



**God has chosen a humble mother from Alaska to be an example for all the servants of God; he has given us Saint Olga as a helper in afflictions and as a guide to leading a life of sacrificial love. □ therefore we entreat thee, O holy mother Olga: pray that we, thy sinful children, may be saved and rejoice with thee in the Kingdom of Heaven. Troparion Tn 4**

# The Light of Orthodoxy

**ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND  
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
SUMMER 2025**

## **Righteous Mother Olga of Kwethluk —Tanqilria Arrsamquq—Wonderworker, Matushka of All Alaska**

### **A Real Person in the Eyes of God and Man**

In the wide stillness of the Alaskan tundra—where the sky stretches open like a prayer and the rivers flow between worlds—God planted a soul full of hidden beauty. On February 3, 1916 (January 21, Julian Calendar), in the village of Kwethluk, at the meeting of the Kwethluk and Kuskokwim rivers, a daughter was born to the Native Yup'ik people. Her name in the Yup'ik language was Arrsamquq, a name meaning lowly, hidden, or unadorned—like the seed sown quietly in the earth. It was a name that would prophetically mark her life, for she lived not in boastfulness or acclaim, but in humility, reverence, and love.

From childhood, she was formed both by the land and by the Church. Her hands learned the ancient skills of Yup'ik women—sewing, cooking, preparing food for winter, raising children, and keeping the home. But her soul was formed by the divine grace that had come to Alaska with the Orthodox missionaries from Russia. The faith of Saints Herman and Innocent had taken root in her village, and in her heart. Her home life, the seasons, and the services of the Church were woven together, creating in her a seamless garment of earthly service and heavenly longing.

As she matured, she married Nicolai Michael, the village storekeeper and postmaster, who would later be ordained to the holy priesthood. In time, she would become known not only as Olga, but as Matushka Olga—a mother to thirteen children of her own, and a spiritual mother to an entire village. Quiet, gentle, and strong, she became a pillar of warmth and grace in Kwethluk.

In Yup'ik culture, to be called a real person—ella tanqilria—is the highest praise. It means one who lives in harmony with the land and with others, who does not set themselves above others, but who listens deeply, works quietly, and carries the burdens of others as their own. Matushka Olga was just such a person. She did not preach. She did not boast. She simply lived with such goodness that the land, the people, and the Church would not forget her.

### **A Matushka in the Manner of the Saints**

After her marriage to Nicolai Michael, Olga embraced not only the responsibilities of a wife and mother, but also the sacred calling of being a matushka—a priest's wife, a helpmate not only to her husband but to the Church. When Nicolai was ordained and began serving as the priest of the Church of Saint Nicholas in Kwethluk, she became the quiet heart of that parish community.

**Continued on Page 2**

## **Righteous Mother Olga of Kwethluk –Tanqilria Arrsamquq–Wonderworker, Matushka of All Alaska**

*Continued from page 1*

She raised thirteen children of her own in modest means and with deep love. Her home was open; her heart was larger still. She offered hospitality not as a performance, but as a way of life. Whether sewing warm clothes for those in need, baking bread for the altar, or comforting a grieving neighbor, she did all things without self-importance. She was known never to raise her voice, and to teach—like many Yup'ik elders—not with scolding but by example. Those who came into her presence often found themselves stilled, as if by a quiet flame.

Her life bore resemblance to the holy women of the Scriptures. Like Tabitha (Dorcas) in the Acts of the Apostles, she was “full of good works and almsdeeds which she did,” and like the Most Pure Virgin Mother of God, she treasured the mysteries of life and of God in her heart. She clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and helped bring new life into the world. As a midwife, she accompanied women through the dangers and blessings of childbirth; as a counselor, she listened to those suffering in silence, especially women who had suffered abuse. Her presence was maternal, unjudging, and deeply healing.

Though she lived in a land of long winters and hardship, she herself was a source of warmth. Her daily life—marked by prayer, labor, and service—became a hidden offering to Christ. Her prosphora was kneaded with prayers, her garments sewn with intention, her silence filled with watchfulness and love. Those who knew her remember her not for speeches or public deeds, but for the realness of her presence. She was always there—praying quietly in church, listening without interruption, carrying burdens without needing thanks.

