



FROM THE AMBON

ST MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH

512 WINTER ST., OLD FORGE, PA

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Priest Michael Shepherd (fmichael@stmichaelof.org)

Chair - Tammy Wytovich (chair@stmichaelof.org)

Vice Chair - Danny Pregmon (vicechair@stmichaelof.org)

Treasurer - Maura Elko (treasurer@stmichaelof.org)

Secretary - Vitaliy Rakovskiy (office@stmichaelof.org)

May 12th, 2024 ANTIPASCHA. 2nd SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone 1. St. Thomas Sunday. St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus (403). St. Germanus (Herman), Patriarch of Constantinople (740). Glorification of Hieromartyr Germogén (Hermogenes), Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (1913). Ven. Dionisii, Archimandrite of St. Sergius' Monastery (1633). St. Sabinus, Archbishop of Cyprus, and St. Polybius, Bishop in Cyprus (5th c.). Martyr John of Vlachia (Romania—1662).

Birthdays & Anniversaries for May

Birthdays: Jason Vo (5/30); Daniel Jones (5/30)

Nameday: Helen Wytovich (5/21); Emily Krenitsky (5/30)

Baptism: Fr Michael and Matushka Emilia Shepherd (5/8); Maximus Shepherd (5/16); Rodion Shepherd (5/18)

Anniversary: Fr Michael Shepherd - Priest Ordination (5/26)

Travelers: Vitaliy and Maria Rakovsky (5/6 -5/22)

Prospora Schedule: HELP! We need families to start baking prospora at home. Please sign up. *The Church has a prospora kit if you would like to borrow it.* Thank you all for your offering “for the people by the people.”

May 19th -

May 26th -

Counting: HELP! Please sign up to help us count weekly donations!

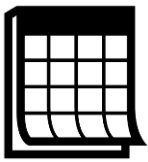
May 19th -

May 26th -

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!

Visitors: PLEASE JOIN US DOWNSTAIRS for an Agape Meal. Thank you to everyone who donated. Please donate what you would spend for lunch at the agape meal to replenish our supplies. PLEASE SING ALONG! Singing the hymns and responses to the litanies throughout the services is encouraged!

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive themselves by prayer, fasting, and a recent (monthly) confession. If you have questions please ask Fr Michael! Visitors, if you did not introduce yourself to Fr Michael at Vespers, please refrain from Holy Communion.*



Service Schedule

SAT, May 18th: @ 4:50PM Great Vespers & Matins w/confessions

SUN, May 19th: @ 9:10 AM - Hours and Divine Liturgy

3rd SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone 2. Myrrhbearing Women.



Words of Wisdom

From the Saints & Teachers

Today Readings

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20 (§14)

Gospel: John 20:19-31 (§65)

EPISTLE

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the 3rd Tone: Great is our Lord, and great is His strength, and of His understanding there is no measure.

Choir: Great is our Lord, and great is His strength, and of His understanding there is no measure.

Reader: Praise ye the Lord, for a psalm is a good thing; let praise be sweet unto our God.

Choir: Great is our Lord, and great is His strength, and of His understanding there is no measure.

Reader: Great is our Lord, and great is His strength.

Choir: And of His understanding there is no measure.

Reader: The Reading is from the Acts of the Holy Apostles.

Acts 5:12-20 (§14): In those days, by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. * And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. * And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) * Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. * There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one. * Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, * And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. * But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, * Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

ALLELUIA (PAUSE before first verse)

Reader: Alleluia in the 8th Tone:

Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Reader: Come let us rejoice in the Lord, let us shout with jubilation unto God our Savior.

Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Reader: For the Lord is a great God and a great King over all the earth.

Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 20:19-31 (§65): The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. * And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. * Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. * And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: * Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. * But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. * The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his

hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. * And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. * Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. * And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. * Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. * And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: * But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Acts 5:19 An Angel of the Lord

For Encouragement and Instruction. St John Chrysostom: “But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, ‘Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.’ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught.” This was done for the encouragement of the disciples and for the benefit and instruction of the others. For notice how what Christ once did happened again here: he does not allow them to witness the miracle in action but provides that from which they may learn of it. This is what happened on the occasion of his resurrection: he did not let them see how he rose again. When wine is made from water, the guests do not see it (for they were drunk); the judgment he entrusts to others. Likewise in the present case, they do not see them being led out, but the evidence, from which they might understand what happened, they saw. And it was by night that the angel put them outside. Why? Because in this way they were more believed than they would have been otherwise. They would not have come to ask questions. They would not have believed otherwise. **Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 13.**

John 20:19: Jesus Does Not Delay. St John Chrysostom: It was likely that when the disciples heard these things from Mary they would either not believe the woman—or if they did believe her, they would be sad that he had not considered them worthy of such a vision even though he promised to meet them in Galilee. Since this was so, he did not let a single day pass so that they might not dwell on this and become distracted. Rather, he brought them to a state of longing by their knowledge that he was risen and by what they heard from the woman. And when they were thirsting to see him and were greatly afraid (which especially made their yearning greater), he then, when it was evening, presented himself before them. And he did so in a very marvelous way. And why did he appear in the “evening”? Because that was probably when they would be especially fearful. **Homilies on the Gospel of John 86.2.**

How Much is my tithe

Weekly	2%	4%	5%	10%
\$200	\$4	\$8	\$10	\$20
\$500	\$10	\$20	\$25	\$50
\$750	\$15	\$30	\$37	\$75
\$1000	\$20	\$40	\$50	\$100
\$1500	\$30	\$60	\$75	\$150

WEEKLY GIVING UPDATE: We thank you for your continued giving in gratitude for all that our loving God does for each of us, for His Holy Church, and all the blessings we receive through her.
May Income: \$5,560.00
May Expense: \$5,117.25
Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$3,740.85
Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$14,963.58



Announcements - Upcoming Parish & Diocesan Events

Silent Prayers and Confession: Every Wednesday 11:00AM - 1:30PM or after vespers. Or you can make an appt for confession.

Church Work Day: Every Friday is Church Maintenance day.

Monthly Panikhida: May 25th

Mother's Day & Blessing of the Graves: Today! Panikhida will be right after Divine Liturgy.

Parish Council Meeting: 1 June 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM - All are invited.

Take Out Chicken Barbeque: Hosted by Arcaro and Genell's. Saturday, June 22nd from 12PM-3PM. The price will be \$13 a ticket. Everyone will be given two tickets to sell (you can purchase more if you like). Sandy and Tammy will hand them out on April 14th.

Cry Room: Please see the sign on the Cry Room door. This room should be left open at any time for mothers of children to use at their discretion. This room is not to be used to hang out in or a place of worship.

Episcopal Visit! His Eminence, Archbishop Mark will be visiting on June 2nd! Let's make preparations to welcome our Archpastor. Blaise Shepherd and Jason Hart will be tonsured Readers at this visit! AXIOS!

Parish Prayer List

Newly Departed: *Jean Staviski Mori (5/6); Michael Brown (3/15)*

Departed: *Evelyn Flynn (5/5); Volodymyr Danylets (5/9); Marie Raskausakas (5/12); Paul Bezuhly (5/15); Harry Krevko (5/16); Alexander Pritchky (5/18); Walter Pregmon (5/19); Dennis Pregmon (5/25)*

Please remember in your prayers LIVING

Ill-afflicted *Archpriests Michael Evans, John Nightingale, & Theodore Orzolek*

All those caring for the sick and suffering at this time throughout the world, especially our families and friends: *David Lezinsky, John Pritchky, Christine Sevensky, Mike Jadick, Margaret Pregmon, Daniel Jones, Matushka Paula Soucek, Michael Sokol; Michael Krenitsky; The children of God Abigail and Nathan.*

