



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, September 15, 2024

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- President
Sharon Hanson - Member at Large
Luba Martins - 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) 322-2906, 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

Diocean Assembly

The Assembly this year occurs on Oct 25th & 26th, and will be held in Cumberland, RI. Jim Ifkovic will be our delegate this year.

Stewardship

Stewardship forms were emailed out to everyone on our mailing list. The are also available in the back of the candle desk. Please be sure to return them to me before the end of the month as we will be using the pledges to generate our budget for the following year. We will also be putting our ministries together as well.

Prayers, Intercessions

and Commemorations



Many Years! To Melissa Josefiak on the occasion of her birthday. To Sophia Brubaker, Luba Martins and Nadia PenkoffLedbek on the occasion of their Name's Day.

Memory Eternal to Deborah Brey on the anniversary of her repose in the Lord. Please remember Glenn PenkoffLedbeck's father, Paul, in your prayers. He reposed in the Lord on Thursday, Sept 5th. May his soul dwell with the righteous.

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.

Please let Fr. Steven know via email if you have more names for which to pray.

- Departed: Galina, Olga, Mat Lillian, Dorothy, Archbishop Nikon (9/1), Deborah Brey (9/10), Kelley Hosking-Billings (9/27)
- Clergy and their families: Fr Sergei, Fr Ceriphim
- Catechumen: Robert, Abbie, Matthew, Joseph, Mary, and Kevin
- Individuals and Families: Luba, Suzanne, Gail Galina, Evelyn, Rosemary, John, Daniel & Dayna, Kristen, Charles, Victor, Susan
- Birthdays and Name's Days this Month: Zachariah Niess (9/5), Michael Niess (9/6), David Miller (9/11), Kathryn Jankura (9/12), Melissa Josefiak (9/16), Sophia Brubaker, Luba Martins, Nadia PenkofLedbeck (9/17)
- Anniversaries this Month: Lloyd and Susan Davis
- Expecting and Newborn: Lynn, David and their unborn child, Keree, Steve and their unborn child
- Traveling: Michael, Jason, Marlene and Vincent Melesko
- Sick and those in distress: Thomas, Sheri, Joanna, Joshua, Remy, Stormy, Scott, Anne, Noah, Nancy, Cathy, Joe

Today's commemorated feasts and saints

12th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 3. Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross. Sunday after Elevation. Greatmartyr Niketas (Nikita)

the Goth (ca. 372). Uncovering of the Relics of St. Acacius, Bishop of Melitene (3rd c.). Martyrs Theodotus, Asclepiodotus, and Maximus, of Adrianopolis (305-311). Martyr Porphyrius the Actor (361). Uncovering of the Relics of the Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen (415). St. Philotheus the Presbyter, in Asia Minor (10th c.). Ven. Joseph, Abbot, of Alaverdsk in Georgia (570). St. Joseph the New of Partos, Metropolitan of Timisoara (1656).

- Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.
- Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East.
- Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.

Parish Calendar

St Alexis Parish

September 15 to September 23, 2024

Sunday, September 15

Sunday after Holy Cross
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, September 16

Melissa Josefiak
Euphemia the Great Martyr

Tuesday, September 17

Sophia & her three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love
8:30AM Matins
6:00PM Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, September 18

Eumenius the Wonderworker, Bishop of Gortynia

Thursday, September 19

Trophimus, Sabbatius, & Dorymedon the Martyrs
8:30AM Matins

Friday, September 20

Eustathius the Great Martyr, his wife and two children

Saturday, September 21

Saturday after Holy Cross
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, September 22

1st Sunday of Luke
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, September 23

The Conception of St. John the Baptist

Saints and Feasts

September 15

Nikitas the Great Martyr

This Saint was of high birth among the Goths beyond the Danube River. He was taken by Athanaric, pagan ruler of the

Goths, and after being tortured, was burned to death for his confession of Christ. According to some, this took place during the reign of Saint Constantine the Great; according to others, under the Emperor Gratian.

