

ΙΕΡΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΜΑΡΙΑΣ ΜΑΓΔΑΛΗΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΚΕΛΛΗΣ

STS. MARY MAGDALENE & MARKELLA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2020 JUNE NEWSLETTER



3714-16 Dublin Road, Darlington, MD 21034

PRESIDING PRIEST

THE REV. FR. ELEFTERIOS PLEVRAKIS

Office: 410-457-0303

Email: frelefterios@gmail.com

Website: stsmm.org

OFFICE HOURS

TUESDAY - FRIDAY

10:00 A.M. - 2:45 P.M.

QUESTIONS? CALL OR VISIT US

(FOR OFFICE VISITS PLEASE CALL IN ADVANCE)



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Pentecost 2020

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Sisterhood, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Communities of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

"When the Most High God came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations. When He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity. And with one voice we glorify the all-Holy Spirit."

My Beloved in the Lord,

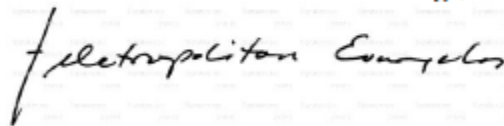
Having recently celebrated the conclusion of the Paschal feast as well as the feast of the Ascension in which our Lord promises to send us a Comforter, we find ourselves at the great feast of Pentecost. Fifty days after our Lord's Resurrection, God manifests His love for us and for all people by sending down upon us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Today, we bear witness to the revelation of the Church in time and it is with the gift of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to continue Christ's earthly ministry as the One and undivided Body of Christ. We are given the commandment to *"Go forth, therefore, and to make disciples of all nations"* (Matt. 28:19) as an indication that the gift of salvation, which has already been extended to us, is to be shared with all people regardless of their race, age, background, nationality, or socio-economic status.

The command to *"Go forth"* is all the more precious to us this year as we continue to contend with the devastation of the Coronavirus Pandemic. By the Grace of God, some of our Ecclesiastical Communities have been able to open their doors to their parishioners. Like the Apostles 2,000 years ago who were *"together in one place"* (Acts 2:1), some devout faithful now have the opportunity to gather in one place as they prepare for the Holy Spirit to descend upon them.

Still, many other Communities have not yet been able to gather together within their Parish Communities. Yet, even in these circumstances, we are not separated from the Holy Spirit since the Holy Spirit is "everywhere present and fills all things." Neither are we separated from one another since through our common prayer we are spiritually united. Through our common goal as Orthodox Christians to fulfill the calling of our Lord when He commanded us to go forth and make disciples of all nations, we bridge the chasm of division and the Holy Spirit forges within our hearts, mind, and souls the spirit of unity. It is this spiritual unity created by the Holy Spirit amongst the members of the Body of Christ that has enabled the devout faithful to continue our Lord's ministry throughout the centuries. For it was the Holy Spirit that enabled the disciples to go forth and begin their apostolic mission. It is the Holy Spirit that guided the Fathers of the Church in ensuring the orthodoxy of our doctrine. It is the Holy Spirit that directed the saints over the centuries to pour down upon us their knowledge through their actions, their writings, and their lives so that we may partake of their wisdom. It is the Holy Spirit which accompanies each of us in our baptism as we shed the old self and we put on Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that at every Divine Liturgy consecrates our offering of bread and wine so that it may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

It is with these thoughts, my beloved in the Lord, that I implore you to go forth to all the nations by living a Christ-like life and being a witness to our Orthodox faith. Thus, we will be able to make disciples of all nations and the Holy Spirit will allow us to transcend the bounds of divided nations, transforming us into a united community of devout faithful in Christ. Praying that the Holy Spirit guides you to the ineffable glory of our Lord, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Metropolitan EvangeLOS". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

May 19, 2020

To the
Devout Orthodox Christians of the Parish Communities of the
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!

I pray this letter finds you all well and in good health as our Holy Orthodox Church, our Metropolis, our Ecclesiastical Communities, and our nation continue to confront the challenging effects of COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

The past couple months have been particularly challenging for all people as the devastating effects of the Coronavirus have permeated all facets of society. Nevertheless, there have been noticeable improvements to the present situation which has made it possible for some states and communities to recommence in-person gatherings, albeit, in a limited capacity. As such, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey has been developing a Parish Reopening Strategy so that Parishes and parishioners alike may adequately prepare once the Parishes are permitted to once again open their doors to the devout faithful. A critical element of this strategy centers around the parishioners of each community complying with a series of requirements which conform to State and Local regulations, CDC guidance, and additional Metropolis of New Jersey directives/requirements. A list of these requirements are as follows:

- Parishioners must register their attendance with their full names and contact information. Your Parish Priest will notify you of the registration process and platform which the Parish will use.
- Parishioners must screen themselves prior to coming to church including a temperature check even if they have not experienced any symptoms of COVID-19. If they have any symptoms, they are not to attend Church.
- Parishioners shall not come to the Church by a ride share (Uber, Lyft), taxi, or by means of public transportation. It is strongly recommended that Parishioners arrive in their own vehicle or arrange for another parishioner to transport them.

