

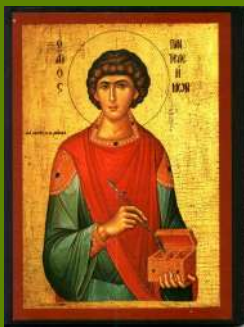
St. Panteleimon Orthodox Church

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest

Fr. Andrew Bartek, Rector V. Rev. Anthony Spengler, Attached

Protodeacon Robert Northrup Reader James Tilghman

Parish Council President: Nicholas Cavaligos



Sunday, June 12, 2016

Gospel: St. John 17:1-13

Tone 6

Epistle: Acts 20:16-18, 28-36

7th SUNDAY OF PASCHA

Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council / Ven Onuphrius the Great

June Bulletin Sponsor

Karen Pradun in Memory of George & Mary Pradun

Liturgical & Events Schedule

Sunday, June 12

9:10 am: Hours

9:30 am: D.L. / Memorial Sunday / Social
/ Reception of Nicholas Grabavoy
into the Church

Saturday, June 18

6:00 pm: Great Vespers w/ Litya for Feast
of Pentecost

Sunday, June 19

9:10 am: Hours

9:30 am: D.L. / Panachida / Fathers Day
Brunch

Noon: Pentecost Vespers & kneeling
prayers

RUSSIAN ETHNIC DINNER

When: Saturday June 25 from 4:00
8:00pm

Vespers will be @ 3:00pm.

Cost: \$9.95 call ahead or \$12 at door /
Children's \$4.95

Menu: Small Bowl of Boscht / 3 pierogies / 1 Stuffed Cabbage / 1 Polish Sausage & Sauerkraut / 1 non alcoholic drink / Dessert

Children's Menu: 2 pierogies / ½ stuffed cabbage / ½ sausage & sauerkraut / 1 drink / dessert or
Sausage in a roll / chips / drink / dessert

If food is left over you can purchase items to go.

**ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT
BUILDING FUND RENOVATION**

Acts 20:16-18, 28-36 (Epistle)

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

GRAVE BLESSINGS

Grace Blessings have been postponed until Saturday of Pentecost weekend, June 18. PLEASE contact me to schedule your grave blessing. Fr. Andrew

7549 West 61st Place, Summit, Illinois 60501

Rectory 708-552-5276 / Cell 570-212-8747

website: <http://www.saintpanteleimon.org/>

Holy Synod issues Statement, Petitions on the Holy and Great Council

The [Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America](#) has [issued a Statement](#) on the Holy and Great Council, slated to be convened on the Island of Crete from June 16 through 27, 2016. Concurrently, petitions have been made available and are to be included in the Litany of Fervent Supplication at all Divine Services, beginning immediately.

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America Statement on the Holy and Great Council to be convened on the Island of Crete June 16-27, 2016

We greet you in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Way and the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).

For many decades, the Orthodox Church has witnessed the efforts to assemble a Holy and Great Council as a contemporary witness to the Holy Orthodox Faith. The initiative in this modern endeavor belonged to the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. The long pilgrimage toward the Holy and Great Council began in the 1960s. There were long pauses in this pilgrimage, followed by a renewed period of intense preparation at the initiative of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Through the decades, Pan-Orthodox conferences, consultations, and meetings of patriarchs and primates have revised the list of topics. During recent months, as the churches have reviewed draft documents and reflected on their formulations, new proposals have been brought forth and fresh disagreements have arisen.

Even at this late stage, participation in the Holy and Great Council is uncertain, and its outcome is equally uncertain. In the midst of all this uncertainty, there is one certainty: the Orthodox Church in America, not being universally recognized as an autocephalous church, is not invited to be a participant. Our reaction to this is one of sadness, but not alienation. With gratitude to God, we affirm our identity as the Orthodox Church in America. We also affirm with gratitude to God our autocephaly, as granted to us by the Russian Orthodox Church, and as recognized by the Churches of Georgia, Bulgaria, Poland, and the Czech Lands and Slovakia. We affirm with profound gratitude to God our Eucharistic communion with all Orthodox Churches, beginning with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We therefore accept and affirm our right and duty to accompany the Holy and Great Council with love and reflection and prayer.

