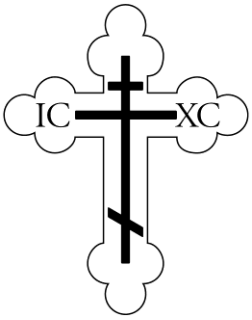


# Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago  
and the Midwest  
Orthodox Church  
in America



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Merrillville, IN 46410  
(219)947-4748  
[www.ptvm.com](http://www.ptvm.com)

Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle  
(219)384-6826 • [frjacobvansickle@gmail.com](mailto:frjacobvansickle@gmail.com)

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or  
after Vespers or by appointment

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

## July 9, 2023

# Holy Hieromartyr Pancratius of Taormina in Sicily

The Hieromartyr Pancratius, Bishop of Taormina, was born when our Lord Jesus Christ yet lived upon the earth.

The parents of Pancratius were natives of Antioch. Hearing the good news of Jesus Christ, Pancratius' father took his young son with him and went to Jerusalem in order to see the great Teacher for himself. The miracles astonished him, and when he heard the divine teaching, he then believed in Christ as the Son of God. He became close with the disciples of the Lord, especially with the holy Apostle Peter. It was during this period that young Pancratius got to know the holy Apostle Peter.

After the Ascension of the Savior, one of the Apostles came to Antioch and baptized the parents of Pancratius together with all their household. When the parents of Pancratius died, he left behind his inherited possessions and went to Pontus and began to live in a cave, spending his days in prayer and deep spiritual contemplation. The holy Apostle Peter, while passing through those parts, visited Pancratius at Pontus. He took him along to Antioch, and then to Sicily, where the holy Apostle Paul then was. There the holy Apostles Peter and Paul made St Pancratius Bishop of Taormina in Sicily.

St Pancratius toiled zealously for the Christian enlightenment of the people. In a single month he built a church where he celebrated divine services. The number of believers quickly grew, and soon almost all the people of Taormina and the surrounding cities accepted the Christian Faith.

St Pancratius governed his flock peacefully for many years. However, pagans plotted against the saint, and seizing an appropriate moment, they fell upon him and stoned him. Thus, St Pancratius ended his life as a martyr.

## 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 4 – Patronal Troparion**

Today the faithful celebrate the feast with joy,  
illuminated by your coming, O Mother of God.

Beholding your pure image we fervently cry to you:

Encompass us beneath the precious veil of your protection.

Deliver us from every form of evil

by entreating Christ, your Son and our God//

that He may save our souls.

#### **Tone 4 – Troparion for St Pancratius**

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles,  
you became a successor to their throne.  
Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine  
contemplation, O inspired one of God;  
by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith,  
even to the shedding of your blood.//  
O Hieromartyr Pancratius, entreat Christ God to save our souls!

#### **Tone 4 – Resurrectional Kontakion**

My Savior and Redeemer, as God,  
rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains.  
He has shattered the gates of hell,  
and as Master,//  
He has risen on the third day!

#### **Tone 4 – Kontakion for St Pancratius**

O Pancratius, you were revealed as a brilliant star for the people of  
Taormina.  
You were also shown to be a sufferer for Christ.//  
Since now you stand before Him, O blessed one, pray for those who  
honor you.

#### **Tone 3 – Patronal Kontakion**

Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church,  
And with choirs of saints she invisibly prays to God for us.  
Angels and bishops worship.  
Apostles and prophets rejoice together,//  
Since for our sake she prays to the eternal God.

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

#### **Tone 4 – Sunday Prokeimenon (Psalm 103)**

O Lord, how manifold are Your works;  
in wisdom have You made them all!

#### **Epistle: Romans 10.1-1**

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that  
they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for  
God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of  
God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own  
righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For  
Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who

believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

**Gospel: Matthew 8.28 – 9.1**

At that time, when Jesus had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.”

And He said to them, “Go.”

