



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

*Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov, Priest-in-Charge, 323-851-7989, nkhalimonov@yahoo.com
 Fr. Alexy Karlgut, Dean/Administrator, 607-759-1833*

Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

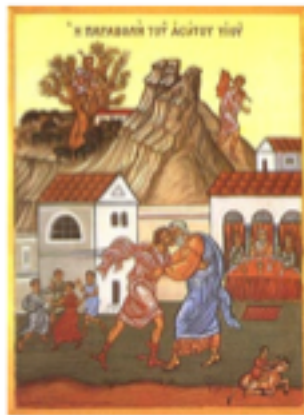
Upcoming Services:
Saturday, Feb 24, Mar 2
Great Vespers: 5pm

Sunday, Feb 25, Mar 3
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

Sunday of the Prodigal Son
March 3



Repose of Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn
February 27

I have recklessly forgotten Your glory, O Father; and among sinners I have scattered the riches which You had given me. Therefore, I cry to You like the Prodigal: "I have sinned before You, O compassionate Father; receive me a penitent and make me as one of Your hired servants."

Kontakion of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

You were a guardian and a defender of the Church's teaching; you protected your flock from false doctrines and confirmed them in the true faith. O holy father Raphael, son of Syria and glory of North America, always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion for the Repose of Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn

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.

Rest of Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn

February 27



*Let all the choirs of Orthodox Christians in America
sing hymns in honor of the holy Bishop Raphael!
By birth an Arab, nourished by streams of Greek theology,
he was consecrated by the Church of Russia, which had adopted us all.
True to his name, he brings God's healing to us
as we celebrate his holy memory.*

*Let us sing hymns of praise to the holy Bishop Raphael,
who shone forth from Brooklyn and enlightened those in darkness!
To those who were wounded by sin, he brought healing in Christ;
to those who were deceived, he brought the truth of the Orthodox Faith;
he gathered his scattered sheep safely into the fold of the Church.
Therefore we praise him as a worthy bishop and a citizen of Heaven.*

*Your children praise you as a wise hierarch of the Church in America,
who unified the faithful from every land,
and who defended the oppressed and guarded the Faith.
You held the high and the humble in equal esteem,
treating all with Christ's own gentleness.
Now as you stand among the saints, O Holy Father Raphael,
never cease to intercede for us with Christ our God!*

Vespers, Lord I Call, Stikhera

Read the full account of Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn's life and ministry from the *Proclamation on the Glorification of Our Holy Father Bishop RAPHAEL (30-Apr-2000)* at

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2021/02/27/100610-repose-of-saint-raphael-bishop-of-brooklyn>

Venerable John Cassian the Roman

February 29



Saint John Cassian the Roman was born around 360, probably in Lesser Scythia (in Dacia Pontica). His pious Christian parents gave him an excellent classical education, and also instructed him in the Holy Scriptures and in the spiritual life.

Saint John entered a monastery in the diocese of Tomis, where his friend and relative Saint Germanus labored as an ascetic. In 380, desiring to venerate the Holy Places, Saint John went to Jerusalem with his sister and his friend Saint Germanus. The two monks stayed at a Bethlehem monastery, not far from where the Savior was born. After five years at the monastery, Saints John and Germanus traveled through the Thebaid and the desert monasteries of Sketis for seven years, drawing upon the spiritual experience of countless ascetics. The Egyptian monks taught them many useful things about spiritual struggles, prayer, and humility. Like honeybees they journeyed from place to place, gathering the sweet nectar of spiritual wisdom. The notes Saint John made formed the basis of his book called *CONFERENCES WITH THE FATHERS* in twenty-four chapters.

Returning to Bethlehem for a brief time, the spiritual brothers lived for three years in complete solitude. Then they went back to Egypt and lived there until 399. Because of the disturbances caused by Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria to the monasteries along the Nile, they decided to go to Constantinople, after hearing of the virtue and holiness of Saint John Chrysostom. The great hierarch ordained Saint John Cassian as a deacon and accepted him as a disciple. John and Germanus remained with Saint John Chrysostom for five years, learning many profitable things from him.

When Chrysostom was exiled from Constantinople in 404, Saints John Cassian and Germanus went to Rome to plead his case before Innocent I. Cassian was ordained to the holy priesthood in Rome, or perhaps later in Gaul. After Chrysostom's death in 407, Saint John Cassian went to Massilia [Marseilles] in Gaul (now France). There he established two cenobitic monasteries in 415, one for men and another for women, based on the model of Eastern monasticism.

