# *St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church*

*30 Cross Street - Auburn, New York 13021 (www.stnicholasauburn.com)*

**Very Reverend Michael Speck – Pastor (315) 246-6051 mspeck100@gmail.com**

**Office Hours 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM Thursday or any time by appointment**

**Reverend Deacon David Donch Reverend Deacon Michael W. Speck**

**Reader Nathaniel Donch**

**Sr. Warden - Greg Michaels Jr. Warden – Reverend Deacon David Donch**

**Secretary – Jane Kimak Treasurer – Glenn Peters**

## Sunday, December 7, 2025

**26th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** — Tone 1. **St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (397). Ven. Anthony, Abbot of Siya (Novgorod—1558). Ven. Nilus of Stolobénsk (1554). Ven. John the Faster, of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th c.). Martyr Athenodorus of Mesopotamia (ca. 304). Ven. Paul the Obedient. St. Philoftheia of Thrace, Protectress of Romania (12th c.). Ven. Gregory, Founder of Grigoriou Monastery (Mt. Athos—14th** c.).

## Schedule of Services and Events

**Friday, December 5 – 5:00 PM Vespers and Litya**

**Saturday, December 6 – 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy –**

**Feast of St. Nicholas with the Chrismation of Kial Flatt**

**– 5:00 PM Vespers**

**Sunday, December 7 – 8:40 AM Adult Education**

**-9:30 AM Divine Liturgy followed by followed by a brief Choir Rehearsal and Church School in the Church Basement**

**Wednesday, December 10 – 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy**

**Saturday, December 13 – 5:00 PM Vespers**

**Sunday, December 14 – No Adult Education**

**-9:30 AM Divine Liturgy followed by a Sisterhood Meeting**

We are starting our new Church School program on, Sunday, December 7 following Divine Liturgy in the Church Basement. Classes will be held in the church basement for 15-20 minutes following Divine Liturgy on Sundays. *All of our children should be attending.* Thanks!

**Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors Appeal**

**We ask you to open your heart this holiday season and contribute to the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor Fund that supports so many vital ministries within our diocese. If you would make a check payable to the Diocese of New York and New Jersey Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor program and give it to either Greg Michaels or myself and we will forward it to the Diocese and you will be recognized for your kindness. Anonymous donations are also gladly accepted. Thank you in advance for your support of this important ministry.**

**May God Bless You Richly!**

*Before Thy birth, O Lord, the angelic hosts looked with trembling on this mystery and were struck with wonder: for Thou who hast adorned the vault of heaven with stars hast been well pleased to be born as a babe; and Thou who holdest all the ends of the earth in the hollow of Thy hand art laid in a manger of dumb beasts. For by such a dispensation has Thy compassion been made known, O Christ, and Thy great mercy: glory to Thee.*

*(Sticheron of the Third Hour, Eve of the Nativity)*

# Conception of the Most Holy Theotokos by Saint Anna

Commemorated on December 9

**The Gospels and other books of the New Testament do not mention anything about Saint Anna, the mother of the Theotokos. According to Tradition, the priest Matthan (Matthew 1:15), a resident of Bethlehem, had three daughters: Mary,[1] Sobe (Sobĕ), and Anna. Mary was married in Bethlehem, where she gave birth to Elizabeth, the mother of Saint John the Baptist.**

**The Holy Righteous Anna was the youngest daughter of the priest Matthan, who was from the tribe of Levi, of the family of Aaron. Her husband, the Holy Righteous Joachim was from the tribe of Judah, from the house and family of King David. According to the ancient promise, the Messiah was to come from the lineage of King David (Luke 2:4).**

**The couple lived in Nazareth of Galilee. Every year, they gave two-thirds of their income to the Temple in Jerusalem, and to the poor. By God's Providence, the holy couple had no children until their old age. They were greatly saddened by this, since the Jews considered childlessness a great misfortune and a punishment from God. They prayed fervently for the Lord to give them children.**

**On a certain feast, when the Israelites were bringing gifts to God in the Temple at Jerusalem, the High Priest, believing that the childless Joachim did not have God's blessing, refused to accept gifts from him. Saint Joachim was grief stricken. He consulted the genealogy of the twelve tribes of Israel and ascertained that all righteous men had offspring, including Abraham, when he was a hundred years old. Without returning home, Saint Joachim went into the wilderness and spent forty days there in strict fasting and prayer, entreating God's mercy for himself, and washing away his disgrace with bitter tears.**

**Saint Anna thought that she was to blame for their sorrow. One day saw a nest with barely fledged chicks in the branches of a laurel tree, she wept and prayed for**