So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

**WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

|                                      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Ev.Mem.</b> Elizabeth Malin (’30) | Olga Thomas (’92)    |
| Josephine Saganovich (’55)           | Frank Jaroscak (’93) |

|                           |              |                |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Health &amp; Salv.</b> | Archpr. John | Pr. Patrick    |
| Archpr. Peter             | Pr. Gregory  | Mat. Anne      |
| Mat. Cynthia              | Mat. Beverly | Mat. Catherine |

|             |           |             |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Kevin       | Mary Ann  | Joyce       |
| Jon         | Dara      | Galina      |
| Tanya       | Jaroslava | Thomas      |
| Jovan       | Andrew    | Diane       |
| Rollie      | Andrew    | Michael     |
| Nadia       | Vadim     | Linda       |
| Joseph      | Hanna     | Stephanie   |
| Linda       | Viktor    | Nathan      |
| Claudia     | Gerald    | Cindy       |
| Carol       | Christine | Nathaniel   |
| Snezana     | Olga      | Tamara      |
| Ryan        | Janie     | Dennis      |
| Nathan      | Sharon    | Maria       |
| Kara        | Tanya     | Elizabeth   |
| Djuro       | Renee     | Jonah       |
| Paula       | Michael   | Jamie       |
| Christopher | Chris     | Kyleigh     |
| Karen       | Nina      | Lauren      |
| Alexandra   | Carissa   | Kyle        |
| Jonathan    | Duane     | Susan       |
| Christine   | Elizabeth | Mark        |
| Zoey        | Olga      | Christopher |
| Dominic     | Klaudia   | Betty       |
| Declan      | Tom       | William     |
| Hudson      | Diane     | Jack        |
| Ronald      | Brandi    | Grace       |

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

### **Special Petition at the Augmented Litany:**

We pray, O Lord our God, for all those who suffer from acts of war, especially the victims in Ukraine. We pray for Your peace and Your mercy in the midst of the great suffering of Your people. Vouchsafe to accept the prayers of the Church, so that by Your goodness, peace may return to all peoples; O Lord, hear us and have mercy.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Thank you to Fr Danial Doss** for celebrating the Divine Liturgy with us this morning. Fr Jacob is on vacation with his family **July 3-12**. For pastoral emergencies, please contact Fr Anthony Saunders (219-221-5695).

**Bible Study** will return on July 17.

On Saturday, July 15, we will hold our **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Choir Retreat** from 3pm until Vespers at 6pm, with dinner provided after Vespers. This is a great opportunity for new members to join. The choir will work on vocal technique and learn new music for our regular rotation.

**More iconography** is coming soon to our temple. In about one month, John will return to paint the icon **The Root of Jesse** on the north wall of the nave, below and up either side of the stained glass. Next he will add **Christ the True Vine** on the same place of the south wall. Afterward, he will return to paint the icons of **Transfiguration** and **Theophany** on the east end of the south wall, where the cross and framed icon of St John the Baptist now reside. Anyone interested in sponsoring further iconography should speak with Fr Jacob about what might be possible.

The **Bookstore** now has vehicle icons, keychains, and visor clips for anyone who wants them for the Blessing of Vehicles on July 23rd. Also a small assortment of incense, burners (including smokeless), charcoal and other home incense items. Thanks to all of you who support the bookstore, we have recently purchased 6 Festal Icons for the parish from bookstore proceeds. These include: Thomas Sunday, the Holy Myrrhbearers, the Last Judgement, Christ the Bridegroom, the Raising of Lazarus, and the Mystical Supper. Thank you again to everyone who supports this wonderful ministry!

