

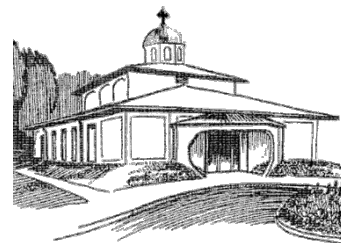


St Nicholas Orthodox Church

*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, September 1, 2024

- Sunday, Sept. 1 *Tenth Sunday after Pentecost & the Indiction (New Year)*
8:40a Third & Sixth Hours, Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday, Sept. 3 *Fr Mark @ Cleveland Area Clergy Meeting in Lorain*
- Friday, Sept. 6 5p Blessing of Pets (& Other Animals)
- Saturday, Sept. 7 4p Catechetical Class || 5:30p Festal Vespers with Lity (Confession to follow)
- Sunday, Sept. 8 *Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, the Entrance of the Theotokos, Sunday before the Exaltation*
9a Church School || 9:40a Third & Sixth Hours, Divine Liturgy



STEWARDSHIP FOR AUGUST 25, 2024

Operating: \$4,361; ZOE: \$100; Capital Maintenance:
\$200; Diocesan Dues: \$89; Candles: \$23; Uganda:
\$130; Parish Charities: \$75

“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

**“I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God
with something that costs me nothing”:**
Some Reflections on Giving to the Church

This Sunday, in addition to our typical weekly mail-outs, everyone is also receiving a letter announcing that next week is ‘pledge Sunday.’ For those who are relatively new to the parish, this is the Sunday on which, customarily, St Nicholas parish sends out a pledge card to everyone—i.e., a card on which you are asked to state how much you plan to contribute to the parish over the next year.

In thinking about the kind of catechesis that I should provide to go with this letter, I must confess that I feel a certain apprehensiveness in addressing the topic of

Church giving. In part, that is because the issue of money is so often a sensitive one. In my own case, since my appointment to this parish began only in January, this topic is one that is even more difficult to address.

In thinking about what I should say as we prepare for ‘pledge Sunday,’ then, I want to offer some remarks about the matter of giving to the church in the vein of how I talk about matters pertaining to our spiritual life in Christ in other ways. In this way, I hope that my remarks fit in with my preaching and teaching more generally, instead of seeming to come out of the blue.

First: Even if I haven’t spoken much about giving to the church, I have spoken about almsgiving. To begin, then, I want to recall my basic instruction when it comes to that matter: The primary goal of almsgiving is not that a person receives the resources that he or she needs. From the perspective of Scripture and the Fathers, the main good that comes out of almsgiving is that *we are transformed* by the practice of giving alms. **Giving, in other words, is not merely a practical matter, but a spiritual matter.** The reason is this: Generosity—being bountiful in giving—is one of the primary attributes of God. And so, in giving, we are made more like God.

Passing from almsgiving to church giving, the same principle applies. In light of that, then, the important

point to make here is the following: There is, obviously, a practical reason for why we ask parishioners to state what they plan to give to our parish over the next year since our financial obligations have to be met. We would be mistaken, however, if we were to reduce the issue of church giving to ‘paying the bills.’ To be clear on this point: The primary reason why we give to the church is not to pay the bills. That is a good thing, but it is secondary in importance. The primary reason why we give is because the act of giving transforms us by making us more like God, who is (as we say in the Ambon Prayer at the end of the Divine Liturgy) he from whom there flows “every good gift and every perfect gift.”

For this reason, a **second** major point follows: Since giving is primarily a matter of spiritual life, everyone at the parish is expected to contribute something to its regular operational needs. I realize that there are going to be some exceptions to this for those who face serious financial challenges at home. And in fact, I want to say: Our bylaws take account of this inevitable reality, and as the rector of this parish, I will give a blessing *not* to donate to anyone for whom that is the appropriate action. But for the most part, barring truly necessary exceptions, every parishioner should plan to contribute something. The best of planning for this (and the one that is most grounded in Scripture) is to tithe—i.e., to give proportionally based on your income. Inevitably, this will not be possible for some. But if not, we should remember the widow’s mite (see Luke 21): Even if one cannot give much, still, if one gives from the little that one has, then before the eyes of God this will be counted as great because of the spirit of generosity behind it.

