

*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.

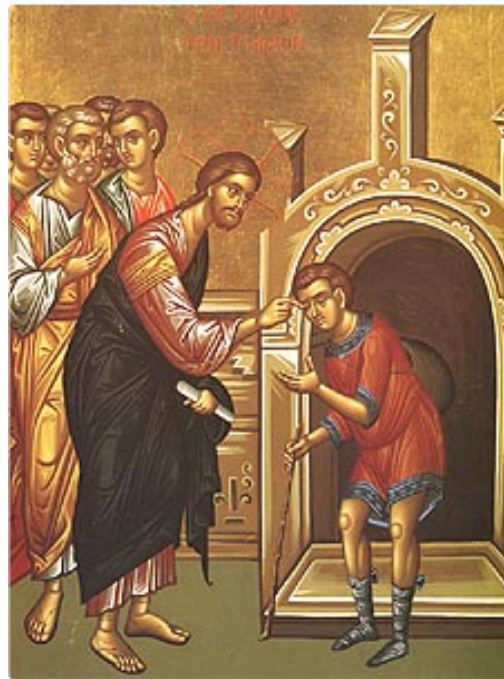
Upcoming Services:
Saturday, June 8, 15
Great Vespers: 5pm
Sunday, June 9, 15
Divine Liturgy: 10am
Coffee and fellowship will follow the service

*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*

Sunday of the Blind Man

June 9



I come to You, O Christ, blind from birth in my spiritual eyes and I call to You in repentance: You are the most radiant light of those in darkness!

Kontakion of Sunday of the Blind Man

Post-Easter Sundays
From *The Orthodox Faith* - Volume II: Worship by Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Sunday of The Blind Man
June 9

The sixth Sunday commemorates the healing of the man blind from birth (Jn 9). We are identified with that man who came to see and to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The Lord has anointed our eyes with his own divine hands and washed them with the waters of our baptism (Jn 9.6–11).

Jesus used clay of spittle and told the man to wash in the waters of Siloam. He did so because it was the Sabbath day on which spitting, clay-making and washing were strictly forbidden. By breaking these ritual laws of the Jews, Jesus showed that He is indeed the Lord of the Sabbath, and, as such, that He is equal to God the Father Who alone, according to Jewish tradition, works on the Sabbath day in running His world.

There is scandal over the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath day. He is separated from the synagogue because of his faith in Christ. The entire Church follows this man in his fate, knowing that it is those who do not see Jesus as the Lord who are really blind and still in their sins (Jn 9.41). The others have the light of life and can see and know the Son of God, for “you have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you” (Jn 9.37).

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! (Kontakion).

From the Lives of the Saints

At the end of Chapter 8 in Gospel of Saint John, the Savior was disputing with the Pharisees in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. He told them, "Your father Abraham was glad that he should see my day; and he saw it and rejoiced" (John 8:56). The Jews said that Jesus was not even fifty years old, so how could He claim to have seen Abraham? The Lord replied, "Before Abraham was, I am." I am, of course, is the name that God revealed to Moses in the Burning Bush. When the Jews picked up stones to throw at Him, He hid Himself and went out of the Temple.

We read in Saint John's Gospel (9:1-38): "As He passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth." It might appear that Jesus was on His way to something or someone else, but in his Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John, the ever-memorable Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas, quotes from Homily LVI of Saint John Chrysostom: "that on going out of the Temple, He proceeded intentionally to the work, is clear from this: it was He who saw the blind man, and not the blind man who came to Him..."

Christ's disciples asked Him who had sinned, the blind man or his parents that he had been born blind. Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God might be manifested in him" (John 9:3). It was thought that a person who had some affliction must have sinned (or his parents did) to deserve such punishment. In the Book of Exodus (20:5), God said that he would visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." This, however, applied to the sin of idolatry, if the children emulated their parents' behavior.

The blind man was not born blind just so the miracle could be performed, but seeing the man in such a condition, the Lord decided to use him in a way that would manifest God's glory. He Who is the Light of the world healed the blind man and enlightened him. Giving sight to the blind was one of the signs which would identify the Messiah (Matthew 11:4-6).

The Lord made clay when He spat on the ground, and placed it in the man's empty eye sockets and sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash. Most versions of the Gospels translate the word *επεθηκεν* as "anointed," but it can also mean "to spread on," or "to smear." Siloam means "sent," and in Saint John's Gospel Christ says about forty times that He Himself had been sent by the Father."

