



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

Address: PO Box 134, 108 E Main St, Clinton,
CT 06413-0134

Phone: 860-664-9434

Web: <http://www.stalexischurch.org>

Email: stalexis@ dneoca.org

Fr Steven Hosking

Rector

Phone: 860-866-5802 (Message)

Email: frsteve@stalexischurch.org

Dn Timothy Skuby

Attached

Phone: (808) 341-1813

Email: dntimothy@stalexischurch.org

Services Schedule

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

Bulletin for Sunday, February 21, 2021

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)

Members of our Parish Council are:

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large
Dori Kuziak - Council Secretary
Carolyn Neiss - Vice President
Marlene Melesko - Council Member at Large
Kyle Hollis - President
Roderick Seurattan - Treasurer

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

Because we were unable to hold our "annual" Souperbowl Challenge, the Council would like to hold an alternative fund raiser. We would like everyone to sponsor a book purchase (see the book description below). Books will be provided to the parish's young adults, in addition to those of family and friends who might find the book of benefit (including yourself of course). **Proceeds from the purchase of the books benefit the scholarship fund for seminarians of the Diocese of New England. If you would like to contribute directly to scholarship fund, checks may be made out to ONE Stewards, with "scholarship fund" in the memo line.**

If you would like to sponsor the purchase of a book or books, please let me know

the quantity by March 1st. I will then place a bulk order with Ancient Faith Press. The books will then be distributed during Lent.

Lenten Reading

Pilgrimage to Pascha: A Daily Devotional for Great Lent

by Archpriest Steven John Belonick with Michele Constable and Michael Soroka / Second edition edited by Deborah Malacky Belonick

This unpretentious little book of meditations based on Scripture, ancient hymns, and writings from Church Fathers will nourish the souls of reflective seekers during the forty-day period of Great Lent. Authors of each meditation have delved deeply into the sins and shortcomings of their own hearts, enabling readers to share in a collective human experience - from darkness to light, from despair to hope, and from isolation to commonality in the body of Christ - as they move steadily toward our Lord's Resurrection.

About the Author: Archpriest Steven John Belonick was Valedictorian of the Class of 1977 at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Yonkers, NY. Throughout his 40-year pastorate as a priest in the Orthodox Church in America he served three parishes and also served as Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Chaplain at the seminary. His favorite Bible passage, John 21:15-17 - in which the Lord instructs his disciple Peter to "feed My sheep" - often strengthened him in his ministry, and it also inspired his guiding principle: "Above all, a pastor must communicate God's love to His

sheep." Father Steven reposed in the Lord August 7, 2019. Memory Eternal!

Proceeds from the purchase of this book go to support scholarships for seminarians from the Diocese of New England.

<https://store.ancientfaith.com/pilgrimage-to-pascha-a-daily-devotional-for-great-lent/>

Mission Sunday, March 14, 2021

To the Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and the Devout Faithful of the Holy Orthodox Churches in the United States:

Greetings in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Despite the anxieties, disruption, loss and grief imposed by the pandemic of these past, long months, we know that in our Savior and Healer we have no need to fear. Indeed, proclaiming this Good News is as important, if not more important, now than ever. The Hierarchs of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States are committed to this mission, and one means we do so beyond our borders is our support of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) on which we specially focus on Mission Sunday, March 14 of this year.

Our world faces great tempests, the pandemic being but one. Yet we are called to courageously face these storms in the great hope of our deliverance through and in our Lord, just as when He walks on the water to his fearful disciples cowering in their boat during a fierce storm (Matthew

14). He calls to them, "Take courage, it is I, fear not." While Peter kept his focus on Christ, he was able to walk on water, but when he focused on the storm he started to sink. We must keep an unwavering focus on Christ and His Church, the means of our rescue and protection from the storms that rage around us. Others will see our faith and turn to Christ. Like the disciples who watched Peter walk on the water, they will proclaim Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and they too will be saved.

This is the holy work that OCMC accomplishes on your behalf and with your support. By praying for OCMC, financially supporting its ministries, serving as a missionary, or volunteering for a short-term mission team, you are helping reach the more than one billion people worldwide who have never heard the Gospel and hunger and thirst for salvation in Jesus Christ. You are also impacting our local communities by being shining beacons of Christ's Good News. Visit ocmc.org to learn more about the ministry of our Mission Center and support the work that they accomplish throughout the world.