In the eyes of the world, she was not great. But in the Kingdom of God, where humility is greatness and the last are first, she walked with the saints.

*Her Suffering and Repose in the Lord*

In 1978, Matushka Olga was diagnosed with cancer. By that time, she had already lived a full life of service and love. Yet, as with so many saints, her final chapter became her most luminous. She did not complain. She did not seek pity. She bore her affliction with the same humility and quiet strength that had defined her life.

When doctors could do no more, she did not despair. She continued to labor gently for those around her, even as her body grew weak. Her children and neighbors recall that she remained peaceful and kind, never bitter or afraid. Her illness became a cross, and she bore it without fanfare, entering more deeply into the sufferings of Christ.

On November 8, 1979, she reposed in the Lord, surrounded by her family in her home in Kwethluk. Her death, like her life, was not loud or dramatic—but it was accompanied by wondrous signs that revealed the hidden sanctity she had carried.

Though it was deep winter, and the land was locked in ice, the frozen river thawed, and the ice softened, allowing boats from nearby villages to arrive—a miracle of timing and temperature that no one could explain. Birds appeared in the sky, though they should have long since flown south. They circled above the village, as if bearing witness. Mourners gathered not only from Kwethluk, but from afar. The people knew—without being told—that a holy one had passed into eternal rest.

As the funeral began, there was a stillness in the air, the kind of sacred hush that often follows the repose of a saint. Those present wept, not with despair, but with awe. A mother, a matushka, a healer, a friend had been taken from them—but heaven received a quiet soul, adorned with the grace of her hidden love. From the moment of her passing, the people of Kwethluk began to remember her not with mere affection, but with reverence. They spoke of her kindness with gratitude, and of her silence with wonder. Her name was whispered in prayer. And in time, those prayers began to be answered.

**Continued on page 3**

**Righteous Mother Olga of Kwethluk  
–Tanqilria Arrsamquq–Wonderworker,  
Matushka of All Alaska**

Continued from page 2

**The Uncovering of Her Relics and the Spread of Her Veneration**

In the decades after her repose, Matushka Olga's memory did not fade. On the contrary, her presence deepened. Stories began to circulate—quietly at first, then more widely—of dreams, visions, and healings. Women in distress felt her nearness. Survivors of abuse spoke of being comforted in their sleep. Families troubled by sorrow found themselves praying to “Matushka Olga” as they would to a beloved elder or a wise grandmother. And she answered.

Many began to believe that she was not only a pious woman but a saint—that the Church had quietly received into heaven a protector of the suffering, a consoler of the afflicted, a mother to the motherless. Her picture began appearing in icon corners, and the faithful began to ask her intercessions in their time of need. Then, in the year 2024, nearly forty-five years after her death, the Church undertook the uncovering of her relics. It was a sacred labor, carried out with prayer and reverence by clergy and faithful gathered in the village of Kwethluk. The day before, a blizzard had made travel nearly impossible. But on the morning of the uncovering, the skies cleared, the wind was stilled, and the sun broke through—as though creation itself made way.

As her coffin was raised from the frozen ground and reverently opened in the presence of Gospel readings, what was revealed became a quiet confirmation of sanctity. Her bones bore the golden, honey-colored hue often associated with the relics of the saints. Her headscarf, kasp'aq, and wedding veil—garments worn in prayer, in service, and in love—remained miraculously preserved. These sacred vestments stood as silent witnesses to a life clothed in humility and grace.

She was not found incorrupt in the full sense, but the presence of grace upon her relics was undeniable. Her sanctity was not in outward marvels but in the quiet transfiguration of a life lived entirely for God. She had not been exalted in the world, but now the Church beheld her as one glorified by heaven.

Pilgrims began to arrive. Prayers multiplied. Icons were painted. And the faithful across the land—from the tundra of Alaska to the deserts of Arizona, from the Orthodox heartlands of Ukraine to small mission chapels across North America and Canada—began to call upon her as Saint Olga Michael, the righteous mother and wonderworker of the North.

