




Sunday	Monday	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Friday	Saturday
27 Matins 9AM Liturgy 10AM	28	29 Liturgy 9:00AM	30 Vespers Bible Study 6:00PM Inquiring Minds 7:30PM	31	Nov. 1	2
3 Matins 9AM Liturgy 10AM	4	5 NO LITURGY Board Meeting 6:30PM	6 Vespers Bible Study 6:00PM Inquiring Minds 7:30PM	7	8 Divine Liturgy for Archangels 9:00AM	9
10 Baptism of Beloit Crew Liturgy 10AM Annual Parish Meeting	11	12 No Liturgy	13 Vespers Bible Study 6:00PM Inquiring Minds 7:30PM	14	15 Nativity Fast Begins Divine Liturgy 9AM	16 Divine Liturgy 9AM
17 Matins 9AM Liturgy 10AM	18 Liturgy 9:00AM	19 Liturgy 9:00AM	20 Liturgy 9:00AM Vespers Bible Study 6:00PM	21 HOLY DAY Feast of the Entrance of Theotokos in the Temple Liturgy 9:00AM	22 Liturgy 9:00AM	23 Liturgy 9:00AM
24 Matins 9AM Liturgy 10AM	25 Liturgy 9:00AM	26 Liturgy 9:00AM	27 Liturgy 9:00AM Vespers Bible Study 6:00PM	28 Liturgy 9:00AM	29 Liturgy 9:00AM	30 Liturgy 9:00AM
December 1 Matins 9AM Liturgy 10AM	2 Liturgy 9:00AM	3 Liturgy 9:00AM	4 Liturgy 9:00AM Vespers Bible Study 6:00PM	5 Liturgy 9:00AM	6 St. Nicholas Liturgy 9:00AM	7 Liturgy 9:00AM

**Calendar Key:**  Strict fasting No Meat and No Dairy on most Wed. And Fridays honoring our Lord's Betrayal and Crucifixion.  
 : Wine and Oil are allowed but no meat and no dairy.  : Fish, Wine, Oil allowed but no meat

**SPEAKING WITH YOUR PRIEST:** Please know you can call me anytime if there is something troubling you. It is not a sign of weakness to share something that may be heavy on your heart or mind. As a priest and Father to our parish, I want you to feel invited to have confidence in calling if you need someone to listen or to pray for you. (My cell: 8157214952) Every

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

ORTHODOX CHURCH

October 27th 2024



1802 Pershing Ave. Rockford, Illinois 61108 - Father Jonathan Bannon  
Father's Cell Phone: 815-721-4952 e: jsbannon@gmail.com www.CTSRockford.org

Schedule of Weekly Services:

- **Sunday October 27th Matins 9:00AM Divine Liturgy 10:00AM Inquiring Minds 12:30PM** Today's Discussion is on the sacrament of Holy Confession and Nepsis: watchfulness, interior vigilance with prayer.
- **Tuesday October 29th - Weekly Divine Liturgy 9:00AM**
- **Wednesday October 30th Vespers + Weekly Bible Study 6:00PM and Inquiring Minds 7:30PM**

UPCOMING PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **STEWARDSHIP MONTH** is NOVEMBER 2024: Pledge cards will be mailed and available in the church. Please return by Sunday November 24th for Stewardship Sunday. We will offer a prayer of Thanksgiving and ask God to bless the our intentions and help us with our goals in honoring Him in our lives and how we care for His Church and those in need.
- Next Monthly Board Meeting Tuesday Nov. 5th 2024 - 6:30PM
- **Baptism of Vashawn, Gavin, Luis & Nakaria and their daughter Aria, Dawson, Tyler & Savannah and their daughter Tala - November 10th at 9:00AM**
- Annual Parish Meeting: Sunday Nov. 10th 2024 *(2nd of 3 printed announcements before meeting)*
- **Nativity Fast** begins Nov. 15th through December 24th. 40 Divine Liturgies will be offered as we prepare for the birth of Christ. Try to attend a service. "I want the church to feel like a bakery, its always open and the oven of prayer is there for us to draw near." - Fr. Jonathan
  - **Fast Goals:** 1) Attend Sacrament of Confession 2) Go to Church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 3) Refrain from Meat and Dairy for 40 Days, but talk to your Spiritual Father about fasting especially if this is your first Nativity Fast. 4) Hide your fasting 5) Read the *Winter Pascha* by Fr. Thomas Hopko.
- Stewardship Sunday Nov. 24th 2024. Blessing of Pledge Cards with Prayer following Divine Liturgy.
  - Thanksgiving Day Liturgy Nov. 28th 2024 **9:00AM (If you plan to eat turkey, enjoy the day)**



PARISH PRAYER RULE:

**15 minutes daily:** Set a timer and begin.  
**5 - Scripture Reading** (Consider the daily readings)

**5 - Prayer** (Consider the Psalms, [the Prayer of the Optina Elders](#), or if you feel the strength to do so consider the [Morning Prayer of Daybreak by St. Sophrony of Essex](#). Your perception of the day will be changed if you offer this prayer.

**5 - Silence**  
and at some point in the day offer **1 (33 knot Prayer Rope) with the Jesus Prayer**, "Lord Jesus Christ, have Mercy on me."

# PARISH NEWS:

## Stewardship Month is November 2024.

Years ago our parish and diocese had on a Dues giving system with an annual designated financial offering expected of everyone. Our previous parish priest Fr. Basil Aden led our parish and then our diocese with a Stewardship format. Instead of only thinking of our offerings to God as financial, we explored giving to God from our whole person with the

### Three T's; Time, Talent, and Treasure.

Without a maximum or minimum amount, we are all encouraged to consider proportional giving. We find 10% is spoken of scripturally, 5%, 1%, whatever the amount, we can consider what God gives us and be intentional with how we give back which in turn helps our parish be forward thinking as we plan and work on projects.

