

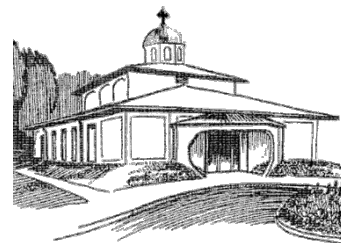


St Nicholas Orthodox Church

*A Parish of the Diocese of the Midwest
of the Orthodox Church in America*

9650 Johnnycake Ridge Road, Mentor, OH 44060

<https://saintnicholas-oca.org/>



Parish Rector: Fr Mark Therrien + (216) 678-8181 + fr.mark.therrien@gmail.com



Services & Events Beginning Sunday, August 25, 2024

- Sunday, August 25** *Ninth Sunday after Pentecost*
8:50a Third Hour, Baptism of Leo, & Divine Liturgy
During Coffee Hour: Meeting with Church School Teachers
- Wednesday, August 28** 6:30p Festal Vespers with Lity
- Thursday, August 29** *The Beheading of the Holy Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptism John*
9a Divine Liturgy
- Saturday, August 31** *The Placing of the Belt of the Most Holy Theotokos*
4:30p Confessions || 5:30p Great Vespers
- Sunday, September 1** *Tenth Sunday after Pentecost & the Indiction (New Year)*
8:40a Third & Sixth Hours, & Divine Liturgy



ATTENDANCE & STEWARDSHIP FOR AUGUST 18, 2024

Attendance: 151; Operating: \$5,707; ZOE: \$45;
Capital Maintenance: \$139; Holy Day: \$50; Diocesan
Dues: \$16; Candles: \$124; Uganda: \$60; Parish
Charities: \$95

“Again we pray for those who bring offerings and do
good works in this holy and all-venerable temple . . .”
(from the final petition of the Augmented Litany)



WEEKLY CATECHETICAL REFLECTION

“Depart, catechumens” & “The doors, the doors”:
Reflections on Some of Our Liturgical Formulae

I was recently asked why we say a dismissal for our
catechumens in the course of the Divine Liturgy
(“Catechumens, depart,” etc.), when, in our current
practice, catechumens usually remain in the temple.

The question is a good one. At a most basic level, the
answer is straight-forward: This dismissal is included
within text of the *Hieratikon* (i.e., the service book used

by the priest and deacon), which has been blessed by the
Holy Synod of Bishops for use in our Church. Still, it is
true that, in many places, this dismissal is not done. That
is the practice that I learned, in fact. But I decided to
start doing it here because it always felt awkward to me
to explain to visiting clergy that I omitted it. And so,
notwithstanding the fact that, in many places, the
dismissal is omitted, I now include it out of obedience
to what is given in the text blessed for our use.

Beyond that, there are some other considerations too.

By way of background, we have to keep in mind the
historical reason why this dismissal was included: The
main purpose that we come to the Divine Liturgy is that
we may receive the holy Mysteries of the Lord’s Body
and Blood. And so, in ancient times, the Church had the
practice of commanding anyone who was not going to
receive the Gifts to depart the church before the bread
and wine were brought forth to be consecrated into the
Eucharist. This included a number of different classes of
persons: catechumens (those undergoing instruction for
reception into the Church), the *photizomenoi* (“those to
be enlightened”—i.e., those who, having been instructed,
would be baptized very soon), the *energoumenoi* (those

possessed by unclean spirits), and penitents (those who belonged to the Church, but who were barred from receiving the holy Mysteries for some reason).

Although the third and fourth classes (the *energoumenoi* and penitents) are still listed in fourth century sources, by the seventh century they are not mentioned in the liturgical commentary of St Maximus the Confessor. Thus, it seems, the use of these categories faded from practice by then. The first two, however, remained. But by the eighth century, these classes were also becoming more nominal than real in many places. Finally, the catechumenate appears to fade away as a live institution in the Church in the thirteenth century.

