



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 23, 2025

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:

Carolyn Neiss- President Greg Jankura - Vice President
Boris Doph - Treasurer. James Ifkovic - Secretary
Sharon Hanson - Member at Large
Luba Martins - Member at Large

Brett Malcolm - Member at Large

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

Lent starts Monday, March 3rd. Liturgically, we begin Lent with Forgiveness Vespers and the Rite of Forgiveness following Liturgy on March 2nd. Throughout Lent, I have reinstated Open Doors twice a week; Wednesdays from 4 to 6 and Saturdays from 3 to 5:30. These times are available for drop-in confession. If you need another date and time, these can be arranged by appointment.

Every parishioner is expected to come to confess during Lent. Please take a look at the Lenten resources on our web site.

<https://www.stalexischurch.org/lentenresources>

I have also placed two brochures on "confession" in the holders found on the wall at the base of the stairs.

Dear [Brethren] in Christ,

At our Diocesan Council meeting last night we reviewed a request from some of our youth at Christ the Savior parish in Southbury to help them raise funds for a mission trip they are hoping to go on this summer. The Council was very enthusiastic about supporting this effort and decided to donate \$1,000 for their trip. His Grace, in an example of stewardship also committed to donate an additional \$500 of his own money. Our own Fr. Mircea and his family went on one of this mission trips last year and spoke very highly of their experience.

The council wished to provide information on this opportunity, not only to maybe support this team, but to raise awareness of this program and maybe promote the program in your own parishes and maybe encourage the youth in your parishes to make a mission trip of their own.

I have attached the letter from the Southbury youth if you wish to support them and Fr. Mircea has provided us with links (see his email below) to see better what the program is all about.

Sincerely in the Lord,
Fr. John

Archpriest John Kreta
Chancellor, Diocese of New England

As promised, see below more information

on this absolutely amazing ministry OYMT (Orthodox Youth Mission Team). Mka Sarah, myself and our daughter Sofia went last summer and found it powerful and transformative. This next summer we are going again, this time bringing three of our children and another youth from our parish. Spread the word!

Recruiting video (filmed during the 2019 mission trip): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6swdBy0q9Kw&t=2s>

The website (has a ton of info about OYMT, history, and past trips): www.oymt.info

And this is a short video of our trip from last year:
https://youtu.be/0fw-rBd5TI4?si=1Q8ip_rorxqDoZ2R&sfnsn=wa

In Christ,
Fr. Mircea

Book Study

Reminder: there is a Lenten book Study being held on Thursday evenings via Zoom. This begins at 7pm. Everyone is invited to attend. The book being discussed is "Whispers of Mary" by Gayle Somers. You do not necessarily have to purchase the book as we will be focusing on the scriptural references.

Catechumenate Study

I will also be restarting the catechumenate study on Tuesday evenings via Zoom, also starting at 7pm. This is open to anyone

who wishes to learn more about the Orthodox Faith and Tradition.

Be sure to check the parish calendar for specific dates of lenten services and events!

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Many years! for Connor Kuziak on the occasion of his birthday.

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.

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

- Departed: Gail Galena, Leonore, Maria
- Clergy and their families: Fr Sergei B, Fr Vladimir, Matushka Anne,
- Catechumen: Kevin, James
- Individuals and Families: Luba, Suzanne, Rosemary, Daniel & Dayna, Kristen, Charles, Victor, Susan, Gregory
- Birthdays and Name's Days this Month: Demetra Tolis (3 Feb), Christina Hoehnbert (8 Feb), Gabrielle Neiss (8 Feb), Fr Deacon Timothy (12 Feb), Nadia Penkoff Lidbeck (18 Feb), Connor Kuziak (24 Feb)
- Anniversaries this Month: Glenn & Stasia Penkoff Lidbeck (15 Feb)
- Expecting and Newborn: Keree, Steve and their unborn child, Katie and Aaron and their unborn child, Steven and Ashley and their unborn child, Christopher, Valery and Jason and their unborn child.
- Traveling:
- Sick and those in distress: Thomas, Sheri, Joanna, Joshua, Remy, Stormy, Scott, Anne, Noah, Nancy, Cathy, Joe, Sophia, Gregory, Tomas, Nancy, Nicholas, Carol, Vincent

