



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

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Upcoming Services:

March 3, Monday

6pm – Great Canon

March 4, Tuesday

6pm – Great Canon

March 5, Wednesday

6pm – Presanctified Liturgy

March 6, Thursday

6pm – Great Canon

March 8, Saturday (St. Theodore)

9am (8:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

5pm – Great Vespers

March 9, Sunday of Orthodoxy

10am (9:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

March 12, Wednesday

6pm – Presanctified Liturgy

March 15, Memorial Saturday

9am (8:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

5pm – Great Vespers

March 16, Sunday (St. Gregory Palamas)

10am (9:40am Hours) – Divine Liturgy

**The First Sunday of Great Lent:
Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 9**



We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One, and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God. Of Your own will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh to deliver Your creatures from bondage to the enemy. Therefore with thanksgiving we cry aloud to You: You have filled all with joy, O our Savior, by coming to save the world.

Troparion

No one could describe the Word of the Father; but when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described, and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images.

Kontakion

1st Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of Orthodoxy March 9

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is the first Sunday of Great Lent. The dominant theme of this Sunday since 843 has been that of the victory of the icons. In that year the iconoclastic controversy, which had raged on and off since 726, was finally laid to rest, and icons and their veneration were restored on the first Sunday in Lent. Ever since, this Sunday has been commemorated as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

The decree of the [Seventh Ecumenical] Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation of the rationale for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day:

We define that the holy icons, whether in colour, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honour (timitiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands.

Orthodox teaching about icons, as defined at the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, is embodied in the texts sung on this Sunday.

We have moved forward from unbelief to true faith, and have been enlightened by the light of knowledge. Let us then clap our hands like the psalmist, and offer praise and thanksgiving to God. And let us honor and venerate the holy icons of Christ, of his most pure Mother, and of all the saints, depicted on walls, panels and sacred vessels, setting aside the unbelievers' ungodly teaching. For the veneration given to the icon passes over, as Basil says, to its prototype. At the intercession of your spotless Mother, O Christ, and of all the saints, we pray you to grant us your great mercy. We venerate your icon, good Lord, asking forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God. For you freely willed in the flesh to ascend the cross, to rescue from slavery to the enemy those whom you had formed. So we cry to you with thanksgiving: You have filled all things with joy, our Savior, by coming to save the world.

The name of this Sunday reflects the great significance which icons possess for the Orthodox Church. They are not optional devotional extras, but an integral part of Orthodox faith and devotion. They are held to be a necessary consequence of Christian faith in the incarnation of the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, in Jesus Christ. They have a sacramental character, making present to the believer the person or event depicted on them. So the interior of Orthodox churches is often covered with icons painted on walls and domed roofs, and there is always an icon screen, or iconostasis, separating the sanctuary from the nave, often with several rows of icons. No Orthodox home is complete without an icon corner (iconostasion), where the family prays.

Icons are venerated by burning lamps and candles in front of them, by the use of incense and by kissing. But there is a clear doctrinal distinction between the veneration paid to icons and the worship due to God. The former is not only relative, it is in fact paid to the person represented by the icon. This distinction safeguards the veneration of icons from any charge of idolatry.

The theme of the victory of the icons, by its emphasis on the incarnation, points us to the basic Christian truth that the one whose death and resurrection we celebrate at Easter was none other than the Word of God who became human in Jesus Christ.

Excerpted from "Sunday of Orthodoxy" on the GOA website <https://www.goarch.org/sunday-of-orthodoxy>



*To repent is not to look downwards at my own shortcomings,
but upwards at God's love;
it is not to look backwards with self-reproach,
but forward with trustfulness;
it is to see not what I have failed to be,
but what by the grace of Christ I might yet become.*

St. John Climacus

The Triumph of Orthodoxy, Us, and The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ

By John Lickwar, March 8, 2020

Orthodox Art & Iconography <https://ortharticon.com/>

We have completed the first week of the Great Fast! We began it one week ago by receiving the universal impetus gathered as the Church in worship to surrender our hearts to the direction given at the service of vespers, *'to cleanse our soul as we cleanse our flesh,'* and *'to abstain from passion as we abstain from food.'* We do this because we are not our own, we are servants of God. With the passing of these words to us from the start of Great Lent, and by the kiss of mutual forgiveness, we are adorned with the form of Christ incarnate whereby we can embark upon a humble and living triumph of Orthodoxy. The triumph of Orthodox iconography is linked to the living presence and call to holiness in Christ; before there were painted icons, there was and is our Lord Jesus Christ, whose image and likeness was and is revealed by his Mother, foretold by the prophets, and realized in all the saints, appearing first in flesh and blood. The triumph of Orthodoxy is a tangible triumph in their Oneness, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolic presence in this world! These behaviors of authentic Church life strengthen our spiritual health, and bring us together in wholeness by way of grace, truth, and joy. The very spirit of the triumph we speak, it's tempered genuineness of which we are called to be a beacon, demand from us the (podvig) of the Baptist's words preceding Christ's coming, *"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."*