The discussions and debates surrounding the draft documents express concerns and objections that emerge in the

Orthodox Churches. It is argued that the intensity of the objections demonstrates that the Holy and Great Council should be postponed so as to avoid possible schism. Such a conclusion appears to reject the conciliar vision and practice of the Orthodox Church. The challenges of our time require more theological reflection and debate, not less. The urgency of such theological reflection and debate calls for more conciliarity, not less.

At the heart of concerns and objections to the Council and its draft documents is the fear of eroding the Orthodox identity and self-understanding, diluting Orthodox theology (the truth about God) and ecclesiology (the truth about the Church). Today's challenge to the Orthodox Church is the same it has always been: to bring to all people the Christ who is the way and the truth and the life, to bring the Gospel of Christ to all people with love and compassion, to worship God eucharistically in Spirit and in Truth. In faithfulness to this Orthodox way lies deliverance from fear and growth in life and faith and spiritual understanding (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

The commitment of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the building of consensus, as shown by periodically convening the Synaxis of Patriarchs and Primates, has opened the path to the Holy and Great Council. Even at these last moments of preparation the obstacles on this path are emerging with even greater strength than before. The most recent sign of the crisis came at the meeting of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on June 3, 2016. The minutes of this meeting enumerate the procedural and substantive challenges faced by the Orthodox Churches on the eve of the Council – including the unresolved dispute between the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem, the demands for changes in some of the draft documents coming from the Churches of Georgia, Serbia, and Greece, and also from the Monasteries of Mount Athos, and finally the decision of the Church of Bulgaria insisting on the postponement of the Council and declaring categorically that she will not participate in the Council set for the end of June 2016. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church concludes that this extraordinary situation may be resolved by the convening of an extraordinary Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Consultation not later than June 10. This Consultation would have as its purpose a review of the existing situation and a study of the proposed changes to the Council documents. On the basis of the conclusion of the Consultation the Churches could determine whether the convening of the Council on the announced dates is possible.

The convening of the Holy and Great Council as a sign of unity and as a witness to unity is a worthy vision for Orthodoxy pursued with patience and determination by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The painful difficulties in realizing this vision have always been evident.

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Great Synod Con't

The dangers on the road towards this vision are now seen in bold relief, yet the beauty of the vision is clear as never before. Today, the Orthodox Churches stand before the world unable to conceal the wounds of our fractured relationships. Yet the vision of unity will not be denied, because it comes from the heart of the Orthodox Faith and is intrinsic to the Good News of Christ. Whatever the difficulties and wounds we bear, we are following the Risen Christ and are empowered by Pentecost to witness to the Gospel of Christ everywhere and at all times.

It is our sincere hope and fervent prayer that the pilgrimage towards the convening of the Holy and Great Council will bear fruit for the Orthodox Church's unity and for her mission and witness in the world. Just as we pray in the Divine Liturgy for the descent of the Holy Spirit on us and on the gifts that are offered, so let us pray that the Holy Spirit may descend on us all and on the gifts of conciliarity that are offered to God.

Petitions for the Holy and Great Council

*To be Included in the Litany of Fervent Supplication
at All Services*

Furthermore we pray: O Lord our Almighty and Eternal God, Source of all wisdom and understanding! As Thou didst send Thine All-Holy Spirit upon Thine apostles and disciples, gathered on the great day of Pentecost, confirming them in the fullness of the faith which they proclaimed to the ends of the earth, fill the hearts and minds of our Holy Fathers gathered in Council with that same Spirit, enabling them to discern Thy holy will, that they may serve and glorify Thee, enlightened with right judgment and good purpose to the building up of Thy Holy Church throughout the world, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy...

Again we pray: O Lord our God, Giver of every good gift, look with favor upon Thy Church and bless and guide the minds and hearts of those gathered in Thy Name, granting them and us by the grace of Thine All-holy Spirit an increase in faith and understanding, that in vigilance, fasting and prayer they may discern Thy holy will with one heart and one mind, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy...

Again we pray: O Lord our God, send Thy Holy Spirit upon them and upon us so that, inspired by Thy gifts of discernment and understanding, Thy will might be accomplished throughout the world in these turbulent times, for the good of all Thy People, that all might be one, even as Thou—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are one, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy...

