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Orthodox Church

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VERY REVEREND

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An Orthodox Christian community of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA under the protection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

WELCOME!



WEEKLY BULLETIN

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 2022

SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY - ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA

⌘ TONE VI ⌘ 1TIMOTHY 1:15-17 ⌘ GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 18:35-43

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY DIVINE SERVICES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23 - SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY

9:00AM Sunday Divine Liturgy followed by a Panachida for +William Albrecht (11th anniv.), offered by his wife, Dolores.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27

4-8:00PM Visitation Hours for +WALTER LYKOSH - Kedz Funeral Home: Toms River.

7:00PM Parastas Service.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28

9-10:00AM Visitation Hour for +WALTER LYKOSH - St. John's Church.

10:00AM Funeral Divine Liturgy for +WALTER LYKOSH, followed by burial in our Parish Cemetery (New).

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29

3:00PM Saturday Evening Vespers - Come join us!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30

9:00AM Sunday Divine Liturgy.

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY PARISH ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23

10:30AM NO Sunday Coffee Social Hour or Sunday School.

MONDAY, JANUARY 24

5:00PM Weekly Soup Kitchen Service.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30

10:30AM NO Coffee Social Hour or Sunday School.

DEEPEST SYMPATHIES and HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES are expressed to Stefanie & Brian Lykosh and the entire Lykosh Family on the sudden falling asleep in the Lord of their beloved father, +WALTER LYKOSH, this past Wednesday evening on the Feast of Theophany. He has been a lifelong member of the parish and recently joined our baking crews in his newfound retirement. Walter has been the caretaker of our cemetery for 30 years, in a job that is often overlooked and thankless. He has served our departed loved ones with great care and concern. His efforts, support and service will be greatly missed. Services are listed above. **May God grant consolation to the bereaved family and may He place the soul of His newly-departed servant, +WALTER, in a serene, luxuriant and peaceful place where this is no pain, sorrow or sighing but only life everlasting. May His memory be eternal! Vicnaja jemu Pamjat! Eternal Memory!**

PLEASE PRAY for the Servants of God: His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. John & Pani Eleanor Pribish, Helen Hrehowsik, Bill Kobasz, Helen J. Dunham, Olga Medvigy, John & Suzanne DiBiasi, Lynn Beres, Maryann Dudash, Eleanor Aleksza, Judith Raskoshin & Unborn child, Jenna Quinn & Newborn Son, Kristy Stallard & Unborn Son, Frank Ello, Lia Gogoladze, Dacia Snider, CPL Michael Delcher, Joann Kolator, Irene Tobin, Olga Mitko, Sandy DiLeo, Pani Eleanor Herbert, Michele Camisa, Abigail Billy, Joseph Santalla, Sussi Howard, Amanda Orender, Helen Deliman, Melanie McHenry, Peggy Patrick, Lillian Kalog, Maryann Della Serra, Victoria Dean, Stephen Skasko, George Kratsashvili, John Paul Hall, Veronica Houser, Joshua Skoog, Michael Ascher, Elizabeth White, CPL Logan Grguric, PO Daniel Langner, Smn. Daniel Birthisel, the unborn children of this world and for more vocations to the Holy Priesthood.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Please remember, if you are admitted to the hospital in an emergency or for any reason, or are undergoing surgery, please notify Fr. Michael so he can make arrangements to visit and pray with you ASAP. He may be reached on his cell phone, at any hour of the day by calling (201) 486-2123. If he cannot be reached: **Fr. Andrew Fetchina (732) 382-8844** or **Fr. Ken Ellis**.

WELCOME VISITORS

We are happy that you have joined us today. Please join us in the church hall (behind the church) for coffee and a bite to eat. You have just experienced the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom which is the ordinary service of worship celebrated on regular Sunday's in the Orthodox Church. The Liturgy—as experienced at St. John's Church—stems from the 4th century though its practices were inherited from the time of the apostles in the book of Acts. (Acts 1:14) It also represents a time when all Christians worshipped in One Undivided fully Catholic Christian Church. If you have any questions in regards to our worship or the Orthodox Church in general please see Fr. Michael and he will gladly answer any of your questions to the best of his ability. He looks forward to meeting you.