And then, rounding out these two points, I want to add a **third**: As someone who, of course, has my own financial obligations, I very much understand that it can be difficult to give depending on circumstances, different financial burdens that arise unexpectedly, etc. But on this point, I would draw attention to the Scriptural verse that I have chosen as a title for this reflection. This verse comes from 2 Kingdoms (i.e., 2 Samuel) 24:24. By way of context: At this point in the narrative of David, he has recently been victorious in a number of conflicts that have severely troubled his people and his land. And so, in light of these victories, David has been ordered to go to make sacrifice to LORD God.

Once David arrives at the temple, however, something curious happens: Although David comes with the intention of buying offerings to make to the LORD, he is told that he may simply take the offerings at no cost to himself. David, however, immediately refuses this

proposal as unacceptable. As he says: “**I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with something that costs me nothing.**” And so, David purchases the offerings instead. Later, as we find out, it is through these sacrifices (and others) that God receives the prayers made on behalf of the people, which lead him to pacify the situation afflicting them.

The point here: Giving can indeed be difficult. But we should always remember that, ultimately, making an offering to God is never really about giving *something* to him (for, in fact, all of creation is already his). Rather, the point of making an offering to God is that, through giving things to God (money, resources, etc.), we are symbolically offering *ourselves* to God—the only sacrifice, in fact, that God has ever desired from us. And, as we see in the example of David, if we do this, our God will honor always this offering.

With these three points having been said, I am going to end my catechesis for this week. To echo what I said earlier: I know that this topic is a sensitive one, and I pray that I have not offended anyone by what I have said (and, if I have, I ask for your forgiveness). For my own part, I realize that the topic of giving is a subject where I need to work more, both with the parish council and with the entire parish, to offer in-depth instruction. God willing, that will come in due time. In the meantime, I would ask everyone to consider what I have set forth here prayerfully as you prepare for next week.



UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS IN OUR PARISH AND DEANERY

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.

The Vigil service is one of the highlights of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, especially in the Slavic form that was inherited by the Orthodox Church in America. In its full form, it consists of Festal Vespers, Lity, Festal Matins, and finally First Hour. The service is especially beautiful because of its many transitions: between light and dark, between solemn moments of festive celebration and sober moments of keeping watch and listening attentively to the prayers and readings, etc.

The Vigil for the feast of the Exaltation is particularly beautiful: During the singing of the Great Doxology of Matins, all of the lights in the temple are illumined, and the priest censes around the altar, upon which lies the

precious Cross. And then, as the choir begins to sing the slow and solemn version of “Holy God” (as they would for funeral procession), the priest takes up the cross and brings it to the center of the temple. Once there, the choir sings the Troparion of the Cross, “O Lord, save Your people...” According to the rubrics, at this point the bells of the Church are also rung (as a way of announcing what is taking place to the outside world).

Since we have not done a Vigil since I have come to St Nicholas, for this feast we will offer the service in an abbreviated form. We will begin at 5:30p. My estimate is that it will take us around two hours. Especially for those of you who have small children, I realize that two hours on Friday evening is a stretch. I want to say this: In my view, it is better to come for part of a service than to refrain from participating in it because one cannot remain for the entire time. So, if you can only come for the first part of the service (i.e., basically, Vespers), come for that, and depart prayerfully and peacefully when you need to do so. (This is what we did at St Vladimir’s Seminary while my family was there.) Or again, if you work into the evening and can only come at a later time of the service, follow the same procedure: Come when you are able, enter the temple prayerfully, and participate in the service for as much as you can. As in all things: God knows the heart, and he accepts whatever we offer to him, provided that we offer it with sincerity and love.

In any case, I would ask everyone: Please make the effort to come to a service for this feast, either the evening before or the morning of (or both), since the Exaltation is, as we know, one of the most important feast-days in the Church year. And, as a reminder: Because we make a special commemoration of the crucifixion of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ on this day, it is a strict-fast day: We do not consume meat, dairy, eggs, or fish on this day (although oil and wine are allowed).



14th Annual Fr. Prislopsky Memorial Lecture

On Tuesday, September 17, His Eminence Michael, the Archbishop of New York and New Jersey, will be giving the 14th Annual Fr. Prislopsky Memorial Lecture. This event will take place at St Michael’s Church in Broadview Heights. Dinner will take place at 6:30pm (cost: \$15); the lecture will then follow. His Eminence will speak about the factors that led up to the calling of the First Ecumenical Council. For details about how to RSVP, and for other details, see [the attached flyer](#).



MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

A Note of Gratitude & Some Housekeeping Notes

I want to express my gratitude to all those who came to help with the clean-out and cleaning day last Saturday, August 24. I was truly amazed by the results, and I know that some others who participated felt the same way.

For me, this clean-out was the first step in a larger project of thinking about how we can best utilize the space that we currently have. I will be sharing my ideas about this in the coming months. In the meantime, there is something more pressing: Having now cleaned out so many areas and acquired some much-needed space, we are now able to do a few house-keeping tasks a bit differently and more efficiently.

First, for **those who work in our flower ministry**: Please note that the sink in the cleaning closet in the back of the church is now completely cleared out. And so, I would ask you to use this space to prepare flowers, to water them, etc. instead of using the sacristy sink. Doing this will help us to keep the sacristy in better order (something that I think is important especially since, in our temple, the sacristy area flows right into the altar).

Second, for **those who assist with cleaning out the candles**: In order to keep the sacristy free from the clutter of the remnants of burnt candles, the supplies for cleaning out the candle boxes have also been moved to the back closet. If you look there, you will find that there are a few plastic bins where you might put the burnt candles as you remove them. And then there is a cardboard box where you can deposit them after that.

Thank you to everyone who assists in these ministries to beautify our temple and our services. And please: if there is anything that we can do to alter the set-up in the closet area so as to facilitate your ministries, please tell me so that we can make whatever improvements we can.



Starting This Sunday: Third and Sixth Hours before Divine Liturgy

I forgot to announce the following last week: Starting with this Sunday as the beginning of the Church’s New Year, the reader will now be chanting *both* Third and Sixth Hours before the Divine Liturgy.

As I said a number of weeks ago in one of my catecheses: The best way to prepare to receive the holy Gifts is to come to church early for the Hours. That is because being in the temple before liturgy gives one time to settle

into church, and to start to enter into a deeper spirit and prayer, so that one can better internalize what happens in the Divine Liturgy in one's heart.

To accommodate for the fact that we will now be doing both Hours before Liturgy, I am asking the readers to begin them **20 minutes** before the start of Liturgy.



PLEASE TAKE NOTE:

Changes in Sunday Schedule Starting Next Week

Beginning next week, our Sunday schedule changes from summer to 'normal' hours: On Sunday morning, church school will be at 9a, and the Hours and the Divine Liturgy will commence at 9:40a.

As part of this, please also note that, starting next week, I will be doing a catechetical class on Saturday afternoon before Vespers (the topic will likely be the Church's Liturgy). At least for now, I will plan to do this class every other week. To accommodate the class, I will start hearing confession *after* Vespers. Confession will take place in this manner: After Great Vespers finishes, I will gather together all those who wish to confess. I will read the introductory prayers with everyone. Then, after that, I will hear individual confessions. I will try this way of doing things for September to see how it goes. If we need to adjust it, we can. **As a general reminder: If you need to confess, but cannot come on Saturday, be in touch with me so that we can find a time that works for you. I am always glad to make time to hear a confession.**



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, 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;** **James Horabik;** **Dolores Kessler** (friend of Suzanne Gubser); **Richard Brown** (husband of newly reposed Joan); **Janet Evans** (friend of Ruth Bede); **Carol Lehman** (Darlene Horabik's sister, wife of newly-reposed George); **Mirela** (friend of Katie Horabik); **Joe Dzura** (brother of Andy Dzura); **the suffering Christians of Ukraine, the Middle East, and Armenia**

Birthdays this week: 9/1: Anna Gordon; 9/3: Ruth Bede; 9/4: Benjamin Zadd; 9/5: Jared Lemaster; 9/7: Andrew Dzura, William Walker

Anniversaries this week: 9/1: Scott & Lea Hoffacker; 9/3: Leonard & Donna Heim; 9/3: Tess & Drew Cressman; 9/5: Anna & Alexander Kosikov, Cole & Sarah Schlafer

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

Catechumens: Dalton Moses (*who is soon to be illumined*), **Alex Wittie**

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

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

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; 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); **George (Bim) Lehman** (Darlene Horabik's brother-in-law)