



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

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 Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:
Saturday, Feb 17, 24
Great Vespers: 5pm

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee
February 25

Sunday, Feb 18, 25
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
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Canton, NY13617

"Kozel'shchansk" Icon of the Mother of God
February 21

Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee! And learn humility from the Publican's tears! Let us cry to our Savior, have mercy on us, only merciful One!

Kontakion of Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

O all-hymned Theotokos, hope of the world, grant unto us abundant gifts of grace from the inexhaustible well-spring of your wonderworking Icon, that we may cry out in thanksgiving: "Rejoice, O most merciful Queen and Mother of Christians."

Troparion

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee *Beginning of the Lenten Triodion*

February 25

The Sunday after the Sunday of Zacchaeus is devoted to the Publican and the Pharisee. At Vespers the night before, the *Triodion* (the liturgical book used in the services of Great Lent) begins.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who scrupulously observed the requirements of religion: he prayed, fasted, and contributed money to the Temple. These are very good things, and should be imitated by anyone who loves God. We who may not fulfill these requirements as well as the Pharisee did should not feel entitled to criticize him for being faithful. His sin was in looking down on the Publican and feeling justified because of his external religious observances.

The second man was a Publican, a tax-collector who was despised by the people. He, however, displayed humility, and this humility justified him before God (Luke 18:14).

The lesson to be learned is that we possess neither the Pharisee's religious piety, nor the Publican's repentance, through which we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, asking Him to be merciful to us, deliver us from sin, and to lead us on the path of salvation.

Two weeks before the beginning of the Fast, as part of our preparation for Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha, the Church prescribes the reading of Saint Mark's Gospel. From Monday to Friday the focus is on the end times, and the Savior's death and burial.



Martyr Philothea the Monastic

February 19

The renowned city of Athens honors the Monastic Martyr Philothea, and joyously reveres her sacred relics; for she lived her life honorably and exchanged it for contests and martyrdom; and she intercedes with the Savior, that He may grant all of us divine mercy.

Troparion

Martyr Philothea the Monastic

February 19

The Monastic Martyr Philothea was born in Athens in 1522. Her parents, Syriga and Angelos Benizelos, were renowned not only for being eminent and rich, but also deeply devout. Often the kind-hearted Syriga had implored the Most Holy Theotokos for a child. Her fervent prayers were heard, and a daughter was born to the couple. They named her Revoula. The parents raised their daughter in deep piety and right belief, and when she was twelve years old they gave her away in marriage. Her husband turned out to be an impious and crude man, who often beat and tormented his wife. Revoula patiently endured the abuse and she prayed to God, that He might bring her husband to his senses.

After three years Revoula's husband died, and she began to labor in fasting, vigil and prayer. The saint founded a women's monastery in the name of the Apostle Andrew the First-Called (November 30 and June 30). When the monastery was completed, the saint was the first to accept monastic tonsure, with the name Philothea.

During this time Greece was suffering under the Turkish Yoke, and many Athenians had been turned into slaves by their Turkish conquerors. Saint Philothea utilized all her means to free her fellow countrywomen, ransoming many from servitude. Once, four women ran away from their Turkish masters, who demanded that they renounce their Christianity, and took refuge in the monastery of Saint Philothea.

The Turks, having learned where the Greek women had gone, burst into the saint's cell, and beat her. They took her to the governor, who threw the holy ascetic into prison. In the morning, a mob of Turks had gathered, and they led her out of the prison. The governor said that if she did not renounce Christ, she would be hacked to pieces.

Just when Saint Philothea was ready to accept a martyr's crown, a crowd of Christians assembled by the grace of God. They pacified the judges and freed the holy ascetic. Returning to her monastery, Saint Philothea continued with her efforts of abstinence, prayer and vigil, for which she was granted the gift of wonderworking. In Patesia, an Athens suburb, she founded a new monastery, where she struggled in asceticism with the sisters.

During the Vigil for Saint Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), the Turks seized Saint Philothea and tortured her. Finally, they threw her down on the ground half-dead. The sisters tearfully brought the holy martyr, flowing with blood, to Kalogreza, where she died on February 19, 1589. Shortly thereafter, the relics of the holy Monastic Martyr Philothea were brought to the Athens cathedral church.

