



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

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Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:
Saturday, Jun 24, Jul 1
Great Vespers: 5pm

Sunday, Jun 25, Jul 2
Divine Liturgy: 10am
Coffee and fellowship will follow the service

*The above services are at
St. Olympia Church
34 North Main Street
Norwood, NY, 13668*

*Mailing Address
St. Olympia Orthodox
Church PO Box 122
Canton, NY 13617*

**The Holy Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the
Apostles, Peter and Paul
June 29**



O first-enthroned of the Apostles, and teachers of the universe, intercede with the Master of all to grant peace to the world, and to our souls great mercy.

Troparion

Today Christ the Rock glorifies with highest honor the rock of Faith and leader of the Apostles, together with Paul and the company of the Twelve, whose memory we celebrate with eagerness of faith, giving glory to Him Who glorified them!

Kontakion

**Saints Peter and Febronia (tonsured David and Euphrosynē)
Wonderworkers of Murom
June 25**

Holy Prince Peter (David in monasticism) and Holy Princess Febronia (Euphrosynē in monasticism), Wonderworkers of Murom. Prince Peter was the second son of the Murom prince Yuri Vladimirovich. He entered upon the throne of Murom in the year 1203. Several years before this Saint Peter had fallen ill with leprosy, from which no one was able to heal him. In a vision it was revealed to the prince that the daughter of a bee-keeper would be able to heal him: the pious maiden Febronia, a peasant of Laskova village in Ryazan gubernia [province]. Saint Peter sent his emissaries to this village.

When the prince saw Saint Febronia, he fell in love with her because of her piety, wisdom and virtue, and vowed to marry her after being healed. Saint Febronia healed the prince and became his wife. The holy couple loved each other through all their ordeals. The haughty boyars did not wish to have a princess of common origin, and they urged that the prince leave her. Saint Peter refused, and so they banished the couple. They sailed off on a boat from their native city along the River Oka, and Saint Febronia continued to console Saint Peter. Soon the wrath of God fell upon the city of Murom, and the people begged the prince return together with Saint Febronia.

The holy couple was famous for their piety and charity. They died on the same day and hour, June 25, 1228, having received the monastic tonsure with the names David and Euphrosyne. The bodies of the saints were put in the same grave. Sts Peter and Febronia showed themselves exemplary models of Christian marriage, and are considered as the patron saints of newly-weds.

*Thinking of the principality and glory of this temporal world,
you lived a godly life in the world, O Peter, together with your wife, the divinely-wise Febronia,
you pleased God by your almsgiving and prayers.
Therefore, after death, you rest inseparably in the same grave, invisibly granting healing,
and now pray to Christ to save the city and the people who praise you.*

Kontakion



**Appearance of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God
June 26**

According to ancient tradition, the wonderworking icon of Tikhvin is one of several painted by Saint Luke the Evangelist. The icon was taken from Jerusalem to Constantinople in the fifth century, where it was enshrined in the Church of Blachernae, which was built especially for this purpose.

In 1383, seventy years before the fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Turks, fishermen on Lake Ladoga in the principality of Novgorod the Great witnessed the icon miraculously hovering over the lake's waters amidst a radiant light. According to an early sixteenth century Russian manuscript, "The Tale of Miracles of the Icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God," the Theotokos herself decided that her image should leave Constantinople, perhaps in anticipation of the impending fall of the Byzantine Empire.

Shortly after its miraculous appearance, the icon was discovered in several neighboring towns, including the village of Motchenitsy on the bank of the Tikhvinka River, before it finally appeared near the town of Tikhvin. A wooden church dedicated to the Dormition of the Theotokos was built on the site of the icon's final resting place. Miraculously, the icon survived a number of fires.

In the early sixteenth century, through the zeal of Great Prince Basil Ivanovich, a stone church was built to replace the original wooden structure. In 1560, by order of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, a men's monastery was established near the church and enclosed with a stone wall.

In 1613-1614, the Swedish army, having seized Novgorod, made several attempts to destroy the monastery. The countless prayers offered to the Theotokos before the icon were heard, and the monastery was spared. On one occasion, after monks had been alerted to the approaching Swedish army, they decided to flee and to take the icon with them. But the monks soon discovered that they could not remove the icon from its shrine. Seeing this as a sign of the Theotokos' protection, the monks decided not to abandon the monastery, begging the Theotokos to spare them and their beloved spiritual home. To their amazement, a large Muscovite army appeared to defend the monastery.

When the Swedes encountered the army, they retreated immediately. Word of this miracle spread rapidly, and imperial emissaries soon visited the monastery. Accompanied by a copy of the wonderworking icon, they set off for the village of Stolbovo, 33 miles from Tikhvin, where they concluded a peace treaty with the Swedes on February 10, 1617. Afterwards, the copy of the icon was taken to Moscow and enshrined in the Kremlin's Dormition Cathedral. Later, the same icon was placed in the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) cathedral in Novgorod at the request of the city's faithful, who also found themselves under attack by the Swedes. Once again, through the intercession of the Theotokos, the city was spared.