- Parishioners must sanitize their hands upon entering the Church.
- Parishioners must wear protective masks throughout the Services.
- Parishioners must adhere to the social distancing guidelines of keeping a six foot distance from other parishioners at all times in the pews and throughout the Church. The only exception being for families that have quarantined together, as they will be able to sit together in a designated section of the Church.
- Parishioners are not to wander in the Church, in the Parish facilities, or outside on the parish grounds.
- Small children shall not be allowed to roam the aisles.
- Only one parishioner will be allowed in the restroom at a time. Parishioners must thoroughly wash their hands after using the restroom.
- Parishioners must leave the Church premises, including the parking lot and exterior grounds, upon conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, all the while maintaining social distancing standards.
- If after attending any service a parishioner experiences symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19, in addition to immediately contacting their medical provider, they must contact the Church office to inform the parish of the date that they attended service.

These measures will help to ensure that all of our Clergy and devout faithful remain as safe as possible during these turbulent times as we start to reopen our Ecclesiastical Communities for the Divine Services. It is my sincerest prayer that as we move forward, we do so safely and with thoughtfulness for our own health and for the health and safety of those around us. Praying that our loving Lord, who is the Physician of our souls and bodies, continues to guard and guide each of you and your families, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings in the Risen Lord,



† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey

LETTER FROM THE PRIEST

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I hope and pray that you are all doing well. I am extremely happy to announce to all of you that our beautiful parish is finally opening up to the faithful. No more is the Grand Banquet, the Body of Christ, going to be restricted from its guests. It is sad to know that in our lifetime we experienced something that no other person ever experienced in history. Even during wars, battles, pandemics, famine, total persecution from local governments or even foreign invaders was communion voluntarily withheld from its flock. People have traveled through mountains and deserts risking death from the climate and lack of food and drink to get to the Holy Altar. All we need to do is pick up books and manuscripts of the lives of the Saints to see that we are not meant to run away from the Live-Giving Font, but rather go to it with a desire to be healed, knowing that without it there is no life.

Thankfully, we are now seeing the light. We have realized that while we might be in the world, our Church is not part of the world. And we know this by simply listening to what many people outside of the walls of the Church say about Holy Communion. While we Orthodox believe that the Holy Chalice, with the Body and Blood of Christ, is the Life-Giving Font that gives people eternal salvation, many non-believers see the Holy Chalice being nothing more than a bath for bacteria and virus to swim in. This is the dichotomy that exists in our world today. Actually, this thinking has been around since the beginning of time, when man decided to turn his back to God and see himself as autonomous. This is the point in which the infection of death took over our worldly reality. It clouded our senses and made the world our punching bag. Whatever we hold inside we take it out on the very same thing we depend on. That also goes for God. We need Him for our existence, but yet we crucify Him. Even worse, we turn His creation, humanity, against Him. This is a scary thing. What we see through our T.Vs is not a cry for respect, but man's continuous force to beat down its environment. Again, it has been going on forever.

Well, God has once again provided! The children of God are now able to return to their Creator. The Holy Chalice is waiting for all of us to come off the streets and to seek true justice, true life, and true salvation found in the Holy Sacrament. It is in this point in which the fallen meets perfection. It is this point which the forces that act against us are no more. It is the bosom of God. We are returning like the Prodigal Son to the Father. If Cain allowed the Chalice to come in-between him and his brother, he would not have killed him. It has been proven over and over again that the moment you take away the physical body of God from our lives, we turn into soldiers of the devil. For this reason, our return to the Church and allowing the faithful to come in is not a right that is given to us by worldly authorities, but a gift from above that is only meant to save us from ourselves and the fallen world.

This Sunday, June 7th is the celebration of the Feast Day of Holy Pentecost. It is the day when we celebrate the establishment of the Church. It is the moment in history that God sent the Holy Spirit to enlighten His followers so they may get the strength to teach and to continue to establish God's physical presence through the life of the Church. On this special day, we will open so the faithful can celebrate once again the pursuit towards eternal life in God.

