religion that was still constitutionally illegal. Taki and just a few other faithful Orthodox Christians began to attend church in spite of the fearful situation they existed in. Taki persevered in his unwavering vigor and dedication to the Orthodox Church throughout the rest of his life.

He was not a theologian. He trained as a car driver during the reign of Communism. Being a chauffeur was not simple during the Communist Era. You had to learn how to be a mechanic, an exceptional driver, and had to know all the ins and outs of motor vehicles. Although Taki was not a theologian, he wanted to use his gifts for the church. So, he became Archbishop Anastasios’ automobile driver. Taki was by the Archbishop’s side without fail for the rest of his years.

Presbytera Renee Ritsi, who knew Taki personally, recalled a time about a year ago when she and her son, Deacon Stephanos (OCMC long-term missionary in Albania), were in Albania at the Archdiocese picking up some lost luggage that had been delivered there. It was 9:30pm, and the Archbishop was staying at the Metropolis that night. She remembers that, other than the night guard, no one was there except Taki working late on the car and tinkering around. Presbytera and Deacon Stephanos asked what he was doing there so late, and his response was, “The Archbishop is still up, so I’m here.” This is just one example of his loyalty to the Archbishop. He gave up his personal time to be available to him for the service of Christ.

Taki used his gifts for God and the service of the church. He was not a seminarian or a great theologian, but he dedicated his life to God by humbly serving the Archbishop and using his specific skills. Let us follow his example and utilize the skills given to us by God for the glory of His name. May his memory be eternal, and may he find rest in the eternal Kingdom of God!



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRISON MINISTRY
AN AGENCY OF THE ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS

Celebrating Freedom...but are we really free?

“I am freer here in prison than I was ever on the outside!” Over many years of being a prison chaplain, I have heard that statement countless times. How could that possibly be? How could someone experience more freedom inside a prison than on the outside?

On the 4th of July the United States celebrates a special holiday that honors our freedom. If you have traveled to some other countries around this world, you might agree that the United States definitely has something to celebrate. We don't have walls or fences to keep us in the United States. By and large, Mexico and Canada are not patrolling their borders looking for Americans sneaking in to find a better life.

Yet in the midst of this “free” country many, many Americans find themselves in a bondage of sorts. They are unable to shake off the inner feelings of emptiness, depression, and lack of meaning in their lives. They continue to strive after something, anything that would give them freedom from these entrapments.

That word...FREEDOM...is such a misunderstood term. Many people equate it with being able to do what you want, when you want, and however you want to do it. They chase after that freedom through travel, jobs, alcohol, drugs, sex, money...on and on goes the list. “If I could just go to New Zealand...If I just had a better job...a bigger house...more money...a different spouse...”

Sadly as they arrive at each goal, the freedom they truly want is still missing. Somehow they are still bound up with those chains of emptiness, depression and lack of meaning in their lives. In spite of failure after failure to be set free, they continue to seek the answer in what they have and what they do. That notion of freedom limits mankind to a purely physical being. But people are not just physical beings.

People are also spiritual beings and if that fact is overlooked, one will never find the freedom they seek. Emptiness, depression, and lack of meaning in life are not just physical problems. In fact, often they are more spiritually oriented than physical. Physical answers to spiritual problems are nothing more than band-aids on a serious infection. Things may feel better for a moment but then bondage returns. We can take a wino out of the gutters of skid row and dress him up in a brand new tuxedo. But, when we return a month later, we will find a drunken man lying in the gutter dressed in a tuxedo. Perhaps we even know this to be true, but many of us continue to pursue physical remedies for spiritual problems.

“Perhaps a little more of the physical answer would do it...I guess I need just a little more...maybe just a bit more.” And so an alcoholic or a drug addict is born (workaholic may fit right in there as well!).

