

# St Michael's Orthodox Church

*A parish of the Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania*

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**January 14, 2023: LEAVE-TAKING OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD**  
*32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. St Nina, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia.*

## Services and Events

**Saturday, Jan 13, 4:00 p.m.** – Great Vespers & Confessions

**Sunday, Jan 14, 9:30 a.m.** – Divine Liturgy & Fellowship

**Saturday, Jan 20, 4:00 p.m.** – Great Vespers & Confessions

**Sunday, Jan 21, 9:30 a.m.** – Divine Liturgy & Fellowship

**Thursday-Friday, Jan 25-26** – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Diocesan Assembly, Harrisburg

**Friday, Jan 26, 5:00 p.m.** – 40<sup>th</sup> Day Panikhida for Rebecca Hanchak

*Coffee Hour is offered by:*

Jan 14: Mat. Dolores & Marilyn Petorak

Feb 4: Maryann Dubee & Susan Schlasta

Jan 21: Ruthie Lasichak & Roxanne Neutts

Feb 11: **SOUPer Bowl Sunday.** Crockpot Potluck. All donations

Jan 28: Vickie Kravitsky & Charette Radionoff

for IOCC. *We will also collect nonperishables for a local food bank.*

### *Words from Fr Moses Berry, who reposed Friday*

*about his conversion into Orthodoxy in the early 1980's, from the Africn Methodist Episcopal (AME) church*

... The choir began to sing: "Rejoice, thou through whom joy will flash forth. Rejoice, revival of fallen Adam. Rejoice, redemption of the tears of Eve. Rejoice, thou bride unwedded." And I was cut to the quick. I had never heard such language before. I hadn't read a book until I went to the prison, because I had dyslexia— and at that time, you know, that really wasn't diagnosed. So I just thought I was a dumb person.

They were singing the Akathist to the Mother of God: "She makes the most eloquent orators as dumb as fish." I was very emotional at that point. Then they sang, "The wise children did not adore the golden idol but went themselves into the flames and defied the pagan gods. They prayed in the midst of the flames, and an angel bedewed them. Already the prayer of your lips..." I said, Oh, my goodness! They reminded me so much of the early gospel music and songs I had grown up with. It had this deep, heartfelt expression of God's love for man, and man's redemption on account of God's love. It was the thing I had been looking for and hadn't been able to find.

Structurally speaking, the Orthodox Church still was not what I was looking for. But that very night, I said to myself, I will forsake all, and I'll buy the whole field for this one pearl of great price. And, you know, even though all my superiors, all my peers, and all my subordinates will be of a different race than I am, I don't care. I'll buy the whole thing.

– Archpriest Moses Berry, in an interview for the Diocese of New York & New Jersey, July 2020.

## Today's Scripture

*Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17*

*Brethren*, Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

*Gospel: Luke 18:35-43*

*At that time*, as Jesus was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him.

And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

## Hymns of the Day

*Sunday Troparion (Tone 7)*

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death. / To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. / For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy, / and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, / to proclaim that Thou art risen, // granting the world great mercy.

*The Theophany of Our Lord (Tone 1)*

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, / the worship of the Trinity was made manifest, / for the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, / and called Thee His beloved Son, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, / confirmed the truthfulness of His word. / O Christ our God, Who hast revealed Thyself // and has enlightened the world, glory to Thee!

*Glory ...*

*Sunday Kontakion (Tone 7)*

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, / for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. / Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry: / "The Savior has come to those in faith; // enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!"

*Now & ever ...*

*The Theophany of Our Lord (Tone 4)*

Today Thou has appeared to the universe, / and Thy light, O Lord, hast shone on us, / who with understanding praise Thee: / Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, // O Light Unapproachable!

## Announcements

The sign-up for **House Blessings** is downstairs near the front door. We will try out this schedule to see how it goes; if there are no convenient times for you, please let me know.

Please **pick up your 2024 envelopes** downstairs in the Church Basement (and please stay for Coffee Hour!)

**THANK YOU to Charlie Battenberg, of Battenberg Funeral Home**, for once again sponsoring our annual **Liturgical Wall Calendars** from St Tikhon's Monastery. We are grateful for Charlie's gift and continued service to many members of St Michael's family in their time of need. May God bless Charlie and all of his work in this community. We should receive these calendars within the next 1-3 weeks.

