



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.

Bulletin for Sunday, February 26, 2023

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:

Greg Jankura - Vice President

Susan Davis- Council Member at Large

Carolyn Neiss - President

Marlene Melesko - Council Member at Large

Susan Egan - Treasurer

Dn Timothy Skuby - Secretary

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

We will once again have Pot Luck dinners on Wednesdays after Presanctified Liturgy to break the fast.

Please bring your favorite Lenten Pot Luck meal to share with your fellow parishioners.

Sunday of Orthodoxy: Restoration of Icons

During the Liturgy, weather permitting, we will process around the church at the Little Entrance. You are encouraged to bring your icons from home, or you may use an icon from around the parish.

More information will be provided in next week's bulletin.

Prayers for the beginning of Great Lent

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

O God, Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that be afar off at sea, Who didst foretell these holy days of fasting in the Law, and the Prophets, and the Evangelists: Do Thou count all of us worthy to pass the course of the Fast in purity, to preserve the Faith undivided, and to keep Thy commandments all the days of our lives. Bid an Angel of peace to preserve our comings-in and goings-out for every good work, being obedient together and together pleasing Thee unto a perfect communion of Thy Most-pure Mysteries. And accept, O Master, the bending of the knees and the fasting of Thy servants, granting unto them, and unto all of us, spiritual blessing, in Christ Jesus, our Lord, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy Most-holy, Good, and Lifegiving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

A second Prayer, unto them:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord Almighty, the God of our Fathers, of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, Who madest the heaven, the earth, the sea and all that is in them; Who hast appointed repentance to men for salvation, and overlookest their transgressions; Who didst accept the tears of Thy servant, the prophet David, and gavest him that repented, forgiveness of sins; Who didst accept the prayer of Manasseh, bound with iron fetters, who, with repentance, confessed unto Thee, and Thou forgavest his sins; Who didst save the Harlot

who understood Thy mercy, for, having received the spies, she let them go in peace: Do Thou hearken now unto the supplication of me, Thine unworthy servant, and overlook all the iniquities of these Thy servants, who make haste unto Thee in repentance. And grant them heartfelt contrition who are in afflictions because of their sins, having angered Thee, their own Creator, Who art able to cleanse them of their sins. Grant unto them Thy grace, that being roused and strengthened by this, and remembering their own evil deeds, they may truly confess all of them, in the fear of Thee, to their own spiritual father, who has been established by Thee as judge. And through us may they call them to remembrance, as ones that are guilty, with a heart broken and humble, and to repent of them, that they may desire also complete forgiveness for them. And count them worthy of absolution for them, according to Thy loving kindness, through their spiritual father as Thy judge, according to Thy sure promise. For Thou hast said, "Whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Yea, O Master, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, accept Thy servants who are repenting for their sins, whether known and unknown, whether voluntary or involuntary, and who, according to Thy command, have set them before Thee in confession, and, mercifully accepting them, by Thy power and grace strengthen them, that they not turn back to sins and to evil and unacceptable deeds, into which they have fallen many times. Rather, raise them up and help them against the snares of the devil, and from all hostile snares, that without hindrance, they may serve Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days

of their lives. For Thou art our God, and Thou camest into the world, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And Thou hast commanded that the transgressions of them that have fallen into sins be forgiven even seventy times seven. And when the woman caught in adultery was led unto Thee by the Pharisees, to tempt Thee, Thou didst not judge her, but mercifully didst say, "Go, and from this time forth sin no more"; for according to Thy love for mankind, Thou didst not judge her, but had mercy. And likewise also as to the other harlot who wept, and with tears washed Thy feet and wiped them with her own hair, Thou wast merciful for the sake of Thine own mercy, so grant unto these, Thy servants unhindered and warm tears of true repentance. Make firm their minds and hearts, that they may know Thee the only true Son of God, Who tookest up the sins of the world. Accept them, as Thou didst accept Peter who denied Thee, and with repentance and bitter tears turned back again. Stretch forth Thy right hand and take them, as Thou didst take him that was drowning in the sea, and strengthen them against the devil who struggles against them. Cleanse their souls and bodies from every kind of filth. For Thou Thyself hast said, O Good Lord, that they that are healthy not ask for a physician, but only the sick. And Thou hast not come to save them that are saved already, but them that are perishing. Grant, therefore, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, that these Thy servants complete, without blemish, the beginning of this Holy Fast, and in it to fulfil Thy commandments, and to be diligent in prayers and to please Thee with good deeds all the days of their lives, that uncondemned