Unless someone is set free spiritually, they will never know true freedom. The best answers to emptiness, depression, and lack of meaning in life are to be found in God alone. This FREEDOM is available to everyone. Entering that path toward freedom is as close as a prayer away. “If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed!” (John 8:36)

Here are a few quotes from early Christians regarding our freedom...or free will to choose God's ways or our own ways:

JUSTIN MARTYR c.100-165 A.D.

“God, wishing men and angels to follow His will, resolved to create them free to do righteousness...”

THEOPHILUS of Antioch (2nd century). To Autolytus XXVII

“For God made man free, and with power over himself . . . For as man, disobeying drew death on himself; so, obeying the will of God, he who desires is able to procure for himself life everlasting.”

IRENÆUS of Gaul c.130-200. Against Heresies XXXVII

“God made man a free agent from the beginning, possessing his own soul to obey the behests of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God. For there is no coercion with God, but a good will toward us is present with Him continually. And in man as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice...so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God. . .”

CYRIL of Jerusalem c. 312-386 Lecture IV

“Know also that you have a soul that is self-governed, the noblest work of God, made after the image of its Creator...having free power to do what it wills. There is not a class of souls sinning by nature and a class of souls

practicing righteousness by nature; but both act from choice. The soul is self-governed: and though the Devil can suggest, he has not the power to compel against the will.”

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM 347-407. On Hebrews, Homily 12

“All is in God’s power, but so that our free-will is not lost . . . It depends therefore on us and on Him. We must first choose the good, and then He adds what belongs to Him. He does not precede our willing, that our free-will may not suffer. But when we have chosen, then He affords us much help . . . It is ours to choose beforehand and to will, but God’s to perfect and bring to the end.”

– Fr. Stephen



International Orthodox Christian Charities

IOCC "Frontline" Delivers Assistance to Families Affected by West Virginia Flooding

Baltimore, MD (IOCC) — Members of the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) Frontline dispatched this week to respond to recent devastating floods in West Virginia and have begun distribution of aid to families in need in remote areas of the state where access remains difficult due to storm damage. More than 500 clean-up buckets with household cleaning supplies, many donated by Orthodox Christian parishes and organizations from across the country through IOCC's kit donation program, have been delivered to a distribution center outside of Lewisburg, WV and are being distributed to smaller communities in the area.

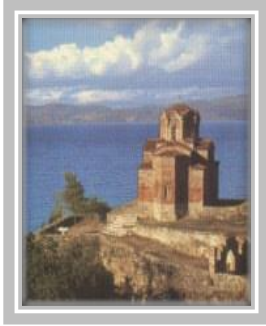
IOCC Country Representative Daniel Christopulos is coordinating IOCC's response with Orthodox Christian hierarchs, local clergy and Orthodox Christian volunteers, ecumenical partners and sister agencies in the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), an association of organizations that mitigate and alleviate the impact of disasters. Frontline members Fr. Andrew Lentz, Dn. Constantine Shepherd, Dr. Marilyn Brady and Christopulos are working with the support of His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh and His Grace Bishop Thomas of the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. The Frontline team is staging out of St. George Antiochian Cathedral in Charleston, WV and St. Nicholas Antiochian Church in Beckley, WV. Fr. Christopher Eid and Fr. Samuel Haddad of the respective Orthodox churches have been working with the Frontline team and introducing them to local leadership.

IOCC Frontline members Dn. Constantine Shepherd, Dr. Marilyn Brady and Fr. Andrew Lentz are briefed by Fr. Samuel Haddad pastor of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church in Beckley, WV about the flooding that has ravaged the state. photo: D. Christopulos/IOCC

"We are focused on providing relief supplies to affected communities in coordination with our partners in VOAD," reported Christopulos, who also serves as the president of the state chapter for VOAD in Minnesota. "In addition to the material aid, members of the IOCC Frontline have been called on by the West Virginia Council of Churches to provide emotional and spiritual care for families in flood-affected communities and are currently working in smaller communities near Lewisburg."

Bishop Thomas met earlier this week with IOCC Executive Director Constantine Triantafilou to discuss the aid efforts, and has instructed his parishes to fully support the work of IOCC and offered the resources of the Diocese to assist in the efforts.