In speaking once with a woman outside the Orthodox faith, she made this discovery from attending our vesper service, *"Nothing else in this world other than Orthodox Christian worship and life can give me the example, renew me, and inspire me to live my life in Christ, as Christ has lived his life in flesh and blood like mine!"* How curious is the response of a person outside the Orthodox Church who considered her attending vespers a life changing experience and triumph of Orthodoxy; she encountered the Kingdom of God made present. Here she was receptive to seeing herself in a new light, that of Christ, his Mother, and his saints.

As we celebrate in our churches the Vespers of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, let us become the tangible triumph of good over evil, of truth over falsehood, of kindness over ill-will, of gladness over sorrow, and of gratitude over thanklessness; let us become radiant examples of Christ's light. Let us shine the light of Orthodoxy's triumph in faith by being brought down to humbly and joyously persevere with the Comforting Spirit in virtues toward each other, toward our neighbor and so be adorned with our entrance into the glorious Resurrection of Christ our Lord! St. John of Kronstadt has said as much:

"This is the character of our earthly life, a constant expectation of God's call from this life to the other."

"Man is a wonderful, grand, most wise, artistic production of the most perfect Artist, God; he was not originally defiled...."

"However, the most wise and almighty, and all-merciful Artist did not allow His and our enemy to entirely destroy His beautiful and grand creation, and made Himself a body like unto ours, and took a soul in the womb of His Most Pure Virgin-Mother; by His incarnation, His teaching, miracles, sufferings, death and resurrection, by His wonderful and most wise orderings, he again restores to the work of His hands its former and even greater beauty and glory; He again bestows upon it the highest bliss, making human nature godly and setting it with Himself on the throne of the Godhead. Glory be to Thee, most merciful, the most wise and almighty Artist!"

In the Rite of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, we acknowledge the victory of Christ triumphant in our lives, and as well as in those who departed this life before us, especially those martyred for the Faith! For those departed we sing Memory Eternal; and for those living we sing Many Years! We also remember in this celebration the condemnation of apostasy of Christians from Christ by willful choice. But even for those who stray from the Orthodox Faith, let us acquire the mind of St. John of Kronstadt and pray as he did for their return to the substance of Christ centered Orthodoxy in life that has established and sustains the universe:

"Strengthen in this belief and in this faith my heart and the hearts of all Orthodox Christians. Unite, in this faith, all great Christian communities Who have tragically fallen away from The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Depose the pride and resistance of their teachers; Grant them to understand with their hearts The Truth and Saving Grace of Your Church and to be united with her without delay. Draw into this faith all peoples who inhabit the earth; in this faith unite us all in the spirit of meekness, humility, gentleness, simplicity, serenity, patience and compassion – rejoicing in the happiness of others. Amen!"



Uncovering of the Precious Cross and the Precious Nails by Empress Saint Helen in Jerusalem

March 6

The Holy Empress Helen uncovered the Precious Cross and Nails of the Lord at Jerusalem in 326.

At the beginning of the reign of Saint Constantine the Great (306-337), the first Roman emperor to recognize Christianity, he and his pious mother Saint Helen decided to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. They also planned to build a church on the site of the Lord's suffering and Resurrection, in order to reconsecrate and purify the places connected with the Savior's death and Resurrection from the foul taint of paganism.

The empress Helen journeyed to Jerusalem with a large quantity of gold. Saint Constantine wrote a letter to Patriarch Macarius I (313-323), requesting him to assist her in every possible way with her task of the restoring the Christian holy places.

After her arrival in Jerusalem, the holy empress Helen began to destroy all the pagan temples and reconsecrate the places which had been defiled by the pagans.

In her quest for the Life-Creating Cross, she questioned several Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful. Finally, an elderly Hebrew named Jude told her that the Cross was buried beneath the temple of Venus. Saint Helen ordered that the pagan temple be demolished, and for the site to be excavated. Soon they found Golgotha and the Lord's Sepulchre. Not far from the spot were three crosses, a board with the inscription written by Pilate (John 19:19), and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body.