As the Church has always taught, God glorifies His saints not only in life but also after death, working through them to comfort the sorrowful, heal the wounded, and guide the lost. So it is with Saint Olga of Kwethluk, whose prayers have brought light into the darkest places, especially to women who have suffered abuse, to mothers in labor, to the grieving, and to all those in need of maternal tenderness. Her intercession is quiet, but her presence is unmistakable.

God has taken flesh and dwells among us, and that holiness is not reserved for the few, but shines in every person who lives in Christ.

She is a saint of the Alaskan land, yet her love has crossed every border. Her spirit walks where the Yup'ik drum once sounded and where Orthodox chant now rises. Her prayers accompany survivors, mothers, widows, children, and all who suffer in silence. To the broken, she is a healer. To the forgotten, she is a friend. To the despairing, she is a light in the long night of the soul.

The Yup'ik elders say: "A real person does not disappear, but remains in the hearts of those they have loved." In the Church, we say more: A real person in Christ becomes a saint, and the hearts they have loved, in communion with the Lord, become the Church, the living body of Christ in the world.

Saint Olga Michael of Kwethluk—Tanqilria Arrsamquq, the Quiet One—has not left us. She remains, as she always was: praying, watching, guiding.

**Righteous Mother Olga of Kwethluk  
–Tanqilria Arrsamquq–Wonderworker,  
Matushka of All Alaska pray for us!**





## FROM THE DESK OF ARCHBISHOP MELCHISEDEK

### Being a Saint

The Orthodox Christian year can be divided into roughly two sections. The first begins 40 days before the feast of the Nativity of our Lord. It proceeds through the highlights of our Lord's earthly life and ministry, records His passion, death and resurrection; and is climaxed with His glorious Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. The second section beginning, as it does, with the sending of the Holy Spirit, begins with the Commemoration of All of the Saints – both the Saints who are venerated widely in the Church, and those who are remembered more locally. If we inquire about the reason for this division, we come to some important issues which have to do with our salvation.

To understand the Christian account of our salvation we must go back to the beginning – to the first chapters of the book of Genesis. There, we read how God created everything, and how he created everything good. The crown of His creation was the creation of the human being. We are told how human beings were not merely 'good' but that the human beings were created in the image and likeness of their creator and placed in paradise to live their lives. We are then told how the first couple were evicted from paradise for their disobedience (for which they blamed each other, the serpent and God Himself (who made the serpent) for their disobedience.

At this point God was faced with a choice. He could either have said "Well that didn't work!" and wiped the slate clean by destroying what He had created and created something else, or he could undertake to repair and restore what had been undone by the disobedience of the first humans. It is the Christian story that He chose the latter. He allowed our first parents to live and multiply, and from their descendants chose a man, Abraham, from whose family descended a nation, which – guided by prophets who spoke for God – produced a woman from whom God the Son – the Word of God – could be born as a human being. Having been born as a human being, He could take our human nature and – in His person – restore it at every stage of human existence, from conception, through growth and maturity and death. In other words, God became 'small' enough to experience and suffer what we experience and suffer, and repair or restore everything which needed it. But even that was not enough. He consented to suffer death and go to hades, the realm of death and confront the ruler of death – the Satan (the one who divides) – in his own kingdom. As St. John Chrysostom tells us: "Hell took a body, and met God face to face!" In addition, we are told how in the evening before his confrontation with death and its author, He gave His followers His life in the ordinary food and drink of our human existence.

Having repaired our humanity, died and risen from the dead – after having crippled the author of death – he ascended to send the Holy Spirit to us so that we can become holy. Let us not cease to struggle to become by the power of the Holy Spirit what God created us to be – saints in His Kingdom.



# **ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA OFFICIAL CHANGES**

**ASHMORE, SUBDEACON EVAN**, was ordained to the Holy Diaconate at the Holy Trinity Church, State College, PA, on May 3, 2025, by His Eminence, Archbishop MELCHISEDEK. He continues his studies at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

**(CONSTANTINE) IGUMEN KONSTANTIN**, is attached to the Holy Altar at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA, effective December 1, 2024.

