



## St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

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Bulletin for Sunday, November 08, 2020

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### Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality.

To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine

Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against

racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

### Weekly Services

During this COVID era, services dates and times are subject to change. Please read the schedule provided withing the bulletin itself for the dates and times of services, and whether they will be held "in person" or streamed via Zoom.

### **Members of our Parish Council are:**

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large  
Dori Kuziak - Council Secretary  
Natalie Kucharski - Council Treasurer  
Glenn PenkoffLidbeck - Council President  
Kyle Hollis - Member at Large  
Roderick Seurattan - Council Vice President

### **Pastoral Care - General Information**

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

## **Announcements**

### **Lectionary Wall Calendars**

The 2021 wall calendars from St Tikhon's Monastery are now available. If you come to Liturgy on Sundays, you may pick up one up at the candle desk. If you do not yet come to Liturgy, I will make arrangements to drop one off to you or to put it in the mail for you.

Once again: the parish shared folder can be

accessed by going to the following link: <http://bit.ly/St-Alexis>.

### **Annual Parish Meeting**

Our Annual Meeting this year will be held on Sunday, November 22nd. This will be entirely on Zoom and will begin at 12:00p, so that those who wish to attend Liturgy may do so, and then return home before the meeting starts. More information will be posted in the upcoming weeks. *If anyone has a report or a resolution they wish to present, they should submit it to me no later than Sunday, Nov 15th.*

We still in need volunteers to be nominated for Parish Council, Diocesan Assembly Deligate and All American Council Deligate.

**Stewards of the OCA Sunday, November 15:** Support the work of the Orthodox Church in America by becoming a Steward of the OCA. Your support will enhance the work of the ministries and departments of the OCA that serve the entire church by providing important resources such as liturgical texts, liturgical music, religious educational material, and educational events. Other new and exciting projects are also under development. Go to [oca.org/stewards](https://oca.org/stewards) to learn more and to view the schedule of upcoming live online events that will highlight the work and plans of the departments.

From Christine Boyd: Greetings from the PNW. We are escaping Seattle for a few days and enjoying a few, days on Whidbey Island. I know it is short notice, but

I wanted to let you know that the church that Alexis goes to is hosting a virtual talk with Dr. Al Rossi. The talk will center around his new book, All Is Well. The discussion will take place on Saturday, November 14, from 9:00-10:30 am Pacific time. It is free of charge and open to anyone in your parish. To register, people just have to email Alexis at boyda02@gmail.com.

## Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Archpriest Michael,  
Archpriest  
Dennis, Deacon  
Timothy, Evelyn,  
Katheryn,  
Anne, Veronica, Richard,  
Nancy, Susann, Carol,  
Luke, Aaron, Alexander,  
Gail, Vincent, Nina,  
Ellen, Maureen  
Elizabeth, Christopher,  
Joshua, Jennifer Petra,  
Olivia, Jessica , Sean,

Sarah, Justin, Arnold, Michael, Kirk, Carol-Anne, Anthony, Natasha, Janice, Gene, John

Memory Eternal! for His Beatitude,  
Metropolitan Theodosios

Many Years! To Vincent Melesko on the  
occasion of his Name's Day

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- Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all

- those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;
- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalized, those who have no one to pray for them;
- All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
- All those who have perished due to hatred and intolerance and all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

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Today we commemorate:

SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL  
AND THE OTHER BODILESS POWERS:  
Archangels Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Selaphiel,  
Jegudiel, and Barachiel. Synaxis of the Holy  
Unmercenaries.

## Parish Calendar

### Services and Events

November 8 to November 16, 2020

#### Sunday, November 8

Repose of Mother Olga  
7th Sunday of Luke  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

## **Monday, November 9**

Stetson Bray - B  
Onesiphorus and Porphyrius of Ephesus  
St. Nectarius of Pentapolis

## **Tuesday, November 10**

Erastus, Olympas, Rodion, Sosipater,  
Quartus, and Tertios, Apostles of the 70  
8:30AM Daily Matins

## **Wednesday, November 11**

Menas of Egypt  
Dana Andrews - B  
6:30PM Evening Prayers

## **Thursday, November 12**

John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria  
8:30AM Daily Matins

