



ΙΕΡΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΜΑΡΙΑΣ ΜΑΓΔΑΛΗΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΚΕΛΛΗΣ



STS. MARY MAGDALENE & MARKELLA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2021 APRIL NEWSLETTER



3714-16 Dublin Road, Darlington, MD 21034

PRESIDING PRIEST

THE REV. FR. ELEFTERIOS PLEVRAKIS

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OFFICE HOURS

TUESDAY - FRIDAY

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

QUESTIONS? CALL OR VISIT US

(FOR OFFICE VISITS PLEASE CALL IN ADVANCE)

LETTER FROM THE PRIEST

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray that you are all doing well. In just a few days we will be reaching the midpoint of Great Lent. On that particular day the Fathers of the Church have chosen to commemorate the Holy Cross because they knew that many of us go through rigorous fasting and spiritual and ascetical exercises which challenge our bodies and souls. The holy day of the Cross helps strengthen our will for the remaining journey by reminding us of the great sacrifice Christ made.

On that special day we celebrate the beauty of the Cross, the life giving tree that opens the door to paradise for all the children of God. We do not get drawn into the worldly drama and gore of the event. As Orthodox, when we see Christ on the Cross we see a flower blooming in the garden of this fallen world; instead of death, we see the eternal life of God taking hold of His Creation and saving them. It is an event which God exhibits the utmost humility towards His creation, even though man had forgotten Him. I ask that many of you attend this special day so you too can build a new momentum in life; to allow the Cross to remedy your anxieties and worries.

I will continue to pray for all of you as we slowly approach Holy Week. Please refer to the schedule provided for the remaining services of the month. I will be sending out a separate schedule for Holy Week. May all of you have a blessed month, and if you need anything please do not hesitate to call or email me.

In Christ,

Fr. Elefterios

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I pray that this letter finds all of you well as we continuing our spiritual journey through Great lent. During Great Lent the church offers so many services to help us deepen our prayers as we approach the saving passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope that we all take advantage of these services, which the church provides for our salvation and comfort. We sometimes neglect our Heavenly Father to pursue the life that we want to live. That is when we will never see the light at the end of the tunnel. We will face frustrations, disappointments, and lack of love, loneliness and the feeling of unworthiness. If we're close to our Lord pray and worship him in a positive and spiritual way, He will always be there for us. All Christ wants and asks from us, is simply a relationship and a true friendship.

We just had a very successful drive by festival. I want to give a big thank you to all that worked and helped to make it such a huge success for our Church. The unlimited time of work from some parishioners is what makes our Church to stand and progress.

A last request from all of us is to come participate and enjoy the services that are taking place in our church until the "Resurrection".

With Love in Christ

Fotini Kaminaris

Saint Mary of Egypt as a Model for our Lives



By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

The mystery of death is a fact that has always preoccupied man. Many texts have been written and several interpretations have been given by various religions, as well as thinkers and philosophers on this issue. One thing is certain, as it has been aptly said, that death is the greatest democrat. And this is because it makes no discrimination and before it we are all equal. In one hymn of the Funeral Service this truth is highlighted: "Which indeed is he that is king? Or which is soldier? Which is the wealthy, which the needy? Which the righteous, or which the sinner?"

Death has always brought awe and terror. The ancient philosophers regarded death as something fearful. Aristotle would say: "Death is the most fearful thing of all." In Christianity we have another approach. The saints do not fear it, but consider it a gain. "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Apostle Paul). And they see it as such, because with death the good things of the kingdom of God and life are not interrupted, which are tasted beforehand in this life, but they will enjoy them in a more perfect way.

Death, which is not a creation of God but is the result of sin, was abolished by the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. "Christ, by Your Resurrection You vanquished Hades and abolished death" (Praises, Sunday Matins in the Fourth Tone). And those who experience the life in Christ conquer it and transcend it beyond the limits of their personal life.

For us Orthodox Christians the Resurrection is the most bright festival. We celebrate it, we chant it, but we also sing about it in every tone. All the romaic songs exuded out of the soul of

our people that lived this tradition, which is why they speak even of a love for death. This is because authentic love is a sacrifice and a cross, or in other words death, but at the same time a transcendence of death - true life.

To taste this life we must go through the experience of true repentance, through grief and weeping for our falls and sins. The venerable Mary of Egypt by her repentance managed to escape the unnatural life of sin and then transcend this nature and reach what is beyond nature. Her life is known to us. She was a prostitute in Alexandria and lured many into sin. At one time she was in Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Honorable Cross and out of curiosity wanted to enter the church. Yet when she approached the entrance, she was unable to enter, as if there was an invisible wall that prevented her. She tried many times, but it was impossible. As she saw others pass by her and enter, then her mind was enlightened and she understood. She begged the Panagia to allow her to enter, at the same time promising that she will change her life. Indeed she kept her promise and went to the desert of Jordan where she lived with many privations and much temperance. For seventeen years she had lived in sin, and for seventeen years she was afflicted by the devil and the rebellion of the flesh. Then this war stopped and she began to climb spiritually. Having arrived at apathy her face began to shine. Saint Zosimas, who went to commune her towards the end of her life, was stunned by the sight. He saw a face that was bright and angelic. He saw a person who experienced the victory over death and her personal resurrection.