Much has been experienced throughout this time, and I know that all of us will reflect on it for many months and years to come, but I have made it a priority in the opening of the Church that we will not make our misfortunes a banner that we must bow down to. I will wake up every morning with the drive to remind myself and my flock that we have God in our lives, and that our amazing parish will be a bright star within the

constellation of believers. We will be a thorn in the side of the devil. Our parish will not feed into the narrative that we need a new beginning to find normalcy, but rather we need our Tradition to save us. We will not forget the Saints of our Church, but we will venerate them as doctors and healers. We will not see our mysteries as non-essential, but MOST-ESSENTIAL. Lastly, we will not be just believers in Christ, but followers of Christ. The baptismal waters of the Jordan will continue to wash away our sins and bring the image of God in us to the surface. Our Parish will come back stronger, knowing now what enemy lurks around.

With these words I want to motive, educate, and with enthusiasm invite all of you to our Parish, to Your Parish. Let us come together to celebrate the Birthday of the Church. I want all of you to come out of your homes and fill the home of God. He is inviting us to the Grand Banquet. Dress up and Show Up!

Things will be a little different as we transition, but it is nothing that can prevent us from the Mysteries of the Church. There are some guidelines that are in place for safety reasons, but we will make it as smooth as we can. I am sending via email the instructions, as well as posting it on our website. The one thing I will highlight here is that all the faithful will be invited to come to the services using an electronic invitation in order for us to best manage the amount of people that will sit in the church. We are only allowed 40% of our total occupancy. Stewards of the church will be given priority with the opportunity for others to come if there are vacancies. More information will be sent out to everyone. I only ask that you all have patience and understanding as we try to implement these new protocols. Keep in mind that we are set up to be a church, not a biology or chemistry laboratory. We will do our best!

I would like to finish off by thanking everyone that continued to support our church with their prayers and their financial contributions. And yes, we did need both! The Ladies of Philoptochos continued to help the local community, including Upper Chesapeake Hospital, by providing lunches. I also want to give the utmost gratitude towards our Spiritual Father, His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos, for his blessed administrative and pastoral guidance. Many blessed years to him! We will continue to pray for our government officials, church officials, Parish Council members, church ministry teachers and directors, doctors, the sick, as well as the healthy. May God give our church many years of work so we may offer to Him the fruits of our labor. God bless!

In Christ,

Father Elefterios

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

To All the Faithful of our Parish,

I hope that through this pandemic, we have realized that our lives actually matter. It is not something we should take for granted. I am sure we could not have imagined that our lives would be affected this much. However, I hope we have learned from this time that our lives have changed, but that our friendships and family relationships have been strengthened. We should look back at this challenging time to thank God for our health but also for how much we value our lives and of the lives of those around us. In the absence of physically being at church services, our church has not been absent from our lives. Through the online streaming we were able to at least stay connected and know that our prayers were being lifted up together.

On behalf of the Parish Council, we are very excited to welcome back all the faithful into the church and we can't wait to see everyone again to be in our church together. Even though there will be some differences and guidelines that we will need to follow, we want to reassure everyone that we will work hard together and help everyone to stay safe and healthy. It will be an adjustment in the beginning as we learn and get into a rhythm of the changes, but I am confident that we will be fine, as we are mindful of being patient and taking care of one another.

Last but not least, we would like to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts for all your donations, stewardship commitments and in general the help you offered our church through this challenging time. Together we can and must support the House of our Lord! Everything we can do will be a great help. Remember, our church relies on our support and assistance.

I wish you all health, and look forward to welcoming everyone to the House of our Lord!

With love in Christ,

Fotini Kaminaris- President

OUR BEAUTIFUL PARISH IS REOPENING



We are extremely happy to announce that our beautiful parish is reopening this coming **Sunday, June 7th**. There couldn't be a more perfect day to open then on the blessed day of Holy Pentecost.

We have been away from each other for a little while, but these three months have nothing on the 2000 years of Orthodox Tradition which is filled with the miracles of the saints and the spiritual efforts of all the faithful. We are coming back not weak and seeking a "new normal" as some say, but rather, prayerfully, we will reconnect with the same unbroken and unchanging faith found in Orthodoxy.

In this newsletter and upcoming emails, we will communicate all the different guidelines and instructions that are being put into place. We only ask that you read them carefully and thoroughly.

REOPENING GUIDELINES

We are very happy that we are opening our parish and getting back to our normal life. We have been praying for the day in which we can all get back together again where we do not see ourselves through a superficial and lifeless screen, but to experience the Holy Spirit in its reality, all of us coming together as one physical body with all of its parts working together, to walk through the gates of Paradise.