**Save the Date:** On **Saturday, March 2**, the Diocese will host a **Women's Retreat** at Holy Trinity in Stroudsburg: "*Compassion: From God to us; from us to others*". The guest speaker will be Presbyteria Kerry Pappas, a licensed marriage & family therapist and a counselor to many Orthodox lay, clergy, and seminarian families. Mat. Alexandra is willing to drive up to 5 or 6 additional people.

## Donations & Memorials

**In order to improve our record-keeping**, please email or text me your notes concerning special donations, or place them inside donation envelopes. It is wonderful that there is an increase in activity in these areas, but it is difficult to keep track of them through verbal conversations or small notes given on Sunday mornings. If I have forgotten anything you have told me or handed me in the past, I beg your forgiveness, and ask that you simply let me know again. As always, I am grateful for your patience. – Fr John

**THANK YOU** for sponsoring the following items!

*Embroidered Cross Liners:*

- ✓ Burgundy: In memory of Kuzma and Irene Leschak, by Melanie Ringa.
- ✓ Purple: In memory of Martha Myshak, by Stephen Myshak.
- ✓ Blue: In memory of members of the Frenchko and Bowan families, by John & Patsy Pash.
- ✓ Green: In memory of members of the Chup and Pash families, by John & Patsy Pash.

*Holy Gospel Ribbons:* ✓ In memory of Rebecca Hanchak, by John Hockin.

**Stay Tuned** for a giving effort in 2024, to fund the purchase of **Orthodox Study Bibles** for everyone in parish.

### In your prayers...

*The Newly-Departed:* Archpriest Moses Berry (Jan 12), Irene Gurka (Dec 16), Rebecca Hanchak (Dec 17).

Please pray for our **Protodeacon Gabriel** Petorak, who was hospitalized last week. Please consider sending a note or card to Pdn. Gabriel & Mat. Delores, 218 Walnut St, Jermyn, PA 18433.

Those who are ill or recovering from illness or injury: **Fr Michael** Evans, **Fr Joseph** Chupek, **Fr Peter** Telencio, **Edward & Karen** Hojnicky, **Gregory** Hansen, **Olga** Krutz, **Maryanne** Krisa, **Michael** Krisa, **William** Hummer, **Barbara** Mosley.

*Those who are alone or confined:*

- **Eileen Dance**, Carbondale Nursing & Rehabilitation Center #**202**, 10 Hart Place, Carbondale, PA 18407
- **John Drutarosky**, Carbondale Nursing & Rehabilitation Center #307, 10 Hart Place, Carbondale, PA 18407
- **Theresa Krenitsky**, Carbondale Nursing & Rehabilitation Center #307, 10 Hart Place, Carbondale, PA 18407
- **Nicholas Mattise**, Personal Care at Allied Terrace, Room 218, 100 Terrace Ln, Clarks Summit, PA 18411
- **Barbara Palubniak**, 629 Hill St, Mayfield, PA 19433
- **Peggy Petrilak**, 127 Petrilak Lane, Greenfield Twp, PA 18407
- **Peter Senio**, The Gardens of Green Ridge, 2751 Boulevard Ave, Scranton, PA 18509
- **Jerry & Marilyn Soroka**, c/o Glenmaura Senior Living, 11 Glenmaura National Blvd, Moosic, PA 18507
- **Paul Kostiak**, along with **Dolores Brophy**, 631 Jefferson Ave, Jermyn, PA 18433
- **Paul & Barbara Mosley**, 623 Cemetery St, Mayfield, PA 18433
- **Bill Hummer**, (Mat. Alexandra's father), c/o Oakwood Terrace, 400 Gleason Dr, Moosic, PA 18507

### *On Prayer*

“There is no need to make long discourses; it is enough to stretch out one’s hands and say, ‘Lord, as you will and as you know, have mercy.’ And if the conflict grows fiercer, say, ‘Lord, help!’ God knows very well what we need and He will show us mercy.”

– Abba Macarius

“As Christians we are always in tension – in an anguish and at the same time in bliss. This is mad, ridiculous. But it is true – accepting the dark night just as we accept the brilliance of the day. We have to make an act of surrender – if I am in Christ, there are moments when I must share the cry of the Lord on the cross and the anguish in the garden of Gethsemane. There is a way of being defeated, even in our faith – and this is a way of sharing the anguish of the Lord. I don’t believe that we should ever say, ‘This cannot happen to you.’ If we are Christians we should go through this life, accepting the life and the world, not trying to create a falsified world.”

