



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

*Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov, Priest-in-Charge, 323-851-7898
 Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:
Saturday, November 19, 26
Great Vespers: 5pm

Sunday, November 20, 27
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, NY13617*

**The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos
 November 21**

**Holy Great Martyr Katherine of Alexandria
 November 24**



Today is the prelude of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. Let us rejoice and sing to her: "Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation."

Troparion of the Entry of the Theotokos

By your virtues, as with the rays of the sun, you enlightened the pagan sages; and like the brightest moon for those who walk at night, you drove away the darkness of unbelief, and led the Empress to faith; you also rebuked the tyrant, and you were called by God as His bride, O blessed Katherine. With love you ascended to the heavenly Bridal Chamber of the most comely Bridegroom Christ, by Whom you were crowned with a royal crown. Now standing before Him with the Angels, pray for us who honor your holy memory.

Troparion to Saint Katherine

Sanctifying Time through the Feasts of the Church

By Fr. Steven Kostoff

Reflections in Christ, November 29, 2017

We recently celebrated one of the Twelve Great Feast Days of the Church's liturgical year—the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. The festal cycle of the Church sanctifies time. By this we mean that the tedious flow of time is imbued with sacred content as we celebrate the events of the past now made present through liturgical worship. Notice how often we hear the word “today” in the hymns of this feast:

“Today let us, the faithful dance for joy....” “Today the living Temple of the holy glory of Christ our God, she who alone among women is pure and blessed....” “Today the Theotokos, the Temple that is to hold God, is led into the temple of the Lord....”

Again, we do not merely commemorate the past, but we make the past *present*. We *actualize* the event being celebrated so that we are also participating in it. We, “*today*,” rejoice as we greet the Mother of God as she enters the temple “in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all.” Can all—or any—of this possibly change the “tone” of how we live this day? Is it at all possible that an awareness of this joyous feast can bring some illumination or sense of divine grace into the seemingly unchanging flow of daily life? Are we able to envision our lives as belonging to a greater whole: the life of the Church that is moving toward the final revelation of God's Kingdom in all of its fullness? Do such questions even make any sense as we are scrambling to just get through the day intact and in one piece, hopefully avoiding any serious mishaps or calamities? If not, can we at least acknowledge that “something” essential is missing from our lives?

I believe that there are a few things that we could do on a practical level that will bring the life of the Church, and its particular rhythms, into our domestic lives. As we know, each particular feast has a main hymn called the *troparion*. This troparion captures the over-all meaning and theological content of the feast in a somewhat poetic fashion. As the years go by, and as we celebrate the feasts annually, you may notice that you have memorized these troparia, or at least recognize them when they are sung in church. For the Great Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos Into the Temple, the festal troparion is the following:

*Today is the prelude of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind.
The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all.
Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation!*

The celebration of a Great Feast of the Church is never a one-day affair. There is the “afterfeast” and then, finally, the “leavetaking” of the feast. So this particular feast extended from November 21 until November 25. A good practice, therefore, would be to include the troparion of the feasts in our daily prayers until their leavetakings. That can be very effective when parents pray together with their children before bedtime, as an example. Perhaps even more importantly within a family meal setting, it would be appropriate to sing or simply say or chant the troparion together before sitting down to share that meal together. The troparion would replace the usual prayer that we use, presumably the Lord's Prayer. All of this can be especially effective with children, as it will introduce them to the rhythm of Church life and its commemoration of the great events in the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Do you have any Orthodox literature in the home that would narrate and then perhaps explain the events and meaning of the Great Feast Days? Reading this together as a family can also be very effective. A short Church School session need not be the only time that our children are introduced to the life of the Church. The home, as we recall, has been called a “little Church” by none other than Saint John Chrysostom. Orthodox Christianity is meant to be a way of life, as expressed by Father Pavel Florensky in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*: “The Orthodox taste, the Orthodox temper, is felt but is not subject to arithmetical calculation. Orthodoxy is shown, not proved. That is why there is only one way to understand Orthodoxy: through direct experience... to become Orthodox, it is necessary to immerse oneself all at once into the very element of Orthodoxy, to begin living in an Orthodox way. There is no other way.”

Holy Great Martyr Katherine

November 24

The Holy Great Martyr Katherine was the daughter of Konstos, the governor of Alexandria, Egypt during the reign of Emperor Maximian (305-313). Living in the capital, the center of Hellenistic knowledge, and possessed of a rare beauty and intellect, Katherine received an excellent education, studying the works of the greatest philosophers and teachers of antiquity. Young men from the most worthy families of the empire sought the hand of the beautiful Katherine, but she was not interested in any of them. She told her parents that she would enter into marriage only with someone who surpassed her in nobility, wealth, comeliness and wisdom.

Katherine's mother, a secret Christian, sent her to her own Spiritual Father, a saintly Elder living in a cave outside the city, for advice. After listening to Katherine, the Elder said that he knew of someone who surpassed her in everything. "His countenance is more radiant than the shining of the sun, and all of creation is governed by His wisdom. His riches are given to all the nations of the world, yet they never diminish. His compassion is unequalled."

This description of the Heavenly Bridegroom produced an ardent desire in the soul of the holy maiden to see Him. "If you do as I tell you," said the monk, "you will gaze upon the countenance of this illustrious man." In parting, the Elder gave Katherine an icon of the Theotokos with the Divine Child on Her arm and told her to pray with faith to the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of the Heavenly Bridegroom, and she would hear Katherine and grant her heart's desire.

Katherine prayed all night and was permitted to see the Most Holy Virgin, Who said to her Divine Son, "Behold Thy handmaiden Katherine, how fair and virtuous she is." But the Child turned His face away from her saying, "No, she is ugly and unbelieving. She is a foolish pauper, and I cannot bear to look at her until she forsakes her impiety."

Katherine returned again to the Elder deeply saddened, and told him what she had seen in the dream. He received her, instructed her in the faith of Christ, admonished her to preserve her purity and integrity and to pray unceasingly. She then received the Mystery of Holy Baptism from him. Again Saint Katherine had a vision of the Most Holy Theotokos with her Child. Now the Lord looked at her tenderly and gave her a beautiful ring, a wondrous token of her betrothal to the Heavenly Bridegroom (this ring is still on her hand).

At that time Emperor Maximian was in Alexandria for a pagan festival. Therefore, the celebration was especially splendid and crowded. The cries of the sacrificial animals, the smoke and the smell of the sacrifices, the endless blaze of fires, and the bustling crowds at the arenas defiled the city of Alexandria. Human victims also were brought, the confessors of Christ, who would not deny Him under torture. They were condemned to death in the fire. Katherine's love for the Christian martyrs, and her fervent desire to ease their sufferings, compelled her to speak to the pagan priest and to Emperor Maximian.

Introducing herself, the Saint confessed her faith in the One True God, and exposed the errors of the pagans. The beauty of the maiden captivated the Emperor. In order to convince her of the superiority of pagan wisdom, the Emperor ordered fifty of the most learned philosophers and rhetoricians of the Empire to dispute with her, but the Saint got the better of the wise men, so that they came to believe in Christ themselves. Saint Katherine made the Sign of the Cross over the martyrs, and they bravely accepted death for Christ and were burnt alive by order of the Emperor.

Unable to persuade the Saint, Maximian tried to entice her with the promise of riches and fame. Hearing her angry refusal, the Emperor ordered his men to subject the Saint to terrible tortures, and then throw her in prison. The Empress Augusta, who had heard much about the Saint, wanted to see her. She prevailed upon the military commander Porphyrios to accompany her to the prison with a detachment of soldiers. The Empress was impressed by Katherine's strong spirit, and her face was radiant with divine grace. The holy martyr explained the Christian Faith to them, and they were converted to Christ.

On the following day, they again brought the martyr to the judgment court where, under the threat of being broken on the wheel, she was urged to renounce the Christian Faith and to offer sacrifice to the "gods." The Saint steadfastly confessed Christ and she was taken to be tortured on four wheels with sharp iron spikes, but an Angel smashed the instruments of execution, which shattered into pieces with many pagans standing nearby.

After seeing this miracle, the Empress Augusta and the imperial courtier Porphyrios and 200 soldiers confessed their faith in Christ before everyone, and they were beheaded. Maximian tried again to entice the holy martyr, offering to marry her, and again he was refused. Saint Katherine remained faithful to her heavenly Bridegroom Christ, and after praying to Him, she laid her head on the block beneath the executioner's sword.

The relics of Saint Katherine were taken by the Angels to Mount Sinai. In the VI century, the venerable head and left hand of the holy martyr were found through a revelation and transferred with honor to the newly-constructed church of the Monastery on Mount Sinai, built by the holy Emperor Justinian (November 14).

Saint Katherine is called upon for relief and assistance during a difficult childbirth. Pilgrims to her monastery on Mount Sinai are given souvenir rings as a remembrance of their visit.

Saint Katherine is commemorated on November 25 in Greek usage.

UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

www.nynjoca.org

Diocesan Council Meeting

Thursday, December 8 at 11:00 AM

Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville NY

Presbyters' Council Meeting

Thursday, December 29 at 11:00 AM

Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville NY

WEEKDAY VESPERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA

Weekdays at 4 PM

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at

mothersophronia@gmail.com

or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead



*Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the Light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a Star to adore You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on High.
O Lord, glory to You!*

Troparion of the Nativity

*Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,
and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One!
Angels with shepherds glorify Him!
The wise men journey with a star!
Since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a Little Child!*

Kontakion of the Nativity