**MATYCHAK, ARCHPRIEST ANDREW**, is released in retirement from the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and W PA to the omophorion of Bishop BENEDICT and the Diocese of Hartford and New England, effective September 10, 2024.

**SMITH, PRIEST DAVID**, who had been attached to the Holy Altar at the Holy Trinity Church, State College, PA, is released from that assignment and appointed Rector of the newly created Church of the Holy Spirit, Beavertown, PA, effective September 10, 2024.

**KERSTETTER, DEACON JOHN**, who had been attached to the Holy Altar at the Holy Trinity Church, State College, PA, is released from that assignment and attached to the Holy Altar at the newly created Church of the Holy Spirit, Beavertown, PA, effective September 10, 2024.

**POSHYVAJLO, ARCHPRIEST ALEXANDER**, reposed in the Lord April 22, 2025.  
**+MEMORY ETERNAL!**

**THOMPSON, READER JOHN**, was ordained a Subdeacon and subsequently ordained to the Holy Diaconate at the St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA, on February 15, 2025, by His Eminence, Archbishop MELCHISEDEK. He is attached to the Holy Altar at the St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA.

**VUKELIC, DEACON MARK**, is released from the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and W PA to the omophorion of Metropolitan TIKHON while awaiting a subsequent release from the Orthodox Church in America, effective September 10, 2024. He was later released by His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON to the Serbian Eastern Diocese.

## **PARISH STATUS CHANGE**

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Beavertown, PA, formerly a chapel of the Holy Trinity Church, State College, PA, is granted full parish status on September 10, 2024, and is now known as "The Church of the Holy Spirit."

Approved for distribution:  
Archpriest William J. Evansky  
Chancellor

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania  
Orthodox Church in America

(28 May 2025)

## A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY

By Protodeacon Michael and Mary Wusylko

We were blessed to have been able to be on the pilgrimage to witness the canonization of St. Olga. We arrived after a 20 hour trip to the far west village of Kwethluk on the banks of an extremely wide and deep Kuskokwim River. There are 800 inhabitants of the village who hosted 200 pilgrims from all around the country. We were housed in the village schoolhouse. They are kind and gentle people who were constantly bringing food into the school cafeteria to feed us. The little village only has dirt roads and electricity is provided by three diesel powered generators. It is totally off the grid!

To get to church, we walked one mile on one of the two main roads. Upon entering the church, we felt totally at home – a beautiful Orthodox church in the middle of “nowhere”. The church services were beautiful. (visit them on YouTube; Orthodox Diocese of Sitka and Alaska) The Yupik Alaskan chants were joyous and spiritual. The choirs were angelic and sang in Yupik, Church Slavonic and English; with traditional Russian church melodies so that we never felt that we didn't know where we were in any of the services. We attended 3 services in Kwethluk that totaled just shy of 12 hours of worship: Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning served by Yupik priests, final Panikhida at the cemetery followed immediately by the proclamation of her sainthood and an All-night Vigil. The following day was a hierarchical Divine Liturgy with 9 bishops and at least 2 dozen priests. Amazingly, we all stood, children and adults, and never felt discomfort. We were embraced by the love of St. Matushka Olga who kept us invigorated and joyous.



Protodeacon Michael and  
St. Olga's son

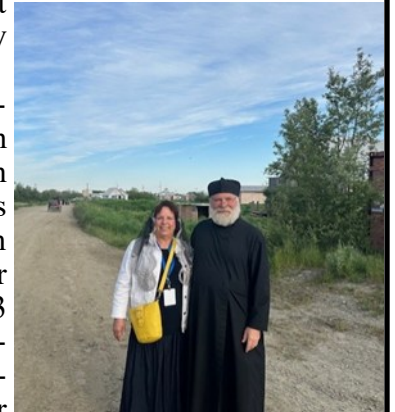


Mat. Mary and St.  
Olga's granddaughter

Many of the Alaskan clergy were enabled by the diocese to be present at the glorification. At the cathedral in Anchorage, there were 9 bishops and 50 priests serving. Probably 800 faithful attended the Liturgy on Sunday morning. Vigil on Saturday night was glorious, and once again just like in Kwethluk, with so many clergy serving, the young altar servers never missed a beat. This was not their first vigil!

