

# St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

28 Cross Street - Auburn, New York 13021 ([www.stnicholasauburn.com](http://www.stnicholasauburn.com))

**Very Reverend Michael Speck – Pastor**

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**Office Hours Thursday from 2PM to 4PM or by Appointment**

Reverend Deacon David Donch    Reverend Deacon Michael W. Speck  
Sr. Warden - Greg Michaels    Jr. Warden - Rocco Lupo    Reader Nathaniel Donch

**June 13, 2021 – Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council**



## **Schedule of Services**

***Sunday, June 13 – 10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy followed by the  
Pork Chop Dinner***

***Wednesday, June 16 – 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy***

***Saturday, June 12 – 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy for Soul Saturday  
-5:00 PM – Vespers with Litya***

***Sunday, June 13 – 9:00 AM – Divine Liturgy of Holy Pentecost  
- Kneeling Vespers  
- Father's Day Panikhia  
- 1:30 PM – Cemetery Memorial Service***

**Congratulations to Mike Cheney on becoming a firefighter for the Auburn Fire Department this week. We pray that he will have a wonderful career and be protected by his Holy Guardian Angel throughout his life. We thank him, all of our first responders and members of the military for their service to our community and country. God Grant Them Many Blessed Years!**

#### **Coffee Hour List**

**June 13 – Pork Chop Dinner – No Coffee Hour**

**June 20 – Pentecost and Father's Day – No Coffee Hour**

**June 27 - Fr. Michael and Matushka Julie**

**July 4 – No Coffee Hour**

**July 11 - Eric Montemoreno**

**July 18 - Greg and Beth Szymaniak**

**July 25 – Fr. Dn. Michael Speck, Chrissy and Dave Urciuoli**

**August 1 - Fr. Michael and Matushka Julie**

**August 9 - Debbie Slobodiak and Emily Young**

**August 15 - Glenn and Pauline Peters**

**August 22 – Howard Clark and Nick Pingryn**

**August 29 – Beheading of St. John the Baptist – Strict Fast – No Coffee Hour**

**September 5 - Karen and Greg Schoonover**

**September 12 – Fr. Michael and Matushka Julie**

**September 19 – Church Council Members**

**If you are unable or unwilling to host the coffee hour, please let Fr. Michael know.**

#### ***Donations***

***\$100 in Memory of the Topichak Family by Christine Topachak for the Parish Hall Fund***

***\$50 in Memory of Betty Hryvko by Christine Topachak for the Parish Hall Fund***

***\$50 in Memory of David Lupo by Christine Topichak for the Renovation Fund***

***\$100 in Memory of Dorothy Babiarz by Christine Topichak***

# Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council



Commemorated on [June 13](#)

**On the seventh Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the holy God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.**

**The Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council has been celebrated by the Church of Christ from ancient times. The Lord Jesus Christ left the Church a great promise, “I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). Although the Church of Christ on earth will pass through difficult struggles with the Enemy of salvation, it will emerge victorious. The holy martyrs bore witness to the truth of the Savior’s words, enduring suffering and death for confessing Christ, but the persecutor’s sword is shattered by the Cross of Christ.**

**Persecution of Christians ceased during the fourth century, but heresies arose within the Church itself. One of the most pernicious of these heresies was Arianism. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, was a man of immense pride and ambition. In denying the divine nature of Jesus Christ and His equality with God the Father, Arius falsely taught that the Savior is not consubstantial with the Father, but is only a created being. A local Council, convened with Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria presiding, condemned the false teachings of Arius. However, Arius would not submit to the authority of the Church. He wrote to many bishops, denouncing the decrees of the local Council. He spread his false teaching throughout the East, receiving support from certain Eastern bishops.**

**Investigating these dissensions, the holy emperor Constantine (May 21) consulted Bishop Hosius of Cordova (Aug. 27), who assured him that the**

heresy of Arius was directed against the most fundamental dogma of Christ's Church, and so he decided to convene an Ecumenical Council. In the year 325, 318 bishops representing Christian Churches from various lands gathered together at Nicea.

