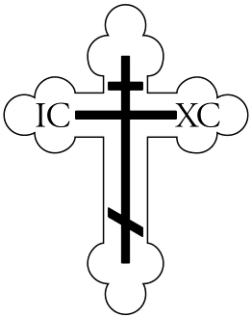


Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest
Orthodox Church
in America



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Merrillville, IN 46410
(219)947-4748
www.ptvm.com

Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle
(219)384-6826 • 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.

January 28, 2024

Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

St Ephraim the Syrian

Saint Ephraim the Syrian, a teacher of repentance, was born at the beginning of the fourth century in the city of Nisibis in Mesopotamia into the family of impoverished farmers. His parents raised their son in piety, but from his childhood he was known for his quick temper and impetuous character. He often had fights, acted thoughtlessly, and even doubted God's Providence.

Once, he was unjustly accused of stealing a sheep and was thrown into prison. He heard a voice in a dream calling him to repent and correct his life. After this, he was acquitted of the

charges and set free. The young man then ran off to the mountains to join the hermits, where he became the disciple of Saint James of Nisibis. St James transformed the wayward youth into a humble and contrite monk. Realizing the great worth of his disciple, he made use of his talents. He trusted him to preach sermons, to instruct children in school, and he took Ephraim with him to the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea. St Ephraim was in obedience to St James for fourteen years, until the bishop's death in 338.

St Ephraim combined asceticism with a ceaseless study of the Word of God, taking from it both solace and wisdom for his soul. The Lord gave him a gift of teaching, and people began to come to him, wanting to hear his counsel, which produced compunction in the soul, since he began with self-accusation. Both verbally and in writing, St Ephraim instructed everyone in repentance, faith and piety, and he denounced the Arian heresy, which at that time was causing great turmoil.

He also wrote the first Syriac commentary on the Five Books of Moses. He wrote many prayers and hymns, thereby enriching the Church's liturgical services. He composed hymns for the Twelve Great Feasts of the Lord, and funeral hymns. St Ephraim's Prayer of Repentance, "O Lord and Master of my life...", is recited during Great Lent, and it summons Christians to spiritual renewal.

From ancient times the Church has valued the works of Saint Ephraim. His works were read publicly in certain churches after the Holy Scripture, as Saint Jerome tells us. At present, the Church Typikon prescribes certain of his instructions to be read on the days of Lent. Among the prophets, Saint David is the preeminent psalmist; among the Fathers of the Church, Saint Ephraim the Syrian is the preeminent man of prayer. His spiritual experience made him a guide for monastics and a help to the pastors of Edessa.

St Ephraim, accounting himself as the least and worst of all, went to Egypt at the end of his life to see the efforts of the great ascetics. He was accepted there as a welcome guest and received great solace from conversing with them. On his return journey he visited at Caesarea in Cappadocia with Saint Basil the Great, who wanted to ordain him a priest, but he considered himself unworthy of the priesthood. At the insistence of St Basil, he consented only to be ordained as a deacon, in which rank he remained until his death. Later, St Basil invited St Ephraim to accept a bishop's throne, but the saint feigned madness in order to avoid this honor, humbly regarding himself as unworthy of it.

After his return to his own Edessa wilderness, St Ephraim hoped to spend the rest of his life in solitude, but divine Providence again summoned him to serve his neighbor. The inhabitants of Edessa were suffering from a devastating famine. By the influence of his word, the saint persuaded the wealthy to render aid to those in need. From the offerings of believers, he built a poor-house for the poor and sick. St Ephraim then withdrew to a cave near Edessa, where he remained to the end of his days.

HYMNS OF THE DAY

Tone 1 – Resurrectional Troparion

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews,
while the soldiers were guarding Your most pure body,
You rose on the third day, O Savior,
granting life to the world.
The powers of heaven therefore cried to You, O Giver of Life:
“Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ!
Glory to Your Kingdom!//
Glory to Your dispensation, O You who love mankind!”

Tone 4 – Patronal Troparion

Today the faithful celebrate the feast with joy,
illumined 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 8 – Troparion for St Ephraim

By a flood of tears you made the desert fertile,
and your longing for God brought forth fruits in abundance.
By the radiance of miracles you illumined the whole universe.//
Our holy Father Ephraim, pray to Christ our God to save our souls!

Tone 1 – Resurrectional Kontakion

As God, You rose from the tomb in glory,
raising the world with Yourself.
Human nature praises You as God, for death has vanished.
Adam exults, O Master!
Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to You://
“You are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!”

Tone 3 – Kontakion for the Holy New Martyrs

Today the new martyrs of Rus' stand in white robes before the
Lamb of God,
and with the angels they sing to God the hymn of victory:
“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and praise, and honor,
and power, and strength be to our God//
unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

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 1 – Resurrectional Prokeimenon (Psalm 32)

Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on You!

