

GENERAL & SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION

Regarding the Temple: In our tradition, the church temple is a house of prayer. Upon entering it, please refrain from unnecessary conversation before, during and after church services, most especially during the Divine Liturgy. Prior to divine services, or during coffee hour in the Church Hall is the appropriate place to exchange personal greetings and converse with one another. May God bless your reverence and piety!

Sick/Emergency Calls/Institutional Visitations: are answered as requests are received. All visitations are by request. Call to schedule an appointment.

Confessions: Are heard one half-hour before every service at Holy Assumption, and once a month at Ss. Peter & Paul. Special arrangements are by necessity, and thereby, appointment only.

Sacraments of Illumination: In the case of infants, Baptism, Chrismation, & Eucharist are administered on ordinary Sundays of the church year, preferably in the context of Divine Liturgy. At least one sponsor must be of the Orthodox Faith and in good sacramental standing. The newly baptized must have one name that is Biblical or Christian in its origin.

What is Church Membership? By regulation, active membership in the church consists not merely in the payment of a set sum, or by fulfilling a *minimum* sacramental obligation, but rather in participation in the life of the church (commensurate with your physical ability). This includes entering into the spirit of the faith through regular and frequent attendance, participation in the divine mysteries, sustained financial support (at a percentage that reflects your ability), and adherence to the parish, diocesan, and national church statutes.

Receiving Communion: while all are welcome to pray with us, we politely offer a reminder that the Orthodox Church maintains a closed communion. All are welcome to Antidoron bread following the Divine Liturgy, but only prepared Orthodox Christians may receive the Eucharist. Orthodox Christians do not commune in non-Orthodox churches, and the non-Orthodox are not communed in an Orthodox Church. Thank you!

Lapsed Members: You are always welcome home, and we need you! Generally speaking, sincere Confession, Communion, and regular attendance are all that is required to begin parish life anew! See Fr. Elijah for specific details.

New Members/Adult Chrismation: new members are always welcome. In the case of interested adults seeking Chrismation, a period of catechesis prescribed by the pastor is necessary before the administration of Holy Mysteries. An Orthodox sponsor is required.

Weddings: A minimum six-month notice is requested. Either Bride or Bride-groom must be an Orthodox Christian, and a parishioner in good standing. Dispensations may be required for inter-faith marriages (the marriage of an Orthodox & any non-Orthodox person). Banns of matrimony published 3 weeks before ceremony. No Weddings performed during fasting seasons!!!

Burial in Church Cemetery: Burial in consecrated ground is reserved for the Orthodox and their spouses/children. Charity burials, or odd circumstances are at the rector's discretion. It is strongly encouraged to hold viewings and visitation of the reposed in the church.

Our Stewardship of the Church: "Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the good steward, who redeemed Adam and Eve of their failed stewardship by offering Thyself for the life of the world. Thou didst teach us in the feeding of the multitudes that whatever we give to God is returned to us multiplied. Thou didst praise those good and faithful servants in the parable of the talents who returned to the Master their gifts. So help us to learn the joy of stewardship, remembering that everything we have comes from Thee and belongs to Thee. We know, Lord, that we often live in fear of the future and insecurity. Help us to remember the lilies of the field and so to trust in Thy providence. Grant to us a cheerful and generous spirit. Enkindle in the hearts of all Thy people a zealous love for Thee. For Thou art the Good Steward, and to Thee we give thanks, praise and glory, together with Thy Father who is from everlasting and Thine all holy good and life-giving Spirit now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Prayer When Lighting A Candle: "Set our hearts on fire with love for Thee, O Christ our God, so that in this flame we may love Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, so that by keeping Thy commandments we may glorify Thee, the giver of all good gifts. Amen."

HOLY ASSUMPTION ORTHODOX CHURCH

629 Sunshine Avenue • Central City, Pa. 15926

SS. PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

Tipple Road • Goodtown, Pa. 15530



Very Rev. Archpriest Elijah J. Bremer, Rector

412 Short Cut Road • Alum Bank, Pa 15521

814-977-7397 • otets.ilya@yahoo.com

www.saintmarysocacc.org

**14th Sunday Post-Pentecost,
14 September 2025**

“Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen.”