In this letter I will provide all the necessary guidelines that you should be aware of before, during, and after the Divine Liturgy. Please follow them to the best of your ability and we will be there to guide each other through this time.

- First and foremost, we will be sending an electronic invitation to all the faithful in order for them to reserve a spot for each service. Because we are restricted to 55 people in the Nave, we will need each person to first RSVP before coming to the property. Stewards of the church have priority, but we will fill up the remaining spots by reaching out to a larger group of faithful via Facebook. Stewards will have until Saturday 5:00 p.m. to RSVP. If there are any spots available, Father will send a message out via Facebook for the larger groups of people to respond. This second group will have until 8:00 p.m. to RSVP. For those that do not have internet, we will reach out to them via telephone. Remember, you cannot come to the services if you have not RSVP'D and received a response from Father.
- On the day of the service, please make sure you take your temperature and take a moment to think whether you have been traveling outside of the country or have been in contact with anyone recently that was sick. If you have a fever (>100.4 F) and/or have been in contact with someone who is sick, please do not come to church.
- When you arrive, please disinfect your hands at the door, put on your facemask, and answer the precautionary questions given by a parish council member. Proceed to the Narthex and light your candles, but do not clutter the area.
- When coming to the veneration of Icons, we will allow three forms of veneration. First, with a simple bow. Second, kissing the icon with the facemask on, and third, kissing in the traditional manner. We will have someone there to sanitize as people come through.
- We will have ushers to seat you. To avoid any distractions during the seating, please give any red candles to the usher to place in the candle stands for you. To best fit everyone, we have come up with a preliminary floor plan so families, couples, and individuals can have room. Please be patient and understanding during the seating.
- Maintain proper social distancing as you continue to sit. Families can sit together.
- Regarding Holy Communion, families and children will come up to receive first maintaining proper distancing. The remainder of the faithful will be ushered row by row so as to not crowd the aisles.
- Holy Communion will be received in the traditional manner. Andidoron will be available for each member to pick up at the end of the service as they exit.
- At the conclusion of Divine Liturgy, the faithful should not gather in the church facilities.
- If after the service anyone feels that they are sick, please inform the church as well as your health care provider immediately.



Sts. Mary Magdalene & Markella Ladies Philoptochos Society, #1043

The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc., is the duly accredited women's philanthropic society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The mission of the Society shall be:

- To help the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; and
- To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;

2018 Philoptochos Membership

The ladies Philoptochos society of Sts. Mary Magdalene & Markella is a very active and integral part of our church supporting her growth and charitable projects in a variety of ways.

Becoming a member of our Philoptochos does not require a lot of your time, nor does it require that you attend every meeting and/or event. Please consider joining the Philoptochos and experiencing the true meaning of Philoptochos - philanthropy, fellowship and faith in action.

Member Name: _____

Member Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Home telephone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Stewardship Amount: \$ _____ **

** Please note that for each paid member \$15 will be sent to National Philoptochos and \$8 will be sent to our Metropolis on NJ Philoptochos to support national and regional initiatives. Any stewardship amount over \$23, will stay with our chapter and be applied to our many local and charitable projects. **

Please complete the form and mail your stewardship check to: Sts Mary Magdalene & Markella Ladies Philoptochos, #1043, Attention: Tina Stavrou, Treasurer, PO Box 1575, Bel Air, MD 21014.

From Pascha to Pentecost

 johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/04/from-pascha-to-pentecost.html

By Protopresbyter Dr. George D. Dragas

1. The Pentecostal Period. The word, Pentecost means “the fiftieth” and is used to designate the great event of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (*Epiphotesis*) upon the Apostles and the Church on the 50th day after the Resurrection of Christ, just ten days after His Ascension into Heaven.

Before His Passion, the Lord spoke to his Disciples about the gift of the Holy Spirit, which they were to receive after the Ascension. The details are preserved in the Gospel of Saint John: “I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will defend you and always be with you” (14:16). He also said, “The Holy Spirit can not come to defend you until I leave. But after I am gone, I will send the Spirit to you” (16:7). After His Resurrection, the Lord appeared to the Disciples, and He said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (20:22). This was a foretaste of the Outpouring (*Epiphotesis*) on Pentecost Sunday.

Near the end of Saint Luke’s Gospel, Christ tells His Disciples, “I will send you the One My Father has promised, but you must stay in the city until you are given power from above” (24:49). It is in the Acts of the Apostles, however, that Saint Luke speaks of the fulfillment of this promise: “On the day of Pentecost, all the Lord’s followers were together in one place. Suddenly, there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind. It filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever language the Spirit let them speak” (2:1-4).