Today's commemorated feasts and saints

SUNDAY OF MEATFARE — Tone

2. Sunday of the Last

Judgment. Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop

of Smyrna (167). Ven. Polycarp of Briansk (1620-1621). Ven. John, Antiochus, Antoninus, Moses, Zebinas, Polychronius, Moses, and Damian, Ascetics, of the Syrian deserts (5th c.). Ven. Alexander, founder of the Monastery of the "Unsleeping Ones" (ca. 430). Ven. Damian of Esphigmenou (Mt. Athos—1280). Monastic Martyr Damian of Philotheou (1568). St. Gorgonia, Sister of St. Gregory the Theologian (370).

- 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

February 23 to March 3, 2025

Sunday, February 23

Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, February 24

First & Second Finding of the Venerable

Head of John the Baptist
Connor Kuziak

Tuesday, February 25

Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople
8:30AM Matins
7:00PM Catechumen Studies

Wednesday, February 26

Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza

Thursday, February 27

Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny of Brooklyn
Procopius the Confessor of Decapolis
8:30AM Matins
7:00PM Book Study

Friday, February 28

Righteous John Cassian the Confessor

Saturday, March 1

Cheesefare Saturday
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, March 2

Forgiveness Sunday
9:30AM Divine Liturgy
11:35AM Vespers with the Rite of
Forgiveness

Monday, March 3

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

Saints and Feasts

February 23

Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

The foregoing two parables -- especially

that of the Prodigal Son -- have presented to us God's extreme goodness and love for man. But lest certain persons, putting their confidence in this alone, live carelessly, squandering upon sin the time given them to work out their salvation, and death suddenly snatch them away, the most divine Fathers have appointed this day's feast commemorating Christ's impartial Second Coming, through which we bring to mind that God is not only the Friend of man, but also the most righteous Judge, Who recompenses to each according to his deeds.

It is the aim of the holy Fathers, through bringing to mind that fearful day, to rouse us from the slumber of carelessness unto the work of virtue, and to move us to love and compassion for our brethren. Besides this, even as on the coming Sunday of Cheese-fare we commemorate Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight -- which exile is the beginning of life as we know it now -- it is clear that today's is reckoned the last of all feasts, because on the last day of judgment, truly, everything of this world will come to an end.

All foods, except meat and meat products, are allowed during 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

Photini the Samaritan Woman & her martyred sisters: Anatole, Phota, Photis, Praskevi, & Kyriaki

Saint Photini lived in 1st century Palestine and was the woman that Christ met at Jacob's Well in Samaria as recorded in the Gospel according to John (4:4-26). After her encounter with Christ, she and her whole family were baptized by the Apostles and became evangelists of the early Church. Photini and her children eventually were summoned before the emperor Nero and instructed to renounce their faith in Christ. They refused to do so, accepting rather to suffer various tortures. After many efforts to force her to surrender to idolatry, the emperor ordered that she be thrown down

a well. Photini gave up her life in the year 66.

St. Photini is commemorated on three occasions during the year: February 26 (Greek tradition), March 20 (Slavic tradition), and the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman on the 5th Sunday of Pascha.

February 27

Raphael of Brooklyn

Saint Raphael Hawaweeny was born on November 8, 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 the 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 27, 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

7, 1915, before being moved to the Syrian section of Mount Olivet Cemetery in Brooklyn on April 2, 1922. They were finally translated to the Holy Resurrection Cemetery at the Antiochian Village near Ligonier, Pennsylvania, on August 15, 1988. His sanctity was officially proclaimed by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on March 29, 2000, and his glorification was celebrated on May 29 of that year at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon in Pennsylvania.

Hymns of the Day



Tone 2 Troparion (Resurrection)

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal,
You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.

And when from the depths You raised the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!”

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.