Beyond finances we explore our talents and time. We have a choir, board positions, study groups, landscaping, the book store, library and spiritual resources, further we have ministries with prison, food banks and preparing for feast days with tombs and flowers. There is the Sunday Fellowship Meal and hospitality which is an extension of the Liturgy where we enjoy fellowship and share in a communion of agape. We also have simply being present, attending services and praying for each other, talking to a visitor and continuing to offer a warm and safe space we call the hospital of the Church.

### PLEDGE CARD

A Pledge Card will be available and is required of everyone each year to be considered a member. (This required aspect was voted on a few years ago at an annual meeting.)

We ask everyone to please fill out a pledge for 2025 after praying and thinking of how to respond to God with your time, talent and treasure. In addition to filling out a financial pledge you will be able to check off ways you are already giving of your time and talents. This is intentional because our value as members of God's church is not based on how large our financial giving is. We want you to see on the tangible card that whatever the amount we give, we also have responded with our whole person in other ways.

So I ask you as your priest, please consider the good words offered by our Stewardship Officer Maurice AlMassad and Parish Board President Jeremy Erber who will speak about Stewardship at this November's Annual Meeting on Nov. 10th. Filling out a pledge card will help us as we continue to plan and explore how to best care for our growing parish.

Your servant, Fr. Jonathan

## Upcoming Holy Feast

Nov. 21st Entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple



The birth and early life of the Virgin Mary is not recorded in the Gospels or other books of the New Testament, however this information can be found in a work dating from the second century known as the Book of James or Protevangelion.

When Mary was three years old, Joachim and Anna decided that the time had come to fulfill their promise and to offer her to the Lord. Joachim gathered the young girls of the neighborhood to form an escort, and he made them go in front of Mary, carrying torches. Captivated by the torches, the young child followed joyfully to the Temple, not once looking back at her parents nor weeping as she was parted from them.

The holy Virgin ran toward the Temple, overtaking her attendant maidens and threw herself into the arms of the High Priest Zacharias, who was waiting for her at the gate of the Temple with the elders. Zacharias blessed her saying, "It is in you that He has glorified your name in every generation. It is in you that He will reveal the Redemption that He has prepared for His people in the last days."

Then, Zacharias brought the child into the Holy of Holies—a place where only the High Priest was permitted to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. He placed her on the steps of the altar, and the grace of the Lord descended upon her. She arose and expressed her joy in a dance as wonder seized all who saw this happen.

The Virgin Mary dwelt in the Temple for nine years until, reaching an age for marriage, she was taken from the Temple by the priests and elders and entrusted to Joseph as the guardian of her virginity.

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple signifies her total dedication to God and her readiness for her future vocation as the Mother of the Incarnate Lord. This is a feast of anticipation. As honor is shown to Mary, the faithful are called to look forward to the Incarnation of Christ, celebrated in a little more than a month by the Feast of the Nativity on December 25.



## Elder Sofian Boghiu

“Love opens the way to any heart.”

A person bows before justice but kneels only before Gentleness. No one can resist gentleness. With gentleness, you can defeat someone who is worse than all the wild beasts. Yet with an angry word, you harm even the best among them. Love opens the way to any heart—as hardened and hopeless as it may be. The despair in your brother’s heart is only healed by love because no door remains closed to love. Love united with Humility is a power that was never equaled by any other power in the world. Any hatred is healed through love. And if the person who hates you plunges a knife into your heart, kiss the hand that holds the knife, because Christ also kissed him who plotted His crucifixion.



—Elder Sofian Boghiu



## Elder Proclu

3 Words of Advice for Priests and Seminarians

1. Whoever wants to be a priest should have a life that corresponds to such a thing, and others should put him forward for it; he should not put himself forward. And he should not be like a police officer or instructor, but he should be more like a mother and less like a father.

2. Once, when I was in Elder Proclu’s cell, I had a cold and was coughing very hard while the Elder spoke to us about spiritual things. All of a sudden, he stopped and abruptly said: **“But you are really coughing! Why don’t you take care of yourself? It is one thing to die while serving the Good God,**

**and another thing to die from negligence.”** Thus, the Elder also knew how to give guidance on caring for this temple of the Holy Spirit [the body].

—Archim. Melchisedec of Putna

3. If someone is a theology student and has this fear: “I have a test coming up, what am I going to do?” Can I preserve the prayer?

Fr. Proclu: Yes, it can be preserved. You know, for him, this is the most amazing help: “I am nothing; I can do nothing, nothing.” That is humility—much humility and the Holy Spirit will help him. And, to put it this way, Elder Cleopa acquired great wisdom, because this is how it is: reading is one thing—illumination from knowledge—but illumination also comes from the Holy Spirit. **The illumination of the mind has many stages, and the person who seeks to learn, to be someone useful to the Church or government, such a person will succeed if he leads a pure life\*, a life of humility, not a life full of evil, and the Holy Spirit grants him all that he has learned.** But for other times, if he preserves as good a life as possible, there are certain times—because he leads a life of repentance to purify his heart—when he feels taught in his mind, without forcing it, exactly how you see something on television, in the same way, it passes in front of your mind; he speaks the words that the Holy Spirit teaches him.

But thinking is one thing, reading is another, and contemplation—being taught by the Holy Spirit—is another. That is, those words come from the right, and when you are speaking to someone and words are coming out and you look in his face, that’s it, you’ve lost it. Priests [with the gift of oration], when they preach, direct their mind in one direction—his mind is not on the world, his mind listens to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives to him, and that priest also gives. But, at other lower stages, the Holy Spirit brings him words that he learned. When we are speaking about the Holy Spirit bringing words directly, you feel that the Holy Spirit guides and teaches you. And there are times when by my way of life I anger God, the gift withdraws, and if it withdraws, for me to acquire it again, I need repentance. Only through repentance does the Good God receive us again; only through repentance and confession. And as I said, to the measure that you enriched yourself with desire for God, the Holy Spirit will give them rest—that desire will give them rest.