and with a pure conscience they may be counted worthy to become partakers of Thy divine Body and lifegiving Blood which is poured out for the whole world for the remission of sins, and that they may defeat and put to shame the demons in their warfare. For Thou, O God, art the God of them that repent, and desirest not the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his way and live. For Thou, O Master, desirest not to utterly destroy the work of Thy hands, neither art Thou well-pleased at the destruction of mankind. But Thou desirest that all be saved, and come to the knowledge of truth. Therefore, now also, O Master, turn not away Thy face from these Thy servants, but grant unto them a true turning from sins unto Thee, and deliverance from all their evil deeds. And count all of us worthy to attain in peace to the performing of good deeds, and that we may bow down before Thy saving Passion and Thy holy Resurrection, and at the end of our life to receive eternal joy together with all that have been well-pleasing unto Thee, our God and our Savior. For Thou art a God of mercies and compassions, and love for mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory, together with Thy Father Who is without beginning, and Thy Most-holy, Good, and Lifegiving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Many Years! to Michael and Zachary Neiss on the occasion of their birthdays.

Please continue to pray for our catecumens, David, James and Anthony (and his family).

Please pray for Evelyn Leake who is in need of God's mercy and

healing; and for Kelley Hosking-Billings.

- 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 institutionalize, 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.

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. St. Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza (420). Ven. Sebastian of Poshekhónsk (ca. 1500). Martyr Christodoulos.

Parish Calendar

Schedule of Services and Events

February 26 to March 6, 2023

Sunday, February 26

Forgiveness Sunday
9:30AM Divine Liturgy
11:30AM Forgiveness Vespers

Monday, February 27

Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny of Brooklyn
Procopius the Confessor of Decapolis
6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

Tuesday, February 28

Righteous John Cassian the Confessor
8:30AM Daily Matins
6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

Wednesday, March 1

The Holy Righteous Martyr Eudocia the Samaritan
6:00PM Presanctified Liturgy

Thursday, March 2

Hesychius the Martyr
8:30AM Daily Matins
6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

Friday, March 3

The Holy Martyrs Eutropius, Cleonicus, and Basiliscus
Michael and Zachary Neiss

Saturday, March 4

First Saturday of Lent: The Commemoration of the Miracle of Kollyva

wrought by Saint Theodore the Tyro
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, March 5

Sunday of Orthodoxy
9:30AM Divine Liturgy
4:00PM Lenten Deanery Services

Monday, March 6

42 Martyrs of Amorion in Phrygia

Saints and Feasts

February 26

Forgiveness Sunday

The Holy Fathers have appointed the commemoration of Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight here, on the eve of the holy Forty-day Fast, demonstrating to us not by simple words, but by actual deeds, how beneficial fasting is for man, and how harmful and destructive are insatiety and the transgressing of the divine commandments. For the first commandment that God gave to man was that of fasting, which the first-fashioned received but did not keep; and not only did they not become gods, as they had imagined, but they lost even that blessed life which they had, and they fell into corruption and death, and transmitted these and innumerable other evils to all of mankind. The God-bearing Fathers set these things before us today, that by bringing to mind what we have fallen from, and what we have suffered because of the insatiety and disobedience of the first-fashioned, we might be diligent to return again to that ancient bliss and glory by means of fasting and obedience to all

the divine commands. Taking occasion from today's Gospel (Matt. 6:14-21) to begin the Fast unencumbered by enmity, we also ask forgiveness this day, first from God, then from one another and all creation.

February 26

Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza

Saint Porphyrius had Thessalonica as his homeland. He became a monk in Scete of Egypt, where he lived for five years. He went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, after which he spent five years in much affliction in a cave near the Jordan. Stricken with a disease of the liver, he departed to Jerusalem, where he was ordained presbyter and appointed Keeper of the Cross at the age of 45. Three years later he was made Bishop of Gaza. He suffered much from the rulers and pagans of Gaza; but with the friendship of Saint John Chrysostom, and the patronage of the Empress Eudoxia, he razed the temple of the idol Marnas in Gaza and built a great church to the glory of God. He reposed in 450.