At our best we are known for our welcoming attitude, hospitality, prayerfulness, generosity and compassion. At our worst, we are sinners, but we're working out our salvation together, and could use your help. If you are looking for a church home, we hope you will consider making St. John's Church that place.

PANACHIDA REQUESTS

Please be reminded to submit requests for all Panachidas to Fr. Michael in writing so there is no confusion. Multiple requests on the same day will be combined, with the exception of 40th day and 1 year anniversaries which take precedence.



PAYPAL QR DONATION CODE

Just scan with your phone and follow the prompts. Thank you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THANK YOU to all those parishioners who cooked, donated and joined us in the Second Holy Night Supper this past week on the Eve of Theophany. If you were not present, you were missed and we hope you can join us next year.

The 2022 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING will take place Sunday, February 06 following Divine Services. We need Your Support of our Parish as we enter our 125th Year of existence. Reports and Agendas are available in the vestibule. An agenda will be printed the week prior.

We are still in search of parishioners wanting to serve on the parish council. If you would like to be considered, please see Steve Wythe or Fr Michael.

Major Agenda Item for Consideration: Presentation on Development of the Liberty Building and formation of a Negotiation Committee.

SIGN-UP SHEET for HOUSE BLESSINGS is in the vestibule. Fr. Michael will call to schedule a day/time in advance. Let us ask the blessings of God upon our homes and family once again!



After Speaking to His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory, we will observe our 125th Anniversary with the following schedule:

Friday, September 09, 2022: Vespers of the Beheading of St. John followed by a small fellowship reception in our parish hall.

Saturday, September 10, 2022: Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of Celebration with Deanery Priests and visiting clergy and guests. A Grand Banquet Luncheon will follow the Divine Liturgy. Information is forthcoming.

Please mark down these important dates on your calendars and plan on attending and supporting our parish on this grand milestone. There is much to give thanks for ... together. Family and friends will also be invited to attend - come one, come all! It's sure to be a wonderful event not to be missed.



ST. JOHN'S SOCIAL CLUB
VALENTINE'S DINNER
Thursday, February 10 @ 6:30PM
Raritan Yacht Club
Contact Kim Kuzma to Sign up: 732-501-3124



XRONIA POLLA!

Many Years to
His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY
on His Episcopal Namesday, today.
Eis polla eti Despota!

AS THE END DRAWS NEAR – SILENCE

St. John the Baptist said of Christ that His “*winnowing fork* is in His hand.” (Lk 3:17) That farm implement is a tool for separating the wheat from the chaff, that is, to separate the edible part of the wheat from the husk that is to be discarded. It is, in that sense, an instrument of *judgment*. The character of Christ, who is the Image according to which we are created, is such that human beings are more fully revealed to be what they are as they draw near to Him (or as He himself draws near to us). There was a point in time when the eleven disciples did not know Judas to be a traitor-in-waiting. Indeed, they trusted him enough that he served as their treasurer. Christ, we are told, always knew Judas to be what he was, but patiently bore with him until he was revealed as a betrayer.

In a similar manner, I think, there is evidence that Christ also saw the other disciples to be what they were to become. Simon is named “Peter” long before he evidenced anything of a “rock-like” character. He was loud, opinionated, capable of trying to correct Christ at any number of points. There’s nothing rock-like in such behavior. Nevertheless, I suspect that, in the presence of Christ, Peter felt some stirring of the rock within himself. In His presence, those who could not walk felt the stirring of strength in their limbs, just as blind eyes strained towards the light of sight. Unbelieving individuals discovered an ability to believe they would have thought impossible. Christ’s presence reveals us.

That the winds and the seas obeyed Christ’s voice was not contrary to their nature – it was the *fulfillment* of their nature – as they at long last heard again the voice of Adam (now the Second instead of the First) command them. They groaned and travailed across the ages, waiting for the glorious liberty of *obedience*. At the voice of Christ, the winds and sea became their true selves.