*\* to be a Leventis (a man or woman of honor)*

• **Prosfora.** offered by **Fr. Jonathan**

Ask Pani Marianna to learn more about the tradition of making prosfora for the Divine Liturgy and consider signing up online to care for a Liturgy of the Church.

### Helping with Hospitality:

#### #CoffeeHour

Learn how to make the coffee, bring a dish or help clean up. Signups for coffee hour coming soon! Ask Sara Erber or Manal AlMassad to learn more about how to offer your talents.

### Special Collection for Hurricane Helene relief:

For the remainder of the month of October we are collecting funds to help offer relief for those suffering from Hurricane Helene's destruction. Funds will be sent to IOCC the International Orthodox Christian Charities group that has dollar matching relationships set up causing each dollar offered to become about 7 dollars of assistance. They were one of the first groups on the ground helping years ago with Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

At the end of each Liturgy on Sundays we have a designated collection basket that is for a different need/ministry largely outside of our parish.

### NOVEMBER IS STEWARDSHIP MONTH

STEWARDS, translated from the Greek word *oikonomos*, means a caretaker, a faithful manager of all of God's gifts.

As Stewards, each of us are called upon to respond to God's gifts through offering our gifts of time, talent and treasure. This is our form of supporting our parish and it leaves us with the question, "How will I respond to God's gifts this year?" Our gifts represent who we are and how we care about God and His Church. This October we will hear more about

Stewardship and how love God through caring for our parish, caring for our neighbors, and living with the framework of being a caretaker of the blessings God gives us.

### A WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS

We are happy you have joined us today. It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning and we wish God's Blessings to all who visit with us today & hope you stop in again soon!

You have just experienced the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. It is our ordinary service of worship on regular Sundays in the Orthodox Church. The Liturgy - as experienced this morning- stems from the 4th century though its practices were inherited from the time of the Apostles in the book of Acts. It also represents a time when all Christians worshipped in One Undivided Church. If you have any questions in regards to our worship or the Orthodox Church in general please see Fr. Jonathan and he will gladly answer any of your questions to the best of his ability. He looks forward to meeting you.

At our best, we are known for our welcoming attitude, hospitality, generosity, and compassion. At our worst, we are sinners, but we're working out our salvation together and could use your help. If you are looking for a church home, and a church where we work on our own hearts first, we hope you prayerfully consider making Christ the Saviour that place.



## Sacramental and Membership Information:

Parishioners in "good standing" are those Orthodox Christians who, as members of Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, strive to live according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church; participate in the life of the parish through regular church attendance, regular reception of Holy Communion and periodic Holy Confession (and receive these sacraments no less than once a year); and financially support the parish (especially through an annual "submitted stewardship pledge card"). Prospective members and returning members are asked to fill out a Stewardship Card, copies of which are available near Church entrance. Only members in good standing sacramentally and with stewardship are allowed a voice & vote at annual parish meetings and to be considered for serving on the parish board or any other ministry offered in our parish proper.

### From Saint Porphyrios:

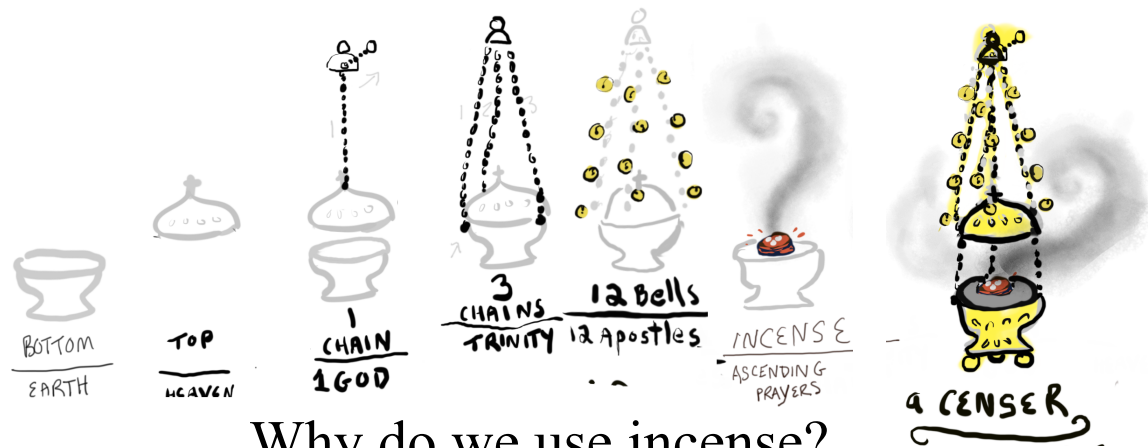
Something which can help a person who is depressed is work, interest in life. The garden, plants, flowers, trees, the countryside, a walk in the open air – all these things tear a person away from a state of inactivity and awake other interests. They act like medicines. To occupy oneself with the arts, with music and so on, is very beneficial. The thing that I place top of the list, however, is interest in the Church, in reading Holy Scripture and attending services. As you study the words of God you are cured without being aware of it... in our Church a cure is to be found through love for God and prayer, provided this is done with all the heart. - *Wounded by Love*

### Orthodox Professionals:

We are blessed to know professionals who are loving and have an Orthodox understanding of the heart and mind near Chicago. Please consider Dr. Arey Christofidis, and or Dr. Randa Anderson. The Orthodox Christian Counseling Institute (OCCI) is a professional network of Orthodox psychologists, counselors, and marriage and family therapists. It was founded in 2004 by Dr. Ary Christofidis as a referral resource in the Chicago metropolitan area, including Northwest Indiana. Dr. Sofie Azmy is an Orthodox psychologist and wife of a Coptic Orthodox priest. She was our keynote speaker for the Lenten Mission in 2023.