Since ancient times, the 50-day period from Pascha to Pentecost has been called Pentecost because what began with the Lord breathing the Holy Spirit on His Disciples was consummated with the full descent of the Spirit upon the Disciples and the whole Church. Thus, the Church was fully born and began to grow.

During this period, all kneeling is prohibited as a tangible confession of the Resurrection of Christ. It is only on the actual day of Pentecost that kneeling is resumed, and is connected with a special kneeling ceremony (*akolouthia gonyklesias*), which consists of prayers for the gift of the Holy Spirit, hence the name, “Kneeling Day” (*tes gonatistes*) for Pentecost.

Later on, another week was added to these 50 days in order to celebrate the post-feast (*metheorta*) of the Feast of Pentecost. Thus, today the period of movable Feasts after Pascha spans eight weeks, to include the Sunday of All Saints (*Agion Panton*), and is divided into three parts: 1) The 40 post-festal days of Pascha, 2) The Feast of the Ascension, together with its post-festal period, and 3) The Feast of Pentecost together with its own post-festal period. The hymns of this period are contained in the special Pentecostal book, the *Pentecostarion*.

2. Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women. We have already spoken about the New Week (*Diakainesimos*) and the Sunday of Saint Thomas (the first Sunday after Pascha). The second Sunday after Pascha is called the Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women (*Kyriake ton Myroforon*). It is dedicated to the women who brought myrrh to the tomb of Christ. It is also dedicated to the secret disciples of the Lord, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who arranged for and assisted in the Lord’s burial. This is clearly commemorated in the Gospel lesson for the day (Mark 15.43-16.8).

The Myrrh-Bearing Women we can identify from the Holy Gospels are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, (a.k.a., Mary of Clopas, Joanna the wife of Huza, a guardian of Herod Antipas, Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee, and Sozanna).

Joseph of Arimathea (a city of Judaea) was a rich nobleman and a member of the Sanhedrin (a council deputy in Jerusalem). He was the one who did not agree with the council's decision against Christ. He was also the one who bravely asked Pontius Pilate for the body of Christ (Matthew 27.57-60, Mark 15.42-47, Luke 23.50-56, John 19.38-42). Nicodemus was a Jewish leader, a Pharisee, who was well read in the Scriptures and visited Christ by night (John 3.1-21 and 19.39-42).

All these sacred persons clearly demonstrate to us that people from all walks of life can be disciples of the Lord and enjoy the privilege of taking care of His body and become primary witnesses of the Lord's mighty Resurrection.

3. Sundays of the Paralytic, The Samaritan Woman, and the Man Born Blind. The following three Sundays are known, in order, as the Sunday of the Paralytic, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, and the Sunday of the Man Born Blind, because of the Gospel readings and the hymns prescribed for them. The incidents commemorated in these feasts all demonstrate the divine authority, identity and power of Christ, which were then fully revealed by his Resurrection.

The healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda or Bethsaida (John 5.1-18) shows Christ's authority over the Sabbath because it was on the Sabbath day that He healed the paralytic.

The conversation of the Lord with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well near Sychar (John 4.3-42) reaches its high point when the Lord discloses his identity: "I am the One [the Christ] Who is speaking to you now" (4:26). At the end of the story, the Samaritans openly declare, "We are certain that He is the Savior of the world" (4:42).

Finally, the healing of the blind man (John 9:1-41) demonstrates the divine power of Christ and the fact that He came from God: "This is the first time in history that anyone has ever given sight to someone born blind. Jesus could not do anything unless He came from God" (9:32).

4. Mid-Pentecost. The Wednesday after the Sunday of the Paralytic falls exactly in the middle of the 50 days of the period of Pentecost and is consequently called Mid-Pentecost (*Mesopentekoste*). It is a Festal Day, and according to ancient custom, it draws its meaning from the Gospel prescribed for it (John 7.14-30). This Gospel lesson contains the speech of the Lord made in the Temple, in the middle of the feast of the Tabernacles (*Skenopegias*), which explains His authority over the Sabbath in terms of the divine origin of both His teaching and His existence. Central to this are the Lord's words to the people of Jerusalem: "I did not come on My own. The One Who sent Me is truthful, and you do not know Him. But I know the One Who sent Me, because I came from Him" (7:28). Also central are the words the Lord uttered on the last day of the Feast which anticipate the Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost: "If you are thirsty, come to Me and drink! Have faith in Me, and you will have life-giving water flowing from deep inside you" (7:37). The hymns of this Feast recall the miracles of the Lord, which demonstrate His Godhead, and admonish the Christians "to keep steadfastly the commandments of the Lord in order to become worthy to celebrate his Ascension and to participate in the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Doxastikon ton Aion).