We pray that you have a blessed Lenten journey with your gaze constantly fixed on Christ Jesus to rise above life's storms. And may your life in the Resurrected Christ be freely offered to strengthen your sisters and brothers during these challenging times.

With Blessings in Christ,

Bishop Demetrios signature
Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos
Episcopal Liaison to OCMC

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Archpriest Dennis,
Archpriest Michael,
Deacon Timothy, Evelyn,
Katheryn, Anne, Aaron,
Veronica, Richard,
Nancy, Susanne, Carol,
Alexander, Gail, Vincent,
Nina, Ellen, Maureen,
Elizabeth, Christopher,
Joshua, Jennifer, Petra,
Olivia, Jessica, Sean,
Sarah, Justin, Nona,
Arnold, Michael, Kirk,

Carol-Anne, Anthony, Natasha, Gene, John,
John, Michael, Kelley, Krisha, Alix, Natalie,
Edward, Nathan, Caila, Julianna, Paul, John,
Jacob, Lynn, Anna, Richard, Robert, Dorothy

Memory Eternal! Archpriest Eugene,
Archpriest Joseph, Dana.

Many Years! to Connor Kuziak on the occasion
of his birthday.

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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, intolerance and pestilence; all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE — Tone 4. Beginning of the Lenten Triodion. Saint Makarios of Glinsk Hermitage (19th c.). Ven. Timothy of Symbola in Bithynia (9th c.). St. Eustathius (Eustace), Archbishop of Antioch (377). St. George, Bishop of Amastris on the Black Sea (802-811).

Parish Calendar

Parish Calendar

February 21 to March 1, 2021

Sunday, February 21

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee:
Triodion Begins Today
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, February 22

The Finding of the Precious Relics of the Holy Martyrs in the Quarter of Eugenius

Tuesday, February 23

Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of
Smyrna
8:30AM Daily Matins followed by Book Study
6:30PM Diocese Council Mtg

Wednesday, February 24

Connor Kuziak
First & Second Finding of the Venerable
Head of John the Baptist
6:30PM Akathist to St John Baptist

Thursday, February 25

Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople
8:30AM Daily Matins
6:30PM Evening Prayers followed by Book
Study

Friday, February 26

Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza
8:30AM Akathist to St Raphael of Brooklyn

Saturday, February 27

Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny of Brooklyn
Procopius the Confessor of Decapolis
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, February 28

Sunday of the Prodigal Son
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, March 1

The Holy Righteous Martyr Eudocia the
Samaritan

Saints and Feasts

February 21

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee:

Triodion Begins Today

The Pharisees were an ancient and outstanding sect among the Jews known for their diligent observance of the outward matters of the Law. Although, according to the word of our Lord, they "did all their works to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5), and were hypocrites (ibid. 23: 13, 14, 15, etc.), because of the apparent holiness of their lives they were thought by all to be righteous, and separate from others, which is what the name Pharisee means. On the other hand, Publicans, collectors of the royal taxes, committed many injustices and extortions for filthy lucre's sake, and all held them to be sinners and unjust. It was therefore according to common opinion that the Lord Jesus in His parable signified a virtuous person by a Pharisee, and a sinner by a Publican, to teach His disciples the harm of pride and the profit of humble-mindedness.

Since the chief weapon for virtue is humility, and the greatest hindrance to it is pride, the divine Fathers have set these three weeks before the Forty-day Fast as a preparation for the spiritual struggles of virtue. This present week they have called Harbinger, since it declares that the Fast is approaching; and they set humility as the foundation for all our spiritual labors by appointing that the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee be read today, even before the Fast begins, to teach, through the vaunting of the Pharisee, that the foul smoke of self-esteem and the stench of boasting drives away the grace of the Spirit, strips man of all his virtue, and casts him into the pits of Hades; and, through

the repentance and contrite prayer of the Publican, that humility confers upon the sinner forgiveness of all his wicked deeds and raises him up to the greatest heights.

All foods are allowed the week that follows this Sunday.