But still, despite the functional disappearance of the catechumenate as a live institution in the Church, the dismissal of the catechumens was retained as part of the Liturgy. Similarly, other exclamations in the liturgy that were once used to mark the restricted nature of the second part of the service were also retained. E.g., the exclamation that the deacon makes before the Creed—“The doors, the doors! in Wisdom, let us attend!”—was originally a command to make sure that the temple was locked so that catechumens and others could not come back inside after having been dismissed.

Why did we retain these exclamations? The answer might be given: In the Church, we just to hold onto old customs. While that is true in some ways, in my view this explanation does not suffice because the Divine Liturgy went through many critical changes at exactly the same time that the catechumenate faded away. And so, if there was any time when this dismissal might have been dropped, this century might have been the prime occasion. But that is not what happened.

So then, again: Why did the Church retain this dismissal, even as the Liturgy changed in other ways at the same time? The question, actually, is not new. In fact, even late medieval Church writers write about it, such as St Symeon of Thessaloniki. Moving closer to the 20th century, we find interesting remarks in some modern commentators on the liturgy. For example, we find the following in the reflections of Nikolai Gogol:

“At these words [“Catechumens, depart,” etc.] all present shudder, all who feel their unworthiness. Calling mentally upon Christ Himself Who drove out of the temple of God the disorderly vendors and shameless traders who had turned His altar into a market, every person tries to drive out of the temple of his own soul the carnal man, the catechumen who is not ready to be present at the sacred action. Everyone calls upon Christ

Himself that He may raise up in him the hidden man of the heart, the man of faith, numbered among the chosen flock, of whom the Apostle said: ‘A holy nation, new men, living stones built into a spiritual temple’ (cf. 1 Peter 2:5,9; also Ephesians 4:24). Each person prays that he may be numbered among the true believers” (*Meditations on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. L. Alexieff, p. 28).

For Gogol, the basic idea is this: Since each of us (even if baptized) still fights with the old carnal man within us, the dismissal for catechumens is supposed to remind us of our need to call upon Christ to strengthen us so that, having been numbered among his chosen flock, we may have the grace to persevere in it.

A similar interpretation is found in the works of another modern commentator, Fr Seraphim Slobodskoy:

“These words for the catechumens to depart from the church building should also be a warning to us, even if there are no actual catechumens among us. We, the baptized, sin frequently and often without repentance are present in the church, lacking the requisite preparation, and having in our hearts hostility and envy against our fellow men. Therefore, with the solemn and threatening words, ‘catechumens depart,’ we as unworthy ones should examine ourselves closely and ponder our unworthiness, asking forgiveness from our personal enemies, often imagined, and ask the Lord God for the forgiveness of our sins with the firm resolve to do better” (*The Law of God*, retrieved online: http://holywisdomorthodox.com/library/Law_of_God/Part_V.html).

In other words, Fr Seraphim sees the dismissal as useful because, in hearing it, we are reminded that, if we do not strive to live as Christians are called by our Lord to live, then we effectively cast ourselves out from the Church by our actions. In sum: Both Gogol and Fr Seraphim interpret the dismissal as a warning that *we* should consider *our* moral state before God in anticipation of receiving the Gifts.

Although this way of thinking about the dismissal is a later interpretative development, it makes a certain amount of good sense: It is clear from early catechetical material that one of the main reasons for pre-baptismal catechesis (and really, perhaps, even *the* main reason) was not learning the content of the doctrines of the faith. There was some element of that kind of instruction. But at the same time, most church writers were of the opinion that one could not really enter into the mysteries of the faith until *after* one had been baptized (since baptism is, as we still call it, the service of *illumination* or *enlightenment*). At this time, then, the

main task of catechesis was *moral formation*—i.e., instruction in how to live a godly life.

With all that being said, then, here are three points to take-away for consideration about this practice:

First: When we hear “Catechumens, depart,” or “The doors, the doors,” we should be attentive to an important reality that can be easy to forget at times: Namely, that the Eucharist is, as we say, an awesome reality—i.e., a reality that should make us stand in awe. To partake of it is something grave. And so, if we wish to do so, we must sincerely try to live in our lives in a way that befits this Mystery. Otherwise, as St Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, we risk eating It to our own condemnation.