At the request of Bishop Castor of Aptia Julia (in southern Gaul), Cassian wrote *THE INSTITUTES OF CENOBITIC LIFE* (*De Institutis Coenobiorum*) in twelve books, describing the life of the Palestinian and Egyptian monks. Written between 417-419, the volume included four books describing the clothing of the monks of Palestine and Egypt, their schedule of prayer and services, and how new monks were received into the monasteries. The last eight books were devoted to the eight deadly sins and how to overcome them. Through his writings, Saint John Cassian provided Christians of the West with examples of cenobitic monasteries, and acquainted them with the asceticism of the Orthodox East.

Cassian speaks as a spiritual guide about the purpose of life, about attaining discernment, about renunciation of the world, about the passions of the flesh and spirit, about the hardships faced by the righteous, and about prayer. Saint John Cassian also wrote *CONFERENCES WITH THE FATHERS* (*Collationes Patrum*) in twenty-four books in the form of conversations about the perfection of love, about purity, about God's help, about understanding Scripture, about the gifts of God, about friendship, about the use of language, about the four levels of monasticism, about the solitary life and cenobitic life, about repentance, about fasting, about nightly meditations, and about spiritual mortification. This last has the explanatory title "I do what I do not want to do." Books 1-10 of the *CONFERENCES* describe Saint John's conversations with the Fathers of Sketis between 393-399. Books 11-17 relate conversations with the Fathers of Panephysis, and the last seven books are devoted to conversations with monks from the region of Diolkos.

In 431 Saint John Cassian wrote his final work, *ON THE INCARNATION OF THE LORD, AGAINST NESTORIUS* (*De Incarnationem Domini Contra Nestorium*). In seven books he opposed the heresy, citing many Eastern and Western teachers to support his arguments.

In his works, Saint John Cassian was grounded in the spiritual experience of the ascetics, and criticized the abstract reasoning of Saint Augustine (June 15). Saint John said that "grace is defended less adequately by pompous words and loquacious contention, dialectic syllogisms and the eloquence of Cicero (i.e. Augustine), than by the example of the Egyptian ascetics." In the words of Saint John of the Ladder (March 30), "great Cassian reasons loftily and excellently." His writings are also praised in the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Saint John Cassian lived in the West for many years, but his spiritual homeland was the Orthodox East. He fell asleep in the Lord in the year 435. His holy relics rest in an underground chapel in the Monastery of Saint Victor in Marseilles. His head and right hand are in the main church.

The Sacraments (*continued*)
From *The Orthodox Faith* - Volume II: Worship
By Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Marriage

Marriage was not invented or instituted by Christ. The Lord, however, gave a very specific meaning and significance to human marriage. Following the Old Testament Law, but going beyond its formal precepts in His messianic perfection, Jesus taught the uniqueness of human marriage as the most perfect natural expression of God's love for men, and of his own love for the Church.

According to Christ, in order for the love of a man and woman to be that which God has: perfectly created it to be, it must be unique, indestructible, unending and divine. The Lord himself has not only given this teaching, but he also gives the power to fulfill it in the sacrament of Christian marriage in the Church.

In the sacrament of marriage, a man and a woman are given the possibility to become one spirit and one flesh in a way which no human love can provide by itself. In Christian marriage the Holy Spirit is given so that what is begun on earth does not "part in death" but is fulfilled and continues most perfectly in the Kingdom of God.

For centuries there was no particular ritual for marriage in the Church. The two Christians expressed their mutual love in the Church and received the blessing of God upon their union which was sealed in the holy eucharist of Christ. Through the Church's formal recognition of the couple's unity, and its incorporation into the Body of Christ, the marriage became Christian; that is, it became the created image of the divine love of God which is eternal, unique, indivisible and unending.

When a special ritual was developed in the Church for the sacrament of marriage, it was patterned after the sacrament of baptism-chrismation. The couple is addressed in a way similar to that of the individual in baptism. They confess their faith and their love of God. They are led into the Church in procession.

They are prayed over and blessed. They listen to God's Word. They are crowned with the crowns of God's glory to be his children and witnesses (martyrs) in this world, and heirs of the everlasting life of his Kingdom. They fulfill their marriage, as all sacraments are fulfilled, by their reception together of holy communion in the Church.

There is no "legalism" in the Orthodox sacrament of marriage. It is not a juridical contract. It contains no vows or oaths. It is, in essence, the "baptizing and confirming" of human love in God by Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is the deification of human love in the divine perfection and unity of the eternal Kingdom of God as revealed and given to man in the Church.