## **Friday, November 13**

John Chrysostom, Archbishop of  
Constantinople

## **Saturday, November 14**

Philip the Apostle  
5:30PM Great Vespers

## **Sunday, November 15**

8th Sunday of Luke  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

## **Monday, November 16**

Matthew the Apostle & Evangelist  
Natalie Kucharski - B

## **Saints and Feasts**

### **November 08**

### **Synaxis of the Archangel Michael & the other Bodiless Powers: Gabriel,**

## **Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jegudiel, & Barachiel**

All the Angels, according to the Apostle Paul, are ministering spirits, - sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation - (Heb. 1:14). God set them as overseers of every nation and people, and guides to that which is profitable (Deut. 32:8); and while one Angel is appointed to oversee each nation as a whole, one is also appointed to protect each Christian individually. He commands them to guard them that hope on Him, that nothing should harm them, neither should any evil draw nigh to their dwelling (Ps. 90:10-12). In the Heavens they always behold the face of God, sending up to Him the thrice-holy hymn and interceding with Him in our behalf, seeing they rejoice over one sinner that repents (Esaias 6:2-3; Matt. 18:10; Luke 15:7). In a word, they have served God in so many ways for our benefit, that the pages of Holy Scripture are filled with the histories thereof. It is for these reasons that the Orthodox Catholic Church, wisely honouring these divine ministers, our protectors and guardians, celebrates today the present Synaxis that is, our coming together in assembly for their common feast to chant their praises, especially for the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, who are mentioned in the Scriptures by name. The name Michael means "Who is like God?" and Gabriel means "God is mighty." The number of Angels is not defined in the divine Scriptures, where Daniel says that thousands of thousands ministered before Him, and ten thousands of ten thousands attended upon Him -(Dan. 7:10). But all of them are divided into nine orders which

are called Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.

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## **November 09**

### **Nektarius the Wonderworker, Metropolitan of Pentapolis**

Saint Nektarius was born in Selyvria of Thrace on October 1, 1846. After putting himself through school in Constantinople with much hard labour, he became a monk on Chios in 1876, receiving the monastic name of Lazarus; because of his virtue, a year later he was ordained deacon, receiving the new name of Nektarius. Under the patronage of Patriarch Sophronius of Alexandria, Nektarius went to Athens to study in 1882; completing his theological studies in 1885, he went to Alexandria, where Patriarch Sophronius ordained him priest on March 23, 1886 in the Cathedral of Saint Sabbas, and in August of the same year, in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, made him Archimandrite. Archimandrite Nektarius showed much zeal both for preaching the word of God, and for the beauty of God's house. He greatly beautified the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, and years later, when Nektarius was in Athens, Saint Nicholas appeared to him in a dream, embracing him and telling him he was going to exalt him very high.

On January 15, 1889, in the same Church of Saint Nicholas, Nektarius was consecrated Metropolitan of the Pentapolis in eastern Libya, which was under the jurisdiction of Alexandria. Although Nektarius' swift

ascent through the degrees of ecclesiastical office did not affect his modesty and childlike innocence, it aroused the envy of lesser men, who convinced the elderly Sophronius that Nektarius had it in his heart to become Patriarch. Since the people loved Nektarius, the Patriarch was troubled by the slanders. On May 3, 1890, Sophronius relieved Metropolitan Nektarius of his duties; in July of the same year, he commanded Nektarius to leave Egypt.

Without seeking to avenge or even to defend himself, the innocent Metropolitan left for Athens, where he found that accusations of immorality had arrived before him. Because his good name had been soiled, he was unable to find a position worthy of a bishop, and in February of 1891 accepted the position of provincial preacher in Euboia; then, in 1894, he was appointed dean of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens. Through his eloquent sermons his unwearying labours to educate fitting men for the priesthood, his generous alms deeds despite his own poverty, and the holiness, meekness, and fatherly love that were manifest in him, he became a shining light and a spiritual guide to many. At the request of certain pious women, in 1904 he began the building of his convent of the Holy Trinity on the island of Aegina while yet dean of the Rizarios School; finding later that his presence there was needed, he took up his residence on Aegina in 1908, where he spent the last years of his life, devoting himself to the direction of his convent and to very intense prayer; he was sometimes seen lifted above the ground while rapt in prayer. He became the protector of all Aegina, through his prayers delivering

the island from drought, healing the sick, and casting out demons. Here also he endured wicked slanders with singular patience, forgiving his false accusers and not seeking to avenge himself. Although he had already worked wonders in life, an innumerable multitude of miracles have been wrought after his repose in 1920 through his holy relics, which for many years remained incorrupt. There is hardly a malady that has not been cured through his prayers; but Saint Nektarius is especially renowned for his healings of cancer for sufferers in all parts of the world.