Second: Again, this way of thinking about this dismissal represents a change in its originally practical nature to something symbolic in meaning. While some might therefore object to this (and indeed, not a few have), it must be said: When it comes down to it, much of our services are comprised of rites that were once practical, but later became more or less exclusively symbolic in meaning. And so, if we were to follow the logic of getting rid of anything in our liturgy that has ceased to serve its originally practical purpose, there would be very little left. This is what happened, in fact, in some other traditions that went through liturgical reforms to ‘restore’ their liturgies to supposedly ‘pristine’ forms. Oftentimes, however, all this did was to lead to a great loss in the beauty and richness of those venerable traditions. And so, I think that, even though our way of keeping things that no longer serve practical functions may seem arcane at times, the risks entailed in the mindset of seeing the Liturgy as something purely practical are more harmful.

And finally, third: Even if we do not ask catechumens to leave, it should be noted that, with the revival of the catechumenate as a live institution in our increasingly post-Christian world, the practice of having the catechumens leave the liturgy mid-way so that they might receive instruction is no longer unheard of. And so, as oftentimes in the Church’s practice, something that might lose its initial meaning in one period might regain it in another. From that perspective, then, the Church’s decision to keep this dismissal in the Liturgy might be seen as Providential as we increasingly face the challenge of how to integrate into the Church those who do not come from any Christian background, and so who require extensive catechesis before being received.



Zapivka Wine: A Note on a Forthcoming Change

In light of a recent exchange that I had about a certain issue, which led me to seek guidance from our diocesan authorities, it came to my attention that, when disposable cups are used for *zapivka* wine (i.e., the wine that one takes after Communion), these should be burned since one might still have traces of the precious Blood on one’s lips in drinking from them.

Since it would be bad to burn plastic cups, we will soon stop using these. As a temporary measure, we have ordered some small paper cups. For reasons of logistical difficulty and cost, however, this is not a long-term solution. And so, we will begin to transition to the practice that is kept in the majority of our parishes and cathedrals in the OCA: The *zapivka* wine will be kept in a pitcher, which will be placed on a small table. On this table there will also be metal cups that people can use to drink from, which will then be cleaned after the Liturgy.

I realize that, for various reasons, some will object to the practice of sharing common cups. Even though this practice is the standard one in our Church more broadly, I want the following to be clear: I do not intend to force this issue. So, in addition to the common cups, small disposable cups will also be provided for those who wish to use them. For the sake of reducing the amount of material that must be burned each and every week, however, I would encourage everyone to consider using the metal cups instead.



UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS IN OUR PARISH AND DEANERY

Divine Services This Week

On August 29, we commemorate the Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John. This is one of those paradoxical days that, in our liturgical calendar, is *both a feast and also a fast*: It is a feast because of the importance of John; it is a fast because this day marks the death of the holy prophet.

To keep this commemoration, we will have two services: Festal Vespers with Lity on **Wednesday** evening at **6:30p**, and then Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning at **9a**. Please note then that, since the Beheading falls on Thursday, we have three fasting days in a row this week: Wednesday (as usual), Thursday (for St John), and Friday (as usual). On Thursday, however, in light of the festal nature of the day, the fast is relaxed: We are allowed wine and oil on this day.



Evening of September 13: Vigil for the Exaltation

On the evening of September 13, in preparation for the feast of the Exaltation, we will serve the Vigil service. This consists of Festal Vespers, Lity, and Festal Matins. The Vigil service is truly one of the highlights of our liturgical tradition—and this one will be especially beautiful since the cross will be brought out at the end. I will write more about it next weekend.



A Note of Gratitude from Laura Abernathy

On Behalf of Peter & Sharon, and those of us who planned, “A Good Night for a Good Cause,” I would like to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts!

Thank you to:

- The record 38 people/families who donated items for the 91 baskets that were auctioned off;
- Those who brought in food;
- Those who came & those who invited others. We had a record 100 people in attendance this year with new faces from both our parish and outside!

This year we raised a record: \$4,570!

To put that into perspective, it can pay for school fees, school uniforms, lunches, shoes and socks, school supplies, books, and medical care for

- Twelve primary students for a full year plus 8 months for another primary student; or
- Five secondary students for a year plus a primary student for a year; or
- Three Vocational School students for a year plus a month for a secondary student; or
- Two University Students for a year plus 4 months for a primary student

Again, Thank you so very much!