September 16

Euphemia the Great Martyr

Saint Euphemia was from Chalcedon and lived in virginity. According to some, she suffered martyrdom during the reign of Diocletian, in 303; according to others, in 307. Her sacred relics are preserved in the Patriarchate in Constantinople.

September 16

Ninian the Enlightener of Scotland

Saint Ninian was born in Cumberland in Britain around the year 360, about a half century after the Emperor Constantius Chlorus died in the British city of York, and his son Constantine, who was with him when he died, was proclaimed Emperor. Ninian was born of Christian parents of noble lineage, at a time when paganism was still strong in his native land. As a young man he went to Rome, where he spent many years in study and ascetical struggles. At Rome, Saint Ninian was consecrated some time after the death of Pope Damasus in 384, and was sent back to his native island about the end of the

fourth century. On his return journey, it is likely that he passed through Tours and met Saint Martin; what is certain is that many churches and cells associated with Saint Ninian, including his own cathedral in Whithorn, were named in honour of Saint Martin. When Saint Ninian returned to Cumberland, he established monasteries that fostered both the life of prayer and missionary labours. By his preaching, his godly life, and his miracles, he ministered to his own countrymen, the Britons, and also converted many of the pagan Picts, who inhabited the northern regions (in today's Scotland). He reposed in peace at his see of Whithorn in Galloway in 432.

September 17

Sophia & her three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love

These Saints were from Italy and contested for the Faith about the year 126, during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian. Faith was twelve years old, Hope, ten, and Love, nine; each was tormented and then beheaded, from the eldest to the youngest. Their mother Sophia mourned at their grave for three days, where she also fell asleep in peace; because of her courageous endurance in the face of her daughters' sufferings, she is also counted a martyr. The name Sophia means "wisdom" in Greek; as for her daughters' names, Faith, Hope, and Love (Charity), they are Pistis, Elpis, and Agape in Greek, and Vera, Nadezhda, and Lyubov in Russian.

September 20

Eustathios the Great Martyr, his wife and two children

The holy Martyr Eustathius before his baptism was an illustrious Roman general named Placidus in the days of the Emperor Trajan. While hunting in the country one day, he was converted to the Faith of Christ through the apparition of an uncommonly majestic stag, between whose antlers he saw the Cross of Christ, and through which the Lord spoke to him with a human voice. Upon returning home, he learned that his wife Tatiana had also had a vision in which she was instructed to become a Christian. They sought out the Bishop of the Christians and were baptized, Placidus receiving the name Eustathius, and Tatiana the name Theopiste; their two sons were baptized Agapius and Theopistus. The family was then subjected to such trials as Job endured. Their servants died, all their goods were stolen, and on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem they were scattered abroad, each not even knowing if the others were still alive. By the providence of God, they were united again after many years, and returned to Rome in glory. Nevertheless, when they refused to sacrifice to the idols-a public sacrifice from which no Roman general could be absent-the Emperor Hadrian, who had succeeded Trajan, had them put into a large bronze device in the shape of a bull, which was heated with fire until they died. When their holy bodies were removed, they were found to be without harm. They suffered martyrdom about the year 126.