5. The Return of Pascha. On the Wednesday after the Sunday of the Man Born Blind (the 6th Sunday after Pascha), we celebrate the Return (*apodosi*), or completion, of the post-festal period of Pascha. The services of the day, which include a paschal liturgy, are sung in a manner identical to that of the New Week. This is actually the 39th day after Pascha, the eve of the Ascension Day, when we sing the Resurrection Hymn, *Christos Anesti*, and exchange the Resurrection greeting for the last time.

6. The Ascension. On the following day, which is the 40th day after Pascha, the Ascension of the Lord into Heaven is commemorated. The feast of the Ascension (*Anapipseos*) is explicitly mentioned in the fourth century, but its origins most probably go back to the preceding centuries. The ancient church manual, *Apostolic Constitutions*, makes the following comment about it: “Again counting 40 days after the first Sunday, you must celebrate from Sunday until Thursday the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, in which He fulfilled the whole economy and design of our salvation, ascended to God the Father, Who had sent Him, and sat at the right hand of the Power to wait until His enemies are placed under his feet” (Book V, chapter 20).

The feast of the Ascension, then, marks the end and the sealing of the work of the Lord on Earth, as well as the Ascension of human nature to heaven and consequently foreshadows the forthcoming Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is celebrated until the Friday of the following week, when it is returned (and therefore closed).

The meaning of the Lord’s Ascension is also connected with His eternal priesthood. The Epistle to the Hebrews sums it up as follows: “We have a Great High Priest Who has gone into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God” (4:14)... Jesus has gone there (behind the curtain and into the most holy place) ahead of us, and He is our High Priest forever, just like Melchizedek (6:20)... Jesus will never die, and so He will be a Priest forever. He is forever able to save the people He leads to God because He always lives to speak to God for them. Jesus is the High Priest we need (7:24-26)... He is the perfect High Priest forever (7:28)... who sits at the right side of God’s great throne in heaven (8:1).”

7. Sunday of the Holy Fathers. The Sunday, which falls in the middle of the festal period of the Ascension (the 7th Sunday after Pascha), is dedicated to the 318 Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and is consequently known as the Sunday of the Holy Fathers (*Ton Pateron*).

The Gospel of this day comes from the Lord’s High Priestly Prayer for the unity of Christians found in John 17:1-13. The Church ordered the commemoration of the Fathers on this particular Sunday because the Eparchial Synods, which were summoned for the purpose of dealing with various local matters, usually met during the Pentecostal period.

Successors of the Apostles, the Fathers, have kept the apostolic faith through their teachings. The Kontakion of the Feast puts this most eloquently and clearly: “The preaching of the Apostles and the dogmas of the Fathers sealed one faith for the Church which, wearing the garment of truth waved with theology from above, rightly dispenses and glorifies the great mystery of piety.”

The Saturday before Pentecost is a Saturday of the Souls (*Psychosabbaton*), and prayers are offered for those who fell asleep that they, too, may become worthy through our prayers of the Pentecostal gift, which is commemorated the next day.

8. Pentecost Sunday. The Christian feast of Pentecost corresponds to the Hebrew feast which bears the same name, and in which the first fruits of Israel’s new crops were offered to God (*Protogennemata*).

The Christian feast commemorates the first fruits of the preaching of the Apostles, which followed the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost, and on account of which the first Christian Church was born and established with three thousand souls. Ever since Pentecost, the Spirit abides in the Church and regulates the Church’s life and growth. The Spirit brings the entire constitution of the Church together as the Body of Christ. As the Comforter (*Parakletos*), He is the pledge of Christ’s return and final victory with the entire body of the Church.

The celebration of this feast goes back to apostolic times. According to ancient custom, catechumens were baptized on this occasion and therefore, even today, no Trisagion is sung during the Liturgy. Instead, the hymn “Those baptized into Christ, have put on Christ,” is sung. The vespers of this day, following immediately after the Divine Liturgy, is especially notable because of the long kneeling supplication, which is offered after the

Entrance. This supplication is the first of several which follow after the feast, having been previously suspended during the Pentecostal Period.

Pentecost is celebrated throughout the week and is returned on the following Saturday. The Monday of the post-festal period is distinguished from the other post-festal days because it is dedicated to the Holy Spirit (*Deftera tou Agiou Pneumatos*). The services of the day follow the pattern of the preceding Pentecostal Sunday. Fasting is not observed during the week of (after) Pentecost.

