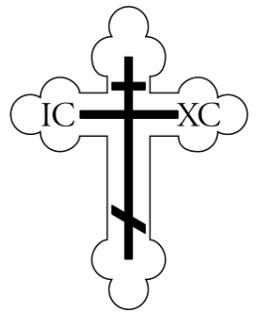


Protection of the Virgin Mary



Orthodox Church



A Parish of the
Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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(219)947-4748
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Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219) 384-6826 • frjacobvansickle@gmail.com

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confessions are heard before or
after Vespers or by appointment.

**Welcome visitors!
Please join us in
the parish hall after
Divine Liturgy for
coffee hour.**

December 16, 2018

Holy Forefathers of Christ according to the flesh

An excerpt from *The Winter Pascha* by Fr Thomas Hopko

Two Sundays before the celebration of Christmas, the Orthodox Church rejoices in the festival of the Holy Forefathers of the Old Covenant, including those who came before the giving of the Law. They foretold the coming of the Messiah and are redeemed by his saving Pascha.

There is a great difference between *existing* and *living*. Many people exist. Very few really live. Only those who seek God have life. Only those who delight in His commandments and rejoice in accomplishing His will pass beyond mere existence and actually find life. "Seek God, and your soul shall live" (Ps 69:32). This is the cry of the psalmist David who is especially hymned on this Sunday and on the Sunday after

Christmas. His exhortation draws upon the words of God given to Moses in the divine Law:

“See I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day that you shall perish. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, and cleaving to Him; for that means life to you and length of days (Deut 30:15-20).

The holy forefathers and mothers have chosen life. They find it in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is Life itself, God's incarnate Word. The celebration of the Winter Pascha is a celebration of Life in God's Word. For "Christ who is our life" has already appeared (Col 3:4). We have "beheld His glory" (Jn 1:14). Now that glory is hidden in the "form of a slave" (Phil 2:7), but it will be revealed at the end of the ages in power for those who "have loved His appearing" and "live in Him" (2 Tim 4:8; Col 2:6).

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 4 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the women Disciples of the Lord learned from the Angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the Apostles:

“Death is overthrown!

Christ our God is risen, //

granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 2 – Troparion of the Forefathers

Through faith You justified the Forefathers,
betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles.
These saints exult in glory,
for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit:
she who bore You without seed.//
So, by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Tone 6 – Kontakion of the Forefathers

You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones,
but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,
you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying:
“Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid,//
for You are merciful and able to do as You will!”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Colossians 3.4-11

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, in which you once walked when you lived in them, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. But now you must put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language from your mouth; do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with its deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Gospel: Luke 14.16-24

At that time Jesus spoke this parable saying, “A certain man gave a great supper, and invited many, and sent his

servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'

And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to examine them. I ask you to have me excused.'

Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'

And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'

Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Repose:

N.Dep. Joseph Huddleston

Kadee Huddleston

Brandi Vail

Swayzee Hite

Rhylie Hite

Marshall Hite

Daniel Hite

Theodore Parkevich

Vaso Popovich

Ev.Mem. Eli Potrevich

Anna Slizh

Vasili Komanecki

John Kristoff

Joanne Strom

Basil Mosak

Health &

Salvation:

Protopr. George

Mat. Anna

Archpr. Peter

Archpr. William

Mat. Jean

Pr. John

Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer

Andrew

Gideon

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Kimberly

Gail

William

Jovan

Charles

Barbara

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Theodore | Diane | Kristin |
| Michael | Madelin | Mitchel |
| Julia | Villian | Brittany |
| Warren | Deborah | Jennifer |
| Loretta | Jovan | David |
| Gilbert | Claudia | Roger |
| Carol | John | Tina |
| Peter | Joey | Chris |
| Janie | Carisa | Sheila |
| Tom | Natalia | Brandon |
| Elizabeth | Elizabeth | Benjamin |
| Tina | Tom | Juliana |
| Adam | Alexander | Lennox |
| Myah | Darlene | Laila |
| Margaret | Mira | N.Ill Sophia |

*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Women's Book Group will start up again on Jan 7. The book is **Becoming a Healing Presence** by Dr. Albert Rossi. It will be available in the book store next week.

Make a plan to have confession this Advent season. On Christmas day, you will be glad you did.

Remember to **purchase your holiday gift cards through Scrip** (available during coffee hour). Also, if you shop on Amazon, start at **smile.amazon.com** and select "Protection of the Virgin Mary Church" as your charity of choice.

The 2019 **parish directory** is being finalized. If you did not receive a Nativity mailer from the Church this week, we don't have a current address for you. Please fill out a form in the narthex.