September 21

Jonah the Prophet

The Prophet Jonah, the son of Amathi, of the town of Geth-hopher (IV Kings 14:25), was of the tribe of Zabulon; he prophesied during the years 838-810 before Christ. God commanded him to go to Nineveh, the great city of the Assyrians, and to proclaim that its destruction was nigh at hand because of the sins of its people. But he, as a Prophet who knew the great compassion of God, feared that at his preaching the Ninevites would repent; that God, accepting their repentance in His love for man, would not fulfill Jonah's threats; and that he would be branded a false prophet. So he disobeyed the divine command, and boarded a ship and departed elsewhere. Yet, the sudden and fearful sea-storm and the revelation of Jonah's disobedience caused the sailors to cast him into the sea. A great sea-monster appeared straightway by divine providence, and swallowed him up. For three days and nights he was found in its belly and he prayed, saying the words, "I cried aloud in my affliction unto the Lord my God..." (Jonah 2:3, the Sixth ode of the Holy Psalter). The sea-monster then vomited him up on dry land and he again heard God's command. Wherefore, he went and preached, saying, "In three days, Nineveh shall be destroyed." The people became terrified and all repented. The great, the small, babes at the breast, and even the irrational beasts themselves fasted, and thus, having found mercy from God, they were spared His wrath. Jonah's book of prophecy is divided into four chapters,

and is placed fifth in order among the twelve minor Prophets. His three-day sojourn in the sea-monster's belly is an image of our Saviour's three-day burial and His life-bringing Resurrection (Matt. 12:39-40). His name means "dove."

Hymns of the Day



Tone 3 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let the heavens rejoice!
Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.
He has trampled down death by death.

He has become the first born of the dead.
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
and has granted to the world//
great mercy.

Tone 4 Troparion (Feast)

Your nativity, O Virgin,
has proclaimed joy to the whole universe!
The Sun of righteousness, Christ our God,
has shone from you, O Theotokos.
By annulling the curse,
He bestowed a blessing.//
By destroying death, He has granted us
eternal life.

Tone 1 Troparion (Feast)

O Lord, save Your people,
and bless Your inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries;
and by virtue of Your Cross,//

preserve Your habitation!

Tone 4 Troparion (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.

Tone 3 Troparion (St. Nicetas)

You defeated error and triumphed in martyrdom,
Nicetas, namesake of victory;
for you conquered the ranks of the enemy
and ended your † contest by fire.//
Pray to Christ our God to grant us His great mercy!

Tone 3 Kontakion (Resurrection)

On this day You rose from the tomb, O Merciful One,
leading us from the gates of death.
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;
with the Prophets and Patriarchs//
they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Your power.

Tone 5 Kontakion (St. Alexis)

Let us, the faithful praise the Priest Alexis,
a bright beacon of Orthodoxy in America, a
model of patience and humility,
a worthy shepherd of the Flock of Christ.
He called back the sheep who had been led
astray
and brought them by his preaching to the
Heavenly Kingdom.

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

Tone 2 Kontakion (St. Nicetas)

You stood firm and defeated delusion
and have received your martyr's crown,
Nicetas, namesake of victory;
you are rejoicing with the Angels,//
together with them you are praying
unceasingly to Christ God for us all.

now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 4 Kontakion (Feast)

As You were voluntarily raised upon the
Cross for our sake,
grant mercy to those who are called by Your
Name, O Christ God;
make all Orthodox Christians glad by Your
power,
granting them victories over their
adversaries//
by bestowing on them the invincible trophy,
Your weapon of peace!

Hymn to the Theotokos

Tone 8

Magnify, O my soul, the most precious Cross
of the Lord!
You are a mystical Paradise, O Theotokos,
who, though untilled, have brought forth
Christ;
through Him the life-bearing wood of the
Cross was planted on earth.
Now at its Exaltation, as we bow in worship
before it, we magnify you.

COMMUNION HYMN

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him
in the highest!
The light of Your countenance has been
signed upon us, O Lord.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Wisdom of the Fathers

The key to knowledge is the humility of Christ. The door of the Kingdom of Heaven is open, not to those who only know in their learned minds the mysteries of faith and the commandments of their Creator, but to those who have progressed far enough to live by them.

St. Bede the Venerable

Unknown, 8th century

To deny oneself means to give up one's bad habits; to root out of the heart all that ties us to the world; not to cherish bad thoughts and desires; to suppress every evil thought; to avoid occasions of sin; not to desire or to do anything out of self-love, but to do everything out of love for God. To deny oneself, according to St. Paul means "to be dead to sin. . . but alive to God."