Her website is: <https://lightchoicepsych.com/>





## Why do we use incense?

**Practical:** The pleasant aroma of incense on a practical level helps calm the mind and remind us of the beauty of God. We pray for peace at the beginning of every service, *“In peace let us pray to the Lord, Lord have mercy. For the peace of the world for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord, Lord have mercy.”* It is hard to engage in a dialogue when we are without peace. God is our peace. Peace is a person and that person is Jesus Christ. Peace much like Truth is a person, not a feeling. So on the most fundamental level incense simply can engage the olfactory system and bring us to a place of peace as we strive to be attentive to our God Who is “invisibly in our midst” as the priest prays at the altar in the quiet prayers only heard by God and those who may serve.

### Theological:

Because of the fall of humanity in the garden we read we will now till the earth and by the sweat of the brow work the fields. When many people who have been working all day gathered together in Temple ages ago before modern hygiene, incense would mask the aroma of so many people. A monk who helped our parish with Divine Liturgies when Fr. Jonathan would be away at various events once shared in a sermon that the incense can then be a reminder of this fallenness. When the priest censens us it is because of the shared humanity that has fallen and we are striving to return to the pre-fallen state of life in Christ. This is also the other side of the coin where being censured in Church just as the icons and the altar are censured is because the image and likeness of God is in every one of us. Censing someone or something is part of the church preparing us and the space around us to be ready for the sacrifice and worship of the Liturgy. To cense something is to set it apart, to bless it, to acknowledge that it is blessable, to prepare it for God’s work. So the symbolism has many sides. Even the censer itself has much symbolism which can be seen in the image above.

**Historical:** Incense is a burnt offering. it is an offering from the created world offered back to God to fill his house with a heavenly scent. Similar to making prosfora, wine, embroidered vestments, the articulation of sung hymns, all of this is a prepared offering. Incense is no different. The monks and nuns prepare the recipe prayerfully.

**Scriptural significance:** In the book of Daniel we read “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” Here we see the 2nd Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ as one wrapped in the clouds. The clouds here are descriptive of the heavens. In spiritual geography with heaven above and the world below our feet the incense rising is a reminder of our prayers rising up to God. Further we read in the New Testament book of Revelation 5:8, “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” and again in Rev. 8:4, “An angel offers incense on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke and prayers rise to God.” Our worship offered to God in the Church mirrors the revealed worship of the angels before God in heaven. As Orthodox Christians we never “make up” worship,. Instead we receive the tradition which came before us and the offering of incense is part of this spiritual inheritance.

**Final Thought:** As with many things in the Orthodox Church there are both practical and mystical symbols that are equally valid and important. Someone may say I don’t need candles and incense to pray to God. While this is true, one can pray wherever they are we are not a Faith of minimalism and we strive to engage and offer our entire person to God with all 5 senses. Our Faith is more than a cerebral /mental exercise of doctrines we hold to be true. It is a way of life and the fallen world and demons want our attention on anything other than God. The incense can catch our heart and mind before we even see an icon like walking into a the home of a grandfather or grandmother who has dinner cooking. Before we even see the food the love of hospitality has already affected us. It is the same with incense. - Fr. Jonathan

## Being an Orthodox Christian

The Orthodox Church is not just another organization, club or fraternal society. It is the Body of Christ, and a life-giving relationship with God. The Orthodox Church is the continuation of the Christian Church from the time of Christ until the present. As Orthodox Christians, we do not have a relationship with Christ in isolation, but alongside other Orthodox Christians. With these things in mind, Orthodox Christians are expected to:

- Strive daily to live a Christian life, according to the teachings of Our Lord in the Gospels, and the tradition of the Church.

- Regularly participate in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays (and on holydays as permitted by your employment).\*

- Regularly receive Holy Communion and participate in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. (The minimum is no less than once a year.)

- Strive to fight against the passions of the flesh by honoring the body, mind, and spirit. We harm ourselves when chasing after sin. In relationships, we practice abstinence until marriage.

- **For the Men of our Parish:** Strive to be a Levendis. An ancient and cultural pre-Christian Greek word: Λεβέντης, pronounced: Luh-ven-TH’EIS) is a man of honor. It is not honorable to objectify women. It is not honorable nor Orthodox to treat a wife as subservient. Husbands and wives are two halves of a whole unit in marriage and with love and respect, sacrifice for the other. The Husband is likened unto Christ who gave Himself for the life of the Church. The Wife is likened unto the Church who founded upon the blood of martyrs gave herself for the Life of Christ. This is what the two crowns represent in the Orthodox Marriage service. Crowns of martyrdom in a spirit of freedom, self-offering, and love.

- **For the Men in our Parish:** Women are to be honored and protected. There is no honor in self-seeking fallen desires. Make the sign of the cross. Remind yourself whose image and likeness we carry and whose image and likeness women carry. Christ tells us, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Nothing will cause more discord in the heart and mind than throwing aside prayer and leaving the doors of our heart and mind unguarded. Fallen desires are hurled by the devil like arrows that fly by day and he invites our mind to be like the pestilence that creeps along the ground at night. We are above such things. So let this be a goal for all men in our parish: **honor before all else.** When we are with women we are before holy icons and we should respond to that truth with our lives. Cultivate a heart and life of Philotimo (Greek for: love of honor)

- **STEWARDSHIP:** Offer your whole life to Christ, and offer the “Three T’s”—time, talent and treasure—to sustain the church. Participate in parish ministries and activities. Volunteer to help. Give monetary support. Our parish does not survive on stewardship, we ‘thrive’ on this form of voluntary giving of who we are. If we are unable to donate monetarily there are many other ways to give with time and talents. If you have any questions about Stewardship please as our Stewardship Officer and Board Vice President Maurice AlMassad or the parish priest.

*\*Those who are homebound and/or physically unable to attend services on a regular basis are asked to spiritually join in prayer on Sundays and holydays. The priest will visit with the Sacraments periodically throughout the year, as requested.*



# Why do we light candles?

**Historical practicality:** They helped with illuminated the space of prayer and worship.

## **Sacrifice:**

Candles are lit because we no longer offer living animal sacrifices as the Jews had done in the Temple. Now the bloodless sacrifice of Christ is offered in the Eucharist every Liturgy. Candles are still a burnt offering and often a donation is given for a candle so there is a sacrifice of one's alms.