Authentic repentance, which is associated with the effort to be released from the passions, is a cross. According to Orthodox teaching, there are three crosses. The first is the various incidents of life, such as temptations and tribulations. The second is the struggle for the transformation of the passions. And the third is the vision of God, which is a taste of real life.

The true celebration of Pascha, therefore, is not possible by external means or events, which are also needed, but it is primarily the intensity of the inner life and true repentance. Great Lent, which precedes this, helps us a lot. Besides, this is its purpose. With solemn services, fasting and its entire atmosphere it enhances the effort for a stronger spiritual life, for more prayer, for the crucifixion of the flesh, that is, the fleshly mind and the purification of the passions. "Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the inaccessible light of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him saying 'Rejoice' to us while we sing to Him the hymn of victory."

The word "Pascha" is a Hebrew word and means "crossing". The Israelites celebrated the wondrous crossing of the Red Sea. Orthodox Christians, the new Israel of Grace, celebrate the crossing "from death to life". Hopefully the victorious paean "Christ is Risen" will be our personal experience.

Source: *Ekklesiastiki Paremvasi*, "ΟΣΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ Η ΑΙΓΥΠΤΙΑ", April 1999. Translated by John Sanidopoulos.

APRIL SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

April 2: 3rd Salutations to the Theotokos

† 6:30 p.m. – *Salutations to the Theotokos*

April 4: Sunday of the Holy Cross

† 9:00 a.m. – *Orthros*

† 10:00 a.m. – *Divine Liturgy*

April 9: Salutations to the Theotokos

† 6:30 p.m. – *Salutations to the Theotokos*

April 11: Sunday of St. John Climacus

† 9:00 a.m. – *Orthros*

† 10:00 a.m. – *Divine Liturgy*

April 16: Akathist Hymn

† 6:30 – *Akathist Hymn*

April 18: Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt

† 9:00 a.m. – *Orthros*

† 10:00 a.m. – *Divine Liturgy*

April 24: Lazarus Saturday

† 9:00 a.m. – *Orthros*

† 10:00 a.m. – *Divine Liturgy*

† *Folding of Palms*

April 25: Palm Sunday

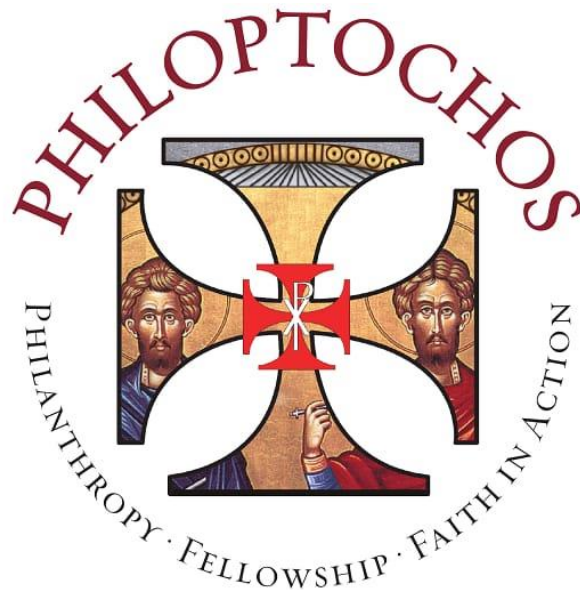
† 9:00 a.m. – *Orthros*

† 10:00 a.m. – *Divine Liturgy*

† *Fish Luncheon*

****Holy Week schedule will be sent in separate email****

JOIN THE LADIES OF PHILOPTOCHOS



The Ladies Philoptochos society of Sts Mary Magdalene and Markella is active not only in our church but also in the community. We are seeking volunteers to serve on the board and take an active role in helping to continue our philanthropic efforts. If you are interested in learning more about the Philoptochos or joining the board, please reach out to Rene Alatzas.

DONATIONS FOR DECORATING THE KOUVOUKLION



THE LADIES OF PHILOPTOCHOS HAVE STARTED ACCPETING DONATIONS FOR THE DECORATION OF THE KOUVOUKLION. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED PLEASE REACH OUT TO ANY OF THE MEMBERS OF PHILOTPCHOS.



GIVE LILIES FOR EASTER

**Consider offering an Easter Lily in memory or in honor of your loved ones.
Donations are \$25 and must be returned to the Church by Sunday, April 25th.**

I wish to donate _____ Easter Lilies

In Memory of:

In Honor of:

Offered by:

SPECIAL OFFERINGS FOR GREAT LENT, HOLY WEEK, AND HOLY PASCHA

The following special items are needed to decorate our Hoy Church during Great Lent and Holy Pascha, and to provide for the liturgical needs of the various holy services. These items cost our Church over \$4,000.00. Your generous donations will help our Church defray the costs of these needed items and provide for the beautiful services of this most solemn and holy time of the year.