February 27

Raphael of Brooklyn

Saint Raphael Hawaweeny was born on November 8th, 1860 A.D., in Damascus, Syria, to pious Christian parents. He studied Arabic grammar and mathematics at the Antiochian Patriarchate parochial school where he was tonsured a reader

in 1874. His strong academics served him well throughout his life, providing for him numerous opportunities to succeed and grow. He accepted a position in 1877 as an assistant teacher of Arabic and Turkish, which became full time in 1879. In 1879 he was tonsured a monk while working with Patriarch Hierotheos at the patriarchate, traveling with him on pastoral visits and serving as his personal assistant.

Longing to continue his theological studies, Raphael petitioned the Patriarch for permission to study at Halki Theological School, which was the only option for students of the Antiochian Patriarchate as the Balamand Seminary in Lebanon had been closed since 1840. After much persistence, Raphael received the blessing of the Patriarch and enrolled in Halki Seminary where he was ordained a deacon in 1885. After completing his degree at Halki, the young Deacon Raphael studied at the Kiev Theological Academy, working as a liaison between the Moscow and Antiochian patriarchates. Deacon Raphael was ordained to the holy priesthood in 1889 while in Kiev, continuing to serve that community for many years.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 led to the subsequent collapse of the silk industry in the Middle East, causing many Syrians and others to immigrate to the United States. These new citizens desired to have their religion present in their new homeland and sent letters to their mother churches for pastoral help. A few priests were sent, but none lasted, and so the people asked for Father Raphael Hawaweeny to come to America and serve.

Both the Antiochian and Moscow Patriarchs agreed to this idea, and Father Raphael left for America where the people greeted him with great love. Father Raphael then spent many years serving the Syrians in Brooklyn, New York, but he desired to scan the continent for Syrians and other Orthodox Christians who were without spiritual leadership. He traveled by train and carriage across the nation, finding Orthodox Christians, recording their location, and performing liturgies, baptisms, and weddings. Upon his return to Brooklyn, Father Raphael worked to find clergy to send to these dispersed communities, giving them a full time pastor to minister to their needs.

In 1909, by the hands of Bishops Tikhon and Innocent of the Moscow Patriarchate, he was the first bishop consecrated in the New World. The now Bishop Raphael continued his ministry to the Christians throughout America. Bishop Raphael worked tirelessly in Brooklyn to mediate disputes between the Orthodox Christians from Syria and Maronite Catholic Christians who often fought violently with one another. Despite numerous outbursts and setbacks, Bishop Raphael continued his ministry serving the Orthodox throughout his vast diocese. One such incident was when an influential leader of the Maronite group was killed and many people accused Bishop Raphael of ordering his murder. This led to many people attempting to harm the bishop, but he endured it all willingly. He was arrested under attempted murder charges, but was eventually cleared and let go after much time and money was spent in his defense.

Throughout his time in North America, Bishop Raphael founded 36 parishes to bring the Church to the faithful who were without a priest to guide them. Bishop Raphael truly lived out Gospel in all aspects of his life, striving tirelessly for the people in his care, even to the point of sacrificing his own physical health in order to maintain the spiritual health of his people. Bishop Raphael died on February 27th, 1915, at his home in Brooklyn. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people, including clergy from all ethnic backgrounds, illustrating his love for all of the people of God regardless of where they came from. The sacred relics of Saint Raphael, “the good shepherd of the lost sheep in North America,” were first interred in a crypt beneath the holy table at his Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn on March 7th, 1915, before being moved to the Syrian section of Mount Olivet Cemetery in Brooklyn on April 2nd, 1922. They were finally translated to the Holy Resurrection Cemetery at the Antiochian Village near Ligonier, Pennsylvania, on August 15th, 1988. His sanctity was officially proclaimed by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on March 29th, 2000, and his glorification was celebrated on May 29th of that year at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon in Pennsylvania.

February 28

Righteous John Cassian the Confessor

Note: If it is not a leap year the hymns of Saint John are transferred to the 28th.