I have no words of wisdom about those who are revealed to be “lost” in some manner, those for whom the presence of Christ seems to reveal their alienation from God. In my experience, this has not been a common thing. Goodness, though it seems fragile, is, in fact, quite strong and frequently victorious. That which has been alienated from God has no grace to sustain it. Nothing “energizes” it. Nevertheless, there is something of an ontological entropy that sets in from time to time, a “falling” into nothing. I recall, in the face of that, Christ’s descent into the lowest Hades so that in the furthest reaches of that dark entropy a redeeming light shines.

On any given day, I dare not think long or hard about this entropy. The very remembrance of it can come as an invitation to join its downward spiral. Christ warns in Scripture that the “last days” will be so difficult that very few will retain faith. I suspect that the culprit will not be pain or suffering, but simple despair. Even now, I hear its fearful, tired voice in the complaints of many.

Are we in the “last days”? In the first week of Great Lent, we sing:

*My soul, my soul, arise! Why are you sleeping?
The end is drawing near, and you will be confounded.
Awake, then, and be watchful, that Christ our God may spare you,
Who is everywhere present and fills all things.*

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The “end” that is drawing near is Christ Himself. It is not the machinations of governments and hidden cabals that mark the last days. That evil becomes more manifest is a *secondary* effect of the “drawing near” of Christ. Human events in no way determine God’s timing. If we are watching such events, our eyes are being distracted and we are likely living in delusion. Writings about such things are usually accompanied with the admonition to take care for our soul.

St. Paul’s last letter was written to the Philippians from prison. He is hopeful that he will be released, but he is also uncertain about the outcome that awaits him (he was executed). (Phil. 1:20) It is of great note that this is called his “epistle of joy.” As the end is drawing near, the brightness of his soul is increasing. He offers this advice:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Phil 4:8)

This admonition is far more than the Apostle urging us towards *pleasant* things. There is nothing naive within his spiritual life. This is a direction for the heart, a specific instruction that allows us to prepare ourselves for the end. Those who think on the ugliness of the world, or the rumors of terrible things and intentions, are, in fact, *sleeping*. It is a sleep that lulls us into a despair that will make shipwreck of our faith in ways that we cannot imagine.

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There is a great spiritual battle that is being waged in the human heart. It is the battle of the true, the noble, the just, the pure, the lovely, the good report, the virtues, and the praiseworthy, all of which have true being and are upheld by the hand of God, versus the lies, the fears, the imagined danger, the ugly and the dark, all of which ultimately have no substance and will pass away like the wind. This battle is the true struggle of our time. These adversaries are the “spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places” that St. Paul describes in Ephesians 6.

There is a reason that [St. Seraphim of Sarov](#) says, “Acquire the Spirit of Peace and thousands around you will be saved.” We have, in large part, exchanged the true spiritual warfare of the heart for the ideological struggles of our age. As such, we place ourselves on a level playing field with every secular argument and action. Political temptations abound because we remain within the delusion that things of great value are being established in that process. The delusion is that so long as our goals are noble and stated correctly, the result will be equally noble and correct. St. Paul warns: “For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” (1 Cor. 4:20) The power (clearly referenced by St. Seraphim) is not in our arguments but in the quiet victory gained through union with the in-dwelling Christ.

It was this same power that raised Christ from the dead.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom. 8:11)

This is the life that saves thousands around us. I find that every time I write in this vein, there is a pushback from some that accuse me of “Quietism,” which is an odd critique from the Orthodox. “Hesychasm” is the Greek form of the same word, and is seen as the very heart of the faith – in belief and practice. The history of “Quietism” in the West is not the same as Hesychasm in the East. Still, it seems to be an easy target for criticism. We believe in our politics.

Here is a word that is worth pondering. It is from Alexander Kalomiros, the author of the article, “The River of Fire.”

Hesychasm is the deepest characteristic of Orthodox life, the sign of Orthodox genuineness, the premise of right thinking and right belief and glory, the paradigm of faith and Orthodoxy. In all of the Church’s internal and external battles, we had the hesychasts on one side and the anti-hesychasts on the other. The very fabric of heresy is anti-hesychastic.

Again, Hesychasm is found in *practice*, not in rhetoric. I believe that it was Hesychasm that parted the waters of the Red Sea. It caused the walls of Jericho to fall. It has raised the dead and cleansed lepers. Demons tremble in its presence.

The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.

ARCHPRIEST STEPHEN FREEMAN