The Diocese of the Midwest has released its own communications app called **Our Diocese**. It is safe, free of ads or other outside influence, and available at no cost. If you are interested in joining, ask Fr Jacob to send you an invite. More info at [our.domoca.org](http://our.domoca.org)

### **Mark your calendars:**

July 13: **Faith Enrichment @ 10am**

July 15: **Choir Retreat @ 3pm; dinner after Vespers**

July 18: **Feast Day Divine Liturgy at St. Elizabeth's in Chesterton @ 9am**

July 23: **Annual Blessing of Vehicles** after Divine Liturgy

July 30: **St. Clement Summer Picnic** after Divine Liturgy

**Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$3,457**

# A Reflection by Mark Santana of Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry

*Sunday July 30, 2023, has been appointed by the Assembly of Bishops as Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday, when all Orthodox churches of every jurisdiction recognize the importance of prison ministry for the life of the Church. OCPM Church Programs Manager, Mark Santana, has written this reflection on his most recent visit inside a prison, SCI Waymart, near St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary.*

OCPM recently held a staff retreat at St. Tikhon's. We had the privilege of visiting with seminarians, along with the Dean at St. Tikhon's Seminary and the Abbot at St. Tikhon's Monastery. We also visited SCI Waymart, a nearby prison, escorted by Fr. John Kowalczyk and Fr. Stephen Powley, Co-Directors of Training and Spiritual Care at OCPM.

I was no stranger to prison visits, having volunteered in prison ministry for the past 12 years. I haven't visited a jail or prison since pre-COVID, however. Fr. John, who has served in this prison for decades, explained to us that SCI Waymart was a little different. This prison houses a unit for inmates needing psychiatric care and treatment who are often suicidal or homicidal. SCI Waymart serves as the focal point for the treatment of all psychiatric inmates within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. Fr. John added that the majority of inmates came from very dark upbringings beginning in early childhood.

No matter how many times I have visited a prison there is always some level of apprehension - after all, it's a prison! This time was no different. The slamming of steel doors and bars behind us as we ventured deeper inside the facility left little doubt that we were outside of our comfort zone. The first unit we visited held one-man cells, behind a solid steel door, and a plexiglass window. As we passed by, I saw some men sleeping, some pacing, and some staring blankly through the glass.

Fr. John approached several cells calling the men by name. As they came to the glass it was clear that they knew him well. Fr. John spoke to them in a way that brought peace to an otherwise dark and uncertain place. I then witnessed some of the men press their heads against the glass as Fr. John placed his hand just on the other side,

praying with them—a very moving thing to witness in a place one would never expect.

We then visited the day room, where 15 or so men sat at tables, watched television. A few men stood facing the wall, alone and silent. As we entered the room, the last thing I would ever expect to happen, happened. More than half of the men stood and began applauding and shouting “Fr. John!” Once again, Fr. John and Fr. Stephen moved about and spoke to the men with kindness and grace, bringing a sense of peace to the room. Prayers were offered, and one man even asked for a blessing! Another man recited a poem he had written, and still another shared how he was reading through the Bible.

I soon began to notice my apprehension was still at play in some ways. As I looked into some of their faces I saw pain, fear, and even a look of hopelessness. In my heart I was gently reminded that I needed to change lenses so that I could see Christ in these men. To know and see them as persons made in the image and likeness of God. Once I see them as God sees them, they will come to see themselves as God sees them, as His precious and beloved sons, and *that* is what will bring healing to their lives.

Later that afternoon, many of the men joined us for a Vespers service, my first service outside of a parish and my first with inmates. It was held in the auditorium and led by Fr. John. Icons of Christ and the Theotokos were on a table near the front and we were blessed by the chants of the St. Tikhon’s Seminary Choir. Despite the venue and the surroundings, I knew without any doubt that God was in that place.

What a blessing it was to have a "front row seat" and to witness God’s grace that day and the work of OCPM. I am humbled to be part of this ministry and work alongside these dedicated servants. On the plane ride home, I reflected on my time inside the prison and searched for a takeaway from the experience. The words that came to mind were words I've heard before but now have deeper meaning - *“We need them more than they need us.”*

# Glory to God for all things!