Among the assembled bishops were many confessors who had suffered during the persecutions, and who bore the marks of torture upon their bodies. Also participating in the Council were several great luminaries of the Church: Saint Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (December 6 and May 9), Saint Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithos (December 12), and others venerated by the Church as holy Fathers. With Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria came his deacon, Athanasius [who later became Patriarch of Alexandria (May 2 and January 18)]. He is called "the Great," for he was a zealous champion for the purity of Orthodoxy. In the Sixth Ode of the Canon for today's Feast, he is referred to as "the thirteenth Apostle."

The emperor Constantine presided over the sessions of the Council. In his speech, responding to the welcome by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, he said, "God has helped me cast down the impious might of the persecutors, but more distressful for me than any blood spilled in battle is for a soldier, is the internal strife in the Church of God, for it is more ruinous." Arius, with seventeen bishops among his supporters, remained arrogant, but his teaching was repudiated and he was excommunicated from the Church. In his speech, the holy deacon Athanasius conclusively refuted the blasphemous opinions of Arius. The heresiarch Arius is depicted in iconography sitting on Satan's knees, or in the mouth of the Beast of the Deep (Rev. 13).

The Fathers of the Council declined to accept a Symbol of Faith (Creed) proposed by the Arians. Instead, they affirmed the Orthodox Symbol of Faith. Saint Constantine asked the Council to insert into the text of the Symbol of Faith the word "consubstantial," which he had heard in the speeches of the bishops. The Fathers of the Council unanimously accepted this suggestion. In the Nicene Creed, the holy Fathers set forth and confirmed the Apostolic teachings about Christ's divine nature. The heresy of Arius was exposed and repudiated as an error of haughty reason. After resolving this chief dogmatic question, the Council also issued Twelve Canons on questions of churchly administration and discipline. Also decided was the date for the celebration of Holy Pascha. By decision of the Council, Holy Pascha should not be celebrated by Christians on the same day with the Jewish Passover, but on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (which occurred on March 22 in 325).

# The Most Confessed Sin

*A brother at Scetis committed a fault. A council was called to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to say to him. "Come, everyone is waiting for you." So he got up and went. He took a leaking jug, filled it with water and carried it with him. The others came out to meet him and said to him, "What is this, Father?" The old man said to them, "My sins run out behind me and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another." When they heard that they said no more to the brother but forgave him. (From The Sayings of the Desert Fathers)*

**It is most unfortunate that the Sacrament of Holy Confession, and with it Holy Communion, have come to be seen as a "duty," rather than the pillar and groundwork of the spiritual life.**

**This formalism continues to rob many people of the experience of God because they come to Confession unprepared, taking only a few brief moments to examine their conscience with the help of a sin checklist in their prayer book.**

**With such a brief and shallow preparation, many people come to Confession not knowing what to say – and so, rendering an account of their sins for the previous six months or longer, their spiritual father hears that most confessed sins: "I ate meat on a Friday," and its brother, "I took the Name of the Lord in vain."**

**One would expect that with such depth of sins being confessed that our churches would be models of sanctity, attracting new members through the holiness of the average churchgoer. But the sad truth is that these two sins are the most confessed because most of us don't understand what confession is, let alone what sin is. Having gone through the checklist we exonerate ourselves from all but these two sins.**

**The real problem is that many of us never experience spiritual growth. We revert back during Confession to that eight year old child who had the Confession Prayers drilled into him or her – often in Slavonic – which people automatically recite without knowing the meaning of a single word!**

**In the world of the eight year old, murder and adultery, hatred and jealousy, lying and lewdness are normally far removed from the experience of day to day life. It is sad and difficult to realize that as we grew physically and emotionally, our spiritual growth was often stunted. The truth is that we have no idea of how to approach Holy Confession as adults. We are often oblivious to what sin is and what we must look for in ourselves to confess.**