Again we pray: O Lord our God, in Thy holy and providential care for Thy Church, grant our Holy Fathers gathered in Council wisdom, understanding, mutual love and respect, sanctity, and the faith and hope to reflect and reveal Thy abundant love for mankind throughout the world, so that Thy Holy Church may be that light on the lampstand and salt of the earth in loving service to Christ our God and thus to one another, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy...

The Ascension of our Lord

Commemorated on [June 9](#)

“AND ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN....”

V. Rev. George Florovsky, D.D.

“I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God, and Your God” (John 20:17).

In these words the Risen Christ described to Mary Magdalene the mystery of His Resurrection. She had to carry this mysterious message to His disciples, “as they mourned and wept” (Mark 16:10). The disciples listened to these glad tidings with fear and amazement, with doubt and mistrust. It was not Thomas alone who doubted among the Eleven. On the contrary, it appears that only one of the Eleven did not doubt—St John, the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” He alone grasped the mystery of the empty tomb at once: “and he saw, and believed” (John 20:8). Even Peter left the sepulcher in amazement, “wondering at that which was come to pass” (Luke 24:12).

The disciples did not expect the Resurrection. The women did not, either. They were quite certain that Jesus was dead and rested in the grave, and they went to the place “where He was laid,” with the spices they had prepared, “that they might come and anoint Him.” They had but one thought: “Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us?” (Mark 16:1-3; Luke 24:1). And therefore, on not finding the body, Mary Magdalene was sorrowful and complained: “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him” (John 20:13). On hearing the good news from the angel, the women fled from the sepulchre in fear and trembling: “Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8). And when they spoke no one believed them, in the same way as no one had believed Mary, who saw the Lord, or the disciples as they walked on their way into the country, (Mark 16:13), and who recognized Him in the breaking of bread. “And afterward He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen Him after He was risen” (Mark 16:10-14). **Con't Page 7**

The Ascension: Our Destiny in Christ by Father Stephen Kostoff

In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed we profess, “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.... And the third day He arose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.”

What a wonderful expression of the great mystery of the “descent” and “ascent” of the Son of God. The eternal Son of God becomes the Son of Man, descending into our world to live among us and to teach us about, and prepare us for the Kingdom of God. This is what we call the *Incarnation*. This movement of descent is only completed when Christ is crucified and enters the very realm of death on our behalf. There is “nowhere” further to descend (in)to. Thus, there are no limits to the love of God for His creatures, for the descent of Christ into death itself is “for our salvation.” The Son of God will search for Adam and Eve in the very realm of Sheol/Hades. He will rescue them and liberate them as representative of all humankind, languishing in “the valley of death.” Since death cannot hold the sinless—and therefore deathless—Son of God, He begins His ascent to the heavenly realm with His resurrection from the dead. And He fulfills this Paschal mystery with His glorious ascension.

As Saint Paul writes, “He Who descended is He Who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” (Ephesians 4:10). The One Who ascended, however, is now both God and man, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the incarnate, crucified, risen, and glorified Jesus Christ Who is now seated at “the right hand of the Father,” far above the heavens. It is the glorified flesh of the Incarnate Word of God which has entered into the very bosom of the Trinity in the Person of Christ. As Saint Leo the Great, the pope of Rome (+461) taught, “With all due solemnity we are commemorating that day on which our poor human nature was carried up, in Christ, above all the hosts of Heaven, above all the ranks of angels, beyond the highest Heavenly powers to the very throne of God the Father.”

This is simultaneously *our* ascension and our glorification, since we are united to Christ through holy Baptism as members of His Body. Therefore, Saint Paul can further write, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Out of our physical sight, we now “see” the glorified Christ through the eyes of faith. Saint Leo further explains how important this spiritual insight is: “For such is the power of great minds, such the light of truly believing souls, that they put unhesitating faith in what is not seen with the bodily eyes; they fix their desires on what is beyond sight. Such fidelity could never be born in our hearts, nor could anyone be justified by faith, if our salvation lay only in what is visible.”