Servants of God *Mark Bezhuly, David Barsigian, Patricia Jones, Anne Buday, Mary Krevko, Gregory Krevko, Emily Krenitsky, Gregory Krenitsky, Barbara Sevensky, Bernie & Beverly Elko, Sandra Condon, Marie Pasternak, Ann Tyrpak, Sandy & Danny Pregmon, Walter Pritchky, Michael & Euphemia Keklak, Justin & Elisabeth Kane, Maria & Vitaliy Rakovsky, Ekaterina & Anna, Joe & Kelly Cigna, George, Natasha, Rosa, & Lucia Coyoy, Paul & MaryAnn Newmeyer, Mat. Emilia, Blaise, Maximus, Rodion, Savina Shepherd, Joseph, Emilia, Judah, Nadezda, & Silas Hart, Eli & Paula Stavisky, Helen Wytovich, Tammy Wytovich, Sharissa & Debra, Nadia Macheska, Paulette Ezbianky, Jason Vo & Maura Elko, Santo Joseph Cerminaro, Mikayla Brown*

Seekers - *Christopher, Eugene, Mike, Brayden, Barbara*

Catechumen - *JoAnne Snopek & Paul Dunay*

Fr. Michael's Reflection from Parish Council: Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! There is a great deal of muddled thinking today about the nature and purpose of the church. This is common not only among those outside the church but also among many within it. As a result, many churches—even seemingly “successful” churches—have lost their way and are not fulfilling Christ's purpose in the world. With simplicity, brevity, and clarity, C.S. Lewis dispels our confusion:

It is easy to think that the Church has a lot of different objects—education, building, missions, holding services. Just as it is easy to think the State has a lot of different objects—military, political, economic, and what not. But in a way things are much simpler than that. The State exists simply to promote and to protect the ordinary happiness of human beings in this life. A husband and wife chatting over a fire, a couple of friends having a game of darts in a pub, a man

reading a book in his own room or digging in his own garden—that is what the State is there for. And unless they are helping to increase and prolong and protect such moments, all the laws, parliaments, armies, courts, police, economics, etc., are simply a waste of time. In the same way the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose.

If Lewis is right that “the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs,” we have a problem. The practice in many churches today appears to be to draw people to church and make them donors and volunteers, which is a very different proposition indeed. What is to be done?

One wonders what C.S. Lewis would say. Perhaps something like this: Don't criticize the church or its leadership; instead, pray for them. Then do two simple things: first, seek out whatever training you need to effectively share the Good News of Jesus with those who don't yet know him. Second, find believers who want to grow in Christlikeness and simply read the gospels together, discussing how to apply Jesus' teachings to everyday life. If even a small minority in a church would start doing this, the church would soon discover that it is becoming what it is meant to be: a place where people who have been drawn to Christ are being made into little Christs. All of us are the Church, not just the building. This building is a holy place but we are the church and if we are not expressing our respect for the holy place we will not draw men to Christ if we treat it like a movie theater.. With this being said, all of us, not just the priest, are called to police each other up when we do not act accordingly to the community we have a responsibility too. I need your help.

"And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:18–20 (ESV)

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, Simon & Schuster Touchstone, 1996), p. 171.

Bottom Line: The mark of an effective church is not how many people come; but how many people who live differently as a result of having been there.

When Is It Appropriate To Receive Holy Communion?

I have often been asked by new converts to Orthodoxy and even life-long members when it was appropriate for one to receive Holy Communion. This is usually the basic advice I give that I thought I would share with all.

Orthodox Christians are generally encouraged to receive Holy Communion at every Divine Liturgy. The purpose of the Divine Liturgy is to enter into communion with God, and the way this is done is by participating fully in the Divine Liturgy. One should avoid being late for the Divine Liturgy when receiving Holy Communion, as this shows a certain amount of disrespect for the great gift one is receiving, but if you are late you should not be later than the Gospel reading and if you are, please refrain from Holy Communion. You are not prepared to receive. The Divine Liturgy is the communal service and gathering of God's people (this is what the word "liturgy" means), so it requires full participation, as much as possible.