February 23

Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna

This apostolic and prophetic man, and model of faith and truth, was a disciple of John the Evangelist, successor of Bucolus (Feb. 6), and teacher of Irenaeus (Aug. 23). He was an old man and full of days when the fifth persecution was raised against the Christians under Marcus Aurelius. When his pursuers, sent by the ruler, found Polycarp, he commanded that they be given something to eat and drink, then asked them to give him an hour to pray; he stood and prayed, full of grace, for two hours, so that his captors repented that they had come against so venerable a man. He was brought by the Proconsul of Smyrna into the stadium and was commanded, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, 'Away with the atheists.'" By atheists, the Proconsul meant the Christians. But Polycarp, gazing at the heathen in the stadium, waved his hand towards them and said, "Away with the atheists." When the Proconsul urged him to blaspheme against Christ, he said: "I have been serving Christ for eighty-six years, and He has wronged me in nothing; how can I blaspheme my King Who has saved me?" But the tyrant

became enraged at these words and commanded that he be cast into the fire, and thus he gloriously expired about the year 163. As Eusebius says, "Polycarp everywhere taught what he had also learned from the Apostles, which also the Church has handed down; and this alone is true" (*Eccl. Hist.*, Book IV, ch. 14,15).

February 24

First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist

The first finding came to pass during the middle years of the fourth century, through a revelation of the holy Forerunner to two monks, who came to Jerusalem to worship our Saviour's Tomb. One of them took the venerable head in a clay jar to Emesa in Syria. After his death it went from the hands of one person to another, until it came into the possession of a certain priest-monk named Eustathius, an Arian. Because he ascribed to his own false belief the miracles wrought through the relic of the holy Baptist, he was driven from the cave in which he dwelt, and by dispensation forsook the holy head, which was again made known through a revelation of Saint John, and was found in a water jar, about the year 430, in the days of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, when Uranius was Bishop of Emesa.

February 26

The Holy Great Martyr Photine, the Samaritan Women

Saint Photine was the Samaritan Woman who encountered Christ our Saviour at Jacob's Well (John 4:1-42). Afterwards she laboured in the spread of the Gospel in various places, and finally received the crown of martyrdom in Rome with her two sons and five sisters, during the persecutions under the Emperor Nero.

Hymns of the Day



Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women
disciples of the Lord
learned from the angel
the joyous message of
Your Resurrection,
they cast away the

ancestral curse
and elatedly told the apostles:
"Death is overthrown!
Christ God is risen, //
granting the world great mercy!"

Tone 4 Kontakion (from the Lenten Triodion)

Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee!
Let us learn humility from the Publican's tears!
Let us cry to our Savior:
"Have mercy on us, //
O only merciful One!"

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him
in the highest! (Ps. 148:1)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Psalm 103.24,1.

O Lord, how manifold are your works. You
have made all things in wisdom.

Verse: Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:10-15.

TIMOTHY, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Triodion Begins Today The Reading is from Luke 18:10-14

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Wisdom of the Fathers

It is possible for those who have come back again after repentance to shine with much lustre, and oftentimes more than those who have never fallen at all, I have demonstrated from the divine writings. Thus at least both the publicans and the harlots inherit the kingdom of Heaven, thus many of the last are placed before the first.

St. John Chrysostom

AN EXHORTATION TO THEODORE AFTER HIS FALL, 4th Century

When lately we made mention of the Pharisee and the publican, and hypothetically yoked two chariots out of virtue and vice; we pointed out each truth, how great is the gain of humbleness of mind, and how great the damage of pride.

St. John Chrysostom

CONCERNING LOWLINESS OF MIND., 4th Century

Beyond the Sermon



Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
Luke 18:10-14
From the Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke

by Blessed Theophylact,
Archbishop of Ochrid
and Bulgaria

10-14. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus within himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house counted righteous rather than

the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The Lord ceaselessly purges the passion of pride in many ways. This passion, more than any other, disturbs our thoughts, and for this reason the Lord always and everywhere teaches on this subject. Here He is purging the worst form of pride. For there are many offshoots of self-love. Presumption, arrogance, and vainglory all stem from this root. But the most destructive of all these kinds of self-love is pride, for pride is contempt of God. When a man ascribes his accomplishments to himself, and not to God, this is nothing less than denial of God and opposition to Him. Therefore, like enemy to enemy, the Lord opposes this passion which is opposed to Him, and through this parable He promises to heal it. He directs this parable towards those who trust in themselves and who do not attribute everything to God, and who, as a result, despise others. He shows that when righteousness—which is marvelous in every other respect and sets a man close to God—takes pride as its companion, it casts that man into the lowest depths and makes demonic what was God-like just a short time before.