Tone 7 – Prokeimenon for the New Martyrs (Psalm 45)

God is our refuge and strength,
a help in afflictions that severely befall us!

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 the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his 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.

Romans 8.28-39 (New Martyrs)

Brethren: We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are the called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, those whom He predestined He also called; those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 22.35-46

At that time, a lawyer asked Jesus a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"

They said to Him, "The Son of David."

He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

N.Dep. Roger Davidson
Archpr. Moses Berry
Nadia Konowalik
Katherine Harbison
Joseph Bloomfield
Michael Benka

Ev.Mem. Peter Hurey ('44)
Alexei Levonuk ('51)
Peter Herbach ('53)
Stephen Sovich ('64)
Paraskevia Mihaluk ('79)
Vernon Orr (2021)

Health & Salv.

Archpr. Peter
Mat. Cynthia
Hierom. John
Pr. Gregory
Mat. Beverly
Pr. Patrick
Mat. Anne
Mat. Catherine
Kevin
Jon
Tanya
Jovan
Rollie
Claudia
Paul
Carol
Snezana
Ryan
Nathan
Kara
Djuro
Paula
Christopher
Karen
Alexandra
Jonathan
Christine
Zoey
Dominic
Declan
Hudson
Ronald

Mary Ann
Dara
Jaroslava
Andrew
Andrew
Vadim
Hanna
Viktor
Gerald
Christine
Olga
Janie
Sharon
Tanya
Renee
Ashton
Michael
Chris
Nina
Carissa
Duane
Elizabeth
Olga
Klaudia
Tom
Diane
Brandi
Joyce
Galina
Thomas
Diane
Stephanie
Cindy

Nathaniel
Tamara
Dennis
Maria
Elizabeth
Jonah
Jamie
Kyleigh
Lauren
Kyle
Mark
Christopher
Betty
William
Grace
Janet
Sarah
Angela
Lauren
Jack
Melissa
Carolynn
Nicholas
Natalie
Lissa
Elizabeth
William
Linda
Margaret
Linda
Jennifer
Diane
Chris

To add a name to our parish prayer list, please give it 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, Israel, and Palestine. 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

After venerating the cross, we will serve the **50-year memorial for Trajan Mitrovich** and the **3-year memorial for Vernon Orr**.

Next Sunday we will serve the **40-day memorial for both Nadia Konowalik and Katherine Harbison**.

2023 Contribution Statements and **February calendars** are available in the Narthex.

There is **no Bible Study tomorrow**. Instead, we have Great Vespers for the Three Hierarchs.

The **Men's Reading Group** will meet **this Thursday, Feb 1 at 7pm** to discuss *On the Incarnation* by St. Athanasius of Alexandria.

On Saturday, February 10, our neighbors across the street **St. Andrew Anglican Church** are hosting Prof. Roslie Levinson, J.D., who will speak about **her parents' experience surviving the Holocaust**. Her talk will be at 11am with refreshments to follow.

The **2024 annual meeting will be held Sunday, February 11** after a potluck lunch. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex to please indicate what you plan to bring for sharing. The agenda and reports are available on the parish website: www.ptvm.com/annual-reports. Printed report packets are available in the Narthex.

Every year, Orthodox Christian **homes are blessed with the new holy water of Theophany**. Make an appointment with Fr Jacob to have your home blessed. The Church teaches us to sanctify everything: dwellings, places of work, all our pursuits, and the fruits of our labor. The home blessing at Theophany represents a renewal of our lives in Christ.

Here is how to prepare for your house blessing: All who reside in the household should make every effort to be present for the blessing. We gather in the dining room or home altar. On your dining room table or family icon corner, set 1) A lit candle, 2) An icon of Christ, and 3) A small bowl. You may also prepare a list of the names of family members living and departed you wish to pray for. Also please remember to turn off any televisions or other noisy electronics. When the priest arrives everyone in the house should gather around the table/family altar and join in prayer and singing. If there are children, they usually carry the icon and a candle to lead the priest from room to room. If not, any member of the household will lead the priest. After the blessing, we all gather back around the icon for the dismissal.

Mark your calendars:

Jan 29: Great Vespers for the feast of Three Hierarchs @ 6pm

Jan 30: Divine Liturgy for the feast of Three Hierarchs @ 10am

Feb 1: Faith Enrichment @ 10am

Great Vespers for the Meeting of the Lord @ 6pm

Men's Reading Group @ 7pm

Feb 2: Divine Liturgy for the Meeting of the Lord @ 10am

Feb 10: Holocaust Talk at St. Andrew's @ 11am

Feb 11: Annual Parish Meeting after Divine Liturgy

Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$3,766

Glory to God for all things!