IOCC has also received the support of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society at the direction of Metropolitan Savas and is poised to offer specific aid as the situation warrants.



Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, LXIII:

Who brought sin into the world, O Lord, and made the whole world sick, and became nourishment for death?

The mind is the gate, through which sin entered in. Through the mind the drop of poison dripped into the heart and the soul.

Separated from virginity and light, no longer threefold but one-dimensional, the mind separated itself from the holy Triad, and stands as "the fourth" -- nonexistence. It thinks what is mundane, and not what is divine.

Separated from the virginity of the soul and the light of the heart, the mind is the shadow of the Son of God and the reverse of Wisdom.³ This dark shadow spreads its darkness into the soul and the heart. And once all three have become shrouded in darkness and covered with mildew, it then educates itself into a sort of unholy triad, a shadow of the Holy Triad, just as nonexistence is a quivering shadow of existence.

What is the first sin of the mind, O Lord, by which it introduced pain and suffering into the whole human race?

The first sin of the mind is self-delusion, the second is pride. Riveted to senses intended for nonexistence, the mind accepted nonexistence as existence.

Self-delusion looks at the reflection of the moon in the lake as though it were the actual moon, and rushes to grab it in the water.

Self-delusion sees a rope and mistakes it for a snake, and flees from it.

The self-delusion of a dog sees a dog in the water, and impels the actual dog into barking at his own shadow.

Self-delusion concerning the capricious ashes of this world impels the mind to attach its essence to this world, and blindfolds it with forgetfulness of the truly existent world.

In truth, self-delusion of the mind is the first sin. This first sin enters into marriage with pride and out of this marriage are born all the sins and all the evils that produce pain and suffering.

How is it that pride appears immediately after self-delusion, my Lord?

Discoverers of what is new and previously unknown are always filled with pride.

The self-deluded mind keeps discovering for itself some-thing new and previously unknown.

Alas, if the mind only knew that it is discovering its own grave!

The self-delusion of the mind is discovering the non-existent world as though it were the existent world. Alas, how this "discovering" is becoming such perilous covering! By revealing the nonexistent world to the mind as though it were the existent one, self-delusion is concealing the existent world and representing it to the mind as though it were nonexistent.

O my Lord, the only One who exists, save my mind from these two infernal sins.

My Truth, save me from the pernicious self-delusion of my mind.

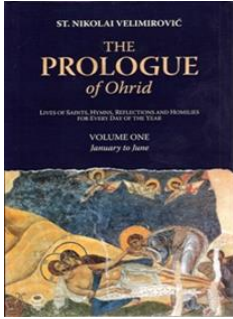
O Master and Bestower of all that I am and I have, deliver me from pride, the destroyer of the deranged and the foolish.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LXIII:

**II. The Realities of the Spiritual World
Holy Tradition**

.If someone wants to be protected from tricks and remain healthy in the faith, he must confine his faith first to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and secondly to the Tradition of the Church. But someone may ask, is not the canon of Scripture sufficient for everything, and why should we add thereto the authority of Tradition? This is because not everyone understands the Scriptures in the same way, but one explains them this way and another that way, so that it is possible to get there from as many thoughts as there are heads. Therefore it is necessary to be guided by the understanding of the Church ... What is tradition? It is that which has been understood by everyone, everywhere and at all times ... that which you have received, and not that which you have thought up ... So then, our job is not to lead religion where we wish it to go, but to follow it where it leads, and not to give that which is our own to our heirs, but to guard that which has been given to us.

