



Welcome!

Whether you are searching for a new church home or just visiting, we are glad you're with us today. If you have a prayer request, are looking for more information about the Orthodox Faith, would like to join our parish, or would like to speak with Fr Thomas, we invite you to fill out a visitor's card and drop it in the offering basket as your offering today. We want to get to know you! God bless you!

Schedule This Week

- Sunday, September 17**
10:00 am Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday, September 19**
9:00 am Daily Matins
9:30 am to 12:00 pm Office Hours
- Thursday, September 21**
9:00 am Daily Matins
9:30 am to 12:00 pm Festival Cooking Prep
- Friday, September 22**
9:30 am to 12:00 pm Festival Cooking Prep
- Saturday, September 23**
9:30 am to 12:00 pm Festival Cooking Prep
12:00 pm to 2:00 pm Pan-Orthodox Choir Reh.
4:30 pm Confessions
5:00 pm Great Vespers/Cathedral Vigil
- Sunday, September 24**
10:00 am Divine Liturgy/Church School

To our Visitors: Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting. Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Rector
Deacon Luke Loboda, Attached
Deacon John Skowron, Attached
Rdr James Wargo and Danielle Bartko, Choir Dirs

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA
OrthodoxPittsburgh.org September 17, 2023

Announcements

- Our next **Bible Study** will be Wednesday, September 27 at 7:00 pm in the Education Building with Vespers at 6:30 pm. Join us for a fascinating study of St Paul's Letter the Ephesians!
- We are in great need of **donations for our monthly food pantry** which feeds our neighbors who are in need. Would you please consider giving a special donation to help? If you give a special gift, please earmark it for "Food Pantry."
- A bus to attend the **PA March for Life** in Harrisburg will be leaving from St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Allison Park on Monday, October 16 at 6 am and will be leaving Harrisburg at 2:15 pm to return to Pittsburgh (arriving approx 6 pm). The cost is \$30. Deadline for reservations is Monday, September 18. Contact Eileen Glisan at glisan@live.iup.edu or 724-272-1552.

➤ **Slavic Food Fest Prep Schedule**
We invite everyone who is interested to join us in preparing the food for our annual Slavic Food Fest (to be held on Saturday, October 14). This is a great opportunity to join together in helping to bring people into our community and offer them a bit of our historical culture, but also share the best of the hospitality of our Orthodox Faith.

We will be having prep workshops **every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday morning from 9:30 am to Noon from now until the Festival** (times will shift only when there is a morning Liturgy). We need your help and support! Join us and learn how to make these great foods! Everyone is welcomed and no one will be turned away. There's much for everyone to do!

Prayers

- **Ill and infirm: Known to be hospitalized;; Home:** John Mahalchak (son), Rick Porter. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Eleanor Kovacs, Natalie Popovich, Michael Soroka.
- **No Vigil Lights From Mat. Nancy K. Mell & Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family. From **Richard & Sonia Blaha** for the departed servants, newly departed, Alma; in memory of Uncle Mike, Grace, parents, and Robert; for the health of family, friends, siblings, and serving soldiers; for special intention, peace, anniversaries, and birthdays. From **Doris Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family. From **Marsha Wasilko** for the departed servants, parents, Charles & Mary; in remembrance of 9/11. From **Charles A. Wasilko** for the health of sisters, Doris & Marsha. From **Nancy Shaytar and George M. Shaytar** for the departed servant, George Shaytar. From **Lindy Hamilton** for the health of the Hamilton & Scott families; special intentions. From **John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilcova, and Daniel Kowalcheck on his birthday. From **John Mahalchak family** for the health of friends & family; John, Cheryl, Gregory, Cindy, Daniel, Mary, and Darlene. From **Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servants, John, Nicholas, and Nicholas; for the health of Mildred, Andrea & family, Nicholas & family, and Alexandria; special intentions.

Thank You

➤ to our **September donors:** from **Sandi Tirpak** (Bulletin \$60) in memory of brother, Nicholas; nephew, Nicholas, and husband, John. From the **Mertz family** for the health of mother, Janice; daughter, Annaliese, and grandmother, Elizabeth, on their birthdays.

St Nicholas Church will strive to glorify God through Orthodox Christian worship, sincere love and care for one another, and service to those in need around us.

This Week in Church School

Today's lesson: St. Paul's Letter to the Romans

Verse (younger classes): "For as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." (Romans 12:4-5)

- Questions to ask/review:**
- What is another name we use for the Church? (the Body of Christ)
 - What are examples of ministries within the body of Christ?
 - How are the ministries of the Church similar to our own bodies?
 - What talents do you have? How can you use your talents in the Church?