(Matthew 22:13-4)

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE: 14 – 21 SEPTEMBER 2025

Sunday 14 September Tone 5	14th Sunday Post-Pentecost Church New Year <i>Epistle:</i> 2 Corinthians 1:21-2:4 <i>Gospel 1:</i> Matthew 22:1-14 <i>Gospel 2:</i> Luke 4:16-22	8:40 am, Hours (CC) 9:00 am, Divine Liturgy (CC) <i>Panakhida, + Jim Bertolasio,</i> <i>req. by wife, Regina</i>
Sunday 21 September Tone 6	15th Sunday Post-Pentecost Nativity of Theotokos <i>Epistle:</i> 2 Corinthians 4:6-15 <i>Gospel 1:</i> Matthew 22:35-46 <i>Gospel 2:</i> Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28	8:40 am, Hours of Prayer (CC) 9:00 am, Divine Liturgy (CC) <i>Major Holy Day Today!</i>

~**Important Considerations** ~

All persons are present at their own risk. Please refrain from attending if you are currently sick, or if you were exposed to a contagious disease. Also understand that if you do not attend Church for more than three weeks without just cause, according to canon law you must go to confession prior to receiving Holy Communion.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: ON SITTING & STANDING IN CHURCH

From: St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church, Beaver Falls, Pa.

More often than not, the faithful stand during services in the Orthodox Church. If you travel to “Orthodox countries” in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, you won’t find any pews at all! You may see a few chairs or benches scattered along the walls for the elderly, sick, infirm, and for pregnant and nursing mothers, but that’s it. Why do we stand? When is it okay to sit?

As Orthodox Christians, we stand during worship because that is how the Christian Church worshiped for nearly sixteen centuries. It wasn’t until the Protestant Reformation that the focus of Christian worship in the West changed from the Eucharist (communion) to the sermon. In Orthodox Tradition, we continue to stand as our predecessors did, maintaining the tradition set forth in Scripture (Isaiah 6:2; I Kings 22:19; Daniel 7:10; II Chronicles 5:12; 6:2; 20:5; I Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 9:4-5; 8:7), professed by Christ Himself, and practiced by the early Church. Remember: worshiping God is not about us. It is about Him. We are God’s humble servants. And we must be ready, attentive, and willing to serve Him. We must acknowledge that we are in the presence of God, and should stand in awe and respect. As Tertullian of Carthage tells us: “It is especially improper to pray while sitting at the very time that a multitude of angels *stand* before the face of the Lord in fear and trepidation; sitting shows that we are somehow praying unwillingly, carelessly, in a lazy manner.” We should stand for the entire service if we can physically manage to do so.

IS IT OKAY TO SIT SOMETIMES? Of course it is! However, you need to think about the reason behind your sitting down. Is it because you have a health issue? Is it because of your age? Do you not know what’s going on and fear looking silly just standing there? Or is it simply because you don’t feel like standing all that time?

Because worship is all about God, we should make every effort to stand as long as our bodies are able. If you do need to sit during the Divine Liturgy, remember to stand at these times: *At the beginning when the priest gives the blessing; During the Little and Great Entrances, Gospel reading, and Anaphora; Whenever the priest uses the censer; While the congregation receives Holy Communion; At the final blessing and Dismissal.* In many parishes, service books in the pews or narthex may contain suggested times when you may sit. Whenever a hierarch (like a bishop or metropolitan) visits the parish, out of respect follow his example. Stand and sit when he does. Bottom line? **When in doubt, stand.** You can never go wrong there!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sincere Condolences: *to Mike Hrinko and family at the repose of Mike’s Uncle, Steve Hook. May his memory be eternal!*

Thank You: *to Fr. Alex Cadman, administrator of the defunct Ss. Peter & Paul Parish in Patton, Pa., for the donation of vestment sets to be used at Ss. Peter & Paul Parish, Pine Hill. Please pray for the deceased of the Patton Parish, and for the health and salvation of Fr. Alex and his current parishes (St. Michael’s in Irvona, and Nativity of the Theotokos in Madera). We would like everyone in attendance to sign a card of appreciation for Fr. Alex. Many Years!*

Upcoming Holy Days this Month: *please note that September has two remaining Holy Days. Liturgy is planned for each day in Central City.*

- † On 21 September, we commemorate the Nativity of the Theotokos
- † On 27 September, we commemorate the Universal Exultation of the Cross (fast day)

Archdiocesan Young Adult Retreat: *in conjunction with several other Orthodox Diocese, the Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania is encouraging participation in a young adult (18 to 35 years old) retreat at Camp Nazareth in Mercer, Pennsylvania. Guest speaker is the Very Rev. Dr. Nicholas Ferencz on the theme, “To Believe or Not to Believe, That is the Question.” The retreat will take place October 17–19, 2025, at Camp Nazareth in Mercer, PA, beginning Friday at 7:00 PM and concluding Sunday at noon. The cost is \$120 per participant (including meals and lodging). For details or to register, contact the Host Committee at (724) 662-4840 or by email at youngadultretreats@gmail.com.*

On the Recent Political Assassination of Charlie Kirk:

please understand that violence incurred during the exercise of free speech can never be tolerated or condoned. Orthodox Christians are urged to pray for the good order of our country, for the forgiveness of sins, and for the salvation of our own souls. If something is fundamentally broken, then it is time to look first within ourselves for a solution, rather than blaming the people around us. Healing starts within!

Follow-Up: *after prayerful consideration, and financial calculation, Fr. Elijah & family will not entertain the possibility of a transfer outside of this diocese. There are too many considerations to explain here, but the loss of Matushka’s income, as well as her health insurance coverage would be unrecoverable, no matter the salary of any new assignment. Too many years were spent in the priesthood being underpaid for us to give up our current positions and compensation. The timing is not right, and in spite of the prestigious offer, there will be no change.*

My dear Wormwood,

Be sure that the patient remains completely fixated on politics. Arguments, political gossip, and obsessing on the faults of people they have never met serves as an excellent distraction from advancing in personal virtue, character, and the things the patient can control. Make sure to keep the patient in a constant state of angst, frustration, and general disdain towards the rest of the human race in order to avoid any kind of charity or inner peace from further developing. Ensure the patient continues to believe that the problem is "out there" in the "broken system" rather than recognizing there is a problem with himself.

Keep up the good work,
Uncle Screwtape

**ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE FROM HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP MARK
REGARDING CLERGY APPRECIATION MONTH 2025
Bath, Pa. Department of Communications, Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania**

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! October is clergy appreciation month and the 2nd Sunday, October 12 is nationally recognized as Pastor Appreciation Day. As Orthodox Christian let us make it something more this year. Let us make it *clergy family appreciation month*. Our clergy are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Clergy often have family events interrupted, including vacation time to minister to one of their flock. The demands on our clergy often take them away from their own family events.

Sadly, clergy are more likely to hear when someone is unhappy, but like the Ten Lepers in the Gospel, those who are pleased with their pastor often say nothing. The rate of clergy burnout is astounding (<https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>), with around 1500 clergy a month leaving active ministry. There is a disturbing article in ‘Leaders & Pastors’ reporting that as of November 2021 38% of pastors gave serious consideration to resigning.

In January of 2021 it was 29%. In a few short months the percentage increased significantly (<https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being/>). Unfortunately, some people believe the role of the clergy is to make them happy! Yet, the role of the priest is not to make people happy, it is to make them Holy! When I went to my second parish the council chairman greeted me and said, Fr. Mark your only role here is to make people happy. Without skipping a beat, I responded, “Our Lord, took on our Humanity, opened the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, healed the withered hand, cleansed the lepers, raised up the lame and raised the dead, and they nailed Him to a tree! Why would I expect to be treated differently?” As far as pleasing the faithful, there are always a few who will never be happy with any priest. Anyone in a leadership position who talks behind their spiritual leader’s priest back should resign immediately for the good of the parish and his or her own salvation. A house divided cannot stand.

Our clergy are entrusted with a stewardship by the Lord for which they will answer. Let us pray that our clergy will always rise above seeking the praise of men and seek to be faithful to their high calling through faithful service, preaching and teaching and seek to be pleasing to the Lord in all things. Additionally, our clergy wives and families make a great sacrifice in their service to the Church and their own family life is impacted by the demands of the priesthood.