The Great Feast of the Ascension, which this year we celebrate on Thursday, June 9, is not a *decline* from the glory of Pascha. It is, rather, the *fulfillment* of Pascha, and a movement upward toward the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the joyful revelation of our destiny in Christ. To return to the opening theme of the marvelous acts of God moving from the incarnation to the ascension, I would like to turn to Saint Leo one more time for his understanding of that entire movement: “It is upon this ordered structure of divine acts that we have been firmly established, so that the grace of God may show itself still more marvelous when, in spite of the withdrawal from men’s sight of everything that is rightly felt to command their reverence, faith does not fail, hope is not shaken, charity does not grow cold.”

KIDS SAFE CITY SUMMER SAFETY CAMP

A non-for profit Organization located in Bridgeview.

A Camp like no other! Kids safe city camp is designated for children ages 4-9. We educate children on Awareness & readiness of real life emergency situations.

Children will experience & practice:

- Good touch/ bad touch
- Stranger Danger (John Walsh program)
- Internet Safety
- Bully prevention
- Pedestrian, traffic & bicycle safety
- Police & gun safety
- First aid (911)
- Dog safety
- Fire prevention
- Pool safety
- Home & poison safety



This program offers indoor/ outdoor programs/ Bicycle inspections/ riding pedal cars / songs, stories, videos & project all focusing on safety / Guest speakers from various organization / Graduation Ceremony.

Cost: \$70 per child (Family discounts) / Kids safe T-shirt will be provided. Each child is required to bring a sack lunch.

Location: 8110 S Ferdinand Ave, Bridgeview, Il 60455

Dates: July 11th-15th or August 8th-12th (1 week program)

Time: 9:00am-1:00pm

Email: kidssafecity@att.net / Website: kidssafecity.org

Phone: 708-458-6343

Prayer List

Prizsts: Anthony Spenglar, John Kuchta, James Gleason (*Fr. 's spiritual father*), ***Ted Bobosh**, ***Moses Berry**, ***John Magramm**, John Duranko, Lev Holowoty, ***Anastassy Fehr**, ***Leonid Kishkovsky**, Dean, ***Daniel Rental**, ***Stephen Hrycyniak**, Archimandrite Vladimir, ***Joseph Gibson**, ***William Bass**

Matushka: ***Carol Janacek**, ***Christina Kolenda**, **Snezana Ruzie**, Pani Patricia Duranko,

Parishionzrs: Karen Muzyka, Ronald Stachowiak, Rebecca Eggers, Jason Kirnbauer, Sonja Harris, Pauline, Marilyn

Parishionzr's Friends / Family: Donna Parhas (*Nick's Cousin*), Ron (*Mark's Friend*), Mary Ann Magerko, John Magerko, Stephen Holly & Walter Litzie (*Fr. 's cousin*), George Cavaligos (*Nick's brother*), Christos Parhas (*Nick's cousin*), Constantine Cavaligos (*Nick's dad*), John Hartel (*Joann's Step-dad*), Sandra (*Karen's sister*), Erika Northrup, Danielle Krush, Mark Svava, Mary Northrup, Dianne Northrup, Raymond Northrup, Joey Krush, Carol Bregin (*Friend of Lynn*), Jan Kost, (Linda's sister) Ann Lazo (*Friend of Lynn*), George Lazo (*Friend of Lynn*), Bruce (*Fr. Kurt's brother*), Chrissy Marron, Daniel Tiani (*friend of Becky Eggers*), Vivian (*friend of Becky Eggers*), Julianna (*Hruban Family*), James, June, James (*Hruban Family*), Tommy, Jimmy, Lawrence (Bishop Matthias Father), **Jacob, Emilian, Joyce, John, Robert, William & Dana, Mark, Eve** (*Spengler Family*)

Other Requests: Lucille (*Duke*), Dianne (*Bill Rudolph*), Elizabeth Lilos, Jemsey Pradun, Mae Joanna Bass, Hermenegil (*Neighbor*), Lidiya (*Neighbor*), Cathleen Rebollar, Patricia Schuster, ***John Sedor**, * **Daria Petrykowski**, Emily & Scott preparing for Marriage, fire fighter Brandon & Chrissy preparing for marriage, ***Cynthia Koranda**, Adrianna & her unborn baby, Lawrence Moriak

Military: Fr. Herman, Fr. Gregory, Amber, Caleb, Nicholas, David, Timothy, Robert, Kristen, Matthew, Brian, Daniel, Joseph, Joseph (*Fr. 's cousin*)

Captivz: Metropolitan Paul (*Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo*), Archbishop John (*Syriac Archdiocese of Aleppo*)

For the UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers in & around Syria / Those suffering persecution in Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and throughout the world / Those held captive throughout the world.