The words of the Pharisee at first resemble the words of a grateful man. For he says, God, I thank Thee. But the words that follow are full of foolishness. He does not say, “that Thou hast made me to depart from extortion and iniquities,” but instead, “I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or worker of iniquity.” He attributes this accomplishment to himself, as something done by his own strength. How can a man who knows that

what he has, he has received from God, compare other men to himself unfavorably and judge them? Certainly, if a man believed that he had received as a gift good things that in truth belong to God, he would not despise other men. He would instead consider himself just as naked as his fellow men in regards to virtue, except that by the mercy of God his nakedness has been covered with a donated garment. The Pharisee is proud, ascribing his deeds to his own strength, and that is why he proceeds to condemn others. By saying that the Pharisee stood, the Lord indicates his haughtiness and lack of humility. In the same way that a humble-minded man is likewise humble in his demeanor, this Pharisee by his bearing displays his pride. Although it is also said of the publican that he stood, note what follows: he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, so that he was stooped in posture. But the eyes of the Pharisee, together with his heart, were lifted up to heaven in boastful exaltation. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Pharisee arranged the words of his prayer can still instruct us. First he says what he is not, and then he declares what he is. After stating, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, pointing to the failings of others, then he declares his good deeds, that he fasts twice a week and gives tithes of all that he possesses. The order of his prayer shows us that we must first refrain from wickedness, and then set our hand to virtue. One must not only turn away from evil, but also do good (Ps. 33:14). It is the same for a man who wants to draw pure water from a muddy spring: only after he has cleaned out the mud can he draw pure water.

Consider this as well: the Pharisee did not say, "I thank Thee that I am not an extortioner or an adulterer, as other men are." He could not endure even the association of his name with such vile terms, and so he uses them in the plural, casting these terms at other men, and avoiding the singular, which might associate him with sin. Having said, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, by contrast he points to himself, saying, I fast twice in the Sabbath, meaning, twice in the week, for the week was called "the Sabbath," deriving its name from the last day of the week, the day of rest. The day of rest was called Sabbat, and the week was called Sabbata, being the plural form of Sabbat. Whence it is that mian Sabatton is the first day of the week, which we call "the Lord's Day" (Sunday). Among the Hebrews mian means the same thing as first.

There is also a more profound explanation of this parable. Against the passion of adultery, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, for lustful desires arise from eating and drinking to excess. By restraining his body through fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, as was the practice of the Pharisees, he kept himself far from such passions. He also resisted extortion and injustice by giving tithes of all his possessions. "I am so opposed to extortion and to wronging others," he says, "that I give alms of everything I have." Some believe that a simple and single tithe is prescribed by the law; but those who carefully examine the law will find three forms of tithing prescribed. You may learn this from Deuteronomy if you apply yourself diligently (Dt. 12:11,17).

So much for the Pharisee. Now we turn to the publican and observe that he is the Pharisee's exact opposite. He stood afar off, and kept himself at a great distance, not only in physical location, but in his demeanor, in his words, and by his compunction of heart. He was ashamed to lift up his eyes to heaven, for he considered his eyes unworthy of heavenly vision because they had desired to see and enjoy the good things of earth. And he smote upon his breast, striking his heart, as it were, because of its evil designs, and awakening it because it had been sleeping. The publican said no other words than, God be merciful to me a sinner. By doing this he went down to his house counted righteous, rather than the other. For every proud heart is unclean in the Lord's eyes, and the Lord resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34, I Pet. 5:5).

But one might wonder why it is that the Pharisee is condemned for speaking a few boastful words, while Job receives a crown for speaking many such words (Job 29). The answer is that the Pharisee stood and spoke these vain words under no compulsion, and he condemned others for no reason. But with Job, his friends pressed him and bore down upon him more fiercely than did his own calamities, telling him that he was suffering these things because of his sins. Job was compelled to enumerate his good deeds, but he did so for the glory of God, and so that men would not be misled from the path of virtue. For if men came to hear that Job was suffering because what he had done was sinful, they would not act as Job had. As a result they would become haters of strangers instead of hospitable

to strangers, merciless instead of merciful, and unrighteous instead of righteous; for such were the good deeds of Job. Therefore Job enumerated his virtues so that others would not be misled and harmed, and this was why he spoke as he did. Shall we not say that his words, which may seem boastful, in fact are radiant with humility? Oh that I were as in months past, he said, wherein God preserved me! (Job 29:2) Do you see that he attributes everything to God and does not judge others? Instead he is judged by his friends. But condemnation rightly falls upon the Pharisee, who attributed everything to himself and not to God, and judged others for no reason whatsoever. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled and condemned by God; and he that humbleth himself when he is condemned by others shall be exalted and counted righteous by God. The Lord is saying, "You, O Christian, be the first to tell your sins, so that you may be counted righteous."