--St. Vincent of Lerina, Notes of a Pilgrim



The Prologue of Ohrid: Lives of Saints, Hymns, Reflections and Homilies for Every Day of the Year

1. The Holy Martyr Hyacinth

A young man and a courtier at the court of Emperor Trajan, Hyacinth was a secret Christian. Once, when Emperor Trajan and his entire court solemnly offered sacrifices to the idols, Hyacinth refrained from this abominable activity. For that he was accused and brought before the emperor to be judged. The emperor counseled him to deny Christ and offer sacrifices to the idols. But Hyacinth remained as firm as a diamond and said to the emperor: "I am a Christian and I honor Christ. I worship Him, and to Him alone do I offer myself as a living sacrifice." Beaten, spat upon and flayed, this holy martyr was thrown into prison. By order of the emperor, he was given nothing to eat except sacrifices offered before the idols. Hyacinth refused to partake of them and after eight days died in prison. Then the prison guards saw two radiant angels in the prison: One angel covered the body of the martyred Hyacinth with his radiant vesture, and the other angel placed a glorious wreath on his head. The entire prison was illuminated and fragrant. The youthful Hyacinth honorably suffered and was crowned with eternal glory in the year 108 A.D.

2. Saint Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople

Anatolius was at first a presbyter in the Church at Alexandria, but following the death of Patriarch Flavian, he was elevated to the patriarchal throne of Constantinople, in the year 449 A.D. During his time, the throne of Constantinople was recognized as equal to the throne of Rome, by the Ecumenical Council held in Chalcedon in 451 A.D. He struggled greatly for the purity of the Orthodox Faith and suffered much at the hands of the heretics, until he was slain by them in the year 458 A.D., during the reign of Pope Leo the Great. Anatolius governed the Church for nearly nine years, and took up his heavenly habitation among the holy hierarchs in the Kingdom of God.

3. The Venerable Alexander [Akimetes]

Alexander was born in Asia and educated in Constantinople. After the completion of his schooling, he devoted himself to military service and became an officer. Reading Holy Scripture, he came across the words of the Savior: If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven. Afterward come back and follow me (St. Matthew 19:21). These words had such an effect on Alexander that he immediately sold and distributed all that he had, and withdrew into the wilderness. After long ascetic struggles and labors in purifying himself, he established the monastery of the Sleepless Ones, with a special rule. According to this rule, the divine services [offices] in his community were carried on night and day without interruption. The brotherhood was divided into twenty-four relays [cursus]. Each relay knew its appointed hours of the day and night, and went to church to continue the reading and singing of the preceding relay. Carrying nothing with him, Alexander traveled much throughout the eastern regions, enlightening men with the Faith of Christ, disputing with heretics, working miracles by the grace of God, and growing old in service to the Lord. He finally ended his earthly life in Constantinople in the year 430 A.D.--where his relics manifested the miraculous power and glory through which God glorifies His holy servants.

4. Venerable Isaiah, the Recluse [Anchorite]

Isaiah lived a life of asceticism at Scetis in Egypt, during the fifth and sixth centuries. He is mentioned in the book of Saints Barsanuphius and John (Answer 249 and others) as a man possessing exceptional sanctity. He wrote many instructions for monks and anchorites. But very few of his writings remain, many having been destroyed by the Muslims. St. Isaiah said: "The mind, before it awakens from the sleep of slothfulness, resides with the demons." "The crown of all good works consists in this: that a man place all his hope in God; that he find recourse in Him once and for all with his heart and strength; that he be filled with compassion for all, and that he weep before God, imploring His help and mercy." What is the sign to a man that a certain sin is forgiven? "The sign that a sin is forgiven is that the sin does not generate any activity in your heart and that you have forgotten it to such a degree that, in conversation about a similar sin, you do not feel any inclination toward that sin, but rather consider it something totally foreign to you. That is the sign that you are completely pardoned." Prayer and asceticism are in

vain for a man who conceals within himself malice toward his neighbor and the desire for revenge. "Watch with all your strength that you do not speak one thing with your mouth and have something else in your heart." "The crown of good works is love; the crown of passions is the justification of one's sins."