Additions or removals from the list? Please notify Fr. Andrew. (***Bishop Request**)

John 17:1-13 (Gospel)

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations and Welcome to Nick Grabavoy, our newest parishioner, who was received into our church today. He joins his family: Dr. Nicholas (his dad), Dr Cindy (his mom) and Cynthia (his sister) who were received into the parish on Lazarus Saturday.

MAY YEARS!

J U N E

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

ANNIVERSARY

3-Nolan Grabavoy
11-Liz Weiss
26-Marcia Grabavoy

4-Pavlinka
17-Andre Davik

NAMESDAY

27-Joann Cavaligos

6-13-70: Duke & Carol Jovanovich
6-27-59: John & Mary Ann Magerko
6-27-09: Archbishop Melchisedek of Western PA

If there are those names to be added or removed, please contact Fr. Andrew. He would like to list all members of your family Orthodox and non-Orthodox.

In blessed repose: J U N E

3- Peter Harris (15) 4- Richard Struckman (98)
6- David Carlson (96) 12- Patricia M Heady (01)
15- Milivoj Stanarcic (85) 15- Frank (05)
16- Milan (06) 16- Margaret Samuta (06)
22- Katrina & Isabella (04) 27- Helen Hasen (06)
29-Adam A. Kozal (88)

1948: Infant Maria Evtushek (10 months)

1949: Michael Makovsky; Koriniy Honrich

Remember those who have gone before us in prayer. If there is a name missing from the above list, please speak to Fr. Andrew to have them added.

Ascension Con't

From whence comes this “hardness of heart” and hesitation? Why were their eyes so “holden,” why were the disciples so much afraid of the news, and why did the Easter joy so slowly, and with such difficulty, enter the Apostles’ hearts? Did not they, who were with Him from the beginning, “from the baptism of John,” see all the signs of power which He performed before the face of the whole people? The lame walked, the blind saw, the dead were raised, and all infirmities were healed. Did they not behold, only a week earlier, how He raised by His word Lazarus from the dead, who had already been in the grave for four days? Why then was it so strange to them that the Master had arisen Himself? How was it that they came to forget that which the Lord used to tell them on many occasions, that after suffering and death He would arise on the third day?

The mystery of the Apostles’ “unbelief” is partly disclosed in the narrative of the Gospel: “But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel,” with disillusionment and complaint said the two disciples to their mysterious Companion on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:21). They meant: He was betrayed, condemned to death and crucified. The news of the Resurrection brought by the women only “astonished” them. They still wait for an earthly triumph, for an external victory. The same temptation possesses their hearts, which first prevented them from accepting “the preaching of the Cross” and made them argue every time the Saviour tried to reveal His mystery to them. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26).

It was still difficult to understand this.

He had the power to arise, why did He allow what that had happened to take place at all? Why did He take upon Himself disgrace, blasphemy and wounds? In the eyes of all Jerusalem, amidst the vast crowds assembled for the Great Feast, He was condemned and suffered a shameful death. And now He enters not into the Holy City, neither to the people which beheld His shame and death, nor to the High Priests and elders, nor to Pilate—so that He might make their crime obvious and smite their pride. Instead, He sends His disciples away to remote Galilee and appears to them there. Even much earlier the disciples wondered, “How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (John 14:22). Their wonder continues, and even on the day of His glorious Ascension the Apostles question the Lord, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). They still did not comprehend the meaning of His Resurrection, they did not understand what it meant that He was “ascending” to the Father. Their eyes were opened but later, when “the promise of the Father” had been fulfilled.

In the Ascension resides the meaning and the fullness of Christ’s Resurrection.