Many people worry and despair over the fact that certain sins in their life make them unworthy of receiving Holy Communion. However, as human beings who often sin every day, we are all unworthy of receiving Holy Communion and there is really nothing we can do to make ourselves worthy to receive the Body and Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We should never approach Holy Communion saying "we are now worthy". But there are certain "grave" sins that we can commit that are sins not only out of habit (personal sins which require daily confession before God), but also sins against our fellow man that require resolve before

receiving Holy Communion. For example, to bear a grudge against someone, to have hate towards a person, and to withhold forgiveness are all sins against our neighbor that require patching up before approaching the cup of love and forgiveness. As Jesus said: "Forgive and you will be forgiven" according to the measure that you forgive your neighbor. Some also have what are known as "sins against the Church" which require a general confession and repentance before a spiritual father or confessor (a priest) before one can approach Holy Communion, after a proper repentance to show one's humble approach before God's grace. Such sins are things like adultery, fornication, divorce, murder and heresy (holding blasphemous teachings opposed to the tradition of the Church).

Saying this, what is required for Holy Communion participation is summed up in the words said by the priest before distributing the holy gifts: "With the fear of God, faith and love, draw near". Humility is the most basic requirement, and trying to the best of our ability to live the life of the Church as set down by Christ, the Apostles and the Saints throughout history. The Church is a hospital for sinners, so the least we can do is to receive the "medicine of immortality" (this is what the Church Fathers called Holy Communion) acknowledging our sickness and seeking the entire treatment offered by the Church for our healing.

Approaching the Holy Chalice

Every time we approach the holy chalice to receive Communion to the Body and Blood of Christ we say a prayer that contains words that must become true on our lips and in our actions, otherwise they are a lie before God. We say to God that we are the worst sinner, we are the chief sinner that there is.

And isn't it natural that so often we say these words thinking, 'This was true of the saints, who could feel that way, but I can't feel that I am the worst of sinners'. When we look around, when we look at the state of the world in which we live, we can see a number of people who in our eyes are worse than we are. And regarding this I would like to remind you of a passage in the diary of Saint John of Kronstadt, who also asked himself the same question, and in the end answered it in the affirmative: 'Yes, I am the worst of all the sinners I know'.

And the reason he gave for this judgment of his was that he was aware of how much God had given him, and how little he had given to God in response.

I think we must all of us begin in this frame of mind, ask ourselves: What are the gifts which God has bestowed upon us? What is it that makes us so happy in ourselves, or makes others so happy in us, rightly or wrongly? And when we have come to understand how much we have received, then we can ask ourselves: what are the fruits which we have borne of these gifts?

And we will see that, according to the first Beatitude, there is nothing in us, in our life, which is our own, of our own making. God gave us life. He gave us a body, a soul, a mind. He gave us all that fills our lives with richness. All that we are and all that we possess are gifts of his. Do we give Him gratitude for it, or do we appropriate these gifts, thinking no, they are our own really? And even when we are aware of the fact that they are not of our making, that it is God who has given us all that we are and all that we have, do we know how to be grateful and also to ask ourselves the question which I have already mentioned: what have I done with all the gifts of God? And if we go ever more deeply within ourselves and in our lives, can we begin to be able to say: yes, I really am the worst of all the sinners around me because I am so richly endowed by God and look how little, how very little, I have brought to God and to my neighbor as a result of it?

If we are to believe that we are the worst of sinners; then it is at this point when the Prince of Peace, the creator of all who exits the altar and just like if a King would walk into the room everything comes to a halt and our focus is only on our Savior. And when we begin the Communion prayer, I believe, O Lord and confess, that You are truly the Christ, Son of the living God, Who came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the first again our arms should be crossed and our focus should not be on anything else. Not having conversations in

the narthex, the candle room, or the cry room. As stated above, if we are not prepared properly with a contrite heart in all humility then we should be honest with ourselves not receive Holy Communion. And we should never be having a conversation in the line for Communion as if we are waiting in line to purchase tickets for the latest movie.