This Saint was born about the year 350, and was, according to some, from Rome, according to others, from Dacia Pontica (Dobrogea in present-day Romania). He was a learned man who had first served in the military. Later, he forsook this life and became a monk in Bethlehem with his friend and fellow-ascetic, Germanus of Dacia Pontica, whose memory is also celebrated today. Hearing the fame of the great Fathers of Scete, they went to Egypt about the year 390; their meetings with the famous monks of Scete are recorded in Saint John's *Conferences*. In the year 403 they went to Constantinople, where Cassian was ordained deacon by Saint John Chrysostom; after the exile of Saint Chrysostom, Saints Cassian and Germanus went to Rome with letters to Pope Innocent I in defence of the exiled Archbishop of Constantinople. There Saint Cassian was ordained priest, after which he went to Marseilles, where he established the famous monastery of Saint Victor. He reposed in peace about the year 433.

The last of his writings was *On the Incarnation of the Lord, Against Nestorius*, written in 430 at the request of Leo, the Archdeacon of Pope Celestine. In this work he was the first to show the spiritual kinship between Pelagianism, which taught that Christ was a mere man who without the help of God had avoided sin, and that it was possible for man to overcome sin by his own efforts; and Nestorianism, which taught that Christ was a mere man used as an instrument by the Son of God, but was not God become man; and indeed, when Nestorius first became Patriarch of Constantinople in 428, he made much show

of persecuting the heretics, with the exception only of the Pelagians, whom he received into communion and interceded for them to the Emperor and to Pope Celestine.

The error opposed to Pelagianism but equally ruinous was Augustine's teaching that after the fall, man was so corrupt that he could do nothing for his own salvation, and that God simply predestined some men to salvation and others to damnation. Saint John Cassian refuted this blasphemy in the thirteenth of his *Conferences*, with Abbot Chairemon, which eloquently sets forth, at length and with many citations from the Holy Scriptures, the Orthodox teaching of the balance between the grace of God on one hand, and man's efforts on the other, necessary for our salvation.

Saint Benedict of Nursia, in Chapter 73 of his Rule, ranks Saint Cassian's *Institutes* and *Conferences* first among the writings of the monastic fathers, and commands that they be read in his monasteries; indeed, the Rule of Saint Benedict is greatly indebted to the *Institutes* of Saint John Cassian. Saint John Climacus also praises him highly in section 105 of Step 4 of the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, on Obedience.

March 01

Eudokia the Martyr of Heliopolis

This Saint, who was from Heliopolis of Phoenicia (Baalbek in present-day Lebanon), was an idolater and led a licentious life. Being beautiful beyond telling, she had many lovers, and had

acquired great riches. Yet brought to repentance by a monk named Germanus, and baptized by Bishop Theodotus, she distributed to the poor all her ill-gotten gains, and entered a convent, giving herself up completely to the life of asceticism. Her former lovers, enraged at her conversion, her refusal to return to her old ways, and the withering away of her beauty through the severe mortifications she practiced, betrayed her as a Christian to Vincent the Governor, and she was beheaded, according to some, under Trajan, who reigned from 98 to 117, according to others, under Hadrian, who reigned from 117 to 138.

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 1 Troparion (St. Raphael)

Your proclamation has gone out through North America,
calling the scattered sheep into the unity of the Church.
Hearing your voice, they respond to your

teaching,
and through your writings you instructed them in piety.
Now guided by your example, O Father Raphael,
we sing hymns of praise to Christ our God:
“Glory to Him Who gave you strength!
Glory to Him Who granted you a ^crown! //
Glory to Him Who, through you, grants healing to all!”

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

Tone 8 Kontakion (St. Raphael)

You were a guardian and a defender of the Church’s teaching,
you protected your flock from false doctrines and confirmed them in the true faith!
O holy Father Raphael, son of Syria and glory of North America, //
always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved!

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen

Tone Six Kontakion (from the Lenten Triodion)

O Master, Teacher of wisdom,
Bestower of virtue,
Who teach the thoughtless and protect the poor,
strengthen and enlighten my heart!
O Word of the Father,
let me not restrain my mouth from crying to You:
“Have mercy on me, a transgressor, //
O merciful Lord!”