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

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.

now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 1 Kontakion (from the Lenten Triodion)

When You, O God, shall come to earth with glory, all things shall tremble, and the river of fire shall flow before Your judgment seat; the books shall be opened, and the hidden things disclosed; then deliver me from the unquenchable fire, // and make me worthy to stand at Your right hand, O Righteous Judge!

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! Alleluia (3X)

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Psalm 146.5;134.3.

Great is our Lord, and great is his power.
Verse: Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good.

The reading is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2.

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Gospel Reading

Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday) The Reading is from Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from

the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Wisdom of the Fathers

"Christian love is the 'possible impossibility' to see Christ in another man, whoever he is..."

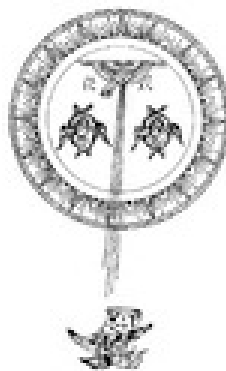
Alexander Schmemmann

Great Lent, 20th Century

. . .The day will come when we shall stand before God and be judged, but as long as our pilgrimage continues, as long as we live in the process of becoming, as long as there is ahead of us this road that leads to the full measure of the stature of Christ which is our vocation, judgment must be pronounced by ourselves.

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

Beyond the Sermon



[In today's Gospel], we read Christ's last sermon before His crucifixion. Here, the Lord does not present a parable, but a description and a prophecy of the judgment that will come on the Last Day. The Cross is near, and Christ brings us to contemplate His glory in the Second Coming,

when He will sit on the Judgment Seat with the whole world in front of Him. On that Day of Judgment, the world as we know it will come to an end, and the Day that never ends will dawn. It will be the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, and those who have

drawn near to God in faith and love will receive their inheritance.

This sermon from Christ teaches us that the Last Judgment will seal the destiny of all human beings, and we will be judged according to how we practiced the virtues of faith and love. To love God with all our heart, mind, and soul is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Such love is not merely felt but shown through our actions. Similarly, genuine faith is that which works in and transforms our lives and the lives of others. Not merely our own, since faith is something to be shared. Genuine faith and acts of love are the measurements by which we will be judged. The Lord tells us that at the Second Coming, He will come in His glory with all His angels, sit on His glorious throne, and all the nations will be gathered before Him. In His first coming, that is, His Incarnation, the Lord becoming flesh, not only restored our human nature to its original dignity but brought about a new possibility, to be transformed into the likeness of God. At His Second Coming in His eternal glory, He will come to separate the sheep from the goats. This illustration would have been familiar to Christ's listeners, who were well-acquainted with livestock. Shepherds raised sheep and goats for various purposes. The Lord's description teaches us that what made them different was not what they were but what they did and did not do. The sheep followed the Shepherd's voice, as the Lord said: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10:27-28). They are gentle and productive. On the other hand, the goats did not follow the Shepherd but were disobedient. We are

called to be obedient, like the sheep, not rebellious like the goats. The Lord will say to those at His right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." The Kingdom is an inheritance, a gift from God to those who love Him and their neighbor.

Notice how Christ identifies Himself with the poor, with those who are thirsty and hungry, with the sick, and with those in prison. To serve those in need is to serve Christ Himself. As He says, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Some chose not to serve others in love, and those will be placed on His left hand, a gesture of His disfavor. Those who served others sacrificially will be placed on His right hand, a gesture of the Lord's royal favor. Those placed on Christ's right imitated Him by faith and love, and they did so by feeding the hungry, practicing hospitality, clothing the poor, and visiting the sick and the captives. The needs listed include both physical and spiritual needs. In the Divine Liturgy, we are united in One Body, the Body of Christ. We pray for those in need, asking "for the sick, the suffering, the captives and for their salvation . . . for our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and distress." Our mission is to participate in the fulfillment of this prayer, not only in thought and word but also in deed. We are called to go to the world and practice genuine Christian love.

Serving the Lord by serving others in practical ways is a mark of Christian discipleship. After the Resurrection and before His Ascension, the Lord commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Becoming a disciple of Christ means being united with Him through the Holy Baptism, living His commandments, and becoming a disciple who loves and serves God and others. Genuine service is best measured by acts toward those who are unable to repay us. The Lord sees the disposition of our hearts and knows whether we act out of faith and love or out of a desire for recognition and reward.