Mark your calendars:

Dec 19: **Fellowship Night @ 6pm**

Dec 20: **Faith Enrichment @ 10am**

Caroling and fellowship at Descent of the Holy Ghost
Orthodox Church in Merrillville @ 6:30pm

Dec 23: Anointing for Healing after Divine Liturgy

Dec 24: Vespereal Christmas Liturgy @ 9am;
Christmas Vigil @ 6pm

Dec 25: Christmas Divine Liturgy @ 9am

Dec 30: Church School Yolka during coffee hour

Last Week's Offerings to the Lord:

General Fund: \$1,266

Mortgage: \$333

“The Four Pillars of Our Healing”

A reflection by His Beatitude, our Metropolitan Tikhon

The Church is often portrayed iconographically and liturgically as a ship. Christ holds the rudder, and the breath of the Holy Spirit fills the sails as the ship sets course for the Father's Heavenly Kingdom. But we are not merely passengers “along for the ride.” Our life on the ship is an active participation that extends beyond the few hours a week that we spend in the Church temple or in our icon corner. We are called to a new life in the Church, and this requires a radical transformation—a willingness to devote our every breath to sailing on that ship through both calm and choppy waters. It is a living participation in unity, sanctity, conciliarity, and apostolic ministry in the Name of Christ. These are the means by which we truly become members, not of an organization, but of a body: The One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, whose head is Christ.

If the Christian Church is the Body of Christ, then she is **ONE** and breathes with one breath. In the same way, all of the members of the body ought to “live, move, and have their being” (Acts 17.28) within that same breath. To breathe as one body requires that we all become one with the Archetype, Jesus Christ. As we enter into union with Him, we are drawn into communion with one another, just as Christ, through the

Cross, draws together the four corners of the world: “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12.32). Our life has no meaning outside of Christ, and we remain outside of Christ if we do not take up the Cross to make Him the beginning, the middle, and the end of our existence.

The Church is also **HOLY**, and her members partake of that holiness through the sanctification offered by Christ through the Resurrection. Our partaking of this gift requires that we exercise good stewardship of the blessings bestowed on us through the holy mysteries: baptism and chrismation, confession and holy unction, marriage and monasticism, among others. The path to sanctification requires work, not only to receive these mysteries, but to allow them to transform who we are as human beings, and to allow that transformation in turn to assist in the transfiguration of the world in which we dwell.

The Church is **CATHOLIC** in that she reflects the unity of the Holy Trinity: Three persons in an unconfused and undivided unity. We manifest catholicity in a personal way by making ourselves worthy of the name of “Christian” through our life of prayer, repentance, and the acquisition of the virtues. We also manifest catholicity in our efforts to live a genuine life in communion with our neighbors in a spirit of truth and of love.

In fulfillment of His promise, the Lord sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, and we participate in this **APOSTOLIC** calling by sharing in their ministry, that is, by sharing the Gospel with the world. We cannot participate in this sacred work if we do not enter into the labors of purifying our hearts and preparing our entire being to receive the gifts of grace. Our evangelical work has less to do with programs and structures than with our efforts to become images of Christ and vessels of the Holy Spirit.

These are the eternal and unchanging marks of the Church, but precisely because they are eternal and unchanging, it may not be evident to us how to incarnate them in our own context. To this end, I propose Four Pillars—

not as replacements for the eternal features of the Church — but as concrete areas in which we, as clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, can apply ourselves and give expression on this continent to the fullness of the Orthodox Christian Faith, incarnated and revealed by Jesus Christ, handed down by the Apostles, and preserved by the witness of the Martyrs and Saints throughout the ages.

This faith is pre-eminently a path towards the healing of broken human beings. If the Church is to be truly prophetic, then she needs to bring those broken human beings (ourselves first) to Christ. The Old Testament prophets and righteous ones were sent as physicians to offer healing to Israel, but they failed in this task because the disease was too great. Christ alone, by becoming man while remaining God, could serve as an effective Physician for humanity. This is the heart of the Divine Liturgy: Christ is offered and received as the “Physician of souls and bodies,” and our participation in the fullness of the sacramental life of the Church is the means by which we participate in this healing.

Just as there are four writings from the Holy Evangelists but only one Gospel, so my Four Pillars have meaning only within the broader context of our common life and healing in Christ and in the Church. They are not precisely defined categories, but rather variations on a single theme: how to live our lives on earth in a manner which helps us to know God, to find healing for ourselves and to uncover the mystery of eternal life with those around us. They are presented as a framework for our Apostolic work, and it is my hope that the bishops, clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America will actively participate and collaborate in filling in this framework through our common efforts and united prayers to build the house of the Lord.

The first pillar—the Spiritual Life—will be the topic of next week’s reflection.

Glory to God for all things!