## **Devotion:**

Candles symbolize devotion to God and remembrance of the faithful who have passed away.

## **Spiritual significance:**

Lighting a candle can evoke a sense of peace, and our embodied faith uses all of the senses in prayerful ways that help us become attentive to the inner life of prayer. The very action of picking up a candle and focusing on lighting it from another candle causes the person to be very present. It is in the present moment we encounter God. Psychotherapists speak of not ruminating on the past. Christ teaches not worrying about many things and the future. Engaging with an oil lamp or candle is both spiritually helpful and psychologically / emotionally healthy. The church has many practices that where this multi-layered care takes place. For example think of the ease that can come to the heart when smelling a pleasing aroma of incense in church. What is the first petition of the Liturgy? In "peace" let us pray to the Lord. In order to be present, in order to be still, in order to be prepared to encounter Christ we need peace. The traditions of the church help us succeed in this.

## **Symbol of the Unwaning Light:**

The burning of candles reminds us of our call to walk in the light and not in the darkness of passions and sin.

## **ICONOGRAPHY AND REFLECTED LIGHT:**

We have an older member of the church who converted to Orthodoxy from Lutheranism. He married Halina's sister Virginia and was a dairy farmer from Wisconsin. His name was Lamonte and Fr. Jonathan visited him at Bildhal Street not far from the church for ten years before he fell asleep in the Lord. Lamonte would recall growing up on a farm as a child and the only light he had in his house at night was the light of the moon, and the light of kerosene lamps. We often experience life with the dead light of electricity that evenly distributes light but much of the churches aesthetic traditions relied on flickering candles and oil lamps and in some cases like monasteries many services were offered before the sun would rise. Think of being in a church where the icons have either a gold leafed reflective background or are covered with those gold or silver covers called Riza's that only show the painted face and hands of the saint. These gold leafed backgrounds, and precious metal embossed covers, oil lamps, carved iconostasis', perforated icon stands, all of these would have a relationship with the light of candles and the of day or night. The Church would look different and active when the sun rises as the Matin's psalms are chanted. The icons would look alive when the chandelier would swing back and forth above the center nave of the church. The community of the saints depicted in the icons would feel very present as the incense caught our mind, the icons caught our vision, the wine and bread of the Eucharist caught our deepest thirst, the kiss of the cross sealed our lips, the sign of the cross and bow of our head caught our very body, and the chanting caught our ears and heart. Over and over the church is striving to adorn us with divine beauty, with the meekness of Christ and the triumph of mercy. - Fr. Jonathan

# SACRAMENTS AND BLESSINGS

**MINISTRY TO PERSONS WHO ARE SICK** - We urge Orthodox Christians who would like to receive Holy Sacraments but are unable to attend Church (hospitalized or at home) to contact Fr. Jonathan so Holy Sacraments can be administered to them (8157214952)

**If your loved one is hospitalized please call, even if the illness is not serious! In a holistic approach to healing and well-being, a visit from the priest can be very positive. Most hospitals do not inform us when they receive patients from our parish. We depend on you!**

**BLESSINGS OF INFANTS**—Forty days after birth, a child and its mother come to church to receive a 40 Day Blessing, imitating Christ who was presented in the Temple 40 days after He was born. Please call the parish priest to arrange this blessing.

**BAPTISMS**—Please see Fr. Jonathan to schedule Baptisms. Plan ahead!—There are some days when Baptisms are not performed (During Great Lent and some fasting seasons). Keep in mind that the Godparent shall be a practicing Orthodox Christian in good standing.

**WEDDINGS**—Please arrange an appointment with Fr. Jonathan at least **eight months** before the proposed wedding date to allow time for all necessary marriage preparation (Prepare Enrich classes). Regular attendance to an Orthodox Church is a requirement of the diocese for those desiring to enter the sacrament of marriage. Marriages are solemnized on Saturdays or Sundays. Circumstances may require a dispensation from the diocesan bishop. Consult the parish priest before any plans have been made for the wedding reception. Marriages cannot be celebrated during the fasting seasons of the church, or on Fridays.

**CONFESSION**—Confessions are often arranged by appointment. Please call to schedule Confession. During the Lenten season time for Confession is made available before and after selected services.

**MEMORIAL SERVICES**—Memorial Services are offered for the eternal rest of persons who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Customarily, these services are offered at 40 days, at 6 months, at 1 year and at 3 years. When three years have passed, the departed are more properly remembered on the Saturdays of the Souls offering the Kutya/Koliva/ Boiled Wheat.

## **END OF LIFE ISSUES**

### **1 - The Right to a Proper Funeral**

It is an honor to have a church funeral. When the funeral does not take place at the church it indicates that someone is not in good order. Sometimes out of convenience, we consider omitting a church funeral for our loved ones, not realizing that we are depriving them of their right to be honored. Let us honor our parents and relatives with the respect they deserve! Eulogies offered by family or friends are most appropriately offered at the meal following the Funeral service. Church Funerals are, under ordinary circumstances, provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual and material obligations to the parish; otherwise, the funeral service is conducted at the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

### **2 - About Cremation**

Orthodox Christians believe that in the General Resurrection, our bodies and souls will be restored to each other. Cremation is the deliberate desecration and destruction of what God has made, an act of violence upon the body and is viewed as the denial of the Resurrection.

In cases where there is intention for the body of a deceased person to be cremated, thus choosing to disregard our understanding of the Resurrection, the honor of a church funeral is not given, either in the church, or the funeral home or any other place.

Additionally, memorial services are not allowed. There is nothing the church can offer when her traditions are disregarded with something so sacred as burying a loved one just as Christ was buried. The body is a sacred vessel and is required to be treated as such both in life and after death.





PARISH PRAYER LIST:

Share names with Fr. Jonathan if you have someone you would like to be prayed for and/or to have a name removed.