**The famed Orthodox spiritual writer, St. Isaac of Nineveh, some fourteen hundred years ago said: “*The person who can see his own sin is greater than someone who can raise the dead.*” More common, however, is the attitude pointed out in the example of Abba Moses in the above story: our own sins run out behind us unseen but we are always ready to judge the sins of others. The Lord Jesus tells us, “*Hypocrite, first take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye*” (Matthew 7:5).**

**There are several methods that we can use to correct this spiritual blindness that is within us. The first is to realize that Confession must be an ongoing process that takes place everyday! The Orthodox prayer book contains a “Confession of Sins” to be prayed at morning or evening prayers. At the end of the day we need to examine our lives and ask the Lord and ourselves where we fell short, what we could have done better and the state of our relationship with those around us. This small act is the foundation and the beginning of a true spiritual life.**

**In our prayers we must ask the Lord to both reveal our sins to us and grant us the desire to confess them. We pray in the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian: “*Grant me to see my own sins and not to judge those of my neighbor.*”**

**It was out of the conviction of his own sinfulness that St. John Chrysostom wrote in his prayer before Holy Communion: “*I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first.*” St. John wrote this prayer as a personal devotion, which the Church loved and came to use.**

**As the Saints grew nearer and nearer to God, they became more and more aware of their own sins. It is like a person in a dark room who cannot tell if his clothes are clean or dirty, but the more he or she comes into the presence of the light, the more he or she can see the dirt. We are now in the dark room and need to seek the light to see our own sins.**

**As we approach Confession, we need to look for the correct standard to judge ourselves by. We often look at the people around us and believe that we are no better or worse than they are. Hence, we find little fault with ourselves. We need to find a higher standard by which to judge ourselves.**

**One place where we can find a better standard is in the pages of the Gospel. We can become aware of our sinfulness by asking ourselves, when we hear the Gospel reading in Church or when we read at home, exactly where we would fit in.**

**In Chapter Eight of the Gospel of St. John there is an interesting story of a woman caught in adultery:**

***Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (St. John 8:3-11).***

**As we read this story, the question we must be asking ourselves is: "Where do I fit in here?" Would I have been the woman caught in adultery? That is, are my sins blatant and obvious to those around me but, somehow, I am able to rationalize away my bad behavior. Would I have been one of those who brought the woman to Jesus demanding that justice be done? That is, must I always have my own way and seek vengeance or get even with those who may have done me wrong? Would I be one of the older men, quick to realize my sin and walk away in shame, or one of the younger for whom it took a while longer? Some of the Church Fathers in commenting on this passage said that Jesus was writing on the ground the sins of those who were accusing the adulterous woman. Would I have been with the Lord, ready to**

**forgive a penitent sinner, knowing that I myself am guilty of many sins? Or am I so blinded by my pride that I would have stayed and started throwing stones?**

**Take as another example the familiar parable of the Prodigal Son. How many of us identify with the older son who did not run away and kept to his Father's house. Do we feel his resentment at the younger son? The truth is that most of us are not in the position of the older son, but have become ourselves prodigals – squandering our spiritual inheritance through a lack of prayer, not going to Church, refusing the invitation of the Lord. In looking at this parable, it is the prodigal that the Church calls upon us to identify with and not the righteous pride of the elder son.**

**When hearing the Gospel, place yourself in the story – ask yourself honestly where you would be and you may catch a glimpse of your sinful self.**

**If we daily examine ourselves through prayer; if we find ourselves in the Gospel story; if we make life itself a preparation for Confession, we will find this Sacrament is much more than an obligation – it is the foundation of our spiritual life and brings us closer to the experience of the Kingdom of Heaven. We will also discover much more to confess than the last hamburger we ate on a Friday.**

**Source: [American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A](#)  
[Protopresbyter Lawrence Barriger](#)**