Now the task was to determine on which of the three crosses the Savior had been crucified. Patriarch Macarius saw a dead person being carried to his grave, then he ordered that the dead man be placed upon each cross in turn. When the corpse was placed on the Cross of Christ, he was immediately restored to life. After seeing the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross had been found. With great joy the empress Helen and Patriarch Macarius lifted the Life-Creating Cross and displayed it to all the people standing about.

1st Saturday of Great Lent: The Miracle of the Boiled Wheat

March 8

Today we remember the miracle of Saint Theodore the Recruit and the boiled wheat. Fifty years after Saint Theodore's martyrdom, Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363), devised a plan to corrupt the Christians during the first week of Great Lent. He knew that Christians purify themselves through fasting, especially during this week (which is why it is known as Clean Week). Therefore, he ordered the Polemarch (military leader) of Constantinople to go secretly and sprinkle all the food in the marketplace with the blood of animals which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Saint Theodore appeared to Archbishop Eudoxios in a dream, telling him to assemble all the Christians on Monday morning and tell them that they must not buy any food from the marketplace; instead they were to boil some kollyva and to eat it with some honey during that week. The hierarch asked Saint Theodore what he meant by kollyva. He replied, "Kollyva is what we call boiled wheat in Euchaita." Thus the scheme of the idol-worshipping emperor was thwarted and the pious people were preserved undefiled during Clean Week.

Ever since the middle of the fifth century, the Orthodox Church has honored the holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit on the first Saturday of Great Lent. On Friday evening, at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts following the prayer at the Ambo, the Canon to the holy Great Martyr Theodore, composed by Saint John of Damascus, is sung. Afterward, kollyva is blessed and distributed to the faithful. The commemoration of the Great Martyr Theodore on the first Saturday of Great Lent was established by Patriarch Nektarios of Constantinople (381-397).

40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste

March 9

In the year 313 Saint Constantine the Great issued an edict granting Christians religious freedom, and officially recognizing Christianity as equal with paganism under the law. But his co-ruler Licinius was a pagan, and he decided to stamp out Christianity in his part of the Empire. As Licinius prepared his army to fight Constantine, he decided to remove Christians from his army, fearing mutiny.

One of the military commanders of that time in the Armenian city of Sebaste was Agricola, a zealous champion of idolatry. Under his command was a company of forty Cappadocians, brave soldiers who had distinguished themselves in many battles. When these Christian soldiers refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, Agricola locked them up in prison. The soldiers occupied themselves with prayer and psalmody, and during the night they heard a voice saying, "Persevere until the end, then you shall be saved." On the following morning, the soldiers were again taken to Agricola. This time the pagan tried flattery. He began to praise their valor, their youth and strength, and once more he urged them to renounce Christ and thereby win themselves the respect and favor of their emperor.

Seven days later, the renowned judge Licius arrived at Sebaste and put the soldiers on trial. The saints steadfastly answered, "Take not only our military insignia, but also our lives, since nothing is more precious to us than Christ God." Licius then ordered his servants to stone the holy martyrs. But the stones missed the saints and returned to strike those who had thrown them. One stone thrown by Licius hit Agricola in the face, smashing his teeth. The torturers realized that the saints were guarded by some invisible power. In prison, the soldiers spent the night in prayer and again they heard the voice of the Lord comforting them: "He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live (John 11:25). Be brave and fear not, for you shall obtain imperishable crowns."

On the following day the judge repeated the interrogation in front of the torturer, but the soldiers remained unyielding. It was winter, and there was a severe frost. They lined up the holy soldiers, threw them into a lake near the city, and set a guard to prevent them from coming out of the water. In order to break the will of the martyrs, a warm bathhouse was set up on the shore. During the first hour of the night, when the cold had become unbearable, one of the soldiers made a dash for the bathhouse, but no sooner had he stepped over the threshold, then he fell down dead.

During the third hour of the night, the Lord sent consolation to the martyrs. Suddenly there was light, the ice melted away, and the water in the lake became warm. All the guards were asleep, except for Agladius, who was keeping watch. Looking at the lake he saw that a radiant crown had appeared over the head of each martyr. Agladius counted thirty-nine crowns and realized that the soldier who fled had lost his crown. Agladius then woke up the other guards, took off his uniform and said to them, "I too am a Christian," and he joined the martyrs. Standing in the water he prayed, "Lord God, I believe in You, in Whom these soldiers believe. Add me to their number, and make me worthy to suffer with Your servants." Then a fortieth crown appeared over his head.