– Met. Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray*

*We will pause our reading of “The Faith We Hold” by Abp Paul.*

*For the next couple of months, please consider the following excerpts from the book, “Money & Salvation”, by Andrew Geleris.*

*I am not asking you to read these excerpts because someone or something needs money. Rather, in the coming weeks, I am challenging each and every one of us to re-examine the nature of our **relationship** with our Church, and what it means for each of us to be not a “member” of an “organization”, but rather **a portion of the Body of Christ**.*

## The Good Way

An utterly breathtaking **divergence** has developed between the **joy of giving** that God intends his people to experience, and the way many Christians view giving as an unpleasant but necessary obligation of church membership. Bishops, priests, and even ministry leaders often dread talking about finances out of a deep concern about how the faithful will receive their words. But as Jesus said concerning another difficult topic, *“From the beginning it was not so” (Mt 19.8)*. The goal of [these discussions] is to dissolve any such feelings of concern and ambivalence regarding church financial discussions by **bathing them in the purifying waters of biblical and patristic teaching**. It is hoped that the result will be that all of us, clergy and laypeople alike, will feel refreshed—indeed, delighted—by recognizing the unfathomably great blessing God hopes to **pour out on us through generosity**: *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2.9)*.

... If anything you read here stirs up feelings of guilt or pangs of conscience that tend to cause you to sense an obligation to give to anybody, even your church or the poor, immediately stop. The purpose of this book is not to raise money for the church or the needy poor. **It is to lead each of us to a place where giving is a joyful experience** primarily motivated by a sense of **gratitude for God's goodness to us** and a desire to **grow** in our experience of his love....

**God wants us**, not our money. Many of us often become so preoccupied with the effort we must exert in order to pursue our own personal ascetic journey that we easily forget that **God yearns for our salvation and our blessing far more than we do**. Fr Josiah Trenham paints a beautiful picture of the immensity of this longing: *“No lover, even if he be violently mad, is so inflamed with his loved one as is God in his desire for the salvation of our souls. God wishes to unite with us more than any lover with his beloved.”*

This astonishingly great desire of God to unite with each of us partly accounts for the immense priority that God assigns to the topic of money throughout the Bible. The four Gospels record Jesus talking far more about finances than any other single topic except the kingdom of God.... By contrast, American Orthodox parishes only rarely discuss financial issues. Indeed, many Christians consider money an “unspiritual” subject in comparison to “truly spiritual” topics such as prayer, fasting, love, forgiveness, obedience, and sexual purity... On those occasions when we do, reluctantly, talk about money, such discussions typically take the form of gentle invitations for parishioners to prayerfully consider giving in behalf of various exceedingly worthy causes such as the yearly parish budget, repairing a leaky roof, providing scholarships for young people, acquiring a new icon, constructing new facilities, or even helping the poor. While the causes we seek to support are both worthy and spiritually important, these discussions primarily focus on the need to raise money for the purpose of ministry. These financial discussions are, therefore, “ministry-centric.”

Jesus viewed the significance of money through the lens of a **dramatically different spiritual paradigm**. He never saw money as a means to accomplish ministry, even to help the poor. Instead, every financial discussion he ever had single-mindedly focused on the significance of money **for the souls of the people with whom he spoke**. Thus, **his discussions were “soul-centric.”** They were ultimately intended to **lead us to salvation**. For example, when Jesus commanded the rich young ruler to give away all his money to the poor, this had nothing to do with helping the poor. He was trying to **remove** a significant **obstacle** to this man's ability to **inherit eternal life**. Similarly, in the story of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, Jesus did not teach that people should assist the needy for the sake of alleviating their suffering. He taught that such charitable acts were **essential for the salvation of the donors....**

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are the three pillars of Orthodox Christian spirituality... But [we] typically devote little attention to almsgiving ... in English, “alms” is an antiquated word ... we often think of it as giving a few dollars ... for the poor. [But an] **expansive view** of almsgiving would include not only giving to the poor but **every financial decision individuals and parishes make....** deep consideration of the **spiritual and theological significance** of lifestyle choices, tithing, church building programs, fundraisings activities, a willingness to take on debt, and financial contentment. It would also encompass many non-financial acts of personal sacrificial love.

– Andrew Geleris, *Money & Salvation: An Invitation to the Good Way* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2022); 11-13, 17-18.