The Christian sacrament of marriage is obviously available only to those who belong to the Church; that is, only for baptized communicants. This remains the strict teaching and practice of the Orthodox Church today. Because of the tragedy of Christian disunity, however, an Orthodox may be married in the Church with a baptized non-Orthodox Christian on the condition that both members of the marriage sincerely work and pray for their full unity in Christ, without any coercion or forceful domination by either one over the other. An Orthodox Christian who enters the married state with a non-Orthodox Christian must have the sacramental prayers and blessings of the Church in order to remain a member of the Orthodox Church and a participant in the sacrament of holy communion.

According to the Orthodox teaching, only one marriage can contain the perfect meaning and significance which Christ has given to this reality. Thus, the Orthodox Christian tradition encourages widows and widowers to remain faithful to their spouses who are dead to this world but alive in Christ. The Orthodox tradition also, by the same principle, considers temporary "living together," casual sexual relations, sexual relations with many different people, sexual relations between members of the same sex, and the breakdown of marriages in separation and divorce, all as contrary to the human perfection revealed by God in Christ. Through penance, however, and with the sincere confession of sins and the genuine promise of a good life together, the Orthodox Church does have a service of second marriage for those who have not been able to fulfill the ideal conditions of marriage as taught by Christ. It is the practice of the Church as well not to exclude members of second marriages from the sacrament of holy communion if they desire sincerely to be in eucharistic fellowship with God, and if they fulfill all other conditions for participation in the life of the Church.

Because of the realization of the need for Christ in every aspect of human life, and because, as well, it is the firm Christian conviction that nothing should, or even can, be done perfectly without Christ or without his presence and power in the Church by the Holy Spirit, two Christians cannot begin to live together and to share each other's life in total unity—spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, economically—without first placing that unity into the eternity of the Kingdom of God through the sacrament of marriage in the Church.

According to the Orthodox teaching as expressed in the sacramental rite of marriage, the creation of children, and the care and love for them within the context of the family, is the normal fulfillment of the love of a man and woman in Christ. In this way, marriage is the human expression of the creative and caring love of God, the perfect Love of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity which overflows in the creation and care for the world.

This conviction that human love, imitative of divine love, should overflow itself in the creation and care for others does not mean that the procreation of children is in itself the sole purpose of marriage and the unique and exclusive justification and legitimization of its existence. Neither does it mean that a childless couple cannot live a truly Christian life together. It does mean, however, that the conscious choice by a married couple not to have a family for reasons of personal comfort and accommodation, the desire for luxury and freedom, the fear of responsibility, the refusal of sharing material possessions, the hatred of children, etc., is not Christian, and can in no way be considered as consonant with the biblical, moral and sacramental teachings and experience of the Orthodox Church about the meaning of life, love and marriage.

In light of the perspective offered above, the control of the conception of children in marriage is a very delicate matter, discouraged in principle and considered as perhaps possible only with the most careful examination of conscience, prayer and pastoral guidance.

The abortion of a child already conceived is strictly forbidden in the Orthodox Church, and cannot be justified in any way, except perhaps with the greatest moral risk and with the most serious penitence in the most extreme cases such as that of irreparable damage to the mother or her probable death in the act of childbirth. In such extreme situations, the mother alone must take upon herself the decision, and all must be prepared to stand before God for the action, asking His divine mercy.



**Before and after the new painting project!
Glory to God!**

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.

Thanks to Ryan and Jonathan for completing this!!

(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

Diocesan Council meeting

Friday, March 1, 11:00 a.m. - Diocesan Chancery, Bronxville, NY

Meeting of Chancellors and Deans

Friday, March 1, 2:30 p.m. - 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.

O Lord, Thou has condemned the Pharisee who justified himself by boasting of his works, and Thou hast justified the Publican who humbled himself and with cries of sorrow begged for mercy. For Thou dost reject proudminded thoughts, but Thou dost not despise a contrite heart. Therefore in abasement we fall down before Thee who hast suffered for our sake: grant us forgiveness and great mercy.

Lenten Triodion; Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee; Praises at Matins

The first to enter Paradise was the wise thief.

The Lord arranged it so for the encouragement and consolation of us sinners.

No sinner should despair.

Do not say that you have already perished.

That thought is from the devil.

Abbot Nikon Vorobiev

Abbot Nikon Letters to Spiritual Children, p.144