



## 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, May 21

10:00 am Divine Liturgy/Church School

### Tuesday, May 23

9:00 am Daily Matins

9:30 am to Noon Office Hours

### Wednesday, May 24

6:00 pm Festal Vigil *\*Note time change*

7:00 pm Bible Study (Ephesians 2)

### Thursday, May 25: Ascension of Christ

9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy

10:30 am to Noon Office Hours

### Saturday, May 27

4:00 pm Community Food Pantry

4:30 pm Confession

5:00 pm Great Vespers/Cathedral Vigil

6:00 pm Social Night

### Sunday, May 28

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

## Sunday of the Blind Man

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org

May 21, 2023

## Announcements

➤ This Wednesday evening and Thursday morning is the celebration of the great feast of the **Ascension of Christ**. This feast is important because it is both the glorification of our human nature in Christ seated at the right hand of God and the divine call of our Lord to preach the Gospel to every creature. May we be found worthy of to fulfill our calling! Join us to celebrate this amazing feast!

➤ Today is **the last day of the Church School year**. We want to sincerely **thank our teachers** who so diligently taught our students meaningful lessons about Church History this year. We are grateful to them and to our conscientious parents who brought their children to learn more about our Orthodox Faith. May God richly bless them!

➤ The **St Nicholas Regional Synaxes** are happening this Tuesday, May 23 and Friday, May 26. Check your email for details about your regional gathering! We hope you'll join us!

➤ **Pro-Life Ministry Drive:** The mom and baby gift bags are due today. Please see Matushka Joni or Mary Hoffman for more info. Thank you for your generosity!

➤ **Looking ahead!**

**Tuesday, May 30** 9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Saint Emmelia Homeschool Cooperative

**Saturday, June 3** 9:30 am Memorial Liturgy

**Monday, July 10- Thursday, July 13, 2023**

Vacation Church School (Preschool-Middle)

## Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized:* John Mahalchak (son), *Home:* (none). *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Eleanor Kovacs, Natalie Popovich, Michael Soroka.  
➤ **Vigil Lights** From **Mat. Nancy K. Mell & Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, for Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family. From **Charles A. Wasilko** for the departed servants, mother, Mary and uncle, Ed Hollenback. From **Marsha Wasilko** for the departed servants, mother, Mary, grandmothers, Susan & Katherine, and Godmother, Mary Hollenbach. From **John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilкова. From **Mat. Joni Soroka** for our departed mothers, grandmothers, and godmothers; for the health of Melanie, Jacqueline, and Natalie. From **Richard & Sonia Blaha** for the departed servants, mothers, Dorothy & Betty, grandmothers, Helen, Mary, Victoria, & Marie, Godmother, Wilma, and Aunts,(newly departed) Ludmilla and Barb, Gregory; for the health of Aunt Eva-95<sup>th</sup> birthday, family, friends, siblings, and serving soldiers; for anniversary blessings on our 35<sup>th</sup>, anniversary of sister & brother-in-law, Cheryl & Mark; special intention and peace. From **Nancy Shaytar** for the departed servant, husband, George. From **George M. Shaytar** for the departed servant, my dad, George. From **Lindy Hamilton** for the health for Elaine Hamilton. From **the Pravlochaks** for the departed servants, Anna, and Mary; for the health of brother, David and granddaughter, Christina. From **the John Mahalchak family** in memory of mothers on Mother's Day; for the health of John, Cheryl, Gregory, Cindy, Daniel, and Mary; for the health of all mothers. From **Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servants, mother, Amelia and daughter, Amelia; for the health of Lisa, Andrea, and all the women of our parish, peach for our country and special intentions.

## Thank You

➤ to our **May** donors: from Sandi Tirpak (Bulletin \$60) for the health of Fr Basil and Matushka Juliana, (Wine \$40) for the departed servant John and the health of Andrea and David, (Altar Candles \$25) for Fr Thomas; from Mat Joni (Incense \$10) for Fr Thomas.

**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.**

## Today's Church School Lesson

**Today's lesson:** Orthodoxy in America Part II

**Questions to ask/review:**

- Who are some saints who have impacted the Church in the last 100-150 years?
- What are some examples of Orthodox jurisdictions in America today?
- When did the Orthodox Church in America become autocephalous? (1970)
- What does autocephaly mean?
- What is the history of our own parish?