Verse (older classes): "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice." (Romans 7:19)

- Questions to ask/review:**
- Can you think of some Old Testament figures who also said they would do something and did not follow through?
 - What promise did Peter fail to keep? Why did he fail? How did he feel? What was God's response?
 - What are some temptations that you struggle with?
 - What is repentance? How do we know if we truly repent?

- Suggested Activities at home:**
- Review the parts of our body and their functions. Discuss how the Church is similar.
 - Sing the song "Father Abraham, had many sons, and many sons had Father Abraham"
 - Visit the sick, write a get-well card, or perform service to someone else in the Church this week.
 - If you have not received the sacrament of confession recently, prepare and come to confession on Saturday.

Prayer: Lord, make me a useful member of your body. Amen.

Hymns and Readings for Sunday, September 17

Tone 6 Troparion (Resurrection)

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb;
the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Thy grave,
seeking Thy most pure body.
Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it.
Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.
O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead,//
glory to Thee.

Tone 1 Troparion (Cross)

O Lord, save Thy people,
and bless Thine inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
over their adversaries;
and by virtue of Thy Cross,//
preserve Thy habitation!

Tone 4 Troparion (St Nicholas)

You appeared to your flock as a rule of faith,
an image of humility, and a teacher of abstinence.
Because of your lowliness heaven was opened to
you!
Because of your poverty riches were granted to
you!
O holy Bishop Nicholas,
pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

Tone 5 Troparion (Martyrs)

Thou didst blossom in the courts of the Lord
as a fruitful olive tree,
O holy martyr Sophia;
in thy contest thou didst offer to Christ the sweet
fruit of thy womb,
thy daughters Faith, Hope, and Love.//
Together with them intercede for us all!

Tone 6 Kontakion (Resurrection)

When Christ God, the Giver of Life,
raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery
with His mighty hand,
He bestowed resurrection on the human race.//
He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life,
and the God of all.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Tone 1 Kontakion (Martyrs)

The holy branches of noble Sophia,
Faith, Hope, and Love,
confounded Greek sophistry through Grace.
They struggled and won the victory//
and have been granted an incorruptible crown by
Christ the Master of all.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 4 Kontakion (Cross)

As Thou wast voluntarily raised upon the Cross for
our sake,
grant mercy to those who are called by Thy Name,
O Christ God;
make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power,
granting them victories over their adversaries//
by bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Thy
weapon of peace!

Tone 7 Prokeimenon (Sunday After)

Extol the Lord our God: / worship at His footstool
for He is holy! (Ps. 98:5)

Epistle of the Sunday After (Galatians 2:16-20)

...knowing that a man is not justified by the works
of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we
have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be
justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of
the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall
be justified.

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we
ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ
therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I
build again those things which I destroyed, I make
myself a transgressor. For I through the law died
to the law that I might live to God. I have been
crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but
Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in
the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who
loved me and gave Himself for me.

Epistle of the Sunday (2 Corinthians 4:6-15)

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out
of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give
the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in
the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that
the excellence of the power may be of God and not
of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not
crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not
destroyed— always carrying about in the body the
dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also
may be manifested in our body. For we who live
are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that
the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our
mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but
life in you.

And since we have the same spirit of faith,
according to what is written, “I believed and
therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore
speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord
Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will
present us with you. For all things are for your
sakes, that grace, having spread through the many,
may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of
God.

Gospel of the Sunday After (Mark 8:34-9:1)

When He had called the people to Himself, with
His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever
desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and
take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever
desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever
loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save
it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the
whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will
a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever
is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous
and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also
will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His
Father with the holy angels.”

And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that
there are some standing here who will not taste
death till they see the kingdom of God present with
power.”

Gospel of the Sunday (Matthew 22:35-46)

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him 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.

Tone 8 Festal Hymn to the Theotokos

Magnify, O my soul, the most precious Cross of the
Lord!

Thou art a mystical Paradise, O Theotokos, who,
though untilled, hast brought forth Christ; through
Him the life-bearing wood of the Cross was
planted on earth. Now at its Exaltation, as we bow
in worship before it, we magnify thee.

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in
the highest! (Ps. 148:1) The light of Thy
countenance has been signed upon us, O Lord. (Ps.
4:7) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

These events took place in 137 AD and seem distant, or even unreal to us. Is anything like this possible nowadays? Would contemporary mothers be able to unhesitatingly witness their children being tortured and executed for the name of the Lord and rejoice at their martyrdom? Would modern children, or even adults, be able to show true faith, hope and love?