Book Discussion with Guest Lecturer
Dr. Jeannie Constantinou

Saturday, February 27th ~ 9:30 am - 11:00 am PST
via ZOOM

To Register: Contact Alexis at boyda02@gmail.com

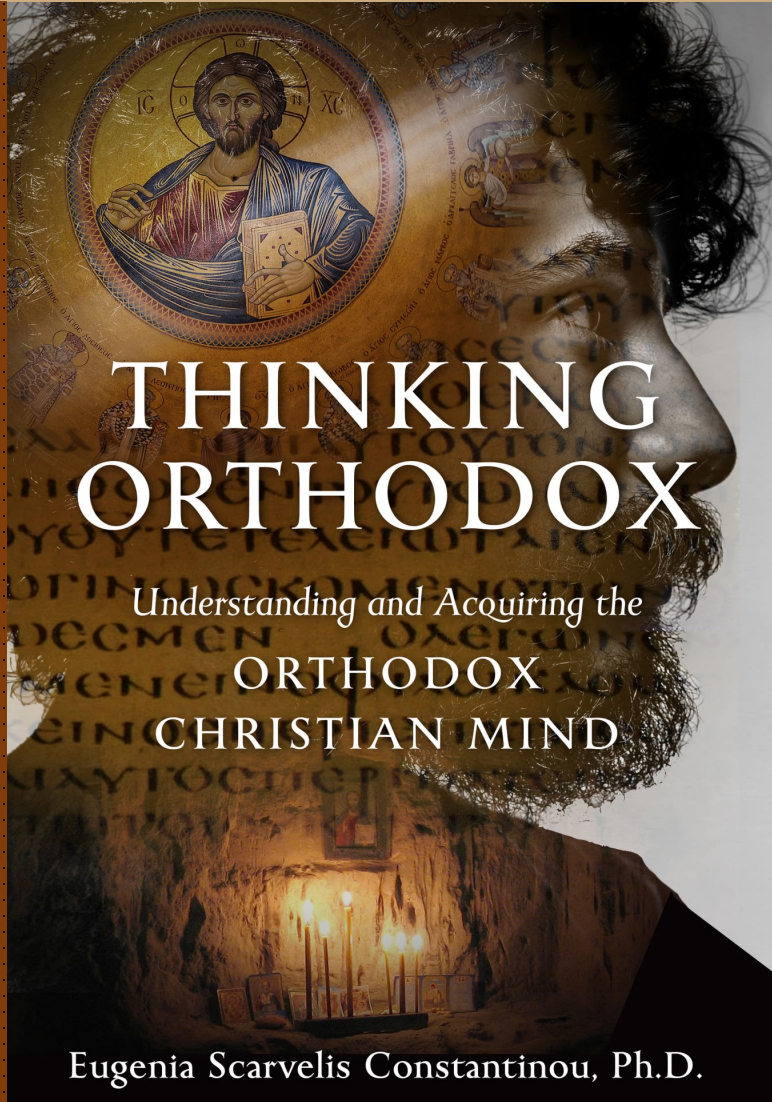


**Eugenia Scarvelis
Constantinou, Ph.D.**

Dr. Eugenia Constantinou hosts the popular podcast *Search the Scriptures Live!* on Ancient Faith Radio. She has been a professor and visiting lecturer on the Bible, patristic interpretation of Scripture, and early Christianity at Orthodox and non-Orthodox universities and schools of theology. She holds master's degrees in theology from the University of San Diego, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and Harvard Divinity School; a juris doctorate from Pepperdine University School of Law; and a Ph.D. from Université Laval in Quebec City in the history of biblical interpretation. She is married to Fr. Costas, a Greek Orthodox priest in Southern California.

The book [Thinking Orthodox](#), to be discussed in Dr. Constantinou's lecture on Feb. 27th, is available online from Ancient Faith Publishing at:

[https://store.ancientfaith.com/
thinking-orthodox/](https://store.ancientfaith.com/thinking-orthodox/)



THINKING ORTHODOX

Understanding and Acquiring the
ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN MIND

Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, Ph.D.

Sponsored by the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption
1804 13th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122 ~ (206) 323-8557