“Kozel'shchansk” Icon of the Mother of God

February 21

This Icon is one of the latest of the wonderworking icons of the Mother of God to be glorified, and one of the most revered. The event which glorified this Icon received the widest publicity, and produced the deepest impression. This was not some ancient tradition which might be denied, but it happened, so to speak, before the eyes of the people who lived at that time. Many people saw, for the first time, how miraculous grace flowed from this Icon. Eminent doctors who examined the hopelessly afflicted girl declared that she could not be cured, but the healing grace of the Most Pure Virgin was felt, and a miracle took place.

The Kozel'shchansk Icon was the family icon of Count Vladimir Ivanovich Kapnist and was kept on his estate, in the village of Kozelshchyna. This icon is very old, and the style of the letters bespeaks its Italian origin. In this extraordinarily beautiful Icon, the faces of the Divine Child and the Mother of God are filled with consolation.

In the 18th century the Icon belonged to the wife of Siromakh, a records clerk of the Zaporozhsky-Cossack army, who signed the act of Little Russia's final annexation to Russia in 1764, and he was granted lands for this. By the order of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, he married an Italian woman, one of her ladies-in-waiting.

Count Kapnist had a daughter named Maria Vladimirovna, who was brought up at the Poltava Institute. In 1880, during Cheesefare week, the girl dislocated some bones in her foot, causing it to become twisted. Doctor Meyer of Poltava thought the damage was minor. The famous Kharkov surgeon Grube said the same. He applied a plaster bandage, and recommended that a special shoe be made according to his own design, with steel springs gripping the leg above the knee, to reduce the pain in her foot when walking. He also prescribed warm baths and iron supplements. All of his instructions were followed to the letter, yet Maria received no relief. At Pascha her other foot became twisted. Professor Grube told the Count to take Maria to the Caucasus and treat her with the mineral waters. There new injuries were found: dislocations of her shoulder joints and her left hip, and very painful sensitivity along her entire spinal column. They tried everything – electricity, warm baths, mineral waters – but nothing helped.

The Count took his daughter to Moscow in October, where she was examined by the renowned neurologists, Professors Kozhevnikov and Korsakov, the surgeon Sklifasovsky, and the therapists Professors Pavlinov, Mitropolsky, and Caspari. They could not help her, so they recommended the European specialists Gutera and Charcot. The family was already in Moscow waiting for the arrival of Charcot, who was summoned by the famous capitalist Lyamin. Since it would be a long time before Charcot arrived in Moscow, and Maria wanted to go home, Count Kapnist let his wife and daughter return to their village, urging them to come to Moscow as soon as they received his wire. The Count stayed behind in Moscow to wait for Charcot.

On February 21, 1881, the Count sent a telegram to his wife saying that Charcot had left for Moscow. The Countess decided to go the next day, and she told her daughter to pray before their family Icon and to polish the metal riza. This was a custom in their family. The mother decided to leave the next day, and pointing to the family Icon of the Mother of God, she said to her daughter: "Masha, tomorrow we go to Moscow, take the Icon and polish the riza, and pray even harder before our Intercessor. Ask her to help us make the trip safely, and to cure your illness."

The afflicted girl had lost hope in earthly doctors, but she placed all her hope in God and entrusted herself to Heaven. Their Icon had long been known as miraculous. According to tradition, the Mother of God especially helped girls who turned to her in prayer and asked that she grant them a happy family. At the same time, it was customary for a girl to polish the Icon's riza, wiping it with cotton, wool, or a towel. Pressing the holy Icon to her bosom, Maria polished it, with her mother's help, and all the heaviness of her affliction, and all the sorrow and despair of her soul was poured out before the Theotokos.

The young Countess embraced the Icon with her feeble hands. As she held it, she prayed fervently, and her prayer was heard. All at once, she felt strength in her arms and legs, and she cried aloud: "Mama, Mama, I can feel my legs, I can feel my hands!"

Then she removed eight pounds of metal and the bandages from her feet. Her mother thought her daughter had lost her mind. Her face was radiant, and her joyous squeals seemed to be those of a mad woman. Finally, she realized that her daughter had been healed. There were many guests in the house. When they heard her scream they ran into the room, there they saw the young Countess walking normally, and they knew that Maria had been healed. Then the parish priest was asked to come at once and serve a Moleben of thanksgiving.