**the gift of a child, promising to bring the infant to God as an offering. As soon as Saint Anna spoke these words, an Angel of the Lord told her that her prayer had been answered, and revealed that she would have a daughter named Mary, through whom all the peoples of the world would be blessed. Rejoicing, Saint Anna hastened to the Temple in Jerusalem, in order to give thanks to God. She repeated her vow to dedicate the child to Him. An Angel came to Saint Joachim in the wilderness with the same news and commanded him to go to Jerusalem. There, the Righteous Anna conceived and gave birth to the Most Holy Theotokos.**

**The Orthodox Church does not accept the teaching that the Mother of God was exempted from the consequences of ancestral sin (death, corruption, sin, etc.) at the moment of her conception by virtue of the future merits of her Son. Only Christ was born perfectly holy and sinless, as Saint Ambrose of Milan teaches in Chapter Two of his Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke. The Holy Virgin was like everyone else in her mortality, and in being subject to temptation, although she committed no personal sins. She was not a deified creature removed from the rest of humanity. If this were the case, She would not have been truly human, and the nature that Christ took from her would not have been truly human either. If Christ does not truly share our human nature, then the possibility of our salvation is in doubt.**

**Saint Anna has been honored since ancient times. We infer this from various Fathers of the Church, and also from ancient hymns in honor of the mother of the Theotokos. In the year 550, Emperor Justinian dedicated a temple in Constantinople to Saint Anna.**

**Part of the Saint's left hand is located in Stavronikita Monastery on Mount Athos. Part of the Saint's incorrupt left foot is located in Saint Anna's Skete on Mount Athos. Part of the Saint's incorrupt right foot is located in the Monastery of Koutloumousiou on Mount Athos.**

**Fragments of the Saint's Holy Relics are to be found in Saint Anna's Monastery at Lygaria in Lamia, and also in the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian at Sourotis.**

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**[1] This Mary is the mother of Saint Anna, and the grandmother of the Theotokos. She is commemorated on the Sunday of the Forefathers.**

*Sources of Christian Doctrine*

# Church Art

**The Orthodox Church has a rich tradition of iconography as well as other church arts: music, architecture, sculpture, needlework, poetry, etc. This artistic tradition is based on the Orthodox Christian doctrine of human creativity rooted in God's love for man and the world in creation.**

**Because man is created in the image and likeness of God, and because God so loved man and the world as to create, save, and glorify them by His own coming in Christ and the Holy Spirit, the artistic expressions of man and the blessings and inspirations of God merge into a holy artistic creativity which truly expresses the deepest truths of the Christian vision of God, man, and nature.**

**The icon is Orthodoxy's highest artistic achievement. It is a gospel proclamation, a doctrinal teaching, and a spiritual inspiration in colors and lines.**

**The traditional Orthodox icon is not a holy picture. It is not a pictorial portrayal of some Christian saint or event in a "photocopy" way. It is, on the contrary, the expression of the eternal and divine reality, significance, and purpose of the given person or event depicted. In the gracious freedom of the divine inspiration, the icon depicts its subject as at the same time both human and yet "full of God," earthly and yet heavenly, physical and yet spiritual, "bearing the cross" and yet full of grace, light, peace, and joy.**

**In this way the icon expresses a deeper "realism" than that which would be shown in the simple reproduction of the physical externals of the historic person or happening. Thus, in their own unique way the various types of Orthodox icons, through their form and style and manner of depiction as well as through their**

**actual contents and use in the Church, are an inexhaustible source of revelation of the Orthodox doctrine and faith.**

**Musical expression may be added to the icon as a source of discovering the Orthodox Christian worldview. Here, however, there is greater difficulty because of the loss in recent years of the liturgical and spiritual meaning of music in the Church. Just as the theological meaning of the traditional Orthodox icon is being rediscovered, so is the traditional doctrinal significance of Orthodox music. The process in the latter case, however, is much slower, much more difficult, and much less evident to the average person.**

**The traditional Orthodox architecture also expresses the doctrine of the Church, particularly in its emphasis on "God with us" and the complete communion of men and the world with God in Christ. The use of domed ceilings, the shape and layout of the buildings, the placing of the icons, the use of vestments, etc., all express the teachings of the Church. The traditional Orthodox church architecture and artwork are expressions of the Orthodox Christian doctrines of creation, salvation, and eternal life.**

**It is a very important spiritual exercise for Christians to study the holy icons and the hymns of the Church's liturgy. One can learn much about God and His gracious actions among men by a careful and prayerful contemplation of the artistic expressions of Church doctrine and life (see *Worship*).**