Over the centuries, the icon's fame spread far and wide. Copies of the wonderworking icon began to adorn churches throughout the land. Some of these copies also proved to be sources of miracles, and it was not uncommon to find the faithful praying before the icon to seek healing for children who were ill.

No fewer than 24 processions with the icon were celebrated each year at the Tikhvin Monastery, where the icon was enshrined. A decorative cover, or "riza," adorned the icon, exposing only the faces and hands of the Holy Virgin and Christ child. Numerous precious stones studded the riza, and many of the faithful, desiring to express thanksgiving for prayers answered through the Theotokos' intercession, affixed precious jewelry to the riza.

Most miraculous is the fact that the icon was preserved from destruction or sale after the Russian Revolution, which ushered in a 74-year persecution of the Church. During the 1920s, the communist government demanded that the Russian Orthodox Church turn over countless icons and other precious liturgical items, which through the nationalization of private property were considered the property of "the people." Many of these sacred items were sold, allegedly to raise money to feed the Russian and Ukrainian population which was afflicted by famine.

During the World War II German occupation, the Nazis removed the icon from the Tikhvin Monastery, from where it was taken to Pskov and subsequently to Riga, Latvia. When the city was evacuated, Bishop John [Garklavs] of Riga, in whose care the icon was placed, took the icon to Bavaria, where it was venerated by Orthodox faithful who had been displaced because of the war. While Soviet agents had spotted the icon, Bishop John was permitted to take the icon to the United States in 1949, under the pretext that the icon in his care was a reproduction, the work of a simple monk, and that it was of little historic or monetary value. Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Bishop John, who was later elevated to the rank of Archbishop, was elected to oversee the Diocese of Chicago, and the icon was regularly displayed and venerated in Chicago's Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Bishop John frequently took the icon on pilgrimage to various places throughout the United States and Canada. After his retirement in the late 1970s and death on Palm Sunday in 1982, Archpriest Sergei Garklavs, Bishop John's adopted son, became the caretaker of the icon. In 2003, over a decade after the fall of communism and the resurrection of the Russian Orthodox Church, the decision was made to return the precious icon to its original home.

The icon began its year-long journey to Russia at the 99th annual Pilgrimage to Saint Tikhon Monastery, South Canaan, Pennsylvania, May 23-26, 2003. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, together with members of the Holy Synod of Bishops and guest hierarchs, greeted the icon, which was available for veneration by the faithful.

The icon follows the "Hodegetria" (Hodēgētria) model and is similar in style to the ancient Ivéron icon of Our Lady. It differs in that the Christ child's legs are crossed, while the sole of His foot is turned to the viewer. Several historic sources note that several other Hodēgētria icons of the Theotokos had been brought to Russia in the 1380s, during the rule of the saintly prince Demetrius Donskoy.

Archpriest John Matusiak

*O people, let us have recourse to the Virgin Theotokos and Queen, thanking Christ God;
and, gazing tenderly at her wonderworking Icon, let us come and cry out to her:
"O Sovereign Lady Mary, you visited this land by the wondrous appearance of your sacred image;
preserve all Christians in peace and well-being and make all of them heirs of the heavenly life,
for we cry out to you with faith: "Rejoice, O Virgin, salvation of the world."*

Kontakion

SS. Peter and Paul: The greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church

Reflections in Christ

Fr. Steven Kostoff, June 30, 2018

During their earthly lives, all the saints are an incentive to virtue for those who hear and see them with understanding, for they are human icons of excellence, animated pillars of goodness, and living books, which teach us the way to better things. [Homily on Saints Peter and Paul by Saint Gregory Palamas]

On Friday, June 29, we celebrated and commemorated the two great Apostles Peter and Paul. Their martyrdom in Rome is a very well-attested historical event, happening probably between the years 64 and 68 A.D. under the Roman emperor Nero. This is considered within the Church to be such a great feast that it is preceded by a prescribed time of fasting, a practice only reserved otherwise for the great feasts of the Lord (Nativity and Pascha) and the Mother of God (Dormition). This both stresses the historical greatness of these two apostles, the accomplishments of their respective ministries, their martyric ends, and the very ministry and role of an apostle in proclaiming the Gospel to the world in fulfillment of the Lord's command to preach the Good News to "all nations" [Matthew 28:16-20]. Indeed, Saint Clement of Rome in his First Epistle, referred to Saints Peter and Paul as "the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church]." On careful reflection, it is not simply pious rhetoric that informs some of the hymns chanted in their honor during this Feast:

What spiritual songs shall we sing for Peter and Paul? They have silenced the sharp tongues of the godless. They are awesome swords of the Spirit. They are the adornment of Rome; They have nourished the whole world with the Word of God. They are the living tablets of the New Testament written by the hand of God; Christ Who has great mercy, has exalted them in Zion [Great Vespers].

In the New Testament, fourteen of the Epistles are traditionally attributed to Saint Paul and two are attributed to Saint Peter. The entire Acts of the Apostles is basically devoted to recording some of the major events in the history of these two apostles "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" [Acts 1:8]. It may not be wholly accurate to refer to Saints Peter and Paul as the apostles, respectively, "to the circumcised" (the Jews) and the "uncircumcised" (the Gentiles) – for Saint Peter preached to the Gentiles and Saint Paul to the Jews) – but this is a way of capturing the fullness of their combined ministries so that Jews and Gentiles alike would be united in the one Body of Christ in fulfillment of God's design.

At Great Vespers of this Feast, three New Testament readings are prescribed, all from Saint Peter's first Epistle. We hear from the magnificent opening of 1 Peter, and this passage profoundly presents the essence of the Gospel as proclaimed in the apostolic age of the Church's foundation, by the "prince of the apostles." For those who have not heard or read this passage recently, a good portion of it deserves to be recorded here so as "to make your day:"

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen Him you love Him; though you do not now see Him you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls
[1 Peter 1:3-9].

In this passage, Saint Peter reminds us that from the beginning the Gospel bestowed upon on Christians a "living hope" that was based on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. All New Testament writers establish Christian hope on the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul did not want his early converts to be "without hope" like their pagan neighbors, thus attesting to how important hope is for the believing Christian). The Apostle Peter was not offering yet another philosophy, but proclaiming the activity of God – "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" – within the realm of human history; that is that God has acted decisively on our behalf by overcoming death itself through the resurrection of Jesus. He then describes our "inheritance" in heaven in strikingly powerful images, emphasizing the eternal and unassailable reality of heaven – "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading." This is in sharp contrast to life as we now know it in this world, for all created things are perishable, subject to defilement and destined to fade away. The Apostle Paul confirms this also by saying that "the form of this world is fading

away” [1 Corinthians 7:31]. “Guarded by faith,” we await a salvation that will be “revealed in the last time,” meaning the Parousia and end of time.

Yet, the apostle knows that this gift cannot be lightly received and treated. It will only come after “various trials” that are inevitable in a fallen world. In this instance, Saint Peter was most likely referring to persecution, as this had already broken out against the earliest Christians. However, suffering comes in other forms. These trials will test the “genuineness” of our faith, purifying it if we emerge from these tribulations purged like gold “tested by fire.” All of this is true even though we have not seen nor “see” Jesus even now. This is true of all of Christ’s disciples through the ages, called by Jesus Himself “blessed” by believing though not actually having seen Him [John 20:29].

The strength of this experience is beautifully expressed by Saint Peter when he confidently states that we “rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.” This is almost embarrassing when we admit dragging ourselves to church or praying as if constrained under a heavy obligation or a “religious duty” that takes us away from more “interesting” activities! A joyless Christianity is completely foreign to the New Testament, as is a “second place” (or “third” or fourth,” etc.) Christianity in the priorities of our lives. The intended “outcome” of all this is “the salvation of your souls.” Is this why every liturgical service that begins with the Great Litany has us praying to the Lord, in the first full petition, for the “peace from above and for the salvation of our souls?” There is nothing “selfish” in seeking or accepting the “salvation of our souls.” This is the gift of God that is intended for all. In the assurance of this gift, we can work more steadfastly on behalf of others, and share what God has done on our behalf.

The Apostles Peter and Paul are truly “rivers of wisdom and upholders of the Cross!” They exemplified the later teaching of Saint Ignatius of Antioch of the mystery of Christ that conveys “life in death,” for they died as martyrs but are eternally alive in Christ. We can now read their epistles and their lives as “living books which teach us the way to better things” as Saint Gregory Palamas said of them. We seek their prayers as we strive to be worthy of the title of “Christian.”

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Pilgrimage to St Olymphia Mission with Archbishop Michael for our Patronal Feast

Monday, July 24, 2023 Vespers, 6pm

**Tuesday, July 25, 2023 Vesting the Bishop, 9:30am
Divine Liturgy, 10am**

Diocesan Council Meeting

Tuesday, July 18, at 11:00 AM

Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville NY

Presbyter’s Council Meeting

Thursday, July 27, at 1:00 PM

Zoom

WEEKDAY VESPERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA

Weekdays at 5 PM

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at mothersophronia@gmail.com

or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead.

This is how you pray continually – not by offering prayers in words, but by joining yourself to God through your whole way of life, so that your life becomes on continuous and uninterrupted prayer.

Saint Basil the Great

***PRAYER OF THE HEART LEADS TO JOY OF THE HEART.
NOTHING IS DIFFICULT FOR A JOYFUL PERSON BECAUSE HE HAS LOVE.***

ELDER THADDEUS