Discipleship, therefore, is about imitating Christ and becoming a vessel of His grace and mercy to others. Those who live in this way and participate in the ministry of Christ are those who are welcomed into the Kingdom and who are called "blessed of the Father" in the end. If we love Him, we will follow in His steps. If our faith is grounded in Him and abides deeply in our souls, our Christian identity is shown to be living and life-giving.

By genuine faith and active love, we show mercy and compassion to all those in need. In this way, spiritually, we already begin to live in that Kingdom which we will receive as an inheritance on the Last Day, when "the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43), and the Lord will say, "Come inherit the Kingdom!" This is the manifestation of God's grace and love in our lives. As Saint John Chrysostom says, "Of what honor,

of what blessedness are these words? And He said not, Take, but, Inherit, as one's own, as your Father's, as yours, as due to you from the first." We will begin to practice the kind of faith and love described as we make ourselves open and available to the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, Who works in and through us (Philippians 2:13). Being His children, we receive the gifts of God, and He rewards our works with His eternal Kingdom. The love of God is the beginning and the end of all things. We cooperate with His Spirit as His disciples; this is the way to the Kingdom of God. May we continue on this path in our journey to His Kingdom by serving Christ and others daily so that we might be counted among the sheep at His right hand.





"I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO CONFESS..."

SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR CONFESSION

The purpose of Confession is to free you and to heal you – not to judge you. When we confess out loud the sins that are burdening us, our sins lose their power over us. We can walk away from Confession free and joyful.

After you've kissed the icons in church, while you're waiting, bless yourself, pray to God to help you make a good confession, and consider these "tips":

Confess your sins; don't focus on anybody else's. It's OK to tell how somebody else has hurt you, but only if you follow it by confessing your sinful response – such as: feelings of hatred, bitterness, grudges, wanting them to suffer or "pay", and so on.

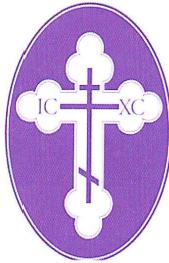
Confess your sins, not your good deeds. List the ways you have failed to be good. Both you and God know the good things you do – and He'll reward you! But He wants you to tell the ways you've failed to be good, so you can be healed of them!

Here are the 10 Commandments. Have you disobeyed any of them? How?

1. "I am the Lord your God.... you shall have no other gods before me." **AND...**
2. "You shall not make for yourself any graven images (idols)... You shall not bow down to them." Have you spent more time or energy on any other part of your life – work; money; leisure (sports, TV, hobbies) – than on your relationship with God? Have you decided not to come to Vespers or holy day services in favor of other activities that do not have to take place at those times?
3. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." Have you said the names, "God," "Jesus," or "Christ" in anger, or for any other purpose than prayer, praise, or talking to someone else about what God has done in your life?
4. "Remember the sabbath day (Sunday), to keep it holy." Have you missed Church on Sunday for any reason other than the inability to come? Have you treated Sunday as "just another day" even after leaving Church?
5. "Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long." Have you disrespected or failed to pay attention to, or to love, your parents and elders?
6. "You shall not kill." Even if you haven't murdered anybody... do you kill others in your heart by hating, judging, or ridiculing them?
7. "You shall not commit adultery." Have you had sexual relations outside of marriage – that includes before marriage if you have never been married – and have you allowed your mind to dwell on the desire to be with a person other than your spouse (even if you're not married)?
8. "You shall not steal." Have you taken anything, from anyone or anywhere, not intended for you?
9. "You shall not bear false witness (lie) against your neighbor." Have you lied about someone else? Have you asked questions that lead others to criticize someone else ("where do you suppose he got all that money?... why do you suppose she got picked and so-and-so didn't?")
10. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house, his wife, ... nor any thing that is your neighbor's." Have you envied or been jealous of anyone? Have you wished something of theirs was yours instead? Have you been jealous when others seem to receive more attention than you?