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### **November 11**

#### **Holy Martyr Vincent**

Saint Vincent is the most illustrious of the Martyrs of Spain. Because of his virtue, he was ordained deacon by Valerius, Bishop of Saragossa, who, because of his advanced age and an impediment in his speech, commissioned Vincent to be preacher of the Gospel. In 303, the impious Emperors Diocletian and Maximian sent Dacian to Spain as governor, with an edict to persecute the clergy. Saint Vincent was brought with Bishop Valerius to Valencia; the bishop was sent into exile, but the holy deacon was tortured on a rack, and after suffering other cruel torments, gave up his soul into the hands of God on January 22 in the year 304.

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### **November 13**

#### **John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople**

This greatest and most beloved of all Christian orators was born in Antioch the Great in the year 344 or 347; his pious parents were called Secundus and Anthusa. After his mother was widowed at the age of twenty, she devoted herself to bringing up John and his elder sister in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. John received his literary training under Anthragathius the philosopher, and Libanius the sophist, who was the greatest Greek scholar and rhetorician of his day. Libanius was a pagan, and when asked before his death whom he wished to have for his successor, he said, "John, had not the Christians stolen him from us." With such a training, and with such gifts as he had by nature, John had before him a brilliant career as a rhetorician. But through the good example of his godly mother Anthusa and of the holy Bishop Meletius of Antioch (see Feb. 12), by whom he was ordained reader about the year 370, he chose instead to dedicate himself to God. From the years 374 to 381 he lived the monastic life in the hermitages that were near Antioch. His extreme asceticism undermined his health, compelling him to return to Antioch, where Saint Meletius ordained him deacon about the year 381. Saint Meletius was called to Constantinople later that year to preside over the Second Ecumenical Council, during which he fell asleep in the Lord. In 386 Bishop Flavian ordained John presbyter of the Church of Antioch. Upon his elevation

to the priesthood his career as a public preacher began, and his exceptional oratorical gifts were made manifest through his many sermons and commentaries. They are distinguished by their eloquence and the remarkable ease with which rich imagery and scriptural allusions are multiplied; by their depth of insight into the meaning of Scripture and the workings of God's providence; and, not least of all, by their earnestness and moral force, which issue from the heart of a blameless and guileless man who lived first what he preached to others. Because of his fame, he was chosen to succeed Saint Nectarius as Patriarch of Constantinople. He was taken away by stealth, to avoid the opposition of the people, and consecrated Patriarch of Constantinople on February 28, 398, by Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who was to prove his mortal enemy.

At that time the Emperor of the East was Arcadius, who had had Saint Arsenius the Great as his tutor (see May 8); Arcadius was a man of weak character, and much under the influence of his wife Eudoxia. The zealous and upright Chrysostom's unsparing censures of the lax morals in the imperial city stung the vain Eudoxia; through Theophilus' plottings and her collaboration, Saint John was banished to Pontus in 403. The people were in an uproar, and the following night an earthquake shook the city; this so frightened the Empress Eudoxia that she begged Arcadius to call Chrysostom back. While his return was triumphant, his reconciliation with the Empress did not last long. When she had a silver statue of herself erected in the forum before the Church of the Holy Wisdom

(Saint Sophia) in September of 403, and had it dedicated with much unseemly revelry, Saint John thundered against her, and she could not forgive him. In June of 404 he was exiled to Cucusus, on the borders of Cilicia and Armenia. From here he exchanged letters with Pope Innocent of Rome, who sent bishops and priests to Constantinople requesting that a council be held. Saint John's enemies, dreading his return, prevailed upon the Emperor to see an insult in this, and had John taken to a more remote place of banishment called Pityus near the Caucasus. The journey was filled with bitter sufferings for the aged bishop, both because of the harshness of the elements and the cruelty of one of his 310 guards. He did not reach Pityus, but gave up his soul to the Lord near Comana in Pontus, at the chapel of the Martyr Basiliscus (see May 22), who had appeared to him shortly before, foretelling the day of his death, which came to pass on September 14, 407. His last words were "Glory be to God for all things." His holy relics were brought from Comana to Constantinople thirty-one years later by the Emperor Theodosius the Younger and Saint Pulcheria his sister, the children of Arcadius and Eudoxia, with fervent supplications that the sin of their parents against him be forgiven; this return of his holy relics is celebrated on January 27.