Recently Illumined-

Natalie (Aug. 25th 2024)  
Danny and Amber (Sept. 8th)

Catechumens/Inquirers:

- Garhart and Nicole
- *Beloit Crew:* Vashawn, Gavin, Louis + Family, Dawson, Ricky, Carter
- Isaac
- Alexander & Jasmine
- Tyler, Genesis and son.
- Tyler, Savannah and daughter.
- Tate and Paige
- Tyler
- Brandon and Haley
- Arianna
- Alyana and sister
- Garriet

**Our Patriarch:** His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople and those serving in the Patriarchate in Turkey (persecuted by government),

**Our Metropolitan: His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa** and all those working in Johnstown and throughout our Diocese, our Spiritual Fathers and All Patriarchs and Bishops.

All College Students, OCF members and recent graduates. Seminarians of Christ the Saviour Seminary and all the Theological Schools of Orthodoxy, our Spiritual Fathers

**Safety of Local Law Enforcement and Firefighters and Emergency Care:**  
Loredona S., Sarah S. Matthew Z Sarah Z.

**For Health and Recovery:**  
Caroline Erber

**For the Health and Peace of:**  
Walter (*Vladimir*) Rakuc, Halina Wojtowicz  
Lia (8 year old who is suffering from heart issues - prayers requested from family) Michelle (Gavin’s Mother), Veronica, Steven, Zoey, Emily, Joshua, Molly, Paul, ChristyAnn and all parish members.

**Clergy Families In the Diocese:**  
Pani Eleanor Pribish,Fr. Robert Prepelka, Fr. Edward Pehanich and Pani Kathy, Seminary Prefect, Father Michael Rustick, Fr. Luke Mihaly (Danbury, CT) Retired priests:

Father Michael Miklos and Pani Karen (FL).

**For the Souls of the Reposed:**  
Newly Departed Servant of God Fr. Thomas Blaschak, Theodoros “Ted” Panagiotopoulos (owner of 5 Coins Restaurant in Rockford and neighbors to our parish home) Pani Andrea Kovich

The Hierarchs His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos Ware + His Grace Bishop Athanasius Akunda of West Kenya and Kisumu, + His Eminence Archbishop Gavriel - Paris, France (friend of Fr. Jonathan) and the priests: The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Fr. John Duranko. Fr. Peter Benyo (August 2022), Rev. Deacon Janke and Nina, Very Rev. Protopresbyter Fr. Ronald Hazuda, Fr. William George, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Macura, Fr. Tony Joseph and Pani Patsy. Very Rev. Fr John Baranik, Very Rev. Proto. Michael Polanichka, Subdeacon Jim Janeck, Fr. George S Zervos, Weira, Olga Moore (Sister of Maria Nafranwicz and Sophie Brucki, Thomas (Son of Lidia and Walter Rakuc) Halena (Friend of Irena Larson) Stephen & Sophie Harbachuk, William (Pani Marianna’s Great Uncle/Aunt - Spring Valley), Geraldine (Paula Grady’s Sister) (Esther Pronschinske - Mya Groza’s Grandmother) Trevor Larry Koss (Laura Warmke’s Grandfather (Kevin - Sara Erber’s Uncle), Mary Andrews, Professour Dimitrios Liakos (Former Art Director of NIU and Orthodox Iconologist who led many trips to Meteora for NIU students) Daniel, Helen, Sandy, Francis J. Schmuck (Craig Warmke’s Grandfather) and Beatrice, Weira Hryszcuck, William (Bill) Johnson. (husband of Mary Johnson Friend of Parish) Edward (Paula Grady’s cousin) Soija Ageev (Natasha Wagner’s Grandma) Anna Evanisko (Pani Miloro’s mother), Danny, Nicholas, Maria. Lawrence, Valerie, Scott, Mary, Pearlene, Gary, Anne and, Glen, Raymond Bannon (Fr. Jonathan’s Godfather) Luba Bremer, Lamonte Shonagel, Lidia Parfiaevich, Thomas Rakuc, Farid (Mana’s Father), Youssef and Rasmeyah (Maurice’s Parents) Thomas (Orthodox friend of Caroline) and Peter Tatsis (Father of His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory)

**Anniversary of repose:**  
Please inform Fr. Jonathan if you have anniversaries and people to commemorate with prayer. Thank you.

**Monastics:** Hieromonk Athanasios, Abbess Christonimfi and her retinue of St. Stephen’s Orthodox Monastery -Meteora Greece (They donated all of the 24” x 36” icons for our narthex and nave asking only to be prayed for as the “best donation” we could give them.  
**Nuns of Piatra Fantanel Monastery** in Romania who made our vestments and sent many icons and prayer ropes as gifts to our children.  
**Nuns of St. Jacob the Mangled** in Lebanon who made vestments for Fr. Jonathan and are currently making prayer ropes he purchased to give to those in need.

**Intentions:** The return of stolen Hagia Sophia to the Orthodox Church.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE JESUS PRAYER?

*from Blessed Elder Aimilianos of Simonos Petras*

The purpose of the [Jesus] Prayer is not a method, nor the words, or the place, or hesychia [stillness], or something else which this prayer involves. We can say that the purpose of the Prayer is what is being worked by God in you. What God works in our inner being... What He works is an experience. But it is not only the experience of God! It is also a revelation of the way He comes, of how the coming of God happens. The Personal God within the human personality... And of course, He comes in Light! And one still feels and understands at the end of his or her ascent, the union which is performed... And with this union, the purification comes, the spiritual advancement comes, the growth of the little baby which is being born into man. Even more, the Spirit gives one a permanent divine state from which he or she climbs towards illumination, towards light, towards a flourishing on different levels which God offers and opens to us. The purpose of Prayer, in a word, we could say, is a perfect mystery of the unseen God, the One now felt, and the visible person... a mystery performed by God. This mystery has been revealed to us by the Fathers of the Church.