Don't worry, you don't have to remember all these things! Just be honest and brave.

May God guide you to a good, healing Confession!



Lord your God in vain." Have you said "Christ" in anger, or for any other talking to someone else about what God

(Sunday), to keep it holy." Have you reason other than the inability to come? another day" even after leaving Church? that your days may be long." Have you

disrespected or failed to pay attention to, or to love, your parents and elders?

Even if you haven't murdered anybody... do you kill others in your heart by hating, judging, or ridiculing them?

Have you had sexual relations outside of marriage – that includes before marriage if you have never been married – and have you allowed your mind to dwell on the desire to be with a person other than your spouse (even if you're not married)?

Have you taken anything, from anyone or anywhere, not intended for you?

Have you lied about someone else? Have you asked questions that lead others to criticize someone else ("where do you suppose he got all that money?... why do you suppose she got picked and so-and-so didn't?")

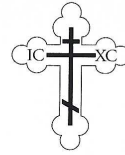
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Orthodox Youth Mission Team

2025 Summer Mission Trip
Appalachia Service Project
June 28 - July 6, 2025



Dear *Bishop Benedict J. John, + Diocese of New England,*

I am writing today with an opportunity to join me in an exciting ministry: the Orthodox Youth Mission Team (OYMT). As a member of OYMT, I will be part of a clergy-led, pan-Orthodox Christian team of high school students and adult leaders, who put our Faith to work by participating in summer mission trips. Here are some facts about our team:

- This year, our Connecticut and New York-based team will be joined by satellite teams from Vermont, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New Mexico—over 60 youth and adults total!
- We will be serving families in Appalachia through the Appalachia Service Project (ASP) (www.ASPHome.org) for the twelfth time this year, doing home repairs with the goal of making homes “warmer, safer and drier.” In Appalachia, one in every four residents live below the federal poverty level. On a daily basis, families are forced to make tough choices between food, medical care and clothing. Home repairs often end up at the bottom of the list.
- Our local team and satellite teams come together for one week in the summer and live together in Orthodox Christian community, building relationships and sharing the love of Christ with others.
- We are currently participating in monthly trainings in our home states, and with each other via Zoom, to prepare for the mission trip. We are learning about the people we will serve, the carpentry and construction skills we’ll need, and how to answer the call to serve Christ as his Body, the Church.

How can you help? Our mission work expenses are approximately \$30,000 this year. I am asking you to become a “shareholder” in our team and invest in this Orthodox youth ministry. What does being a shareholder look like?

- Donors purchase mock stock in OYMT from a team member for \$10 per share.
- As a shareholder, you’ll receive updates about our mission work throughout the year and while we are on the trip, including our annual newsletter. You can also visit the “Shareholder Hub” on our website.
- Shareholders are invited to special thank you presentations in the Fall, where team members share photos and reflections from the summer mission trip.

Where does your donation go? Your stock shares will pay a triple dividend! Your generosity will:

1. Help us help those in need by covering the costs of training, transportation, accommodations, and necessary items for the homeowners we will serve.
2. Make this mission opportunity available to all Orthodox high school students, regardless of their family’s financial situation, by providing need-based scholarships.
3. Ignite a zeal for mission in our parishes and our youth and, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, inspire us to better know, love and serve Christ—the beginning of lifelong vocations as future leaders of our Church.

Ready to invest? My goal is to sell at least 50 shares of stock this year. If you’d like to support me, please complete the enclosed form and mail it to me or OYMT with a check for \$10.00 per share made payable to **St. John the Baptist Church**. You can also buy your stock online by visiting www.oymt.info, clicking Donate, and writing the information requested on our stock form in the comments. We would welcome matching corporate or community donations/grants to help fund our work.

To make the most impact on this summer’s trip, it would be ideal if we could receive your investment by **May 1, 2025**. OYMT is church-sponsored, which means that all donations are tax deductible.

Thank you in advance for investing in me and supporting the Orthodox Youth Mission Team!

In Christ, *Sofia + Hannah Cole, Chris + Cassie Reznic, and Elias Locke*
- Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, CT

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Please pray for us and our team!