It was an amazing 5-day trip! We ate a lot of salmon. We spent a total of 20 hours in church. The night was dark for only 2 hours between 2-4 am. We met so many newly illumined Orthodox faithful who were completing their journey to the faith by this final pilgrimage to glorify a saint!

St Matushka Olga was not a theologian nor a scholar. She lived a life of prayer, love, hard work, providing care as a midwife, always caring and giving to those around her. She is truly a role model not only for Alaska but to all of us.



Awaiting flight from Bethel  
(after glorification )  
to Anchorage

EDITOR'S NOTE: For Protodeacon Michael and Mat. Mary Wusylko this was the second phase of their pilgrimage. The first phase of their pilgrimage was the uncovering of the relics of St. Olga a few months prior. Protodeacon Michael was the physician overseeing the exhumation of and gathering of the holy relics of Mat. Olga.



## News from the Country Side



Holy Assumption and Saints Peter & Paul Orthodox Churches had a busy six months! Prior to the Nativity of Christ (Old Style), catechumen Robert Hiller was received into the faith, taking for himself the name Seraphim (in honor of Blessed Seraphim of Platina). He is pictured here with his pastor, the Archpriest Elijah, and his sponsor, Brent Nicholas Thornton (visiting from the Cumberland, Maryland Orthodox Mission, Antiochian Archdiocese).

Also, during the Nativity Season, the parishes collected supplies for Birthright of Somerset County and adopted a family in need for Christmas. Glory to God for these small graces!

During the Lenten Season, the parishes collected monetary donations for the Women's Help Center of Johnstown, and pet food/supplies for the Somerset County Humane Society. These were designated as our parish-wide Lenten projects, and the effort was very well supported. The end of the fasting season was marked by the Archpastoral visit of Vladyka Melchisedek on the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt.

Finally, significant physical improvements were just completed at Holy Assumption Parish. The aging parish roof and failing rectory roof were replaced with modern, metal roofing. The Altar Society engaged in year-long fundraising efforts, in conjunction with pledges from the parishioners to raise the necessary resources. We are very grateful to all who made this possible!

As always, the faithful of Somerset County look forward to growing the parish, and taking on the next improvement project!





# THE ST. CYRIL OF WHITE LAKE ORTHODOX FOOD PANTRY

Every second and fourth Thursday of the month faithful gather at St. Mary Orthodox Church in Southside Pittsburgh to distribute food to our neighbors in need. Each time those in need receive two bags of food to insure they have food for about 5 days. This includes three types of frozen meat, side dishes, soup, vegetables, peanut butter and jelly (first distribution), cereal, pudding, bread and juice. These items are purchased through your financial donations and food donations; and through generous donations of non-perishable foods by the local community. A special shout to generous help of Stamoolis Brothers in the strip district; to Shop N Save in Pittsburgh and Carnegie; and to the Market District in Robison Township who helps us stretch your gifts for maximum effect to feed our neighbors.

Special needs of the food pantry that exist is always non-perishable foods; **financial donations**; volunteers on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month; and for large canvas grocery bags.

Local ordinances have outlawed the use of plastic bags and paper bags are not wise because of weather — canvas grocery bags work the best but are extremely expensive to purchase and this prevents finances from being used on food where it is needed. Your help is always a blessing.

Our thanks for your help and may God richly reward your generosity. Donations can be sent to the Orthodox Food Pantry, 105 S. 19th St., Pittsburgh PA 15203.

## BLESSING OF VEHICLES





## Lenten Journey Culminates in Joy at Holy Trinity in State College

Holy Trinity Church in State College concluded the Lenten season with a Holy Week of solemn services culminating with the celebration of Divine Liturgy on Pascha. During this week, we welcomed six new catechumens, who have begun their spiritual journey toward joining the Church along with the baptism and reception of three new members into the Orthodox faith.





# OCF Campus Missionary Initiative to Expand to Penn State in 2026



With 60% of college students never returning to the Church after graduation and only 10% of young adults exhibiting deep, lasting faith, the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) is working to bridge this gap through its Campus Missionary Initiative. This program places full-time missionaries on college campuses to provide spiritual mentorship, lead scripture studies, and foster discipleship among students.