This manner of healing reminds us of the way God created man by fashioning him from the dust of the earth. In the Old Testament God created man from the dust of the earth, now Christ, the same God, fashions eyes from the clay and places them in the blind man's empty sockets. Here are some quotes from the Pentecostarion:

At the Oikos of Matins: *"He receives physical eyes as well as those of the soul."*

In the Verses of the Synaxarion: *"O Bestower of light. Who are Light coming forth from Light; You gave eyes to the man who was blind from birth, O Word."*

In the second exapostilarion: *"Along the way, the Savior found a man who lacked both sight and eyes."*

At Monday Vespers (stikheron of the Feast) we sing, *"With his whole soul, and mind, and his tongue, the man who in times not long passed had been blind, confessed Him Who had fashioned eyes for him out of spittle and clay..."*

Saint Theophylaktos says in his Commentary that "Jesus our Lord fashioned all the members of the blind man's body except for the eyes, which He omitted. By healing them now, he completes the divine act of creating and demonstrates that He is the Creator."

Jesus tests the faith of the blind man by sending him to the Pool of Siloam (which means "sent"). He respects the man's freedom, but asks for his voluntary and free participation in the miracle. The blind man, with faith, obeys God's command. He goes and washes in the pool, and he returns seeing.

The former blind man's life was not made easier, however. He becomes the object of the Scribes' and Pharisees' evil and hatred, those who believed in God and in the observance of His Law. They themselves were blind, yet they were suspicious of the formerly blind man, imagining that he only pretended to be blind and now was able to see. "They willingly were made blind by the dark letter of the Law, in which Christ, the resplendent Sun shines."¹

They questioned the man who was blind, but when they see the miracle before their eyes, instead of believing, they shut the eyes of their souls. Then the man's parents were questioned. They were afraid to confirm the miracle that happened to their son who was born blind, because they did not want to be expelled from the synagogue. They tried to avoid trouble by concealing the truth. Therefore, they said, "He is of age, ask him!"

We who receive benefits from God every day are ashamed or afraid to confess God because of our lack of trust. We put our own interests above God, knowing that He will understand us! He will understand us, but He will also see our faith and what priorities we have in our lives. Christ will see what "gods" we have put in His place, but He will not cease to remind us that He is the light of the world.

The blind man was healed, not only in the eyes of his body but eventually in his soul as well. He recognizes Jesus as God, and does not hesitate to confess it before the religious rulers with courage that many of us would envy. Faith alone is not enough, we also need to confess our faith in order to become genuine children of God. When we confess Christ before men, He will confess us before His Father, as the Lord has promised us: "Everyone who shall confess me before men, I also shall confess him before my Father who is in Heaven; and whoever denies me before men I also will deny him before my Father who is in Heaven" (Matthew 10:32). ...

"I ascend unto My father, and your Father...."

Father Steven Kostoff

May 25, 2017

According to the mind of the Church, the Risen Lord is also the Ascended Lord. In the words of Father Georges Florovsky, "In the Ascension resides the meaning and the fullness of Christ's Resurrection." Though the visible presence of the Risen Lord ended 40 days after His Resurrection, that did not mean that His actual presence was withdrawn. Christ solemnly taught His disciples – and us through them – "Behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age" [Matthew 28:20]. The risen, ascended and glorified Lord is the Head of His body, the Church. The Lord remains present in the Mysteries/Sacraments of the Church. This reinforces our need to participate in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist, through which we receive the deified flesh and blood of the Son of God "unto life everlasting."

Christ ascended to be seated at "the right hand of the Father" in glory, thus lifting up the humanity He assumed in the Incarnation into the very inner life of God. For all eternity, Christ is God and man. The deified humanity of the Lord is the sign of our future destiny "in Christ." For this reason, the Apostle Paul could write, "your life is hidden with Christ in God" [Colossians 3:3].

The words of the "two men ... in white robes" (clearly angels) who stood by the disciples as they gazed at Christ being "lifted up" as recorded by Saint Luke in Acts 1:11, point toward something very clear and essential for us to grasp as members of the Church that exists within the historical time of the world: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven." The disciples will remain in the world, and must fulfill their vocation as the chosen apostles who will proclaim the Word of God to the world of the crucified and risen Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. They cannot spend their time gazing into heaven awaiting the return of the Lord. That hour has not been revealed: "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority" [1:7]. The "work" of the Church is the task set before them, and they must do this until their very last breath. They will carry out this work once they receive the power of the Holy Spirit—the "promise of my Father"—as Christ said to them in Luke 24:49. Whatever our vocation may be, we too witness to Christ and the work of the Church as we await the fullness of God's Kingdom according to the times or seasons of the Father.

In our daily Prayer Rule we continue to refrain from using "O Heavenly King" until the Day of Pentecost. We no longer sing the Paschal troparion, "Christ is risen from the dead," but replace it from Ascension to Pentecost with the troparion of the Ascension: "Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the Blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world!"



Saints Martha and Mary

June 4

Formerly, you dwelt in the town of Bethany, now in Heaven, you abide in Paradise, where the Lord's countenance shines. For with fervent longing, you gave your hearts and souls to Him Who is the Life and Resurrection; as you stand on high, O Mary and Martha, entreat Him to grant salvation to us.