Despite her daughter's full recovery, the Countess decided to bring her to Moscow, and they left the next day, taking the Icon with them. In Moscow, the Count set up a meeting with some doctors. Charcot said that if it were not for such reliable witnesses as the Moscow Professors, he would have regarded the whole incident as a hoax. The Count stayed at the Loskutna Inn, and rumors of Maria's healing quickly spread throughout Moscow, and people began to flock first to their hotel room, and then to the church, where the Icon had been moved, and where there was a large crowd.

At the end of March, the Kapnist family went back to their village with the Icon. Then a blind maiden came to the manor, who told them that in a dream the Mother of God ordered her to go to her Icon. The Countess took her to the Icon, before which she prayed for a long time. A few days later, she returned with her sight restored in both eyes. First, a chapel was built in the Count's garden, and then a church. Miracles were recorded, and twenty-one miracles were examined by a commission from Poltava. A certain boy was healed before the commission. In 1885, a women's community with a hospital was opened in Kozel'shchyna, with a school and an orphanage for cripples.

The Divine Child on the Kozel'shchansk Icon rests in the lap of the Mother of God, holding a cross. On the table is a bowl and a spoon, perhaps to symbolize that the Mother of God brought joy to all the world. This may have been inspired by the Akathist to the Mother of God, Ikos 11: "Rejoice, O cup which drawest up joy."

There is a venerated copy of this Icon in Moscow, in the church of the Kazan Icon by the Serpukhov Gate. During Passion Week of 1885 in Astrakhan, the maiden Gitsevich was healed by a copy of the Kozel'shchansk Icon.

In 1882, a church was built, and by the decision of the Holy Synod on March 1, 1885, a women's community was established. On February 17, 1891, it became a convent dedicated to the Nativity of the Theotokos.

When the Monastery was closed in 1929, the Icon was taken by the nuns to a hermitage in the village of Obitok, and after its closure in 1932 it was kept hidden in the town of Kobelyaki, in 1941-1949 it was in the Kozel'shchyna Monastery again. Then it was brought to Lebedinsky Monastery in the Cherkasy region. From 1961 the Icon was in the Kiev apartment of the former Kozel'shchyna nuns, and it was returned to Kozel'shchyna on February 23, 1993.

A Church Service has been composed for the Kozel'shchansk Icon of the Mother of God, as well as an Akathist.



Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna
February 23

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles, you became a successor to their throne. Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God; by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, even to the shedding of your blood. Hieromartyr Polycarp, entreat Christ God to save our souls.

Troparion

The Sacraments (continued)

From *The Orthodox Faith - Volume II: Worship*

By Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Penance

The sacrament of penance is our formal act of reconciliation with God in the Church when sin has severed us from the Church's life. Because penance is the way to communion with God when that communion has been broken by sin, it is often referred to in Church Tradition as the renewal of baptism, or as the reestablishment of that condition of life with God which was given to men in the basic sacraments of inauguration into the Christian life.

Not every sin requires the necessity of formal penance through sacramental ritual. This is obvious because Christians are never completely without sin. Certain grave sins or the prolonged separation from Holy Communion, however, do call for the act of sacramental penance. Also, Christians living in communion with Christ are expected to make use of this sacrament periodically in order to humble themselves consciously before God and to receive guidance in the Christian life from their pastor in the Church. It is the teaching of the Orthodox Church that sacramental penance is necessary for those receiving Holy Communion when they have committed grave sins or when they have been separated from the eucharistic meal for a long time.

The sacrament of penance exists in the Church to allow for the repentance and reconversion of Christians who have fallen away from the life of faith. There are three main elements to the act of formal penance. The first is a sincere sorrow for sins and for the breaking of communion with God. The second is an open and heartfelt confession of sins. At one time this confession was done publicly before all men in the midst of the Church, but in recent times it is usually done only in

the presence of the pastor of the Church who stands in behalf of all. The third element of penance is the formal prayer of absolution through which the forgiveness of God through Christ is sacramentally bestowed upon the repentant sinner.

The fulfillment of penance consists in the reception of Holy Communion and the genuine reconciliation of the repentant sinner with God and all men according to the commandments of Christ. From this there obviously follows the necessity of a sincere attempt by the penitent to refrain from sin and to remain in faithful obedience to God and in uprightness of life before Him and all people.