Our life is impossible without faith, hope and love. These qualities are inextricably linked.

St Paul writes (Heb. 11: 6), “And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”. It means that we cannot enter into any relationship with God (i. e. we cannot hope in Him, love Him, pray to Him, etc.) if we, before anything else, do not believe in Him. Faith, according to the apostle, is "the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" as if these things were visible in the present life (Heb. 11:1). Faith is the beginning of everything.

Christian hope is very closely connected with Christian faith. While faith can be described as the certainty that there is a Creator by Whose providence the redemption of the human race was accomplished by Jesus Christ, hope is the certainty that the goal of creation and redemption of man will be achieved. A hoping heart reaches perfect comfort in God, knowing that He constantly cares about our salvation and will not deprive us of His grace-filled help in achieving it, fulfilling all His promises both in our temporary and eternal life.

Let us turn once again to the words of St Paul the Apostle (1 Cor: 13:13), “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." True Christian love is the highest virtue and the source of all virtues. For Christians, love for God and neighbor is the end result in achieving the goal of the

commandments, as well as the content and meaning of life.

But what about Sophia's name? Just as it was impossible for the three martyrs to live without their loving mother, so faith, hope and love are impossible to exist without wisdom.

Without a wise approach, faith turns into fanaticism, hope turns into carelessness, and love without wisdom blinds a person, making him a jealous tyrant.

By their strong faith, hope for salvation and love for God, Faith (*Vera*), Hope (*Nadezhda*), Love (*Lyubov*) and their mother set us an example of a truly Christian life. Let us turn to them with prayers so that the Lord will strengthen us and help us acquire these virtues.



Sophia and Her Daughters

The holy martyrs, Faith, Hope, Love and their mother Sophia (*Wisdom*), are revered throughout the world. They lived in Rome in the early 2nd century. When Sophia was left a widow, she devoted her life to raising her three daughters, naming them Faith, Hope and Love (the most important virtues in Christianity) and teaching them, above all things, to love God.

Learning of this family, the Roman Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD) ordered that they be brought to Rome and put on trial. The young mother and her daughters appeared before the ruler and openly confessed their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.

These are the words that Sophia said to her daughters before they were executed. *“My beloved daughters, now is the time of your heroic deed. The day has come for you to espouse yourself to your immortal Bridegroom and comply with the meaning of your names, showing firm faith, undoubted hope and eternal love. The hour of your triumph has come, and you are about to be honored with a martyr's crown, betrothing you to Christ, Whose blessed dwellings you will enter with great joy. Seeing your valiant patience and firm, even to death, confession of His Holy Name will be my triumph, joy, honor and glory among all believers, if I deserve to be called the mother of the martyrs. Then my soul and my spirit will rejoice and my old age will be strengthened. You will truly be my daughters, if, after listening to the instructions of your mother, you stand for your Lord to the last drop of blood and die for Him with zeal.”*

In the face of their death for the Lord Jesus Christ, she set for them an example of unshakable faith. The holy martyrs Faith, Hope and Love showed obedience to their mother and

joyfully accepted all the sufferings, singing hymns and glorifying the Lord.

Then the emperor ordered them to be tortured. They burned the holy virgins over an iron grating, then threw them into a red-hot oven, and finally into a cauldron with boiling tar, but the Lord preserved them.

The youngest child, Love, was tied to a wheel and they beat her with rods until her body was covered all over with bloody welts. After undergoing unspeakable torments, the holy virgins glorified their Heavenly Bridegroom and remained steadfast in the Faith.

They subjected Saint Sophia to another grievous torture: the mother was forced to watch the suffering of her daughters. She displayed adamant courage, and urged her daughters to endure their torments for the sake of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens were beheaded, and joyfully bent their necks beneath the sword.

In order to intensify Saint Sophia's inner suffering, the emperor permitted her to take the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and loaded them on a wagon. She drove beyond the city limits and reverently buried them on a high hill. Saint Sophia sat there by the graves of her daughters for three days, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord. Even though she did not suffer for Christ in the flesh, she was not deprived of a martyr's crown. Instead, she suffered in her heart. Believers buried her body there beside her daughters.

In 777 AD, the relics of the holy martyrs were sent from Rome to a women's monastery in Eschau, France. During the Protestant Reformation, monastic life at the monastery was abolished. Later, during the French Revolution in the 18th century, the holy relics disappeared. *(continued on back)*