St. Innocent of Alaska

The Lenten Spring, SVS Press, p. 147, 19th Century

Beyond the Sermon



THE GOSPEL READING

Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

[Jesus' First Prophecy of His Passion]

The Lord said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the

gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

THE SERMON

After feeding a multitude of thousands of people, Jesus begins to teach His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" His disciples answered that people had various opinions. Then the Lord asks them very specifically, saying, "But who do you say that I am?" the Apostle Peter answers and says to Him, "You are the Messiah," which is to say, "You are the

Christ.” This sets the context for this passage, as the Lord teaches us what it means to follow Him.

Immediately after Apostle Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord begins to teach them that the Son of Man will suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and after three days, rise again. This seems almost contradictory to the revelation that Jesus is the Messiah. In the minds and hearts of the Jewish people at that time, the Messiah was expected to be a conquering warrior who would defeat the enemies of God’s people and set them free forever. The Messiah, they thought, was meant to be the One anointed with the power and glory of God. He would be the One who would liberate Israel from its oppressors and rule from His throne in Jerusalem over a free and prosperous Israel. However, after confessing that Jesus is the Messiah, the disciples hear from Him that, instead of defeating enemies and setting up His throne, Jesus would rather suffer many things and be killed. Saint Peter reacted to this, took the Lord aside, and began to rebuke Him. He told the Lord that He should not speak of pain, rejection, or crucifixion. He is the Messiah! However, the Lord rebukes Peter, telling him that he was thinking with a worldly mindset. The way to freedom, glory, and eternal life is through the Cross. That is why the Lord tells His disciples that whoever wants to follow Him must take up their own cross. He says that whoever puts the desires of this life as the priority, will lose them. On the other hand, whoever puts the desires of eternal life first, will receive it. The Lord teaches

that achieving all things in this world cannot be compared to receiving eternal life. To love Christ means to follow Him. Jesus teaches us that to follow Him means

to walk with Him on the path He Himself has walked. This path leads to the Resurrection and eternal life. However, this path goes through the Cross and the grave before it reaches the morning of Pascha (Easter). We need to descend into the tomb with Christ before we ascend with Him into Heaven. When the Lord allows suffering in our lives, which is inescapable, it is to make us more like Him. Christ is the eternal Son of God Who voluntarily took on human nature and its suffering. The pain inflicted upon Him is for our redemption.

He suffered for our sake. When He calls us to take up our own cross, He invites us to walk with Him so that we can live with Him forever.

This is not always easy because it requires that we say to Him, not as I will, but as You will, Lord. We are called to embrace our cross, whatever it may be, for each one of us individually. This does not mean that we seek to suffer for suffering’s sake. It does not mean that we do not seek solutions for our problems, nor that we refrain from asking Christ to help us, and the Mother of God and the Saints to intercede for us when we encounter difficult, even desperate, situations. It means, however, that we trust the Lord, and “...commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God” (as we pray during the Divine Liturgy). This is not always easy, but all God asks is that we try. We never have to do it alone, since God is always with us.

Saint Augustine of Hippo says, “The Lord

has required that 'whoever will come after him must deny himself.' But what He commands is neither hard nor painful when He helps us in such a way so that the very thing he requires may be accomplished . . .

For whatever seems hard in what is enjoined, love makes easy." In other words, the Lord helps us with His grace, which the Holy Spirit gives us in many ways. Christ tells us that His grace is sufficient for us, that His strength in us is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Ultimately, He gives us the great promise: that He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb.13:5).

In this way, we are called to take up our cross and follow Christ. This means two things. Firstly, we become ready to give up everything that keeps us tied to worldly things, that is, things that seem essential to us from a secular perspective but keep us away from spiritual growth and Christ. We learn to be mindful of God more than of this world.