The sacrament of penance, like all sacraments, is an element of the life of the Church which presupposes a firm belief and conviction that Christ himself is present in the Church through his Holy Spirit. A person without the experience of Christ in the Church will not understand the meaning of sacramental penance and the need for the open and public confession of sins. When the Church is experienced as the new life in Christ and as the genuine communion with God in his kingdom already present with men in sacrament and mystery, then not only will sacramental penance and the confession of sins be understood, but it will be cherished as the great mystery of God which it is: the unique possibility for reunion with God through the forgiveness of Christ who has come to save sinners who confess their sins and who sincerely desire to change their lives according to the ways which he himself has given.

In a word, the Orthodox Church strictly adheres to the teaching of the Bible that only God can forgive sins, that he does so through Christ in the Church, that his conditions are genuine repentance and the promise of change which are witnessed by confession; and that confession, by definition, is the open and public acknowledgment of sin before God and all mankind.

Holy Unction

Christ came to the world to “bear the infirmities” of men. One of the signs of his divine messiahship was to heal the sick. The power of healing remains in the Church since Christ himself remains in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

The sacrament of the unction of the sick is the Church’s specific prayer for healing. If the faith of the believers is strong enough, and if it is the will of God, there is every reason to believe that the Lord can heal those who are diseased.

Is any among you sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed (James 5.14–16; see also Mark 6.13).

The sacrament of anointing is a “sobornal” sacrament in the traditional Orthodox practice. This means that as many of the faithful as possible are gathered to participate in the prayers. The rite itself calls for seven priests, seven readings from the epistles and gospels, seven prayers and seven anointings with oil specifically blessed for the service. Although it is not always possible to perform the sacrament in this way, the normal procedure is still to gather together as many priests and people as possible.

The express purpose of the sacrament of holy unction is healing and forgiveness. Since it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God’s will be done always remains as the proper context of the sacrament. In addition, it is the clear intention of the sacrament that through the anointing of the sick body the sufferings of the person should be sanctified and united to the sufferings of Christ. In this way, the wounds of the flesh are consecrated, and strength is given that the suffering of the diseased person may not be unto the death of his soul, but for eternal salvation in the resurrection and life of the Kingdom of God.

It is indeed the case that death inevitably comes to man. All must die, even those who in this life are given a reprieve through healing in order to have more time on the earth. Thus, the healing of the sick is not itself a final goal, but is merely “instrumental” in that it is given by God as a sign of his mercy and as a grace for the further opportunity of man to live for him and for others in the life of this world.

In the case where a person is obviously in the final moments of his earthly life, the Church has special prayers for the “separation of soul and body.” Thus, it is clear that the sacrament of holy unction is for the sick—both the physically and mentally sick—and is not reserved for the moment of death. The sacrament of unction is not the “last rites” as is sometimes thought; the ritual of the anointing itself in no way indicates that it should be administered merely in “extreme” cases. Holy unction is the sacrament of the spiritual, physical, and mental healing of a sick person whatever the nature or the gravity of the illness may be.

PARISH WISH LIST

A wish list to help our parish grow!

SPECIAL, one-time needs or items

LED lights or lanterns e.g. strings of Christmas lights, to illuminate our entrances temporarily.
(Electrical work needed must be postponed until the summer.)

RECURRING needs:

Paper Plates (small and large), **Paper Bowls**, **Hot Cups**
Napkins
Plastic Utensils, especially **Forks**
Paper Towels
Toilet Paper

Holy Mother Olympia, pray to God for us!

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Presbyters Council Meeting

Thursday, February 22, 11 AM
Diocesan Chancery
Bronxville, NY

Parish Council Meeting

Monday, March 4, 7:30 PM via Google Meet

Lenten Women's Retreat: Friday, March 22 – Sunday, March 24, 2024
St Andrews Camp – see the Diocesan website to register

WEEKDAY VESPERS 5 PM AT THE HERMITAGE OF ST OLYMPIA

For information please contact Mother Sophronia at mothersophronia@gmail.com
or via Facebook: Nun Sophronia Hofstead.



**First and second finding of the Honorable Head
of the Holy Glorious Prophet,
Forerunner, and Baptist of the Lord, John
February 24**

*The head of the Forerunner rose from the earth as a
star, brilliant with rays of healing and immortality.
It gathers the choirs of angels in heaven, and
assembles the human race on earth to sing with one
voice the glory of Christ our God.*

Troparion