Saint John was surnamed Chrysostom ("Golden-mouth") because of his eloquence. He made exhaustive commentaries on the divine Scriptures and was the author of more works than any other Church Father, leaving us complete commentaries on the Book of Genesis, the Gospels of Saints

Matthew and John, the Acts, and all the Epistles of Saint Paul. His extant works are 1,447 sermons and 240 epistles. Twenty-two teachers of the Church have written homilies of praise in his honour. Besides his feasts today and on January 27, he is celebrated as one of the Three Hierarchs on January 30, together with Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian.

*It should be noted that, because September 14 is the Exaltation of the Cross, the Saint's memory has been transferred to this day.*

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## **November 14**

### **Philip the Apostle**

This Apostle, one of the Twelve, was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and was a compatriot of Andrew and Peter. He was instructed in the teachings of the Law, and devoted himself to the study of the prophetic books. Therefore, when the Lord Jesus called him to the dignity of apostleship, he immediately sought out and found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1.45). Having preached Jesus the God-man throughout many parts of Asia Minor, and having suffered many things for His Name's sake, he was finally crucified upside down in Hierapolis of Phrygia.

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## **November 14**

### **Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki**

This divine Father, who was from Asia Minor, was from childhood reared in the royal court of Constantinople, where he was instructed in both religious and secular wisdom. Later, while still a youth, he left the imperial court and struggled in asceticism on Mount Athos, and in the Skete at Beroea. He spent some time in Thessalonica being treated for an illness that came from his harsh manner of life. He was present in Constantinople at the Council that was convened in 1341 against Barlaam of Calabria, and at the Council of 1347 against Acindynus, who was of like mind with Barlaam; Barlaam and Acindynus claimed that the grace of God is created. At both these Councils, the Saint contended courageously for the true dogmas of the Church of Christ, teaching in particular that divine grace is not created, but is the uncreated energies of God which are poured forth throughout creation: otherwise it would be impossible, if grace were created, for man to have genuine communion with the uncreated God. In 1347 he was appointed Metropolitan of Thessalonica. He tended his flock in an apostolic manner for some twelve years, and wrote many books and treatises on the most exalted doctrines of our Faith; and having lived for a total of sixty-three years, he reposed in the Lord in 1359. His holy

relics are kept in the Cathedral of Thessalonica.

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**November 15**

### **Nativity Fast Begins**

The Nativity Fast is one of [four main fast periods throughout the ecclesiastical year](#). Beginning on November 15 and concluding on December 24, the Nativity Fast gives individuals the opportunity to prepare for [the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior in the Flesh on December 25](#). By abstaining from certain food and drink, particularly from meat, fish, dairy products, olive oil, and wine, as well as focusing more deeply on prayer and almsgiving, we can find that the [primary aim of fasting is to make us conscious of our dependence upon God](#).

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### **Hymns of the Day**



#### **Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)**

Let us, the faithful,  
praise and worship the  
Word,  
co-eternal with the  
Father and the Spirit,  
born for our salvation

from the Virgin;  
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in  
the flesh,  
to endure death,  
and to raise the dead//  
by His glorious Resurrection.

#### **Tone 4 Troparion (Bodiless Powers)**

O Commanders of the heavenly hosts,  
we who are unworthy beseech you:  
by your prayers encompass us beneath the  
wings of your immaterial glory,  
and faithfully preserve us who fall down and  
cry out to you://

“Deliver us from all harm, for you are the  
Commanders of the Powers on high!”

#### **Tone 5 Kontakion (Resurrection)**

You descended into hell, O my Savior,  
shattering its gates as Almighty,  
resurrecting the dead as Creator,  
and destroying the sting of death.  
You have delivered Adam from the curse, O  
Lover of Man,//  
and we cry to You: “O Lord, save us!”

#### **Tone 2 Kontakion (Bodiless Powers)**

Commanders of God’s armies  
and ministers of the divine glory,  
princes of the bodiless angels  
and guides of mankind;  
ask for what is good for us, and for great  
mercy,//  
O Supreme Commanders of the Bodiless  
Hosts.

### **Gospel and Epistle Readings**

#### **Epistle Reading**

##### **Prokeimenon. 6th Tone. Psalm 27.9,1.**

O Lord, save your people and bless your  
inheritance.

Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

**The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 6:11-18.**

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

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**Gospel Reading**

**7th Sunday of Luke**

**The Reading is from Luke 8:41-56**

At that time, there came to Jesus a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he besought him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As he went, the people pressed round him. And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and had spent all her living upon

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physicians and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter and those who were with him said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" But Jesus said, "Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

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## Wisdom of the Fathers

He puts an end to the woman's fear ... He sets her right, in respect of her thinking to be hid ... He exhibits her faith to all, so as to provoke the rest also to emulation ...