**Suggested Activities at home:**

Discuss the history of our own parish and share how your family came to be Orthodox Christians and joined our parish.

**Prayer:** Lord, strengthen and enlighten us to spread your Word in all of Pittsburgh and America.

**There is no need to idealize the past.** There were plenty of deficiencies and weaknesses in the Church of all ages. There were greedy priests and stingy laymen. There were periods of decay and corruption, and, then, those of revival and renovation. The preaching of the Gospel may have been weak and the understanding of Christian life, responsibilities and goals narrow and one-sided. The doctrine and the liturgy of the Church may not have been understood in all their implications and there may have not been enough concern for justice and charity... In the light of all this it becomes obvious—and this may come as a second shock—that the "parish" as we know it today is, in spite of all its religious connotations, a product of secularization, or, rather, that in the process of its development within the American way of life it has accepted a secularistic basis which little by little dissolves the ultimate seriousness of that which it claims to serve and to express; i.e., the Church. (FAS)

in vitality” since 2020, measured not only by growth in membership but by other indicators including church attendance, financial giving, enrollment in religious education and participation in parish activities beyond worship. Prominent among the characteristics of these parishes, he said, is a higher-than-average share of converts.

Some say it is no coincidence that the pandemic, with all its social and economic disruption, ushered in newcomers drawn by the ancient faith’s traditional teachings and the beauty of its worship, which prominently features the veneration of icons.

“We’ve all experienced a world where the ground has shifted underneath our feet,” said the Rev. Stephen Mathewes, pastor of a church in Bluff City, Tenn. “A lot of people...want something that is going to stand the test of time, no matter what happens in the world.”

Many of the converts joining parishes that have grown in vitality since the pandemic are young single men, Krindatch said.

Kyle Riggs, 26, a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army National Guard and former Southern Baptist in Ball Ground, Ga., who joined the Orthodox Church in 2021, said many men welcome the challenge of the church’s strict regimen of prayer and fasting. Orthodox Christians are traditionally expected to

limit their food intake and abstain to varying degrees from certain foods, including meat and fish, for about half the days of the year, though clergy typically advise new converts to adjust gradually to the discipline.

Converts to Orthodoxy tend to be more conservative on social and moral issues, for instance in their opposition to same-sex marriage and the ordination of women, than those who were born in the church, Krindatch said.

The Rev. Jonathan Ivanoff, pastor of a church in Shirley, N.Y., on Long Island, says that many converts have abandoned denominations that have taken a more liberal line on such matters and have come to Orthodoxy, in which liberals are still very much in the minority, as a kind of refuge.



Dr. Colette Hoilman, 29, a medical doctor and new mother in Kingsport, Tenn., who formerly attended an evangelical church, became Orthodox shortly before her marriage to a fellow convert in 2020. She said one of her Protestant friends asked her how she could join a church in which only men can be priests; she replied that it wasn’t a problem for her.

“The Orthodox Church reveres women. We venerate the Mother of God more than most saints,” Hoilman said.

The influx of people without an ethnically Orthodox heritage occasionally causes tensions. The Rev. Barnabas Powell, a former Pentecostal pastor who leads a parish in Cumming, Ga., north of Atlanta, said that some Greek-American members of his congregation sought his removal because he wasn’t of Greek descent, but that he managed to win them over.

The priest said that his concern now is to ensure, by offering Greek language classes and holding an annual Greek festival, that the 75% of his flock of 450 who are converts appreciate the importance of Greek culture in the history of their faith.

Jennifer McDaniel, 29, a graphic designer and former Baptist in New York who became Orthodox in 2017, said she felt out of place when she attended a parish that worshiped mostly in Greek. She said she feels at home at Ivanoff’s parish on Long Island, where the liturgy is in English and half of the congregation are converts, even though she is the only African-American member.



Ivanoff, who was raised in an Orthodox family of Macedonian descent, said converts have begun “to change the orientation of the church from an ethnically, inwardly minded one to a evangelistic, outwardly minded one,” a move that he says is necessary if the church is going to survive in the U.S.

Converts “bring in with them, not only that enthusiasm, they bring with them a lot of knowledge about where they come from, and then they can bridge that so that the parish can engage in further outreach and try and bring the faith to others,” he said. -END-

## Hymns and Readings for Sunday, May 21

### Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead// by His glorious Resurrection.

### Tone 8 Troparion (Sts. Constantine and Helen)

Thy servant Constantine, O Lord and only Lover of man, beheld the figure of the Cross in the heavens. Like Paul, not having received his call from men, but as an apostle among rulers set by Thy hand over the royal city,// he preserved lasting peace through the prayers of the Theotokos.

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

### Tone 3 Kontakion (Sts. Constantine and Helen)

Today Constantine and his mother Helen reveal the precious Cross, the weapon of Orthodox Christians against their enemies,// for it is manifest for us as a great and fearful sign in struggle.

*Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

### Tone 4 Kontakion (Pentecostarion)

I come to Thee, O Christ, blind from birth in my spiritual eyes, and call to Thee in repentance:// “Thou art the most radiant Light of those in darkness.”

### Tone 8 Prokeimenon (Pentecostarion)

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God! (Ps. 75:10a)

### Epistle of the Sunday (Acts 16:16-34)

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out,

saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, “These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.” Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.”

Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them;

and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

### **Gospel of the Sunday** (John 9:1-38)

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?”

Some said, “This is he.” Others said, “He is like him.”

He said, “I am he.”

Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”

He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.”

Then they said to him, “Where is He?”

He said, “I do not know.”

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”

Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?”

He said, “He is a prophet.”

But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.” His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.”

He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”

Then they said to him again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?”

Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.”

The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a

worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”

And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”

Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.

### **Hymn to the Theotokos of the Feast**

The Angel cried to the Lady, full of grace:  
“Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Again, I say: ‘Rejoice, your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb!  
With Himself He has raised all the dead.’” Rejoice, O ye people!

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you. Exult now, and be glad, O Zion! Be radiant, O pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your Son!

### **Communion Hymn of the Sunday**

Receive the Body of Christ; taste the fountain of immortality! Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe. (Ps. 18:4) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## **Eastern Orthodoxy Gains New Followers in America**

*Ancient faith is drawing converts with no ties to its historic lands*

**By Francis X. Rocca**

**The Wall Street Journal      May 17, 2023**

Michelle Jimenez was captaining an oil tanker in the Gulf of Mexico in early 2020 when she heard

about a Bible-study group organized by a crew member. Though she had been baptized a Catholic in infancy, she was never raised in that or any other faith. She had experimented with New Age beliefs and Zen Buddhist meditation, but hadn’t found a spiritual home. Her new encounter with Christianity eventually led her to an Eastern Orthodox liturgy.

“I just felt this overwhelming presence of God...that everything is always going to be OK no matter what,” recalled Jimenez, 36 years old, of her first experience with Orthodox worship. She was baptized in the church the day before Easter in 2022, becoming part of a small but



fast-growing group of Americans from diverse backgrounds who have embraced Orthodoxy in the past few years.

Eastern Orthodoxy is one of the two parts of the Christian world that emerged from the Great Schism of the 11th century, a split with the Roman Catholic Church caused principally by disagreement over the authority of the pope. Its members belong to a family of churches with historic roots in Eastern Europe, Russia and the region of the eastern Mediterranean, which traditionally look to the Patriarch of Constantinople as their spiritual leader.

The Eastern Orthodox population of the U.S. is dominated by immigrants from the church’s historic lands and by their descendants. But in recent years, aided by more widely available information on the internet, the church has been attracting more attention from people with no ancestral ties to Orthodoxy, a trend that appears to have accelerated following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some pastors across the country report growth of their flocks by 15% or more in a single year owing to conversions, defying an overall trend of decline similar to that in other denominations.

Alexei D. Krindatch, national coordinator of the U.S. Census of Orthodox Christian Churches, said the practicing Eastern Orthodox population in the U.S. was 675,000 in 2020, down from 816,000 a decade earlier, and most parishes lost members after the outbreak of the pandemic. But Krindatch said about 13% of Orthodox parishes have experienced a “surge