

St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church

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Very Reverend Michael Speck – Pastor

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Reverend Deacon David Donch

Reverend Deacon Michael W. Speck

Sr. Warden Greg Michaels

Jr. Warden Rocco Lupo

Reader Nathaniel Donch

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Sunday, March 15, 2020 – St. Gregory Palamas

Sunday, March 15 -9:40 AM – 3rd and 6th Hours
-10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy - No Coffee Hour
Monday, March 16 - 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM - Office Hours in Church Rectory
Wednesday, March 18 -8:30 AM – Confessions
-9:00 AM – Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
Thursday, March 19 -2:00 PM – 4:00 PM – Office Hours in Church Rectory
Friday, March 20 No Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
Saturday, March 21 -8:30 AM - Confessions
-9:00 AM – Divine Liturgy –Soul Saturday
-4:15 PM – Confessions
-4:45 PM – 9th Hour - 5:00 PM – Vespers
Sunday, March 22 No Adult Education -9:40 AM – 3rd and 6th Hours
-10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy – No Coffee Hour

Please note that there will be no Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts served this Friday. I must be out of town on that day. Otherwise, the schedule of services remains the same.

The Sisterhood will be making pascha breads on April 6, 7, and 8. Please note that the deadline for orders for these breads is *March 29. Order forms are located in the church entrance.* Thanks for your support!

If you would like to have the announcement section of the Weekly Bulletin sent to you by e-mail, please complete the yellow sheet in today's bulletin and return it to me or send me an e-mail at mspeck100@gmail.com

Please Keep In Your Prayers the Servants of God,

Those Serving in the Military: Joshua, Daniel, John, Michael and Aaron.

Ill Servants: Archpriest John Chupeck, Archpriest Herman Shick, Mother Onuphria, Irene Bashta, Claudia Bashta, Ann Bandas, Alexander Wasilenko, Christian Lupo, Kelly Lupo, Rocco Lupo, Olga Melnick, Clement John Wick, Helen Milliman, Michelle Pavylak, Michael Topichak, Tanya Kohut, Anthony Lupo, William Acker, Michael Panek, Karen Donch, Suzanne Schumacher, David Lupo, Elizabeth Hryvko, Ludmilla Smart, Damian Donch, Amanda Donch Domenick and Sara Urciuoli, Elizabeth Peters, Wesley Clymer, Walter, Charity, Michael, Natalie, Teresa, James, Louis, and Brendi, Ralph and Martin, Susan (Wilson), David, Mildred.

Saint Patrick, Bishop of Armagh, Enlightener of Ireland (March 17)

Saint Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland was born around 385, the son of Calpornius, a Roman decurion (an official responsible for collecting taxes). He lived in the village of Bannavem Taberniae, which may have been located at the mouth of the Severn River in Wales. The district was raided by pirates when Patrick was sixteen, and he was one of those taken captive. He was brought to Ireland and sold as a slave, and was put to work as a herder of swine on a mountain identified with Slemish in Co. Antrim. During his period of slavery, Patrick acquired a proficiency in the Irish language which was very useful to him in his later mission.

He prayed during his solitude on the mountain, and lived this way for six years. He had two visions. The first told him he would return to his home. The second told him his ship was ready. Setting off on foot, Patrick walked two hundred miles to the coast. There he succeeded in boarding a ship, and returned to his parents in Britain. Some time later, he went to Gaul and studied for the priesthood at Auxerre under Saint Germanus (July 31). Eventually, he was consecrated as a bishop, and was entrusted with the mission to Ireland, succeeding Saint Palladius (July 7). Saint Palladius did not achieve much success in Ireland. After about a year he went to Scotland, where he died in 432.

Patrick had a dream in which an angel came to him bearing many letters. Selecting one inscribed "The Voice of the Irish," he heard the Irish entreating him to come back to them. Although Saint Patrick achieved remarkable results in spreading the Gospel, he was not the first or only missionary in Ireland. He arrived around 432 (though this date is disputed), about a year after Saint Palladius began his mission to Ireland. There were also other missionaries who were active on the southeast coast, but it was Saint Patrick who had the greatest influence and success in preaching the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, he is known as "The Enlightener of Ireland."

His autobiographical Confession tells of the many trials and disappointments he endured. Patrick had once confided to a friend that he was troubled by a certain sin he had committed before he was fifteen years old. The friend assured him of God's mercy, and even supported Patrick's nomination as bishop. Later, he turned against him and revealed what Patrick had told him in an attempt to prevent his consecration. Many years later, Patrick still grieved for his dear friend who had publicly shamed him. Saint Patrick founded many churches and monasteries across Ireland, but the conversion of the Irish people was no easy task. There was much hostility, and he was assaulted several times. He faced danger, and insults, and he was reproached for being a foreigner and a former slave. There was also a very real possibility that the pagans would try to kill him. Despite many obstacles, he remained faithful to his calling, and he baptized many people into Christ.

The saint's Epistle to Coroticus is also an authentic work. In it he denounces the attack of Coroticus' men on one of his congregations. The Breastplate (Lorica) is also attributed to Saint Patrick. In his writings, we can see Saint Patrick's awareness that he had been called by God, as well as his determination and modesty in undertaking his missionary work. He refers to himself as "a sinner," "the most ignorant and of least account," and as someone who was "despised by many." He ascribes his success to God, rather than to his own talents: "I owe it to God's grace that through me so many people should be born again to Him." By the time he established his episcopal See in Armagh in 444, Saint Patrick had other bishops to assist him, many native priests and deacons, and he encouraged the growth of monasticism. Saint Patrick died on March 17, 461 (some say 492). There are various accounts of his last days, but they are mostly legendary. Muirchu says that no one knows the place where Saint Patrick is buried. Saint Columba of Iona (June 9) says that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that Patrick was buried at Saul, the site of his first church. A granite slab was placed at his traditional grave site in Downpatrick in 1899. (OCA Lives of the Saints)

In order to help to protect our church family from the potential spread of the SARS-Covid-19 Virus and under the direction of the Holy Synod of Bishops, several temporary changes to our traditional para-liturgical practices are being implemented. We pray that these adjustments will be necessary for only a few weeks.