### **St. John Chrysostom**

*Homily 31 on Matthew 9, 4th Century*

At the same time both signifying that it is easy for Him to raise the dead ... and also teaching us not to fear death; for that it is not death, but is henceforth become a sleep.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

*Homily 31 on Matthew 9, 4th Century*

## Beyond the Sermon



MATUSHKA OLGA  
MICHAEL

A Helper in Restoring  
the Work of God's Hands

by Fr. John Shimchick

Come, O assembly of the  
Orthodox, and with love let us praise the holy

women, men, and children, those known to us  
and those known only to God,

and let us cry out to them: Rejoice, All Saints  
of North America, and pray to God for us.

(The Commemoration of All Saints of North  
America)

Saints of North America known and unknown.  
While all of the canonized Saints of North  
America have so far been men, over the past  
few years an Orthodox woman, native of  
North America, has slowly become known to  
more and more people, particularly other  
Orthodox women.

Matushka Olga Michael was the wife of  
Archpriest Nikolai O. Michael from the village  
of Kwethluk on the Kuskokwim River in  
Alaska. As described in Fr. Michael Oleksa's  
book, *Orthodox Alaska*, she was neither a  
"physically impressive or imposing figure." She  
raised eight children to maturity, giving birth  
to several of them without a mid-wife. While  
her husband was away taking care of many  
other parishes, she kept busy raising her  
family and doing many things for other people.  
One is reminded of the story of Tabitha in the  
book of Acts (9:36-ff) when hearing that "in  
addition to sewing Father Nikolai's vestments  
in the early years and crafting beautiful  
parkas, boots and mittens for her children, she  
was constantly sewing or knitting socks or fur  
outerwear for others. Hardly a friend or  
neighbor was without something Matushka  
had made for them. Parishes hundreds of  
miles away received

unsolicited gifts, traditional Eskimo winter boots ('mukluks') to sell or raffle for their building fund. All the clergy of the deanery wore gloves or woolen socks...[which she] had made for them" (p. 203).

While fulfilling many of the other tasks (like preparing the eucharistic bread) that are often assumed by other priests' wives, she also knew by heart the hymns of many feast days, including Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Pascha in Yup'ik (her Eskimo language). After miraculously surviving an initial bout with cancer when it seemed nothing could be done, she eventually succumbed to a return of the disease, preparing herself for death which took place on November 8, 1979 with great courage and faith.

It appeared that the normal snow and river ice of that time of the year would prevent many people from attending her funeral. But, the weather uncharacteristically changed and a southerly wind helped to melt the ice and snow allowing parishioners from the neighboring villages to make the journey to Kwethluk. "Hundreds of friends...filled the newly-consecrated church on the extraordinary spring-like day of the funeral. Upon exiting the church, the procession was joined by a flock of birds, although by that time of the year, all birds have long since flown south. The birds circled overhead, and accompanied the coffin to the grave site. The usually frozen soil had been easy to dig because of the unprecedented thaw. That night, after the memorial meal, the wind began to blow again, the ground refroze, ice covered the river, winter returned. It was as if the earth itself had opened to receive this woman.

The cosmos still cooperates and participates in the worship the Real people [i.e., the name native people give to themselves] offer to God" (p. 205).

However, it is not just her story that has been so special and life changing to others, but the actual encounter with her presence that has taken place in remarkable ways. One woman, originally from Kwethluk, but now living in Arizona, had a dream in which Matushka Olga appeared, assuring her that her mother would be alright because she was coming to join Matushka Olga in a bright and joyful place. This woman did not know her mother was sick at the time, that she had been rushed to Anchorage, and that she would soon die. But the next day she received news of her mother's emergency and she rushed from Arizona to Alaska, comforting her mother with the news Matushka Olga had brought her about her eternal destiny. The woman died in peace and with her daughter without the shock and grief that would have certainly ensued if the dream had not reassured her.

Another woman, after viewing a picture of Matushka Olga, experienced a "compassionate, loving, gentle, and very real - very accessible presence."

The most detailed account comes from an Orthodox woman who, as in the previous example, had suffered for many years from the consequences of severe sexual abuse experienced as a child. This is her testimony of meeting Matushka Olga:

"One day I was deeply at prayer and awake. I had remembered an event that was very scary. My prayer began with my asking

the Holy Theotokos for help and mercy. Gradually I was aware of standing in the woods feeling still a little scared. Soon a gentle wave of tenderness began to sweep through the woods followed by a fresh garden scent. I saw the Virgin Mary, dressed as she is in an icon, but more natural looking and brighter, walking toward me. As she came closer I was aware of someone walking behind her. She stepped aside and gestured to a short, wise-looking woman. I asked her, 'Who are you?' And the Virgin Mary answered, 'St. Olga.'