Hymn of Praise

Saint Alexander [Akimetes]

Venerable Alexander, saint of God,
Established the temple of the "Sleepless Ones", a holy monastery,
That in it the Lord might be glorified, hymned and magnified.
Of this holy monastery, the story still carries on.
Even in our hearts, the community of heaven lives—
In your heart you must glorify the Living God.
In our hearts, let sleepless prayer be counted;
As a flame let unquenchable love stand,
With grace let the Holy Spirit warm our hearts,
Let Christ, His words throughout our heart, sow,
And let the angels in that temple keep vigil day and night.
Farther from us, farther from them, let the furious ones hide.
Let the Holy Virgin exude myrrh in that temple,
And with her, include the apostles and all of the saints,
And all the chosen ones of God--glorious martyrs,
And all virgins for the sake of Christ, and all hermits.
In our hearts, let the Liturgy be served,
And let the Wisdom of God be magnified unremittingly.

Reflection

Love is all-powerful. It can, among other things, ease the lot of the souls of deceased sinners. The Orthodox Church confirms this resolutely, and endeavors on behalf of the deceased to offer prayers and perform corporal works of mercy. Abundantly rich in every spiritual experience, the Church knows that prayers and works of mercy on behalf of the deceased help those in the other world. Before her death, St. Athanasia the Abbess (April 12) made her sisterhood promise that, for forty days after her death, they would prepare a table for the poor and needy. The sisterhood carried out her command for only ten days and then ceased. The saint then appeared, in the company of two angels, and said to the sisters: "Why have you transgressed my commandment? Know that God's mercy is invoked by works of mercy and by the prayers of the priest for the souls of the deceased, over the course of forty days. If the souls of the departed are sinful, they receive through this forgiveness of sins from God--and if they are not sinful, then the corporal works of mercy performed for them serve to aid the salvation of the benefactor himself." Naturally, works of mercy and prayer are thought of here in connection with great love toward the departed souls. In truth, such works of mercy and prayer do help.

Contemplation

To contemplate the miraculous transformation of the rod into a serpent, and again, the serpent into the rod (Exodus 4):

1. How the Lord, Who created the serpent and the rod from dust, can--by His own power, and for the sake of higher goals--transform the dead into the living, and the living into the dead;
2. How the Lord can, according to my faith and prayer, return my soul (withered and deadened by sin) to life.

Homily

About the joy of faith in Christ

"Although you have never seen Him, you love Him, and without seeing you now believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible joy touched with glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

These are the words of the Holy Apostle Peter. He saw the Lord and loved Him. He looked at the Lord and believed in Him. Precisely because of that, he praises the love of those who have not seen the Lord and the faith of those who have not seen Him with their eyes. Our Lord Himself said: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (St. John 20:29). Blessed are they who have not seen the Lord as the apostle saw Him, but nevertheless love Him with apostolic love. Blessed are they who have not seen the Lord as the apostle saw Him, but nevertheless believe in Him with apostolic faith!

O my brethren, even if we do not see the Lord, we see His works, which have enlightened the entire history of mankind, from one end to the other, and have illumined every created thing under the heavens with a spiritual significance. Even if we do not see the Lord, we see His Holy Church--built upon His All-holy and Pure Blood--of the great number of saints and righteous ones and the countless souls baptized in His Name throughout the ages of ages. Even if we do not see the Lord face to face, as the apostles saw Him, we believe that He is among us in the Body and Blood by which we receive according to His commandment; and in receiving His Body and Blood we rejoice with unspeakable joy.

Brethren, the Lord is alive and the Lord is near! That is our unwavering faith, and that is the spark of fire that ignites our hearts into a flame of love for the Lord, living and near.

To know that, out of love, our Lord the Creator descended to the earth, and revealed Himself as a man for our sake, and to further know that He was dead and that He showed Himself alive--what stronger foundation does our faith need, and what stronger justification does our love require?

Brethren, the Lord is alive and near. Even in our own day. He reveals Himself to many righteous souls who serve Him with patience.