The **prokeimenon** in the 8th tone; Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!

Choir: Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!

Reader: In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

Choir: Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!

Reader: A second prokeimenon in the 7th tone; My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance! He shall not fear evil tidings! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 8th Tone. Psalm 75.11,1.

Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.

Verse: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4.

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves

becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

Gospel Reading

Forgiveness Sunday

The Reading is from Matthew 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees

in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Wisdom of the Fathers

Spiritual delight is not enjoyment found in things that exists outside the soul.

St. Isaac of Syria

Unknown, 7th century

Do we forgive our neighbors their trespasses? God also forgives us in His mercy. Do we refuse to forgive? God, too, will refuse to forgive us. As we treat our neighbors, so also does God treat us. The forgiveness, then, of your sins or unforgiveness, and hence also your salvation or destruction, depend on you yourself, man. For without forgiveness of sins there is no salvation.

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Unknown, 18th century

Beyond the Sermon



Metropolitan Anthony
Sourozh

Forgiveness Sunday
19 February 25, 1996

In the name of the
Father, the Son and the
Holy Ghost.

To-day two themes
dominate the readings

of the Holy Scriptures. St Paul speaks to us about fasting and the Lord about forgiveness, and St Paul insists on the fact that fasting does not consist simply of depriving oneself of one form of food or another, neither does it, if it is kept strictly, obediently, worshipfully, give us any ground to be proud of ourselves, satisfied and secure, because the aim of fasting is not to deprive our body of the one form of food rather than the other, the aim of fasting is to acquire mastery over our body and make it a perfect instrument of the spirit. Most of the time we are slaves of our bodies, we are attracted by all our senses to one form or another of enjoyment, but of an enjoyment which goes far beyond the purity which God expects of us.

And so, the period of fasting offers us a time during which we can say not that I will torment my body, limit myself in things material, but a time when I will re-acquire mastery of my body, make it a perfect instrument. The comparison that comes to my mind is that of tuning a musical instrument; this is what fasting is, to acquire the power not only to command our body, but also to give our body

the possibility to respond to all the promptings of the spirit.

Let us therefore go into fasting with this understanding, not measuring our fasting by what we eat and how much, but of the effect it has on us, whether our fasting makes us free or whether we become slaves of fasting itself. If we fast let us not be proud of it, because it proves simply that we need more perhaps than another person to conquer something in our nature. And if around us other people are not fasting let us not judge them, because God has received the ones as He receives the others, because it is into the heart of men that He looks.

And then there is the theme of forgiveness, of which I will say only one short thing. We think always of forgiveness as a way in which we would say to a person who has offended, hurt, humiliated us, that the past is past and that we do not any more hold a grudge against this person. But what forgiveness means more deeply than this is that if we can say to a person: let us no longer make the past into a destructive present, let me trust you, make an act of faith in you, if I forgive you it means in my eyes you are not lost, in my eyes there is a future of beauty and truth in you.

But this applies also to us. Perversely, we think very often of forgiving others, but we do not think sufficiently of the need in which we are, each of us personally, of being forgiven by others. We have a few hours left between the Liturgy and the Service of Forgiveness tonight, let us reflect and try to remember, not the offences which we have suffered, but the hurts which we have caused. And if we have hurt anyone in one way or another, in things small or great,

let us make haste before we enter into Lent tomorrow morning, let us make haste to ask to be forgiven, to hear someone say to us: in spite of all that has happened I believe in you, I trust you, I hope for you and I will expect everything from you. And then we can go together through Lent helping one another to become what we are called to be - the disciples of Christ, following Him step by step to Calvary, and beyond Calvary to the Resurrection. Amen.

The Faith We Hold



Metropolitan Anthony
Sourozh
On Confession.
1st sermon
12th September 1999

In the Name of the
Father, Son and Holy
Spirit. Amen.

I was asked to give a
certain number of

sermons on Confession; because many come to Confession and repeat only things which they have read in manuals of devotion or which other people have told them about. And I would like to start where I start with a child and attract your attention to the fact that our situation is the same.