1. Palms to decorate on Palm Sunday
2. Flowers to Decorate the Icon of the Bridegroom (X2) (Sunday & Tuesday Night)
3. Flowers for the Base of the Crucifixion for Holy Thursday
4. Candles for the Holy Cross (3 sets of 3) of Holy Thursday
5. White Bed Sheet (Queen Size) for the Apokathelosis Service on Holy Friday
6. Rose Petals to be Placed on Top of the Epitaphios
7. Candles for the Kouvouklion (Set of 4)
8. Bay Leaves for Holy Saturday Morning's Divine Liturgy
9. Flowers to decorate the Icon of the Resurrection
10. Resurrection Candle for the Priest

If you would like to contribute to any of the above items, please contact Fr. Elefterios Plevrakis.

Let us take this opportunity to be generous during the spiritual journey of Great Lent and Holy Week with the utmost humility and devotion to our faith in the Lord.

In Christ,

Father Elefterios Plevrakis



“Mystagogy” Resource Center

-By John Sanidopoulos

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

HAVE YOUR CANDLES LIT IN THE DIVINE SERVICES



As Orthodox Christians we believe that where there is light there is also the presence of God. In our Tradition, we light our candles to fill our hearts with God's energies and to direct our prayers to Him.

To help the faithful in their prayerful life during these difficult times, Father Elefterios will light candles and commemorate the names of people. If you would like to make an offering and/or provide a list of names for Father to commemorate at the Divine Services, please visit our website at www.stsmm.org and press on the "donations" link. Refer to the link that is titled "Candle Donations." Please specify if you would like to contribute towards a red candle. Please email the names to frelefterios@gmail.com.

We hope that God continues to give all of you strength. God bless!

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.)



WE WANT TO LET THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY KNOW THAT WE ARE ALSO ACCEPTING ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS FOR YOUR NEXT DONATION TO THE CHURCH. HERE IS A LIST OF DEPARTMENTS THAT YOU CAN DONATE TO:

**BUILDING FUND
CHURCH SUPPLIES
GENERAL DONATION
LADIES OF PHILOPTOCHOS
STEWARDSHIP
YOUTH GROUP**

JUST VISIT THE WEBSITE AND PRESS "DONATIONS." IT IS FAST, CONVENIENT, AND GREAT FOR RECORD KEEPING.

*FOR GREEK SCHOOL, PLEASE SPECIFY BY WRITING THAT IN THE NOTES; OTHERWISE, YOUR DONATION WILL BE ADDED TO THE GENERAL YOUTH FUND.

2021 PLEDGED STEWARDS

Alatzas, George & Rene

Batis, Nikolaos & Maria

Batsis, Nick & Nomiki

Batsis, Meropi & Komninos Psaros

Bilis, Amalia

Bonincontri, Ray & Jamie

Bournousouzis, Christos

Caprinolo, Lee & Mary

Cioloa, Bogdan & Anca

Diamandaras, Helen

Fafalios, Ava

Fafalios, Nicolette

Fokianos, Konstantinos & Maria

Giannaras, Chris

Giannas, Apostolos & Maria

Giannas, Erene

Giannas, Ioannis

Giannas, Stylianos & Maria

Gikas, John & Lola

Gikas, George

Harris, Christina

Hennessy, Cathrine & Mary

Kaitis, Dr. Angela

Kaminaris, Gus & Fotini

Kanaras, Louis & Eleni

Kanaras, Penny

Karalekas, Alexandra **

Karas, Aimee

Karas, Andy

Karas, Bethany Anne

Karas, Daphne

Karas, John & Belinda

Karas, Katie

Karas, Michael & Linda

Karas, Peter & Kim

Karas, Scott

Karas, Steven

Katsaros, Stelios **

Kechagias, John & Noni

Kioutas, Nick & Shellie

Kirakos, Manal

Kougianos, Alex & Daniela

Kougianos, Dionisios & Argiro

Lewis, Donna

Marvelis, Vasilios & Efthymia

Mimaros, Dimitrios & Argie

Murphy, Kevin & Nancy

Nikitaras, Andreas & Nicole

Nikitaras, Christos & Angela

Nikitaras, Spiro & Despina

Pappas, Basil & Linda

Perdikakis, George & Zoe

Plevrakis, Fr. Elefterios & Esther

Pikounis, Emmanuel & Helen

Prapas, Spiros

Sacksen, Peter

Sarris, Sam

Sarris, Greg & Kristie

Stakias, Stelio & Tina

Stavrou, George & Tina

Steber, Christopher

Steber, Paula

Stillwell, Pauline & Billy

Sudeck, Virginia

Trikoglou, Carole

Tsiatsoulis, Leonidas & Eirini Anastasiou

Varkarota, Christina

Total 2021 Stewards: **68**

Number of New Stewards for 2020 (**): **1**

Pledged: \$52,290 / Collected: **\$31,020**

Outstanding Balance: **\$21,270**

Average Stewardship Pledge: **\$ 768.97**