"St. Olga gestured for me to follow her. We walked a long way until there weren't many trees. We came to a little hill that had a door cut into the side. She gestured for me to sit and she went inside. After a little while some smoke came out of the top of the hill. St. Olga came out with some herbal tea. We both sat in silence drinking our tea and feeling the warmth of the sun on our faces. I began to get a pain in my belly and she led me inside. The door was so low I had to duck as if bowing in prayer.

"Inside the hill was dry and warm and very quiet. The light was very soft coming from a shallow bowl and from the open hole on the top of the hill. Everything around me felt gentle, especially Mother Olga. The little hill house smelled like wild thyme and white pine in the sun with roses and violets mixed in. Mother Olga helped me up on a kind of platform bed, resembling a driftwood box filled with moss and grasses. It was soft and smelled like the earth and the sea. I was exhausted and lay back. St. Olga went over to the lamp and warmed up something which she rubbed on my belly. I looked five

months pregnant. (I was not pregnant for real at that time.) I started to labor. I was a little scared. Mother Olga climbed up beside me and gently holding by arm, she pretended to labor with me, showing me what to do and how to breath. She still hadn't said anything. She helped me push out what seemed to be afterbirth, that soaked into the dried moss on the box bed. I was very tired and crying a little from relief when it was over.

"Up until this she hadn't spoken, but her eyes spoke with great tenderness and understanding. We both got up and had some tea. As we were drinking it, Holy Mother Olga gradually became the light in the room. Her face appeared to have a strong light bulb or the sun shining under her skin. But I think the whole of her glowed. I was just so connected to her loving gaze that I didn't pay much attention to anything else. It was the kind of loving gaze from a mother to an infant that connects and welcomes a baby to life. She seemed to pour tenderness into me through her eyes. This wasn't scary even though, at that time, I didn't know about people who literally shone with the love of God. (It made more sense after I read about St. Seraphim). I know now that some very deep wounds were being healed at that time. She gave me back my own life which had been stolen, a life that is now defined by the beauty and love of God for me, the restored work of His Hands.

"After some time I felt that I was filled with wellness and a sense of quiet entered my soul, as if my soul had been crying like a grief-stricken abandoned infant and now

had finally been comforted. Even now as I write...the miracle of the peacefulness, and also the zest for life which wellness has brought, causes me to cry with joy and awe.

"Only after this did Holy Mother Olga speak. She spoke about God and people who choose to do evil things. She said the people who hurt me thought they could make me carry their evil inside of me by rape. She was very firm when she said, 'That's a lie. Only God can carry evil away. The only thing they could put inside you was the seed of life which is a creation of God and cannot pollute anyone.' I was never polluted. It just felt that way because of the evil intentions of the people near me. What I had held inside me was the pain, terror, shame, and helplessness I felt. We had labored together and that was all out of me now. She burned some grass over the little flame and the smoke went straight up to God who is both the judge and the forgiver. I understood by the 'incense' that it wasn't my job to carry the sins of people against me either. It was God's, and what an ever-unfolding richness this taste of salvation is. At the end of this healing time we went outside together. It was not dark in the visioning prayer. There were so many stars stretching to infinity. The sky was all shimmer with a moving veil of light. (I had seen photos of the northern lights but didn't know that they move.) Either Matushka Olga said, or we both heard in our hearts I cannot remember which that the moving curtain of light was to be for us a promise that God can create great beauty from complete desolation and nothingness. For me it was proof of the healing great beauty where there had been nothing before but despair hidden by shame

and great effort."

What is one to make of these accounts? If nothing else, for now, one can acknowledge the special place that Matushka Olga has had in the lives of certain native people and a growing number of contemporary women. But it is in the slow and gradually expanding process of knowledge which moves from local veneration to broader awareness that God reveals how He can be "wonderful in His Saints." Matushka Olga was herself a midwife and may also have known from personal experience the traumas of being abused earlier in her life. Perhaps it is in this role as an advocate for those who have been abused, particularly sexually, that God will continue to use Matushka Olga in drawing "straight with crooked lines," His work of "creating beauty from complete desolation and nothingness."

If God wills, may it also one day be possible to exclaim: "O Blessed Mother Olga, pray to God for us!"

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