In the morning, the torturers saw with surprise that the martyrs were still alive, and their guard Agladius was glorifying Christ together with them. They led the soldiers out of the water and broke their legs. During this horrible execution the mother of the youngest of the soldiers, Meliton, pleaded with her son to persevere until death. They put the bodies of the martyrs on a cart and committed them to fire. Young Meliton was still breathing, and they left him on the ground. His mother then picked up her son, and on her own shoulders she carried him behind the cart. When Meliton drew his last breath, his mother put him on the cart with the bodies of his fellow sufferers. The bodies of the saints were tossed in the fire, and their charred bones were thrown into the water, so that Christians would not gather them up.

Three days later the martyrs appeared in a dream to Saint Peter, Bishop of Sebaste, and commanded him to bury their remains. The bishop together with several clergy gathered up the relics of the glorious martyrs by night and buried them with honor. The names of the forty martyrs are: Cyrion, Candidus, Domnus, Hesychius, Heraclius, Smaragdus, Eunocius, Valens, Vivianus, Claudius, Priscus, Theodulus, Euty chius, John, Xanthius, Helianus, Sisinius, Aggias, Aetius, Flavius, Acacius, Ecdicius, Lysimachus, Alexander, Elias, Gorgonius, Theophilus, Dometian, Gaius, Leontuis, Athanasius, Cyril, Sacerdon, Nicholas, Valerius, Philoctimon, Severian, Chudion, Agladius, and Meliton.



Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebaste March 9

Let us honor those noble soldiers of the Master of all, for they were united by their faith as they passed through fire and water; and being enlisted by Christ, they entered into divine refreshment. Now those pious warriors stand and intercede with Christ God for those who cry out: "Glory to Him Who strengthened you. Glory to Him Who crowned you. Glory to Him Who made you wondrous, O Forty Martyrs."

Troparion

St. Olympia Lenten Fellowship

The Fast & The Curious



1 March

Hymns of Repentance: The Orthodox Essence of Lenten Worship (Dr Jessica Suchy-Pilalis)

8 March

Lenten Nourishment (Pres Krista Fedorchak)



15 March

Repentance in Western Saints (Joseph Stark)

22 March

Movie Night: Prince of Egypt



29 March

Themes of Repentance in Byzantine Iconography (Mother Sophronia)

5 April

Chess Tournament



12 April

Sing for Joy with Hymns of Pascha (an informative song-filled session w/ Dr Jessica)

come for Vespers at 5PM
stay for Fellowship (~6-8PM)
34 N Main St, Norwood

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Work Days

No work days are scheduled for this week.

Lenten Fellowship

This series will continue this Saturday, March 8 (see attached flyer). It will be potluck style – bring something Lenten (no meat/dairy) to share *if you'd like*, but food is in no way a requirement for attending.

Sunday of Orthodoxy

After Liturgy this coming Sunday, we will have a procession with the icons in celebration of the triumph of Orthodoxy. Please bring an icon from home for the procession if you'd like.

Book Study

Thursday, March 13, 5:45 – 7:15PM @ the church. This session will feature Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, Part 1. See Joseph Stark with questions. Bring friends!

Men's Retreat – Cold Weather Camping

Friday, March 14 – Sunday, March 16 @ the Adirondacks. Contact Subdeacon Julio if you're interested.

Memorial Saturdays

March 15th and March 22nd we will have Liturgy for Memorial Saturday. You can still submit names to Fr Gregory to be commemorated.

Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 18, 7:30 PM @ the Hermitage.

Sunday School

On Sunday, March 23, we invite the kids to participate in a Sunday School lesson at the beginning of coffee hour. We will meet in the sanctuary and learn a hymn for the Sunday of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross.

Lenten Women's Retreat

Friday, March 26 – Sunday, March 28 @ St Andrew's Camp. The theme is "Be Who You Are in the Body of Christ," and the keynote speaker is Mother Melania of Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA. Learn more [here](#).

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAFETY – Please steer clear of the basement as work intensifies. You may still use the bathroom, but please avoid the kitchen area.

Coffee Hour – We are looking for someone to host coffee hour this coming Sunday. Sign up [here](#) or on the list at Church.

Commemoration Lists – Submit names of Living and Departed to be commemorated at the Divine Liturgy. Lists can be found near the candles.

PARISH NEEDS

- Removal of wood and other debris from the basement
- Help with general cleaning of the nave, side room, and bathroom

The person that is struggling to the best of his abilities, who has no desire to live a disorderly life, but who—in the course of the struggle for faith and life—falls and rises again and again, God will never abandon.

And if he has the slightest will not to grieve God, he will go to Paradise with his shoes on. The Benevolent God will, surprisingly, push him into Paradise.

God will insure that he takes him at his best, in repentance. He may have to struggle all his life, but God will not abandon him; He will take him at the best possible time.

St. Paisios the Athonite