Kontakion

PARISH CURRENT NEEDS!

Holy Mother Olympia, Pray to God for us!

PROTECTING OUR STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS

We have finished scraping, priming, and painting the exterior trim of four stained-glass altar windows in the altar. These are ready for the plexiglass storm windows needed for both protection and energy efficiency—this will keep the altar cooler in summer and warmer in winter! To date, we have raised approximately \$1500 of the \$2,800 needed for all four windows. Please contribute toward this project. Every little bit helps. Go to saintolympiaorthodoxchurch.org to donate online or send a check to St. Olympia Orthodox Church, P.O. Box 122, Canton, NY 13668.

RUGS: Our new rugs are now fully funded. What a beautiful enhancement of the nave. Many thanks to those who have generously contributed to this purchase!

ALTAR FLOOR FIXED

Our thanks to Robert Docker for enlarging and crafting a new trap door to the crawl space under the altar and filling other holes in the floor. The old door was a dangerous tripping hazard. Robert also carved a new cross for the top of the Tomb of Christ (Kouvouklion) used for Holy Week and also built a liturgical table to match the iconostasis.

SUMMER CHURCH PROJECT – Re-mortaring the stone foundation and re-sloping the ground.

Our church project for the summer is about to begin. All workers at all skill levels welcome!

Phase 1 begins on June **Saturday, June 15th at 10 am**. Ted Ritzko will lead this project kick-off by showing people how to remove old mortar, mix and apply new mortar in the gaps in our foundation. The more willing hands we have, the faster this will go. No previous mortaring experience necessary. If we do not finish within the day, we will continue in the late afternoon on the following days. Rain dates for start of project: Sunday, June 16th after church and Saturday, June 22nd at 10 am. If you are willing to help, please text or call Ryan Carr (315)705-3927 or email ryancarr007@hotmail.com. Please mark your calendars!

Phase 2 will be scheduled upon completion of Phase 1. This will involve re-sloping the earth on the north and west sides of the church so that water doesn't flow towards the foundation and into the basement. We will spread stone and then topsoil. When that is done, we will need to reseed the lawn.

UPDATE, UPKEEP, UPGRADE, UPLIFT!

As we continue to improve our church building, it is time to establish some regular routines for taking care of our church building. The weekly cleaning and care of the church will take place on Fridays at 4:30. There are many small projects that could also be done at that time too. All parishioners and friends of the parish are welcome to come and participate. John and Jonathan will be there to help you get started.

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Parish Council Meeting

Monday, June 17, 7:30 PM via Google Meet

Diocesan Council Meeting

Monday, June 17, 11:00 AM -1:30 PM

Endicott, NY

Presbyters Council Meeting

Monday, June 25, 11:00 AM -1:30 PM

Zoom

As a priest, one of the things I look forward to most in my liturgical office is the act of asking forgiveness at the Divine Liturgy. And by the wisdom of God's Church, this is a rubrical formality—in other words, the priest is ordered by the script of the service itself to ask forgiveness of his fellow celebrants and of the congregation at large. The Body and Blood of Christ cannot be approached without it.

No matter what has preceded, the priest knows that he will face this moment. It haunts him all week. It is as if he faces the second coming of Christ. "Christ is in our midst," he and his concelebrants say to one another while exchanging the kiss of peace. Here he is. What excuse can we give, what truth can we dodge in that moment?

All petty grievances, but even substantial differences, in that moment melt away. They must. For in the face of the fire of God they are nothing. The priest turns to his congregation, seeking their forgiveness as well—there they are in all their sinful and saintly glory. There are critics, there are confidants. There is his spouse and family, there are complete strangers. There is the leftist and there is the right-winger. There is the family with which he has laughed, and there is the family with which he has grieved. And to each of them he offers a collective bow and words uttered with a sigh: "My brothers and sisters, forgive me."

Forgive me that I don't know you better. Forgive me that my sermon fell short. Forgive me that I haven't yet replied to your e-mail. Forgive me that we had a testy exchange. Forgive me that I misunderstood your message. Forgive me for this vain post. Forgive me for not living up to my high calling. Forgive me.

All of us in the Church are called to do this, but it is the priest in particular, in that setting and moment, who at once feels the immense burden of his sins and the needs of his people, and the immense relief and assurance of Christ, when he must humble himself and utter the words, with fear of God, with faith, and with love: "Forgive me".

Glory to God, who provides for our salvation. Glory to God, who gives us new beginnings.

Fr. Andreas Houpos

... love God above everything and your neighbor as yourself.

If you have not sufficient strength to preserve in your heart these inestimable treasures, fall down oftener at the feet of the God of Love.

***"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it I shall be opened unto you"*—for He Who has promised is true.**

Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, p.47