So, let us all reflect on this. And when we come next time to Communion and we think or say these words, let us say them with at least a beginning of understanding that yes, it is true, and I know why. But come with an incipient understanding, because it takes a very long time for us to see how richly God has endowed us and how poorly we have responded to Him. But gradually, step by step, these words will become true and we will receive Communion with a new depth of broken-heartedness and with gratitude. Amen.

The Orthodox Church in America
6850 North Hempstead Turnpike
Syosset, NY 11791

Oath of Allegiance to the Holy Priesthood

I, the undersigned, presently called to the Order of the Holy Priesthood, bow down to Almighty God as witnessed in His Holy Gospels and do make this solemn vow:

I promise, in accordance with the Will of God, to fulfill all Church observances, services, rituals and prayers as prescribed by the Orthodox Christian Tradition;

I will recite the prescribed secret prayers diligently before offering the Holy Eucharist, and I vow not to introduce any changes or innovations to the customary Church ceremonial worship services;

I promise to uphold the teachings of truth and other pastoral instructions according to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox, Catholic and Apostolic Church and the Holy Fathers; to endeavor with my mind, heart and soul to protect the souls of the faithful entrusted to my care, against every heresy and schism, and to labor with every means available to return to the True Flock of Christ those who may have strayed from His path;

I vow to lead an honorable and sober life, putting aside all that is vain, worldly and vulgar; to set a good example, in humility and meekness, in order to guide others to good and noble things;

In all that I do, I will seek not my own vain honor and interests, but the Glory of God, the welfare of God's Holy Church, and the salvation of my neighbor;

As a cleric of the Orthodox Church in America, I will obey all the decisions of the Higher Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Leadership in all matters pertaining to my spiritual and administrative responsibilities;

I will with diligence and with the fear of God care for the good estate and development of the Orthodox Church in America;

I will serve under the canonical jurisdiction of the ruling bishop of a diocese of the Orthodox Church in America and I will not seek acceptance into another diocese or church without the written blessing of my bishop. In addition, I vow not to attempt to leave this canonical jurisdiction without a Letter of Release and the appropriate canonical release from the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America;

In cases of disputes between me and the spiritual and ecclesiastical authority of the diocese and the Orthodox Church in America , I promise to exhaust all internal procedures of the diocese and the Orthodox Church in America before bringing the dispute to the civil courts or tribunals in my jurisdiction;

I also recognize and understand that, with respect to my spiritual and administrative responsibilities within the diocese and the Orthodox Church in America, Ecclesiastical Canon Law takes precedence over any civil law and I understand that, pursuant to Canon Law, I may be subject to Canonical disciplinary measures.

I am assured in my heart that, by the prayers of the All-Pure Theotokos and the saints, the Lord God will help me with His blessings and mercy.

In affirmation of my solemn vow, I kiss the Word and Cross of my Savior, Jesus Christ Amen

Signature of Candidate

Signature of Father Confessor

Date

ST. MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish Of

The Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



Statement of Intent

As parishoner(s) of St Michael Orthodox Church, Old Forge, Pennsylvania, *I/we* will abide by the Canons and norms of the Holy Orthodox Church and the by-laws of the Orthodox Church in America, the Diocese, and parish.

I / we understand that regular participation in the Divine Sacraments (Confession and ideally both Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy) is essential for spiritual nourishment and growth. *I/we* understand that the Divine Sacraments are a free gift of God's Love and that proper preparation and participation in them is necessary for salvation.

I/we understand that being a member of a Christian community requires the God-pleasing sacrifices of Time, Talent, and Treasure as far as *I/we* are able to offer up to His Glory and for the building up of His Holy Church.

With Love in Christ,

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature

Date

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Rev. Michael Shepherd e-mail: frmichael@stmichaelof.org