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Ascension con't

The Lord did not rise in order to return again to the fleshly order of life, so as to live again and commune with the disciples and the multitudes by means of preaching and miracles. Now he does not even stay with them, but only “appears” to them during the forty days, from time to time, and always in a miraculous and mysterious manner. “He was not always with them now, as He was before the Resurrection,” comments St John Chrysostom. “He came and again disappeared, thus leading them on to higher conceptions. He no longer permitted them to continue in their former relationship toward Him, but took effectual measures to secure these two objects: That the fact of His Resurrection should be believed, and that He Himself should be ever after apprehended to be greater than man.” There was something new and unusual in His person (cf. John 21:1-14). As St John Chrysostom says, “It was not an open presence, but a certain testimony of the fact that He was present.” That is why the disciples were confused and frightened. Christ arose not in the same way as those who were restored to life before Him. Theirs was a resurrection for a time, and they returned to life in the same body, which was subject to death and corruption—returned to the previous mode of life. But Christ arose for ever, unto eternity. He arose in a body of glory, immortal and incorruptible. He arose, never to die, for “He clothed the mortal in the splendor of incorruption.” His glorified Body was already exempt from the fleshly order of existence. “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor. 15:42-44). This mysterious transformation of human bodies, of which St Paul was speaking in the case of our Lord, had been accomplished in three days. Christ’s work on earth was accomplished. He had suffered, was dead and buried, and now rose to a higher mode of existence. By His Resurrection He abolished and destroyed death, abolished the law of corruption, “and raised with Himself the whole race of Adam.” Christ has risen, and now “no dead are left in the grave” (cf. The Easter Sermon of St John Chrysostom). And now He ascends to the Father, yet He does not “go away,” but abides with the faithful for ever (cf. The Kontakion of Ascension). For He raises the very earth with Him to heaven, and even higher than any heaven. God’s power, in the phrase of St John Chrysostom, “manifests itself not only in the Resurrection, but in something much stronger.” For “He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19).

And with Christ, man’s nature ascends also.

“We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven,” says St John Chrysostom.

“We who were unworthy of earthly dominion have been raised to the Kingdom on high, have ascended higher than heaven, have come to occupy the King’s throne, and the same nature from which the angels guarded Paradise, stopped not until it ascended to the throne of the Lord.” By His Ascension the Lord not only opened to man the entrance to heaven, not only appeared before the face of God on our behalf and for our sake, but likewise “transferred man” to the high places. “He honored them He loved by putting them close to the Father.” God quickened and raised us together with Christ, as St Paul says, “and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephes. 2:6). Heaven received the inhabitants of the earth. “The First fruits of them that slept” sits now on high, and in Him all creation is summed up and bound together. “The earth rejoices in mystery, and the heavens are filled with joy.”

“The terrible ascent...” Terror-stricken and trembling stand the angelic hosts, contemplating the Ascension of Christ. And trembling they ask each other, “What is this vision? One who is man in appearance ascends in His body higher than the heavens, as God.”

Thus the Office for the Feast of the Ascension depicts the mystery in a poetical language. As on the day of Christ’s Nativity the earth was astonished on beholding God in the flesh, so now the Heavens do tremble and cry out. “The Lord of Hosts, Who reigns over all, Who is Himself the head of all, Who is preeminent in all things, Who has reinstated creation in its former order—He is the King of Glory.” And the heavenly doors are opened: “Open, Oh heavenly gates, and receive God in the flesh.” It is an open allusion to Psalms 24:7-10, now prophetically interpreted. “Lift up your heads, Oh ye gates, and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty...” St Chrysostom says, “Now the angels have received that for which they have long waited, the archangels see that for which they have long thirsted. They have seen our nature shining on the King’s throne, glistening with glory and eternal beauty.... Therefore they descend in order to see the unusual and marvelous vision: Man appearing in heaven.”