PARISH PRAYER LIST

If you know of someone who is in special need of prayer at the moment, please email me so that I might add the person to the prayer list. Please also email me to make changes to this list (e.g., to remove a name).

Perry Capitan, Julian, Sarah Crivella, Joella (LuAnn Dzura’s daughter), **Emily Finazzo**, (friend of the Rendas), **David Campbell** (Debbie Clements’ brother), **Patrick Leahy** (Dave K.’s brother-in-law), **Rick Wagner** (Merrick and Mia’s grandfather), **Joseph Chuppa, Mary Ann**

Sheranko, Helen (Jan Ursinyi’s mother), **Kevin, Declan, and Teagon** (husband and children of the newly-reposed Kristen), **Andrew Dzura, Rich Cook** (Cindy Renda’s brother), **Daniel Conger** (friend of Jim Renda); **the residents of St Herman’s House, as well as those who serve them**; our seminarian, **Cole (Paul) Schlafer**, and his family members: **Sarah, Simon, Michael, & Nikolai**; the members of the **Bagley family, especially Joseph, Rosemary, Isaac, Lucia, & Julian**; **Jim Barkas; Delphine** (mother of Sean Kiernan); **Jennifer, Gani, Stiljan, & Vera** (friends of Katie Horabik); **Janice** (Laurie Alexander’s mother); **Miriam Kuhl** (Sue Hoffacker’s sister); **Boris & Maria** (friends of Anna Kozikov); **Michael** (cousin of Anna Kozikov); **Katarina** (relative of Natalie Antonoff); **Aleksey Byltsov** (son of Natalie Antonoff); **Willie Gomer** (in baptism: **Alexander**); **Nancy** (Leah Woodruff’s mother); **Archpriest Jan, Matushka Jana, and the parishioners of St Theodosius Cathedral; Theodore Tollefson; Charlie Deeb; James Horabik; Dolores Kessler** (friend of Suzanne Gubser); **Richard Brown** (husband of newly reposed Joan); **Janet Evans** (friend of Ruth Bede); **the suffering Christians of Ukraine, the Middle East, and Armenia**

Birthdays this week: 8/29: Katya Levedev, Jessica Chongris; 8/30: Bobby Kingsbury; 8/31: Joe Renda

Anniversaries this week: 8/25: Alison & Jake Szendrey; 8/27: Jake & Maggie Lemaster; 8/30: Adam & Leah Woodruff

Parents Who are Expecting: Jake & Allison Szendrey, Subdeacon David (Jeffrey) & Michelle, Brian & Katya; Theodore & Jessica

Catechumens: Dalton Moses, Alex Wittie

Infants Awaiting Holy Illumination: Leo (son of **Weston & Rachel**); **Kennedy Anne** (daughter of **Jon & Alexandra**); **Margaret Lee** (daughter of **Greg & Grace**)

Newly illumined: Nicholas & Mary Monda; Anysia Theophana Pohl; James Lapointe

Departed: Joseph Demanski, Cathy Ubancic (friend of the Rendas), **Patricia** (Michael Abernathy’s grandmother), **Nun Elizabeth** (of Holy Transfiguration Monastery), **Kristen** (Michelle Hoover’s cousin), **Jane Hunt** (great grandmother of Sofia Kiernan), **Patricia Wilcoxson** (Rosemary Bagley’s mother); **Joseph Naymik; Jay Emmer-Lovell** (friend of the Russell, Horabik & Lehman families); **Pauline Demanski; Elizabeth** (Denise Busch’s aunt); **Theodore Kisha** (father of Ted Kisha); **Daniel** (infant son of Fr Peter and Matushka Sophie Ries); **John** (father of Sean Kiernan), **Ronald** (in baptism, **Thomas**) (Collin Moore’s father); **Priest James Bernstein; Joan Brown** (friend of Fr Mark and Matushka Olena); **Carol Wright; Paul Webb** (friend of Abby Goodell)