The Doxastikon hymn of the day is the well known prayer with which most Church services begin and which is used by many Orthodox Christians as a first Prayer of each day: “Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things, come and abide in us; cleanse us from every stain and save our souls Gracious Lord.”

9. Sunday of All-Saints. The Sunday after Pentecost is known as the Sunday of All Saints. It is a very ancient feast mentioned at the end of the fourth century and seems to have been initially instituted as a feast in honor of all the Martyrs.

The Church always honored the Martyrs. Since honoring the Martyrs was originally a local affair, however, many of the Martyrs were unknown, and it is probably for this reason that such a feast was instituted to honor all Martyrs, known and unknown. This feast was placed very appropriately after Pentecost because the Church was watered and increased through the witness and blood of the Martyrs. Later, when the Church honored others as Saints besides the Martyrs, the moveable feast after Pascha acquired a more general character and was changed into a feast in honor of all the Saints.

10. The Feast of the Holy Apostles. On the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints, a fast is observed for the Feast of the Holy Apostles. Originally, this was a weekly fast as it is explicitly stated in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book V, chapter 20). Later on, it was connected with the feast of the Holy Apostles (June 29-30) and was extended to the whole period from the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints to the 28th of June.



Official Announcement of the Church of Crete on the Manner of Reception of the Divine Eucharist

 johnsanidopoulos.com/2020/05/official-announcement-of-church-of.html



The Sacred Eparchial Synod of the Church of Crete, on the occasion of the discussion that has arisen, but also due to the online public debate and the various positions and views, in reference to the Mystery of Mysteries, the Divine Eucharist and Divine Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a deep sense of pastoral responsibility, unanimously announces, and in every way, that the All-Holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist is nonnegotiable, as the ecclesiastical experience testifies that the established method of transmission today, and for a series of centuries, of the All-Holy Body and Honorable Blood of our Christ to the faithful, is not the cause of illness, therefore it is not a matter of discussion or dialogue.

The Church of Crete, far from fanaticism, excommunications and dangerous experiments, expresses, once again, the need to strengthen our faith in the Triune True God, to remain steadfast with unwavering and strong dedication to the boundaries "that have been set by our Fathers", in order to remain immovable in the Faith of the Saints, without exaggerations and fears.

Let us respect the Mystery of Mysteries and do not be distracted by hurried and targeted voices, which cause confusion and noise.

After all, the free approach toward the Sacred Mystery of the Divine Eucharist has as a precondition, among other things, the true and genuine faith of people, without "second thoughts" and doubts, in order for their communion with the All-Holy Body and Honorable Blood of our Lord, to issue forth "the forgiveness of sins and eternal life."

It may be necessary, more than ever, in these difficult and changing times, to empower and strengthen our faith, to heal our weaknesses, to remain steadfast in the ship of our Holy Church, and to approach it with reverence and hope, as well as heartfelt prayer, and the Grace and the mercy of the All-Holy God, so that we may come out strong and strengthened by our common trial.

Heraklion, May 27, 2020

From the Sacred Eparchial Synod of the Church of Crete

[Source](#): Translated by John Sanidopoulos.

Contemporary Testimony of a Priest Who Communed Hundreds of Lepers

 johnsanidopoulos.com/2020/05/contemporary-testimony-of-priest-who.html



In the video below, Fr. Stephanos, who has served for the past 48 years as the priest at the Hospital for Infectious Diseases "Saint Barbara" in West Attica since he was first ordained at the age of 28, recounts his experiences of many decades pastoring and communing various patients with infectious diseases, especially those suffering with leprosy and tuberculosis.

He begins by saying that when he was first ordained at the age of 28 and began serving in the church he is now standing in, the entire church would be filled with lepers, around 200 of them. Many of the lepers that came forward to receive Holy Communion from a common cup were not able to use the cloth to wipe themselves afterwards, nor to take the antidron, because their hands were withering away, so three nuns who attended the services as well as Elder Eumenios, who was then a monk and had been miraculously cured of leprosy, would help the lepers wipe themselves with the cloth after they received and gave them the antidron.

Today there are only eight lepers who attend the Divine Liturgy. One of them who has suffered the most from leprosy is Barba-Thanasis, who due to leprosy is blind and has lost his hands. When Fr. Stephanos asks him how he is, he always says: "Glory to God, all is well!" He says that none of the lepers he served over the years complained about their fate. They had great faith in God. It was a beautiful thing to behold. For many of the patients there, their leprosy was beneficial, because it sanctified them. Not only did it produce patients like Saint Nikephoros the Leper and Elder Eumenios, but many of the lepers there became saints. There is no doubt they are saved.