O Living Lord, You Who were dead and are alive, enliven in us faith and love until our last breath on earth--that by faith and love we may be made worthy to see You face to face, as did Your holy apostles.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbots Tryphon

The Kindly Priest

The priest and the American tourist

A protestant woman from Tacoma, WA. was on vacation with her husband in the Greek city of Athens. Each day she walked to a small sidewalk cafe near the hotel for her coffee and watched the locals pass by. One of these locals was an Orthodox priest who'd pass by the cafe on his way to his parish church. The woman would smile and the priest would nod, smile back, and continue on his way.

One day this Greek priest, who spoke English, noticed that the American woman had a sad look on her face and walked over to her table and asked if something was troubling her. She burst into tears and told the priest about her husband's medical problems, and that she feared for the worst. The priest sat with her and prayed for she and her husband. Each day he'd stop to sit at her table, praying for her husband's recovery.

A few weeks passed and the husband recovered from his illness and returned to the United States with his wife. The memory of this priest's compassion for a foreign woman has remained with her all these many years. She shared her memories with her doctor, who is a friend of mine, and I now share her memories with you.

What a true disciple and servant of the Lord, was this kindly priest. May we, like this priest, be attuned to those who are in need and of whom the Lord places before us. May we reach out with open hearts and bring healing to those who are suffering, letting them know that we care and that they have a friend during their time of sorrow, need and despair.

**With love in Christ,
Abbots Tryphon**



Daily Reflection
Saints and Celebrities



“Wondrous is God in his saints: the God of Israel is he who will give power and strength to his people. Blessed be God.” (Ps 67: 35/36)

The recognized saints are the proper “celebrities” of our community, because they bring us together. The word “celebrity” comes from the Latin “celebrare,” which means to “assemble to honor,” and the past participle of this word, “celebratus” (celebrity), means “much-frequented.” So we assemble, we gather to honor, nay, to wonder at, God, Who is “wondrous in His saints,” because it is He Who has given power and strength to His people.

I’m thinking about this verse today, on the day of the repose of a saint very dear to my family, my Church, and me personally, St. John, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco. May God continue to bless us, and may we continue to bless Him, through wonder and recognition of the saints and saintly among us. It is He Who has given them strength and power, and it is He Who will give power and strength to all of us, His people, today as He did yesterday. “Blessed be God.”

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Scripture exhorts us to offer gifts to God so that we may become conscious of His infinite goodness. For God receives our offerings as if they were entirely our own gifts and He had not already given us anything. In this way God’s untold goodness towards us is fully evident, for when we offer Him things which in reality are His own He accepts them as if they were ours, and He makes Himself our debtor as though they were not already His.

+ *St Maximus the Confessor, 500 Various Texts*

Daily Readings with Early Church Fathers and Mothers

"Taking Offense" by St. Ambrose

If someone offends you, don’t tell anyone about it except your elder, and you will be peaceful. Bow to everyone, paying no attention whether they respond to your bow or not. You must humble yourself before everyone and consider yourself the worst of all. If we have not committed the sins that others have, perhaps this is because we did not have the opportunity – the situation and circumstances were different. In each person there is something good and something bad; we usually see only the vices in people and we see nothing that is good.