When a child comes to Confession, usually he brings either on paper or by memory a long list, or a short list, of sins. And when he has finished, I always say, 'Are these things which break your heart? Are these things which you feel are wrong in you? Did you invent for yourself this confession?'

And most of the time the answer is, 'No, my mother gave me this list because that makes her cross!' After that I usually have a conversation with the mother. But as far as the child is concerned, it has nothing to do with him, it is not his confession. It is the judgement which the parents have established, accusations against him. And the same could be asked about grown-up people who come with lists of sins which they have found in manuals, or been told to consider by their spiritual fathers. And the answer is always the same: it is not my confession, yet it is a challenge which I was given.

And then, the next move, indeed, is to ask, 'What do you know of Christ? Does He attract you? Do you like Him? Does He mean anything to you? And the answer is varied. Some say, 'No, I know Him from afar off, I know Him from the Church, from what I was taught, but I never had a personal attitude to Him.' Then the answer is, 'Find out. Read the Gospel and try to find out what Christ is like.'

And the next move: ask yourself, 'Do I like Him? Would I wish to be His disciple, His friend? If the answer is 'no', then begin to think about your whole situation, because if Christ means nothing, if you dislike Him, if He is no image of what you would like to be, then you must start a long, long way away. But if you can say, 'Yes! I like Him, I can respect Him, I can admire Him. Yes, I would like to be His personal friend if He was here,' then my next question will be, 'Do you know what friendship is?'

Friendship consists most of all in choosing someone among all the people to be to you the one you treasure above all, whom you admire, by whom you are prepared to stand

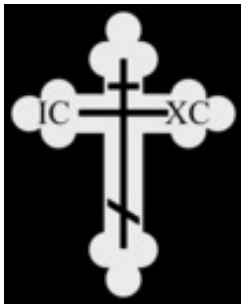
in case of danger or unpleasantness; one to whom you wish to give joy. Ask yourself these questions with regard to Christ; and ask yourself, in what way have you tried in the past week to give some joy to the Lord Jesus Christ, or in what way have you been for Him a cause of pain. 'I have loved him to the point of giving My life and My death to him and he does not care at all. Not for My suffering or My death, but for Me'.

If that is the conclusion, begin to re-examine all your status as a Christian. If you can say, 'yes, I choose Him as a friend,' begin to ask yourself every day, every day: what have I done, said, thought, felt, been, which can be to Him a joy or a pain?

And when you will come to Confession that is what you must bring to Confession; between the last Confession and today's Confession this is what I have been: an unfaithful friend, an indifferent friend, a cowardly friend, or on the contrary, no, I have chosen Him for my friend and I stood by Him . . .

Think in those terms; and we will see in the following sermons of mine what else we can think and do, and prepare, to pronounce a Confession that will be your own; the truth, the rock bottom of your life and heart, the truth about your relationship with Christ. Amen.

The Back Page



Parish Shared Folder (for all documents, bulletins etc)
- <http://bit.ly/St-Alexis>

The QR Code here may be used as well.

Parish Web Site -

<http://www.stalexischurch.org> ; [calendar](#)
(<https://bit.ly/StA-Calendar>)

Facebook - @stalexisorthodox

Youtube Channel - https://bit.ly/StA_Youtube

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bit.ly/StA-Zoom>

Meeting ID: 471 678 4843

Passcode: 1994

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,4716784843#,,,,,0#,,1994#

US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4716784843>

Troparion to St Alexis

O righteous Father Alexis, / our heavenly intercessor and teacher, / divine adornment of the Church of Christ! / Entreat the Master of All / to strengthen the Orthodox

Faith in America, / to grant peace to the world / and to our souls, great mercy!

Troparion to St Herman

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, / north star of Christ's holy Church, / the light of your holy life and great deeds / guides those who follow the Orthodox way. / Together we lift high the Holy Cross / you planted firmly in America. / Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ, / singing his holy Resurrection.

Troparion to St Elizabeth

Emulating the Lord's self-abasement on the earth, / you gave up royal mansions to serve the poor and disdained, / overflowing with compassion for the suffering. / And taking up a martyr's cross, / in your meekness / you perfected the Saviour's image within yourself, / therefore, with Barbara, entreat Him to save us all, O wise Elizabeth.