When asked if they all communed from the same chalice, he responds in the affirmative, and that he would go out to them to commune them from where they were standing or sitting instead of them lining up. And often the healthy relatives of those who were sick would be in the congregation, and they also communed of the same chalice, but none of them ever got sick.

Fr. Stephanos then recalls his first Divine Liturgy serving in a church full of lepers. He was nervous and wondering what he was going to do and how he was going to do it, such as consuming the remaining portions of Holy Communion after they all communed. He looks back at that moment as a temptation of fear. He then

decided to view the matter as a soldier whose duty it was to serve no matter what the circumstance. Just as a soldier can't choose whether to go to the Turkish border or the Albanian border, so he as a priest could not choose where to serve. This is where he was stationed as a soldier of the Church, and it was here that he would remain and serve. When the time came for Holy Communion, one of the lepers was only able to consume half the portion on the spoon, so Fr. Stephanos saw this as an opportunity to overcome his temptation and he put the spoon with the remaining portion in his own mouth and consumed it. After this, he felt liberated from the temptation. From that moment on, he never was tempted by fear again.

Not only did he commune them, but they would also often kiss his hands, especially when they received the antidron at the end of the liturgy. Because they were all sick, often times they would cough on his hand, so he would always go back to the sanctuary and wash his hands in the sink afterwards. He never forbade them kissing his hands, but would just take the necessary precautions for his own health in circumstances like that.

Finally, he mentions that there were two doctors in the hospital who would attend the liturgy when he first began his service there, and they would bring their kids to help the priest in the altar. There were about 4 or 5 healthy children who served as altar servers. The lepers and the others with infectious diseases would tell Fr. Stephanos to not allow children in the church, but Fr. Stephanos continued to allow them to serve and keep a distance from the patients. He even allowed his own children to serve. Today, 48 years later, neither Fr. Stephanos nor anyone else who was healthy there ever became infected with leprosy or any other infectious disease.

****To hear this incredible story from Fr. Stephanos please click on the hyperlink below to be redirected.**

<https://youtu.be/Bo6gJrno2Pc>



JUNE SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

June 6: Saturday of Souls

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy

June 7: Sunday of Holy Pentecost

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy
- ✠ ****OPENING PARISH TO THE FAITHFUL****

June 14: All Saints Day

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy

****June 15: Apostles Fast Begins****

June 21: 2nd Sunday of Matthew (Father's Day)

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy

June 24: Wednesday – Nativity of St. John the Baptist

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy

June 28: 3rd Sunday of Matthew

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy

June 29: Monday – Apostles Peter and Paul **

- ✠ 9:00 a.m. – Orthros
- ✠ 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy

****The service might be canceled if it is held at Sts. Peter and Paul in Fredrick, MD.**



“Mystagogy” Resource Center

-By John Sanidopoulos

<https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/>

WHEN TO SIT OR STAND DURING THE DIVINE LITURGY

(Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral - Norfolk, Virginia)

People have been asking me the important question of what is the proper etiquette when sitting or standing in Church during the Divine Liturgy. To best explain, I have referenced the guidelines provided by one of our sister parishes, the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Norfolk, Virginia. Their guidelines, which I also agree with, state:

The traditional posture for prayer and worship in the Orthodox Church has been to stand. In the Orthodox “old countries,” there are usually no pews in the churches. Chairs or benches on the side walls are usually reserved for the elderly and infirm. In North America, we have tended to build our churches with pews, and since we have them, we need to figure out when we may sit and when we should stand. It is fully acceptable (even preferable) to stand for the entire service. If you prefer this, it would be better to find a place closer to the back or side of the church so as not to stand out or block someone’s view.

When should you definitely stand? Always during the Gospel reading, the Small and Great Entrances, the Anaphora, the distribution of Holy Communion, whenever the priest gives a blessing, and the Dismissal. In many parishes, the Divine Liturgy books in the pew have suggested times when sitting is acceptable. Follow those instructions (it’s probably safer than to follow what the people are doing in the first couple of rows). It is never wrong to stand in church.

(Note: Many parishes also follow the practice of kneeling on Sundays during the Cherubic Hymn, consecration, and the “Our Father.” Strictly speaking, this is not correct, because every Sunday is a “little Pascha” in which the Resurrection is remembered — hence, no kneeling. The “kneeling prayers” said five weeks after Pascha, are said after the Sunday Liturgy, “reinstating” kneeling for Vespers, Matins, and weekday Liturgies only. If the tradition of the parish you are visiting is to kneel, and everyone kneels, it’s better to do so than to stick out like a sore thumb. If there is a mixture of standing and kneeling, then stand.)

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