For Clergy Appreciation Month, I would ask our Parish Councils to request the faithful of their parish to consider showing their appreciation to their priest and his family in a few ways:

1. Attend the services regularly and all classes intended to enrich our faith.
2. Send a card and state five things you sincerely appreciate about your priest, as well as his Matushka and family.
3. Consider either jointly or personally giving gift card(s) for the clergy and Matushka’s favorite coffee shop or restaurant.
4. Consider some form of recognition for clergy wives and families for their sacrifices as well.
5. Perhaps, the priest and his wife would appreciate time at a Bed and Breakfast/
Finally, telling your pastor and his family you appreciate them should not just be limited to the month of October. Years ago, I remember hearing from a priest, ‘for every negative comment, we need to offer a hundred ‘atta boys.’ Let us always seek to build one another up.

“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save him, the Lord shall raise him up” – James, 5: 14-15

Abp. Nathaniel Mat. Sasha	Abp. Melchisedek Mat. Laryssa	Abp. Michael Fr. Jim	Fr. Michael Mat. Sarah	Mat. Valeria	
Allison	Elaine	Charles	Katie	Mike	Pat
Sandi	Stephanie	Sophie	Nancy	Chrystyna	Damian
Noah	Emma	Henry	Natalia	Peter	Ashley
Mary-Evelyn	Bryan	Gregory	Debbie	Nancy	Mike
Donna	Kevin	Nick	Anne	Nick	Agnes
Robert	Mary Etta	Cory	Sharon	Kara	Michelle M.
Helen	Sandy	Kenneth	Scott	Jon	Rhonda
Bill	Sam	Betty	Jerry	Allan	Julie
Charles	Dakota	Kathy	Sue	Debbie	Ruth
Mary-Elizabeth	Darcel	Jennifer	Mary	Karis	Jeremiah
Lisa	Thelma	Shane	Mary Ann	Peter	Lawrence
Jonathan	Tammy	Kathie	Chris	Larry	Matthew
Betty Lou	Renée	Alexandra	Roxanne	Alexis	Gordon
Izzy	James	Curtis	Lita	Suzanne	Shirley-Ruth
George	Jean	Dale	Allen	Steven	Jim
Mitch	Johnnie	Charles	Nancy	Annette	Darren
Johnnie-Mac	David	Agnes	Barbara	Katherine	Joseph
Jan	Larry	Daniel	Monica	Dwain	Michael
Magdalena	Dorothy	Francesca	Kara	Andrew	Tim
Taissia	Daniel	Barbara	Mary Ann	Dave	Ashley
James	Eric	Mary-Louise	Barbara	Denise	Rachelle
Andy	Andrea	Amanda	John, Jr.	Mike	Jean
Ann	Mark	Samantha	Susan	Mary	Maria
Robert	Tim	Don	Mary Ann	Judith	Roxanne
Phyllis	George	Mary	Heidi	Dee Ann	Christine
Jeanne	Tim	Samantha	Bernie	Gene	Kim
Eleanor	John	Dave	Chuck	Anna-Sophie	Betty
Ray	Helen	Maryann	Julia	Jim	Antoinette
Shirley	Greg	Megan	Bob	Ann-Marie	Marie
Walt	Edward	Shaun	Hayes	Sue Y.	Donna
Betty	Robert	Jennifer	Ron	Linda	Gloria
Judy	Richie	Ray	McKenzie	Brady	Betty
Richard	Josephine	Shirley	Sandy	Karl	Gail
Janet	Tammy	Donna	John S.	Paige	Michelle B.
Pastor Dave	Keith	Johannes	Marcella	Linda	Gladys
Tammy	Jodi	Nancy K.	Rod	Larry	Ansley
Marsha	George	Louise	Jessica	Matthew	James
Mike	Hannah	Mary Ann	Lubomyr	Tom	Lilly
Emerson	Tiffany	Gary	Cindy	Amy	Jim

Do you have prayer intentions? Remember you may add or remove intentions at any time. You do not have to be members of our parish, or even Orthodox to be placed on the list!



THE KINGDOM MAY BE COMPARED TO ...

By: Fr. Anthony Hughes



Understand. Parables are never to be taken literally. That is why the Lord begins this one saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to...” Parables are by nature metaphorical. This parable is a difficult one to parse. It has deep layers of meaning as all parables do. They are meant to make us think more deeply by directing us to focus on the inner landscape of our lives and that is something most of us seldom do. This parable about the kingdom is surprising because it is filled with turmoil. We expect parables about heaven to be peaceful, don’t we? But not so this one and it makes sense. Where is the kingdom then in this parable? Let’s look at this

question for a few minutes.

Jesus pointedly tells his disciples that the kingdom of heaven is within. And what do we usually find when we first look within? Chaos! In a work ascribed to St. Simeon the New Theologian entitled “Three Types of Prayer” his readers are instructed not to become discouraged when they turn their awareness inside and find chaos! He encourages them to keep at it and watch as chaos gives way to open space.

When we look within we find a condition like Jesus describes in this parable. There are parts of us like the moody king, parts of us like the ungracious guests, parts of us that are avaricious and murderous, parts that are forgotten like the second group of guests from the “highways and hedges” and then parts that are like the man in the end who finds himself cast into “outer darkness” because he wore the wrong clothes.

And yet, in the midst of all this chaos the beating heart of the parable is the image of the Great Feast. The representative of God in this parable is not the king, it is the Heavenly Banquet, a symbol of the Eucharist and the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, of communion and deification. The parable has a sacramental theme. It is like a finger pointing at the moon.

And, as it is, the beating heart of every human being is the kingdom of heaven. It is our reason for being, our energy, our purpose, recognized or unrecognized. When the light of Christ shines upon the interior darkness and compassion is brought to bear upon all our disparate parts, then the Banquet Table at the center reveals its presence and we discover that we have always been invited, we have always welcomed to come to the Feast. We have simply refused to attend. There is another important aspect of this parable I would like to point out. It is the all-inclusiveness of the kingdom. The king throws open the doors of the banquet and invites both

the good and the bad to come just like God who makes the sun to shine on the good and bad alike. He makes no distinction. He simply wants his banquet table to be full. And when we turn within we must bring this spirit of inclusion with us. All the parts we find must be made welcome for all of them are in need of the food of heaven.

God is always merciful. He sees into the depths of everything by means of his infinite compassion, he sees into the heart of us. He knows who He has made us to be, and what we have made of ourselves and those are often two very different things and this takes us to the last, and most unsettling part of the parable. Why, after this, does he cast out the man who is wearing an inappropriate garment?

We often choose to wear garments that do not fit us. We put on attitudes and behavior that hide our inner beauty and are not natural to us. What ensues is an interior war St. Paul speaks of in Romans as we end up doing what we do not want to do and in opposition to the truth of who we are. In this way we cast ourselves into “outer darkness,” a darkness of our own making. Ask yourselves. If we take from our inner darkness and project it onto the world around us, what harvest can we expect to receive, but more darkness?

And yet all that is false cannot last, nothing that is untrue is eternal. The darkness cannot extinguish the light, in fact, the darkness makes the light even more obvious. “Outer darkness” has a shelf-life. Love always wins. To love, to do good, to be compassionate, these are our natural garments. Our unhappiness stems from the fact that we often think and act in opposition to love. It is for us to become follower of Jesus and friends of Love.

The Lord sees through our disguises. He knows us because he made us. His face is most truly our face and ours is his. “The glory of God is a human being fully alive,” wrote St. Irenaeus long before Maslow and contemporary psychologies of self-actualization. Both were right! It is interesting to me that the message of Irenaeus and the Gospel, though not attributed to either, can be found at supermarket checkout stands all over the world in one form or another. There is a thirst that only this truth can quench.

There is another interesting way to understand the “outer darkness.” Not as punishment; rather as initiation. Entering into the “divine darkness” is a classic image in Orthodox spiritual writing. It represents the entry into a knowledge of God that can only come through “unknowing,” by casting off the garments of thoughts, imagery, concepts, and even theology with which our minds attempt to understand God. Entering the “divine darkness” is the way of direct, unmediated experience of the Unapproachable God.

In this parable putting on the appropriate garment can be interpreted as taking a step into deeper communion with God. St. Paul speaks about all his righteousness being as “filthy rags.” So, we must change our inappropriate garments, the rags of our small and limited understandings, and replace them with “robes of light” that are woven from direct experience of God in whom “we live and move and have our being.”

We could go on, but that is enough for now, I think. Parables are inexhaustible resources of living water. Some food for thought if nothing else ...