Secondly, as difficult as it sounds, we prepare to forgive everyone who might hurt us — and follow Christ in the path of love, grace, and peace. At the Cross, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Forgiving others who hurt us deeply and unjustly may seem almost impossible. But it is with the grace and love of Christ that it becomes possible. This path is not always easy, and does have challenges and obstacles, but it is this path leading to salvation where we experience the joy, peace and love of God. It is the path to unity with God.

The way of the Cross leads to eternal glory. This is the path Christ opens for us. He calls

us to follow Him to the Cross and share in His glory. The Lord calls us to be courageous in the face of suffering and opposition from this world, knowing that His glory is with us. This refers to the heavenly glory the disciples would witness

when Christ was transfigured. He showed His divine glory to them, reminding us that this is our destination — if we follow Christ.

All the generations of holy people who undergo a spiritual rebirth and a transformation, experience the Kingdom of God in their lives here on earth. All those who follow Christ through prayer, repentance, and virtue are transformed. All those who seek theosis, that is, union with Christ, spiritually see the Divine Light of Mount Tabor, the Light of the Transfigured Christ. The way to that glory passes through embracing our cross, denying ourselves, and following Him. He walks with us through pain and suffering, and He leads us to joy, peace, and eternal life.



August 18, 2024
Protocol 08/006

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (Acts 2:1)

In July 2025, the bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America will gather in one place for the 21st All-American Council. Our gathering in Phoenix, Arizona, will not be in the upper room where the disciples once received the grace of the Holy Spirit in a rush of wind and in the form of fiery tongues. Yet we, too “have seen the true light; we have received the heavenly Spirit” through holy Baptism and Chrismation. Thus, when we gather as Church, it is the grace of the Holy Spirit that calls us together. On those blazing July days, the Spirit will be no less present in our midst than in the days of the apostles, and we will seek the Spirit’s inspiration and guidance to act in one accord for the sake of the proclamation of the kingdom.

In preparation for that gathering, I am calling on all the communities of the Orthodox Church in America—parishes, missions, seminaries, monasteries, and all institutions—to consider submitting a reflection on this moment in the life of the Church: whence we have come, where we are now, and whither the Spirit may be calling us.

As a Church, we have passed through seasons of inner struggles and, even today, we face any number of difficulties; yet, by the grace of God, the Orthodox Church in America finds herself today in a place of stability and great opportunities. As the Primate of the Church for close to 12 years, I possess the conviction that this is no mere ephemeral phase but rather a firm foundation upon which we can not only weather external storms but, more importantly, build further.

To build further upon this foundation, one key body to which we look is the All-American Council, and hence it is that, prior to the upcoming council, I request that all of your communities join in helping us as Church reflect on the possibilities of the present moment.

According to the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, the All-American Council has the authority to “approve and implement Church-wide initiatives with regard to the missionary, educational, financial, and philanthropic activities of the Church.” So that your reflections may contribute to the formulation of an actionable resolution, I ask that they deal with activity in one or more of these four areas: mission, education, finance, and philanthropy.

Once again, these reflections should be the product of communal effort. Your community's reflection process should be geared to include all members of the Body of Christ, from the youngest child to the most elderly shut-in. I encourage you especially to consider your community's own initiatives and activities that might inspire activity on the part of the whole Church. Here, it is useful to think about the past, present, and future: what has been tried? What is succeeding? What is next?

Your community's reflection can be submitted for consideration via email to grandinvitation@oca.org. Reflections should be submitted on behalf of each community by its rector or equivalent clergy leadership, or, for communities without clergy, by lay leadership. It is my hope that these reflections can become the basis of a major resolution, an invitation to address the life and future of the Orthodox Church in America. In one accord, guided and inspired by heavenly Spirit, let us reflect and discern how God is calling us to use this moment to act as Church for the sake of his kingdom and his glory.

Once again, your community's reflection should be submitted via email to the following address: grandinvitation@oca.org.

I remain sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tikhon', with a cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada