



# The Weekly Forerunner



St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

301 Struthers Liberty Rd

Campbell, OH 44405

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest

## AUGUST Bulletin Sponsor

In memory of Aunt Mary Sveda- Given by Barbara Kolesar

In honor of Michele Basile & Millie Wilfong – Given by Basile family

### Liturgical & Events Schedule

#### Sunday, August 3rd

9:35 AM: Hours

10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / 40 day Panachida for Helen C. / Social by 'O' Club

#### Tuesday, August 5

Vigil @ Monastery of the Transfiguration

#### Wednesday, August 6

9:00 AM: Divine Liturgy with blessing of fruit

#### Thursday-Sunday August 7-10

Campbell City Festival

#### Saturday August 9

Noon City Festival Parade

6:00 PM: Vespers

#### Sunday, August 10

9:35 AM: Hours

10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Social is OPEN at this time

10:15 PM: City Festival Fireworks

Orthodox Tradition teaches that the Mystery of Confession is a sacred encounter between Christ and the penitent, and that nothing revealed in confession may be disclosed to others. This teaching is not a legal or administrative policy, but our belief rooted in the Gospel and sustained by the conscience of the Orthodox Church throughout her history.

At the same time, the Orthodox Church in America affirms the Church's deep and unwavering commitment to the protection of children and the vulnerable. The Mystery of Confession is not a shelter for abuse, but a place of repentance, healing, and accountability before Christ for our sins. We believe these commitments—to the gospel, and to the safeguarding of every human person—are not in conflict with one another. On the contrary, the gospel requires of us the highest standard of care for others, especially children. We receive with utmost seriousness the sober warning of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ that "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6).

The Orthodox Church in America was compelled to file this suit to uphold religious freedom and to ensure that Orthodox priests are not forced to choose between obeying the law and remaining faithful to the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church. The Court's decision recognizes the constitutional protections at stake, and we are thankful for the legal clarity which the Court has provided.

### Statement on Injunction Protecting the Seal of Confession in Washington State

On July 25, 2025, U.S. District Court Judge Rebecca L. Pennell entered an Order granting a stipulated preliminary injunction which blocks enforcement of a state law requiring clergy to break the seal of confession in cases involving suspected child abuse. The practical effect of this Order is to prevent Washington State from enforcing or attempting to enforce Senate Bill 5375 against OCA and other Orthodox priests until a final judgment is entered in the case. Absent this Order, Senate Bill 5375 would have gone into effect on July 27, 2025.

The Orthodox Church in America is grateful for the Court's ruling granting this injunction to protect the confidentiality of the Holy Mystery of Confession in the State of Washington. The injunction affirms what Orthodox Christians hold as inviolable: that the seal of confession cannot be broken.

### SOCIALS FOR AUGUST

August 3 – 'O' Club

August 10 - OPEN for now

August 17– Sisterhood

August 24– Pancake and Sausage breakfast

August 31 – OPEN for now

### AUGUST Reader Schedule

August 3– Deacon David Gemmel

August 10– Natalia Simko

August 17– Sub-Deacon Donald Tamulonis

August 24– Reader Matthew Vansuch

August 31– Reader Nick Vansuch

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## PLEASE KEEP OUR ELDERS OF THE CHURCH & SHUT-INS IN YOUR PRAYERS

Send a "Thinking of You" card or remember their Birthday with a card. If anyone needs to be added, please contact Fr. Andrew.

**Mrs. Mary Fredericks**  
648 Dumont Ave  
Campbell, OH 44405

**Matushka Helen Psinka**  
c/o Concordia Villa St. Joseph  
1030 W State Street / Room 1B49  
Baden, Pa, 15005

**Mrs. Dorothy Shirilla**  
8362 Van Dr.  
Poland, OH 44514

**Joan Cross**  
97 Butler Street / Apt 1-rear  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

**Mrs. Audrey Chengelis**  
c/o Assumption Village  
9802 Market Street / Room 132  
North Lima, OH 44452

**Emilia Yannitto**  
8017 Salinas Tr.  
Boardman, OH 44512-5402

**Mrs. Pauline Fesz**  
488 Harmony Lane  
Campbell, OH 44405

**George Horodnic, Sr.**  
c/o The Inn at Walker Mill  
8060 South Ave, Rm 216  
Boardman, OH 44512

**Mrs. Julia Simko**  
c/o Inn At Poland Way  
6501 Poland Way / Rm 122  
Poland OH, 44514

**Carol Ruff**  
2207 Birch Trail Blvd  
Youngstown, OH 44515-4910

**Sue Kennedy**  
593 Hyatt Ave  
Campbell, OH 44405-1479

**Ann Cvercko**  
2769 Donna Dr.  
Upper Arlington, OH 43221

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### Address of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon at the Twenty-First All American Council

**THEME: "Gathered Together By Christ"**

### Primate Address of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon to the Orthodox Church in America Twenty-First All-American Council Phoenix, Arizona July 14, 2025

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On September 16, 1979 a crew of eight men set sail on a three-month expedition which would take them from Saint Malo, a commune in Brittany, on the west coast of France, to the island of South Georgia, a British Overseas territory in the Antarctic region. The French crew was composed of four sailors and four alpine guides, including my paternal uncle, and had set for itself the goal of undertaking a journey by sea and by land, inspired by the expeditions of the early 20th century in the period known as the "Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration." That age is remembered for the exploits of well-known figures such as Ernest Shackleton, who made the first crossing of South Georgia; Roald Amundsen, who was the first to reach to South Pole; and Robert Falcon Scott, who reached the South Pole but, on the return trip, perished of starvation and cold along with his entire crew.

My uncle's expedition had the more modest goal of sailing to South Georgia, crossing the island, and ascending its central peak, Mount Paget, with a

altitude of 9,629 feet. The chronicler of this expedition relates that the inspiration for this voyage was a sense of the fleeting nature of existence, a desire to accomplish something more challenging, and a quest to avoid boredom. Perhaps these, and other factors, have served as the impetus for most human endeavors, heroic or not, throughout history. One may find similar examples of heroic exploration within the Orthodox tradition. Looking to the history of the Orthodox Church in America specifically, we immediately think of the travels by sea and by land undertaken by Saint Herman and his companions.

What is it, one might ask, that distinguishes Saint Herman and his companions from the many notable explorers of the Antarctic or scalars of significant peaks? Saint Herman indeed traveled the length of Siberia, crossed the Bering Strait, and ascended the mountain of Spruce Island, but his goal was not the avoidance of boredom. Rather, given the fleeting nature of our existence in this world, Saint Herman had devoted himself to the life of the world to come. Having reached his earthly destination of Spruce Island, he built there a chapel in which he and others might glorify God through repentance and prayer, through worship and service to others.

Seas and other bodies of water, as well as mountains and hills, figure prominently in the life of our Lord, and in fact throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, it is above all in the mountains that the glory of the Lord is revealed. By making the effort to ascend such heights, the patriarchs and prophets were striving to enter into the glory of the Lord.

Often, when our Lord gathers his disciples, he gathers them in high places, such as Mount Tabor or the Mount of Olives. He also calls to them from the water, as he did when he called to them from a boat "a little ways off from the shore." But whether on land or sea **Con't Next Page**

## AUGUST Candle & Bulletin Sponsors

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**Bulletin:** In memory of Aunt Mary Sveda— Given by Barbara Kolesar / In honor of Michele Basile & Millie Wilfong— Given by Basile family

**Wine: OPEN**

**Incense: OPEN**

**Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light:** In honor of my sister Raissa’s birthday on August 13th.— Given by Tashie Simko

**Altar Candles:** In memory of Michael & Ethel Dudzik- Given by Michael & Lynn Polewan

**Tetrapod Candles: OPEN**

**St. Herman Candles:** Commemorating all who participate in the maintenance of the church, the teachers, singers and those who participate in social events. Praying for everyone to love one another.

**St. Panteleimon Icon Candles: OPEN**

**Protection Icon Candles:** For the health of my husband Gary Thompson on the occasion of his birthday— Given by Patty Thompson

**St. John the Baptist Candles:** For the health of my husband Gary Thompson on the occasion of his birthday— Given by Patty Thompson

<u>\$50 per month</u>	<u>\$30 per month</u>	<u>\$25 per month</u>
*Wine	*St. Herman candles	Incense
*Bulletin	*St. Panteleimon Icon candles	
*Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light	*Protection Icon candles	<b>Flowers - \$50 for 2 weeks at a time— Updated</b>
*Altar Candles	*St. John the Baptist candles	
*Tetrapod Candles		

### *Metro. Address con’t from previous pg*

the Lord was clearly the focal point of the gathering, the center of those gathered in the midst around him.

The appearance of the Lord in these remote and dangerous places, in the heights and hovering over the depths, reminds us of the ascetical effort required to enter into communion with Christ, the one who is revealed on the mountain-top in glory to those who can behold this “as far as they were able.” If the explorers of the past, if that crew of French adventurers, could make an extraordinary effort to cross seas and climb mountains just to stave off ennui, then it should be no surprise that the saints would make greater efforts—not only with their bodies, but with their minds and hearts—in order to behold the face of the living God.

At the last All-American Council, our theme was “Becoming Vessels of Grace,” and I spoke of the Orthodox Church in America’s past, present, and future by using the images of a nautical journey. This is one way of speaking of our collective and individual life as Christians, as the Church. This is a horizontal image, a vision of our progress as a passage from point A to point B.

But today, I would like to speak, not so much in terms of the voyage from Saint Malo to South Georgia, but in terms of the subsequent ascent of Mount Paget. Christ calls us, not just from one place to another, but from the low places to the high places. He has ascended on high and taken captivity captive, and he calls us to follow him to the heights. Just as Moses and Elijah encountered the Lord in high places, so he gathers us in an upper room in order to leave behind worldly things and encounter the Most High God.

The axis here is not horizontal, but vertical. The movement is not a passage through time, but an ascent beyond the constraints of time and space. In this address, I would like to reflect on the past, present, and future of our Orthodox Church in America, but I would like to do so with this vertical axis always in mind. I would like to consider our Church, not just in historical terms, but in transhistorical and superhistorical terms. To use an image common to the ancient Western Fathers of the Church, we are pilgrims in time, but, as our holy Eastern Tradition constantly reminds us, to be in the Church is also already to be outside of time. As we sing on September 13, the feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of the Resurrection, “The Church is shown to be a heaven filled with light, enlightening all the faithful.”

First, then, I would like to consider the legacy of the Orthodox Church in America—our heritage and our accomplishments in the 55 years since receiving the Tomos of our autocephaly.

Certainly, a major part of our legacy is liturgical. The Orthodox Church in America has been at the forefront of the revival of the practice of frequent communion, which is now once again commonplace throughout the Orthodox world. This is rightly celebrated; the faithful should be encouraged “in the fear of God, with faith and love [to] draw near” and to “taste the Fountain of immortality.” The Divine Liturgy is the summit of our existence; it is the place where, laying aside all earthly cares, we receive the pre-eternal God into our very bodies, souls, and hearts.

Frequent approach to the holy chalice can come with temptations, however: we can grow casual, lukewarm, entitled, and thoughtless. Without **Con’t Next Pg**

## PRAYER LIST

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**FAMILY & FRIENDS:** Mary Ann Bozichovich (Kennedy) / Diane Caban (Sirilla) / George Caban (Sirilla) / Donna Chiarelli / Karen Debiec / Basil Glovinsky (Fr.) / Bruce Harris (Sabol) / Paula Kennedy / Joe Kollar (Fr.) / Pauline Meath (Fr.) / Matushka Raisa (Nicoloff) / Chris Quotap (Fr.) / Bob Smrek (Sirilla) / Emilia Yanitto / Catherine Zile (Fr.) / David (Willison) / Drew (Willison) / Eleanor Marie (Vansuch) / Katherine (Steffaro) / Richard (Tusinac)

**MILITARY FAMILY & FRIENDS:** Cory Deaton (Fr.) / Alena Grabavoy (Fr.) / Liam Garrity (Zelinsky)

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Metropolitan Paul (Orthodox Diocese of Aleppo) & Archbishop John (Archdiocese of Aleppo) still being held captive & Metropolitan Arseny imprisoned / The UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers around the world / Those suffering persecution in Syria, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and around the world.

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### *Metro. Address con't from previous pg*

frequent confession and repentance, without awe, without care, the Body and Blood of Christ, a divine Fire that warms and enlightens, instead can become a dread Fire that consumes the heedless. Communion of the holy Mysteries should raise the mind on high; if we commune thoughtlessly and as a matter of habit, however, we will remain earthbound.

I quote the words of the holy bishop Seraphim of Dmitrov, martyred by the Soviet regime in 1937: "The whole meaning of this earthly life is found in nothing other than in continual preparation for the reception of the holy Mysteries of Christ: in prayerful struggle, abstinence, and pure-hearted repentance. The whole meaning of a Christian's life is contained in this preparation for the holy Mysteries, and in the very communion of the holy and life-giving Mysteries of Christ. A Christian ought to commune as often as possible." Our life's meaning is found in communion itself and in preparation for communion; frequent communion should never be divorced from constant preparation.

In this regard, it is helpful to remember the long-standing guidance of the Holy Synod of Bishops on the subject of confession and communion, issued fifty years ago: if a person communes most every Sunday, he ought to make his sacramental confession at least once per month. The transformative power of communion is not magical. Though we are never worthy of holy communion, if we do not at least make an effort to prepare ourselves, the Mysteries become a source, not of healing, but of spiritual danger.

Another element of our legacy is the adoption of English for liturgical use. Though this is now widespread among the so-called jurisdictions, the Orthodox liturgical use was pioneered by the Orthodox Church in America (and by the Metropolia prior to autocephaly)

and it is in our Church that the use of English is most widespread.

The use of English in most of our communities is perhaps the clearest expression of our identity as the local autocephalous Church on this continent. In our tradition, liturgical translation is the cornerstone of missionary activity, as we see in the Lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. Stephen of Perm, and St. Nikolai of Japan.

However, though the missionary value of English is clear, and though its liturgical dignity, at least in potential, is undeniable, this focus on the English language also has drawbacks. We are a young Church, with much to learn from our older sisters, but relatively few of our clergy, at least outside of our non-territorial dioceses, have fluency in either the liturgical or vernacular languages of the other Orthodox Churches. This can further isolation, eccentricity, and ignorance.

Furthermore, many liturgical materials await translation into English, especially in conformity to the use of the Orthodox Church in America; at the very least, many texts are poorly disseminated. Hence, because we have lost the ability, in most of the communities of our territorial dioceses, to make even partial or occasional use of liturgical languages other than English, this incompleteness means that our liturgical life remains impoverished.

The haphazard process of implementing English in the liturgy has moreover led to a plurality of translations unknown in any other Orthodox Church; the idea that a parish priest might employ his own version of a liturgical text is a phenomenon unique to Anglophone Orthodoxy. Though unity does not mean uniformity, the lack of uniformity in this area does not accord with the tradition that we received and with the tradition and life of our sister Churches. *Coon't pg 7*

## AUGUST Reposed List

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Sophie Kotanchik (1964)  
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5- Elias Lisko (1925) ©  
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### Metropolitan Tikhon Announces Recognition of Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric at AAC

Meeting in special session on May 21, 2025, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America decided, effective immediately, to recognize the canonicity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric and to affirm our full communion with its hierarchs, clergy, and faithful. This joyful news was conveyed to the Church at large by His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon in his July 15, 2025 report to the 21st All-American Council, which meets this week in Phoenix, AZ.

This decision came at the request of His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia, who, in official correspondence with His Beatitude, asked that the Orthodox Church in America, in accordance with the Tomos granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church, recognize the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric.

The offices of Metropolitan Tikhon and His Beatitude Archbishop Stefan of Ohrid are currently planning a concelebration between the two Primates, to take place at Metropolitan Tikhon's cathedral of Saint Nicholas in Washington, D.C. This concelebration, as Metropolitan Tikhon informed the All-American Council, will be crowned with a formal recognition of the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which takes its place alongside the Orthodox Church in America as a fully autocephalous local Orthodox Church.

**August Celebrations**

**Birthday**

- 1 Heidi Kuzemchak
- 4 Meiriam Dardovski / Sonja Harvischak
- 5 Linda Livosky
- 7 William Sabo
- 9 Elaine Basala
- 12 Layne Demkosky / Reader Nick Vansuch / Ethan Donofrio / Sue Tamulonis
- 13 Frank Batura, Jr. / Ed Kusinski
- 14 Eli Arvan / Katie (Zelinsky)
- 15 Anthony Cavaliere
- 16 Anthony Jesko, Jr.
- 17 Lauren Koval
- 27 Michael Centofanti
- 29 Archbishop Michael / Gary Thompson Sr
- 31 Sharon LaVallee / Melanie Rusnak

**Anniversary**

- 7 Stephen & Karen Simko (02) / Dennis & Pamela Tubic
- 10 Fr. John's Ordination (68)
- 18 Nicola & Shelly Nicoloff (96) / Philip & Trudy Ellmore
- 21 Fr. Gregory & Matushka Xenia Burner / Dc. David & Mat. Gemmel (88)
- 27 Fr. Michael & Presbyteria Jessica Ellis
- 28 Fr. Eli Bremer Priestly ordination / Joe & Georgiana Lukehart
- 29 Zoland & Claudia Zile
- 30 Fr. Peter & Pani Bernadette Zarynow

**Names Day**

- 15 Sonja Harvischak / Sophia Jesko
- 23 AB Irene of Ottawa & the Archdiocese of Canada
- 26 Natalia Simko
- 30 AB Alexander of Dallas, the South & Bulgarian Dio-

<b>ATTENDANCE: A Comparison - JULY</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>1st Week</b>		
Vespers	No Vespers	5
Liturgy	60 / 34	58 / 30
<b>2nd Week</b>		
Vespers	No Vespers	No Vespers
Liturgy	70 / 43	59 / 29
<b>3rd Week</b>		
Vespers	No Vespers	No Vespers
Liturgy	57 / 38	38 / 30
<b>4th Week</b>		
Vespers	No Vespers	No Vespers
Liturgy	Deacon service 29	45 / 30
<b>5th Week</b>		
Vespers Divine Liturgy	NO 5th WEEK	NO 5th WEEK



***Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos***

**Met. Tikhon Issues Statement on Devastating Flooding in Texas**

On Sunday, July 6, 2025, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon issued the following statement concerning the devastating flooding in central Texas:

“I am deeply saddened to hear of the terrible flooding in central Texas along the Guadalupe River, along with the great loss of life. At this time, with many still missing, I urge the clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America to pray for the efforts of first responders and all involved in search efforts. I also pray that the Lord would extend his great comfort to all those who have suffered loss of loved ones or friends due to this disaster, or who were harmed by these floods in any way. In accordance with the apostolic command to ‘Weep with those who weep’ (Rom. 12:15), I, together with all the clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, join with those affected by this flooding, and indeed with all the people of the United States, in mourning this tragedy. Finally, as rain storms continue to threaten the affected areas of the Guadalupe Basin, let us beseech the Lord that ‘he will remember the covenant he made with Noah and not destroy us with grievous wetness and the stormy breath of winds’ (Book of Needs), but instead reveal his great mercy by sending fair weather together with gentle showers in their season. To all those assisting the victims of this flood, may God grant his protection and blessing, and many years. To all those who have suffered because of this disaster, may God show his comfort and mercy. To all those who lost loved one and friends in this tragedy, may God reveal his compassion and love.”

### *Metro. Address con't from pg 4*

Finally, our rapid transition to English has meant a rapid obscuring of our heritage. In particular, the Church Slavonic and East Slavic heritage common to the territorial dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America is not merely a matter of now-fading ethnic identity; it is something sacred. Until 1970, our Church was part of the Russian Orthodox Church. This means that the saints and traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church belong to us, too, regardless of our own ethnic background. The rapid loss of Church Slavonic and our sense of connection to East Slavic Orthodoxy has weakened our connection to the great cloud of witnesses who went before us, who suffered and labored for the Faith over the course of centuries so that it could eventually be brought to North America and proclaimed in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. We must never be tempted to Protestantize our history, leaping from the apostolic era to autocephaly.

I acknowledge, and indeed emphasize, that this is not just true of our Russian Orthodox heritage; the same applies to the heritage of our non-territorial, so-called ethnic dioceses. Moreover, what I have said here concerning English equally applies to the other North American languages and language communities, notably Spanish and the Hispanophone community as well as French and the Francophone community.

Again, however, this is not merely a matter of historical understanding; there is a vertical element. A consciousness of our heritage helps connect us with the Church Triumphant. In the case of our territorial dioceses especially, this consciousness of our Church Slavonic, East Slavic, and Russian Orthodox heritage helps connect us to the many saints of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Carpatho-Rus who belong very much to us as well. In the Orthodox tradition properly understood, identity does not divide us, but unites us; it is a bridge from our individual circumstances to the eternal and universal.

In this respect, I would quote a passage from St. Paul, one which I cited during the canonization celebration for St. Olga in Anchorage. St. Paul, writing against divisions in the Church at Corinth, says: “For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” We do not want to become attached to elements of our heritage as a divisive, partisan matter. Neither, however, do we wish to deny that which belongs to us, both historically and eschatologically.

Much more could be said about the legacy of the Orthodox Church in America: liturgical, missionary, theological, and more. But the few matters I have discussed here serve to communicate my larger point: past achievements, if they matter, matter insofar as they raise us heavenward. History presents ambiguities; indeed, as we shall discuss, so do the present and future.

However, in Christ, through asceticism and prayer, we are offered a way to transcend this sin-made earthly mess. In God is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning”; in him who is Light, there is no darkness at all; he is infinite yet simple and without contradiction. An earthly legacy necessarily carries uncertainty and question marks; but we strive toward the judgment of God, by which all questions are resolved and in which ultimate meaning is found.

We do this, however, by navigating the twists and turns of earthly existence; for now, we live in a world of becoming, not of being. So I turn again to our pilgrimage through time, and to our present circumstances.

In preparation for this present council, I issued a call for reflections. This call invited all the faithful, as concrete local communities—missions, parishes, and institutions—to reflect on the current moment in the life of our Church. The fruit of this invitation was a white paper formulated by an ad hoc committee appointed by me to analyze the responses. In addition to reviewing this report, I also took the time to review a number of these responses individually. Subsequently, the committee’s findings were offered up to the whole church in the form of an abbreviated report.

I will not address every element of these findings. I would, however, like to speak about one of the most ubiquitous responses. Many respondents reported a spike in interest in Orthodox Christianity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This seems to be a cause for both joy and concern on the part of many. We are always happy to see our churches grow. But this new wave of inquirers and converts, according to many, have brought on us a host of accompanying challenges.

Logistically, many of our facilities are being stretched to capacity. In an era of soaring real estate prices, it is often no simple matter for rapidly growing missions to scale up. Likewise, even as some speak of a supposed “clergy shortage,” our clergy are being asked to provide pastoral care for larger and larger congregations.

More challenging, perhaps, are the new dynamics behind this wave of interest in our Church. On the one hand, younger generations of North Americans are dealing with a new longing for belonging and identity. In the past, Old World ethnic identities undergirded many communities, but even the memory of ethnic identity is non-existent for large swaths of the population. Moreover, to speak from a United-States-based perspective, emergent “American” identity may have possessed more positive content in past decades; now, our national character seems more contested than ever—at least, more contested than any time since the Civil War—with definite alienating effects, regardless of one’s political proclivities. As a result of these factors, many young people feel totally unmoored from a much-needed sense of communal identity and belonging.

When these young people come to the Church, they bring along social and cultural needs together with the desire for everlasting salvation in Christ. This can be **Con’t next Pg**

### ***Metro. Address con't previous pg***

confusing for an older generation of Orthodox Christians who strove to strip away ethnic and cultural elements from our communities, viewing these as an obstacle to evangelism. In past decades, we would speak of the need to reach “the culture”; now, many young people do not feel themselves part of any culture at all, and in the Church, they are seeking what they miss.

A further challenge, according to many respondents, stems from the formation that new inquirers and converts find online, even before they set foot in the doors of a Church. According to respondents, many inquirers bring a host of preconceptions and misconceptions that priests and others involved in formation struggle to dispel. Gone are the days of a new arrival having read a few books or even viewed some forum posts or listened to a few podcasts; now, a first-time visitor may have consumed a great many hours of so-called content from one or more Orthodox Christian personalities online.

Though these circumstances are indeed challenging, I would once again like to suggest that there are further complications. The longing for identity is not intrinsically linked to the search for salvation, and certainly it comes with pitfalls. But at the very least, this longing can be a step in the right direction, a step toward a true longing for Christ. St. John Climacus says that we can play the passions against each other—using vanity to defeat other, more public sins, for example—and so it hardly seems impossible to use lesser longings as a step toward higher things.

Moreover, we often speak of the “incarnational” character of Orthodox Christianity, and this means that, normally, for most of our history, in most places and times, Orthodoxy is very much infused into culture. If we can provide new converts with a sense of social and cultural belonging, this may very well enrich and ground their faith now and provide for a deeper, more organic experience of Orthodoxy for generations to come. The disintegration of old ethnic communities and the failure of the monolithic mass culture to satisfy are an opportunity to reintegrate our heritage and build new social and cultural forms, not as ends in and of themselves, but as supports for the salvific mission of the Church. Many twentieth-century theologians recoiled at the term “religion.” But the word “religion” is often understood to come from the Latin root meaning “tie,” and there is nothing wrong with ties that bind, provided, of course, they bind us to one another in the shared mission of the Gospel and the shared pursuit of the kingdom of heaven, and not tie us down to this earth.

Likewise, when we encounter newcomers who bring in a host of preconceptions, we would do well to seek to form them without becoming prey to our preconceptions about Orthodox Christianity. Undoubtedly, some new arrivals may indeed bring truly harmful misconceptions; undoubtedly, many self-appointed authorities on the internet present dangerously imbalanced perspectives.

But our focus, in catechesis, mystagogy, and all kinds of formation must be on Christ, not on our own brand of Orthodox Christianity.

Again, I return to that vertical axis, that ascent: the goal of formation isn't to make Christians that conform to our ideas, but rather to help those for whom we care to ascend to Christ.

All of which is to say, it is easy to look at our present moment and present challenges and view our problems solely through a worldly lens. But this ultimately results in absurdity. If we do not place Christ and his kingdom at the center of our endeavor, our pursuit of other particular ends is meaningless. Whether the challenge be the price of land or the number of clergy, the longing for identity or the formation of catechumens, our focus must always be Jesus Christ: his glory, his adoration. We must avoid the temptation to get bogged down in the journey from one point to another; we must always bear in mind the call to ascend.

This remains true as we turn from the present to the future. In preparing these remarks, I wrote down a lengthy list of those challenges that lie on the horizon. I will not rehearse them here, however. Much more important than addressing particular “issues” is remembrance of the one thing needful. Whatever the issue at hand is, our question should always be: how can I be saved? What does this have to do with my salvation?

In this regard, I think of that quotation from Archimandrite Zacharias of Essex, one many of us have seen on our wall calendars this month: “Just as people in the world are immersed night and day in the cares of life, so too are the workers of godliness consumed by one: ‘What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’”

Even when it comes to issues and controversies within the Church—perhaps especially when it comes to issues and controversies within the Church—we are often tempted to introduce other criteria. But really, our goal is single: the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, our criterion is one: how shall we inherit that kingdom? In other words, what does this Or that matter have to do with my salvation?

When we ask that question, we find that so many issues become clear, and perhaps even more of them simply die away. “Let the dead bury their own dead,” says the Lord; let others concern themselves with trivial issues. As for us, we are called to ascend, to leave behind the snares of the fowler and to soar aloft with the spiritual eagles.

Yes, it is true: we always ascend from somewhere. We begin in time, in history, in between past and future. Yet the goal of the ascent is the endless present of the one named I AM.

But how do we ascend to Christ? We must first descend into the deep heart by persevering in humble, patient, quiet, consistent prayer. We cannot ***Con't Next Pg***

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catechize those who are searching if we ourselves are not likewise searching; we cannot feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, if we are not longing for our Lord – the one whose divine image is reflected in their human persons; we cannot point those broken in heart or broken in mind to genuine healing if we ourselves are not seeking that very healing; we cannot proclaim the Gospel with boldness, or offer the liturgy with purity, or provide the holy mysteries with integrity, if our own hearts are not drawing closer to the source.

Our goal is not to draw God down to ourselves but rather to lift up our mind and our spirit in order to present it before God in what Archimandrite Zacharias calls “an uprush towards heaven.”

And so, in conclusion, I return to those eight Frenchmen and their voyage to the summit of Mount Paget. As I mentioned, their reason for this journey was to escape boredom, the tedium of existence. In this age of constant content and entertainment, this may seem strange: why would you go to an isolated mountain peak to escape boredom?

But then we realize, though the color and clamor of the world may present itself to us as a source of fulfillment, ultimately this parade of noise and opinion and appearances is boredom itself. All of these lie at the base of the mountain. If we wish to go on a real adventure, if we want to breathe reality, if we want to encounter true joy and excitement, the journey is not outside, but within. It takes place in silence and struggle; it is not escapism, but true liberation.

The resolution to our finitude is indeed the ascent of a mountain, a mountain which is both Golgotha and Tabor: the place where we encounter the one who is crucified and risen, slain and ever-shining. It is he who has gathered us together in his Name, and it is he who is the One Thing Needful: the Word uttered in the silence of the Father, who is carried to us, not in the thunder of opinion or the whirlwind of busy-ness, but on a still, small voice.

Let us strive to hear that still, small voice, to keep our eyes on the things above, and to ascend together to the kingdom of Christ.

To him, our true Lord and God and Savior, be all adoration, together with his Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon Opens 21st All-American Council, Phoenix, AZ**

On July 14, 2025, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon opened the 21st All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America in Phoenix, AZ. This is the first time the Council has been held in the American Southwest.

The first Plenary Session began with a formal greeting of His Beatitude by his Chancery staff. Following the Mollen for the Opening of a Sacred Council, Call to Order, and welcoming remarks, His Beatitude delivered his opening address.

Speaking on the theme of the Council, “Gathered Together by Christ,” His Beatitude began his address reflecting on the idea of exploration within the Orthodox tradition by recounting the story of a 1979 expedition to the Antarctic island of South Georgia, a journey undertaken by His Beatitude’s uncle and a group of French adventurers. He then turned to the life of St. Herman of Alaska, whose own journey was not fueled by a longing for adventure but by a longing for the Kingdom of God.

Throughout the address, His Beatitude emphasized that the Church’s life is not merely a passage through time, but an upward calling in Christ. He noted, “Just as Moses and Elijah encountered the Lord in high places, so he gathers us in an upper room in order to leave behind worldly things and encounter the Most High God.” Whether considering the Church’s liturgical legacy, its use of English, or the varied challenges facing her, he urged the Church to see each issue in light of the gospel.

His Beatitude spoke on the 2025 Call to Reflection and the growing interest in Orthodoxy across North America, especially in the wake of the pandemic. While acknowledging the strain on resources and challenges regarding formation, he urged the Church to view these challenges as part of shared pursuit of the kingdom of heaven. Said His Beatitude, “We must avoid the temptation to get bogged down in the journey from one point to another; we must always bear in mind the call to ascend.”

In his conclusion, His Beatitude exhorted the clergy and faithful to resist looking at the challenges of our present circumstances through a worldly lens but instead to look inside of ourselves. “If we want to encounter true joy and excitement, the journey is not outside, but within. It takes place in silence and struggle... The resolution to our finitude is indeed the ascent of a mountain, a mountain which is both Golgotha and Tabor.”

### **Many Years to His Beatitude, Celebrating his 59th Birthday!**

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon celebrates his 59th birthday on July 15th. The Holy Synod of Bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America wish His Beatitude many more blessed years!

Eis polla eti, despota!

## Venerable Isaac the Ascetic of the Dalmatian Monastery at Constantinople Commemorated on August 3

Saint Isaac (May 30) was a soldier before he became a monk. After he was tonsured, he attained such a degree of spiritual perfection that he was accounted worthy of beholding divine visions.

When Saint Isaac heard about how the Emperor Valens had fallen into the Arian heresy and was persecuting the Orthodox Christians, he left his monastery and traveled to Constantinople to confront the emperor. At that time Valens was planning a campaign against the Goths. Saint Isaac tried to change the emperor's mind several times, but was unable to convince him. He prophesied that Valens would die in flames because of his actions. The emperor ordered that Saint Isaac be thrown into prison, and promised to deal with him when he returned from his expedition. On August 9, 378 Valens was defeated at Adrianople and died in a fire after hiding in a barn, just as the saint had predicted.

Emperor Theodosius the Great, who had a great love for the saint, released him from prison and banned Arianism. Saint Isaac attended the Second Ecumenical Council (381), where he defended the Orthodox Faith against the Arian heresy.

Saint Isaac hoped to return to his monastic life in the wilderness, but a wealthy man built a monastery for him at Constantinople, and he became its first igumen. The monastery was later named for his disciple Dalmatus.

When Saint Isaac was approaching the end of his earthly life, he named Saint Dalmatus to succeed him as igumen. He lived to a ripe old age and reposed in the year 383.

### JULY FINAL FINANCIALS

Expenses	\$17,988.59
Income	\$13,554.55
<b>TOTAL</b>	
Weekly Tithe	\$9,082.70
Weekly Candles	\$598.00
Altar Candles	\$100.00
Tetrapod Candles	\$50.00
Icon Screen / Eternal Light Candles	\$50.00
Incense	\$50.00
Bulletin	\$150.00
Wine	\$50.00
Strawberry Festival	\$161.00
Unneeded Gifts	\$170.00
Cemetery Reimbursement	\$2,571.13
Donations Scooter Refund	\$80.00
Workman's Comp Refund	\$96.96
Parish Hall Rental	\$344.51
Monthly Charity: St. Vladimir's Seminary	\$458.00

## Matthew 14:14-22 (Gospel)

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

## 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (Epistle)

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.<sup>8</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

## NEXT WEEK'S BULLETIN

Next week I will continue to publish what occurred at the All-American Council. Father Andrew

## AUGUST CHARITY

Orthodox School in Warren



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