JULY – 2016

Sunday Resurrection	Monday Holy Angels	Tuesday St. John the Baptist	Wednesday Most-Holy Theotokos	Thursday Holy Apostles	Friday Life-giving Cross	Saturday Departed
					1 Unmercenary Wonderworkers Cosmas & Damian 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	2 <i>19 June O.S.</i> <i>St. John Bp. Of S.F.</i> Robe of the Theotokos St. John, Bp. Of Shanghai & San Francisco 6:30pm Vespers
3 <i>All Saints of America</i> <i>All Saints of Russia</i> Martyr Hyacinth Relics Hieromartyr Philip, Metr. Of Moscow 9:40am Hours 9:45am Gen'l Confession 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	4 <i>Galatian Icon</i> St. Andrew of Crete Ven. Martha	5 <i>Ekonomissa Icon</i> RELICS VEN. SERGIUS OF RADONEZH VEN. ATHANASIOS OF MOUNT ATHOS 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	6 Ven. Sisoës the Great Virgin Martyr Lucia	7 <i>Blachemae Icon</i> Ven. Thomas of Mt. Maleon Ven. Eudoxia	8 <i>Kazan', Sitka- Kazan' Icons and Others</i> Greatmartyr Procopius 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	9 <i>Kolochskaya Icon</i> Hieromartyr Pancratius, Bishop of Taormena 6:30pm Vespers
10 <i>Konevskaya Icon</i> 45 Martyrs at Nicopolis VEN. ANTHONY OF THE KIEV CAVES 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy / Social	11 <i>End Ss. Peter & Paul Fast O.S.</i> Greatmartyr Euphemia BL, Princess Olga	12 <i>Three Hands Icon"</i> <i>29 June O.S. Ss. Peter & Paul</i> Martyrs Proclus & Hilary of Ancyra 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study. NA Grp Mtg.	13 <i>"Axion Estin/Dostonio est'" Icon</i> Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel Ven. Stephen Sabbaita	14 Apostle Aquila of the 70 Repose Ven. Nicodemus the Hagorite	15 <i>Fish, Wine & Oil</i> GREAT PRINCE VLADIMIR, EQUAL-TO-THE- APOSTLES, ENLIGHTENER OF THE RUSSIAN LANDS 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	16 Hieromartyr Athenogenes, Bp. Of Heracleopolis 6:30pm Vespers
17 <i>Fathers of the 1st Six Ecumenical Councils</i> <i>4 July O.S. Royal Passionbearers</i> Royal Passionbearers Greatmartyr Marina (Margaret) 9:40 Hours 10:00 Divine Liturgy / Social	18 Nun Martyrs Gr. Duchess Elizabeth & Barbara	19 RELICS VEN. SERAPHIM OF SAROV 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	20 <i>Fish, Wine & Oil Abalatskaya Icon</i> HOLY PROPHET ELIJAH	21 <i>Armatia Icon</i> Prophet Ezekiel Ven. Simeon of Emesa, Fool-for- Christ	22 Holy Myrbearer Mary Magdalene, Equal-to-the-Apostles 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	23 <i>Pochaev & Joy of All Who Sorrow Icons</i> Martyrs Trophimus, Theophilus & Their Companions 6:30pm Vespers
24 Martyr Christina MARTYRS BORIS & GLEB. PASSIONBEARERS 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy/ Social	25 Dormition of Righteous Anna, Mother of the Theotokos	26 <i>Emvolon Icon</i> ST. JACOB, ENLIGHTENER OF THE PEOPLES OF ALASKA 7:00-8:00pm The Grey Book Study NA Grp Mtg.	27 GREATMARTYR & HEALER PANTELEIMON St. Clement, Bishop of Ochrid	28 <i>Smolensk Hodigitria</i> <i>156 July O.S. St. Vladimir</i> Apostles of the 70 Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon & Parmenas	29 Martyr Callinicus Virgin Martyr Seraphima 8:00-9:15pm Living Clean NA Group Mtg.	30 Apostles of the 70 Silas, Silvanus & their Companions 6:30pm Vespers
31 <i>Forefeast Procession of the Life-giving Cross</i> Righteous Eudocimus St. Germanus, Bp. Of Auxerre 9:40am Hours 10:00am Divine Liturgy/ Social	<i>What is the source of greatest joy in my life now? Have I begun to intentionally seek to be present in my life more often? Do I still live in my thoughts longing for life to begin 'tomorrow'? How much time do I waste in front of the TV, on the internet in a dull state of consciousness? Who in life helps me awaken? Who do I seek out in my life in order to have a dialogue from the heart about the search for God and what really matters? Do I have a spiritual confessor and guide and make regular confessions? Do I worship or sit as a spectator? – Dn. Stephen Muse, "Being bread."</i>					