Campus missionaries—selected, trained, and hired by OCF—help connect students to parish life through fellowship, mentorship, and campus outreach. Since launching in 2022, the initiative has expanded from Texas A&M University to Arizona State University and the Greater Atlanta area, with plans to scale nationwide.

In preparation for Penn State's OCF receiving a full-

time missionary in Fall 2026, Christina Andresen, OCF's National Director of Ministries, visited Holy Trinity in State College on March 20-24 to meet with current OCF students, tour the campus, meet with the parishioners and council members, and discuss the opportunities ahead. Most importantly, she worked to establish a steering committee to guide the project's scope, personnel, and financial and prayer support, ensuring a lasting foundation for its success.

To make this happen, we're looking for a few more dedicated alumni, parents, and enthusiastic parishioners to join the Penn State OCF Exploratory Committee. With guidance from OCF staff, this collaborative team will work together to bring this vision to life. Members can take part in program development, hiring efforts, or contribute to alumni and fundraising sub-committees (please reach out by May 9, 2025).

If you can't commit the time to be on the committee, you can still support with your gift. Every dollar given will go directly to Penn State, helping build the seed funding needed to launch next fall. Scan the QR codes (in the photo) to join the committee or make a contribution in support of this initiative..

Holy Trinity has long been a supporter and advocate of OCF and is committed to strengthening campus ministry at Penn State. With OCF's vision to expand this initiative across the country, Penn State's upcoming missionary placement marks another important step in keeping young Orthodox Christians engaged and rooted in their faith and introducing other students to the Orthodox Church.

APRIL 2025

## OCF WEEK

MON 4/7	6th Hour prayer 12:20-12:45 pm @ Meditation Chapel in Pasq
WED 4/9	6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy 7:30 pm Lenten Potluck
THURS 4/10	6:00 pm <b>Pascha Cheese? Movie?</b> Whole bunch of FUN!
FRI 4/11	11:00 am - 1:30 pm <b>Lunch</b> @ HUB - with SPECIAL GUEST!
FRI 4/11	6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy
SAT 4/12	<b>Lazarus Saturday!</b> (SO CLOSE TO PASCHA) 4:00 pm church basement Palm cross making, Pascha bread making, Dyed eggs. Get in the spirit!

**Confession:**  
4 pm Wednesday  
4 pm Friday  
7:30 pm Sunday

**Reimagining  
Campus Ministry**

Exploratory  
Committee Interest

Donate Today!

OCF



## Advancing Accessibility for the Deaf in Orthodox Worship

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, which coordinates Orthodox Christian ministries nationwide, is developing a Liturgical lexicon in American Sign Language (ASL) to enhance accessibility within Orthodox worship. On May 1, a conference titled *Gathered as One Body: Disability, Accessibility, and Inclusion in the Orthodox Church* will take place at the Huffington Ecu-  
menical Institute in Boston, bringing together Deaf Orthodox parishioners and ASL interpreters for an intensive workshop to begin this vital work.

Among the participants is Deanna (Dee) Patel, a member of Holy Trinity Church in State College, who has been invited as a specialist in ASL interpretation. Over the past year, she has faithfully provided ASL interpretation for community members making it beautiful and deeply moving to see our deaf guests fully engaging in worship.

Dee is deeply thankful to our Archdiocese (and Holy Trinity) for its support in sending her to the first ever Orthodox Christian Deaf Conference in Dallas in January which has connected her with this ground-breaking initiative.

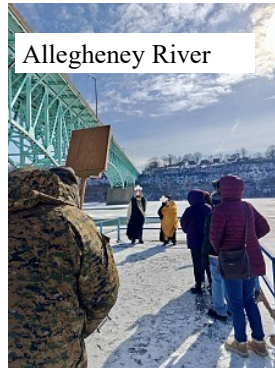
If you would like to watch the most recent Divine Liturgy with ASL interpretation, visit this site <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj8ON1ky5O0> or scan the QR code below.