The Ascension is the token of Pentecost, the sign of its coming, “The Lord has ascended to heaven and will send the Comforter to the world”

For the Holy Spirit was not yet in the world, until Jesus was glorified. And the Lord Himself told the disciples, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you” (John 16:7). The gifts of the spirit are “gifts of

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The Ascension Con't

reconciliation,” a seal of an accomplished salvation and of the ultimate reunion of the world with God. And this was accomplished only in the Ascension. “And one saw miracles follow miracles,” says St John Chrysostom, “ten days prior to this our nature ascended to the King’s throne, while today the Holy Ghost has descended on to our nature.” The joy of the Ascension lies in the promise of the Spirit. “Thou didst give joy to Thy disciples by a promise of the Holy Spirit.” The victory of Christ is wrought in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“On high is His body, here below with us is His Spirit. And so we have His token on high, that is His body, which He received from us, and here below we have His Spirit with us. Heaven received the Holy Body, and the earth accepted the Holy Spirit. Christ came and sent the Spirit. He ascended, and with Him our body ascended also” (St John Chrysostom). The revelation of the Holy Trinity was completed. Now the Spirit Comforter is poured forth on all flesh. “Hence comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, distribution of good gifts, the heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, the being made like to God, and, highest of all, the being made God!” (St Basil, On the Holy Spirit, IX). Beginning with the Apostles, and through communion with them—by an unbroken succession—Grace is spread to all believers. Through renewal and glorification in the Ascended Christ, man’s nature became receptive of the spirit. “And unto the world He gives quickening forces through His human body,” says Bishop Theophanes. “He holds it completely in Himself and penetrates it with His strength, out of Himself; and He likewise draws the angels to Himself through the spirit of man, giving them space for action and thus making them blessed.” All this is done through the Church, which is “the Body of Christ;” that is, His “fullness” (Ephesians 1:23). “The Church is the fulfillment of Christ,” continues Bishop Theophanes, “perhaps in the same way as the tree is the fulfillment of the seed. That which is contained in the seed in a contracted form receives its development in the tree.”

The very existence of the Church is the fruit of the Ascension. It is in the Church that man’s nature is truly ascended to the Divine heights. “And gave Him to be Head over all things” (Ephesians 1:22). St John Chrysostom comments: “Amazing! Look again, whither He has raised the Church. As though He were lifting it up by some engine, He has raised it up to a vast height, and set it on yonder throne; for where the Head is, there is the body also. There is no interval of separation between the Head and the body; for were there a separation, then would the one no longer be a body, nor would the other any longer be a Head.” The whole race of men is to follow Christ, even in His ultimate exaltation, “to follow in His train.” Within the Church, through an acquisition of the Spirit in the fellowship of Sacraments, the Ascension continues still, and will continue

until the measure is full.

“Only then shall the Head be filled up, when the body is rendered perfect, when we are knit together and united,” concludes St John Chrysostom.

The Ascension is a sign and token of the Second Coming. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

The mystery of God’s Providence will be accomplished in the Return of the Risen Lord. In the fulfillment of time, Christ’s kingly power will be revealed and spread over the whole of faithful mankind. Christ bequeathes the Kingdom to the whole of the faithful. “And I appoint unto you a Kingdom as My Father has appointed unto me. That ye may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30). Those who followed Him faithfully will sit with Him on their thrones on the day of His coming. “To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21). Salvation will be consummated in the Glory. “Conceive to yourself the throne, the royal throne, conceive the immensity of the privilege. This, at least if we chose, might more avail to startle us, yea, even than hell itself” (St John Chrysostom).

We should tremble more at the thought of that abundant Glory which is appointed unto the redeemed, than at the thought of the eternal darkness. “Think near Whom Thy Head is seated...” Or rather, Who is the Head. In very truth, “wondrous and terrible is Thy divine ascension from the mountain, O Giver of Life.” A terrible and wondrous height is the King’s throne. In face of this height all flesh stands silent, in awe and trembling. “He has Himself descended to the lowest depths of humiliation, and raised up man to the height of exaltation.”

What then should we do? “If thou art the body of Christ, bear the Cross, for He bore it” (St John Chrysostom).

“With the power of Thy Cross, Oh Christ, establish my thoughts, so that I may sing and glorify Thy saving Ascension.”

40 DAYS MEMORIAL

- June 12: Those who lost their lives in the Egypt plane crash
- June 19: ArchPriest Gregory Dye
- July 3: Riassaphor Monk Vladimir & Ann