We also know from experience, always, how to become a recipient of God. Not through reasoning and meditation, but in a way that God penetrates the human person, and transforms it entirely. And so, he or she becomes a person who can taste, understand and comprehend this mystery. Now that we’re talking about the purpose of the Prayer, we have to note something... There are several higher levels to which man ascends when he or she practices the Jesus Prayer. But, for the moment, we set them aside. Because, we can’t talk about something that only a person knows, and only he or she can reveal it to another person. So, it is a continuous climb. It is an ever-rising communion, perfect, unchanging. I mean, no person changes, neither one, nor the other. There is a divine vision and a communion with the unseen. This person lives this greatness... He or she lives the godly things in an inexpressible joy and happiness. And in his way, he runs without any obstacle, but, however, without being able to tell it to the others. He is the one who experienced it, he carried it, and hence, this man which climbs to the highest levels of prayer, which unfold in the depths of the heart. These steps, this advancement of man, can’t be interpreted by us, dear Mr. Werner, on the TV screen. It’s something that cannot be observed by the human reasoning. From now on we should let God to search for the people who want it, fight for it and succeed to go up there with divine help.



# *All others are Saints... we are the sinner.*

St. Paisios the Athonite spoke:

"You must also view all the others as saints.

And to see only yourself as a sinner, the smallest among all, even if other people may be sinners.

We have no right to see them sinners. We have no right to judge them!

We have no right to speak against a sinner.

We have to see only ourselves as sinners, and the smallest among all!

...

Let our soul always thirst for the knowledge of the truth,

let it thirst for the forgiveness of sins,

let it thirst for the peace of consciousness,

Let it thirst for the heavenly joy!

The most beautiful thirst is the one for the union with Jesus Christ!

Let it thirst for the Holy Communion!

Let it thirst for the acquisition of virtues!

Let it thirst for entering as quickly as possible into the Kingdom of Heaven, to free itself as soon as possible from the vanity of this world, to free itself from pain, from sorrow, from torment, from the wickedness which reigns in the hearts of people!

For becoming free!

For freeing ourselves from passions!

And finally, let our soul thirst for the eternal joy!

Let it thirst for the union with God, so that we may live forever with the saints!

Because... how long will be our life here on earth?"



# On the Jesus Prayer

By Fr. Gheorghe Calciu gives us precious details about the Prayer of the Heart, the fruits of this prayer and the signs of delusion. Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa (1925–2006) spent a total of 21 years in prison for his Christian evangelism and criticism of the communist regime in Romania.

Fr. Gheorghe Calciu:

You close your eyes, and direct your inner attention towards the heart.

The [spiritual] heart is not really here where we hear it, but somewhere above.

This is the place of the spiritual heart. When you make this connection, the mind begins to follow the spiritual direction of the heart.

**THEN YOUR ENTIRE BEING WILL CHANGE. AND THEN, TRULY, THE POWER OF PRAYER CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS.**

Maybe we won't get there, but what's important is to organize your prayer life in such a way that you pray with your mind and heart as well. When you pray, you will feel a warmth, when you truly pray, when your heart descends into your heart, you will feel a warmth. If this warmth comes from below up, then it is from the devil, don't be deceived! If this warmth comes from above down, or finds a place in heart without passing from the lower part of the body, then, it is the Holy Spirit, who abides in you. You might even reach this state, after a long time...

I won't make now an extended exposition of the Jesus Prayer, I will say just a few words.

**PRAY! PRAY EVEN FOR FIVE MINUTES! FOR FIVE MINUTES YOU MUST NOT ALLOW EVEN A SINGLE STRAY THOUGHT, EXCEPT FOR THE THOUGHT TOWARDS GOD, AND FEEL AROUND YOU THE FLUTTER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PRESENCE.**

Next time I will talk more about the Jesus Prayer... And then you will feel how the Holy Spirit visits you, rarely in the beginning, but then more and more often, until it rests in your heart for long time.

I saw a man, a man who used to pray the Jesus Prayer. He was Father Benedict Ghiuş. He was already old and would rarely serve at the altar, because of his old age. He was at the Cernica Monastery [Bucharest, Romania], and when he was walking through the alleys of Cernica, or in the church, he was like a saint, like floating. Although he wasn't smiling, his face was radiating happiness. I had a revelation about him when I went to Cernica to serve the liturgy, and he was sitting on a chair somewhere over there, in a corner, in semi-darkness, in the altar. And the more he advanced in prayer, the brighter the father's corner became. If you had looked at him, you wouldn't have seen any halo above his head. But you would have seen that the entire corner where he was sitting, was brighter than the rest of the altar. The altar was illuminated by candles, not light bulbs. And then I understood what the practice of Jesus Prayer means. I knew about him (everyone did) that he practiced the Prayer of the Heart...

**HE REACHED SUCH HIGH STAGES, THAT TROUGH THE PRAYER WHICH WAS UNCEASINGLY UTTERED BY HIS HEART AS HIS MIND AS WELL, HE WOULD EMANATE SUCH LIGHT AROUND HIM... THAT WAS SOMETHING MIRACULOUS...**

Monks say that when you pray the Jesus Prayer and you reach the perfect form of this prayer, then even if you preach, or talk to someone, or sell candles, or do other things, dig in the garden, tend the flowers, your heart and mind unceasingly sings: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Unceasingly, without pause and without separation from God. As if the mind would divide itself in two parts, one preoccupied with the daily tasks, and another one which maintains a permanent relationship with God!

**MAYBE WE DON'T SEEK TO REACH THAT STAGE, BUT GOD IS GREAT, HOLY SPIRIT FULFILLS EVERYTHING!**







# STORIES OF THE JESUS PRAYER

Elder Ephraim Katounakiotis once told the following story,

**“An elder says to his novice:**

- Read the Jesus Prayer.
- I read it, but I don't understand it.
- The devil understands it and runs away.
- This is too difficult for me.
- Okay, do you want to see a miracle?
- Yes, I want to see a miracle, father.
- All right, - says the elder, - I will pray that the Lord will show you a miracle, so that you understand the power of the Jesus Prayer.
- Okay.

**After praying and fasting for three days,  
the elder calls the novice:**

- Come here. Now take this basket, go up to the spring and fill it with water.
- Forgive me, father, - the novice says, - but I haven't lost my mind yet. Fill the basket with water?
- Didn't you say you wanted to see a miracle and the power of the Jesus Prayer? Have you changed your mind already?
- No, I still want it.
- Well then, do as I tell you. Do not forget that you need to be reading the Jesus Prayer all the time.
- Your blessing. - says the novice and goes to the spring, repeating the words of the prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me...' He puts the basket in the spring. The water fills the basket without spilling anywhere. In the meantime, the novice continues to pray, while the elder is also praying in his cell, that the Lord would show a miracle to His servant. Seeing the

basket filled with water, the novice runs in a hurry to show it to the elder. While he is on his way, the devil in human guise appears to him and says:

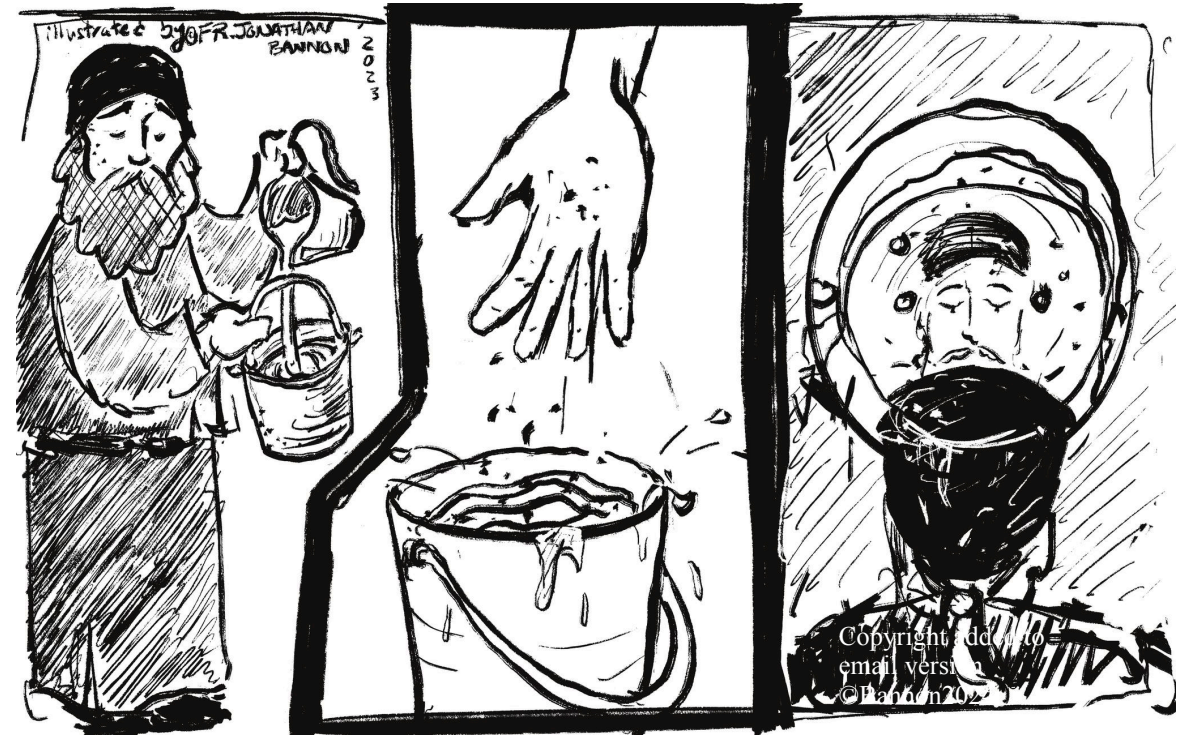
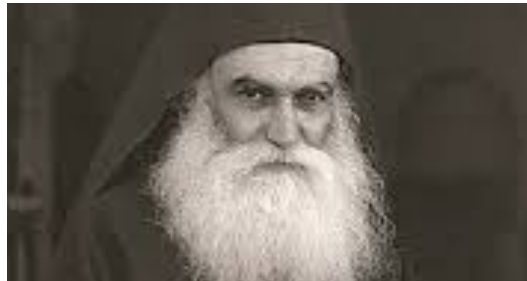
- Where are you going, monk?
- To my elder.
- What is your name?
- George.
- How many years have you been a monk?
- Five or six.
- What kind of work do you do?
- I make seals for prosphora.

While the novice is busy talking, the water begins to pour out, and he returns to the elder with an empty basket.

- What happened?
- So and so, father.
- You have abandoned the prayer, my child, that's why the water poured out. You see, while you were reading the prayer, the basket was holding water, but when you stopped and began idle talk, the water poured out.

If you want to become a good monk, do not leave the Jesus Prayer. Your prayer goes along with your merit.

Two phrases should always be on a monk's lips: 'May it be blessed' when you need to do something, and 'forgive me' when you need to ask for an apology. At the same time, your mind must be consumed with prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.'



FROM THE HOLY MOUNTAIN:

Callinicus the Hesychast was sought out by a monk whose soul was afflicted with intrusive thoughts and temptations beset him. He shared with Callinicus the situation and the holy Father told him to fill a bucket with water and throw some dirt in, give it a mix. Asking him if he could see anything in the water, the troubled monk responded, no it is clouded. So they continued to discuss and the meek Callinicus with love and care encouraged him. Callinicus told him to examine the water and the monk responded it has begun to clear up, so they continued for a bit more and Callinicus reminded him to look again at the bucket. It has become perfectly clear he responded, I can pick out some little pebbles from the bottom easily now. The kind Callinicus replied, "Something of the sort has happened to you, too. At the present, your mind is like the muddy water. Do not be upset, however. Have some patience, and in two or three months the trouble and muddiness, will settle, and you will see how much clearer and straighter you will think." " Things developed exactly as the hesychast had said.

- from the book Contemporary Ascetics of Mount Athos Vol.I