## BLESSING OF RIVERS AROUND THE ARCHDIOCESE



Ohio River



Allegheny River



Erie County



Erie County



Little Conemaugh River



# Pennsylvania MARCH FOR LIFE

**MONDAY  
SEPT. 22  
2025**

Bus Trip sponsored by The Orthodox Archdiocese of Pittsburgh  
& Western PA; planned by the Orthodox Christians for Life Ministry,  
St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Canonsburg, PA



or register here

**\$30/PERSON**  
**BUS DEPARTS CANONSBURG**  
**@ 6:00A**  
**BUS DEPARTS HARRISBURG**  
**@ APX. 2:00P**  
**FORMS IN THE NARTHEX**  
**BRING A FRIEND!**

**QUESTIONS?**  
**LORISTRENNEN@GMAIL.COM**  
**RSVP BY AUG. 24**



**ORTHODOX  
CHRISTIANS FOR LIFE**  
**ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY**



## VIOLENT SPRING STORM DAMAGES CHURCH

St Nicholas Orthodox Church, McKees Rocks PA, was severely damaged by the storms that swept through the Pittsburgh area on April 29, 2025. A dome located on the northeast corner of our historic building was completely torn off its tower, causing interior and exterior structural damage to our roof, and landing on the fence near the parking lot. In addition to the dome and roof damage, a large stained glass window on the west facade was destroyed by the devastating winds. Thankfully, no one was injured during this incident.



## ORTHODOX FAMILY PICNIC 2025

More than 60 people came together to celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul at our annual Orthodox Family Picnic yesterday at Curwensville Lake! It was a beautiful day filled with delicious food, joyful fellowship, and fun activities for all ages. Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the day so special! St. Michael and Nativity of the Theotokos Orthodox Churches.







## 21st ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

July 14-18, 2025

# 21ST ALL AMERICAN COUNCIL

On July 14 through July 18, the 21st All American Council of the Orthodox Church in America convened in Phoenix Arizona. The All American Council is the main gathering of the Church throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico for legislative and administrative matters of the Orthodox Church in America. Gathered together in holy assemblage was the Holy Synod, priests and lay delegates representing the entire Church. Each parish was asked to send their priests and lay delegates to participate in the Council. It was a gathering marked by glorious worship services, fellowship, and needful meetings to direct and guide the OCA into the next three years.

Among the Council highlights was

- 1) A liturgical celebration of the canonization of St. Olga of Alaska
- 2) The unveiling of a new Icon of All the Saints of America;
- 3) The announced retirement of Archbishop Benjamin of the West
- 4) The election of members of the Metropolitan Council and the pension board;
- 5) Consideration of reports from every facet of Church life;
- 6) Several Diocesan Assemblies;
- 7) The Synodal election of Very Reverend Archimandrite Vasily (Permiakov) as the next for Bishop of San Francisco and the West.;
- 8) A special youth program for the youth of the OCA;
- 9) A grand banquet to celebrate the life of the Church;
- 10) The Annual Convention of the FOCA.

The Council was a great success, marked by joyous liturgical celebrations—a wonderful program of fellowship for all, and a dynamic gathering of youth from throughout the church. The 22nd All American Council will be held at the Hyatt Regency Dallas from July 24–28, 2028.



## 98th FOCA COVENTION

The 98th FOCA Convention held during the AAC saw the viewing of the movie “Sacred Alaska” and several initiatives approved, among them.:

- 1) The Fellowship moving away from dues and toward a donation plan for the works of the FOCA to be presented at the FOCA 99th Convention in July 2026 in Cleveland, OH.
- 2) The Scholarship and Grant committee to immediately develop a plan for the distribution of awards to OCA camps and campers for the 2026 season.
- 3) Further development and implementation of the Emergency Assistance Fund to help OCA seminarians falling into financial distress.

As was shared with the closing session of the FOCA convention, President Kochan said, “...if we want to be connected beyond our own parishes, we must build on what we have always been and what the Holy Synod has recognized us to be. We all must pray even more to find the best path for each of us to share the true meaning of the FOCA and bring others to our understanding of who we are, what we are, and why we do it. This will improve the spiritual health of all of us.”