First and foremost, the practice of Holy Communion cannot be changed. It is among the foundational tenants of the Orthodox Faith that the Holy Eucharist is the True Body and Blood of Christ and cannot cause harm or illness to those who are properly prepared to receive it. Further, following every Divine Liturgy, deacons or priests consume the chalice(s) after all the faithful have partaken and are not stricken with disease from this practice, nor have they been throughout the history of the Church. Should any person find his or her faith in this regard to be weaker than their brothers and sisters in Christ and choose to not approach the chalice for a brief time during this viral outbreak, they will in no way be stigmatized or judged to be lacking. The Church prays for all its children that their faith may be strengthened. Moreover, the Church prays for all those who believe that they have a stronger faith than their brethren in this regard as this attitude was displayed by the Pharisee praying in the Temple and is a grave sin.

- 1. Anybody experiencing fever with cough, shortness of breath, and other signs and symptoms of upper respiratory infection or any illness should not come to church, but immediately seek medical evaluation and treatment. If you are over age 60 and have any additional risk factors such as lung or heart disease, diabetes or chronic medical conditions that reduce your immunity, please know that if you choose to stay at home for a week or two until this outbreak is quelled, there will be no penalty or judgment by the Church.**
- 2. Please practice cleanliness and care especially at church. Make sure to wash hands, use hand sanitizers (if they can be found) and avoid sneezing and coughing. Do not use tissues and leave them lying around. If you usually leave your prayer books or other items in the pews from week to week, please take them home with you.**
- 3. We will suspend the following practices that we are accustomed to:**
 - The Zapivka (wine after communion) will not be served. Although we have used individual disposable cups for some time, the chance of contamination of them is significant**
 - The antidoron (bread served after communion and at the end of the service) will not be brought out. The possibility of contamination by fingers picking up this bread is also significant.**
 - When reverencing icons, please do not kiss them. Full reverence can be paid to them by bowing at the waist prayerfully. Do not kiss the chalice when receiving the Eucharist.**
 - The Cross will not be brought out for veneration at the conclusion of services for the foreseeable future. The Divine Services of the church are in no way diminished or any canons violated by these short-term precautions.**
- 4. Meetings and group gatherings are to be temporarily suspended:**
 - Coffee Hour is cancelled for the next several weeks.**
 - Adult education and the Men's Discussion Group will not meet for several weeks.**
 - Parish Council and Sisterhood business may be conducted by telephone, e-mail, or even teleconferencing.**
 - Post-Communion prayers should be read privately so as to not lengthen the time that we are gathered in the church.**

- 5. Social distancing.** The Center for Disease Control asks that as possible, you should stand six feet away from other people. This does not include immediate family members. This may be difficult to do so we ask you to use your own judgment not standing too close to others. We will temporarily not gather our choir together in the back of the church but have directors standing on the right front side of the church to lead singers standing nearby or throughout the congregation.
- 6. Please remember your stewardship responsibilities to the church.** This is a **TEMPORARY** situation and the expenses of operating our parish are not diminished. Even if you are not present in church, please remember that your continued support is a vital obligation.
- 7. It is important to stress that our church is not closing its doors at all for any services.** Except for this Friday evening, the entire schedule for Great Lent will be served as usual. I will delay some of the home visitations for the Lenten season for several weeks until the spread of this virus is controlled. Nursing homes and extended care facilities are uniformly closed to visitors and hospital visits may also be curtailed at least partially.
- 8. Should the civil authorities order the closure of churches and gathering places in the event of a greater emergency, we will comply.** Christ taught us to obey government officials since God has chosen to place them in authority over us. One of our diocesan parishes in New York City has been closed by official order. Most parishes in the OCA diocese of the South will be closed for several weeks (as announced on March 13).
- 9. There is an almost satanic frenzy of panic and anxiety being whipped up by television, radio, print and electronic media for their own gain. Shut off the noise.** Read a good Orthodox book, the scriptures, and the lives of the saints. You will still hear enough of the news to keep you informed without immersing yourself in it for hours each day. **TRUST GOD** and seek His peace.
- 10. This same anxiety is driving many to hoard goods and empty store shelves unnecessarily.** This may well mean that some of our brothers and sisters may not have the ability obtain necessary supplies. Please consider checking on the elderly and less fortunate and assist them wherever possible.
- 11. I know that some of you will criticize these temporary changes thinking them unnecessary or ill-conceived.** However, we are commanded to be obedient to Christ's Holy Church, its Bishops and leaders. Should we willfully ignore the recommendations outlined here by the Synod and by the Center for Disease Control, we will be acting sinfully, possibly causing our brothers and sisters harm, and perhaps even subjecting ourselves to civil penalties. These recommendations have been promulgated by the Church in its love for not only its own faithful, but for all of God's children, and not out of fear.

Let us pray for God's guidance and mercy in these days and trust in his never-ending love for all of humanity.

Asking for your prayers and assistance,

Father Michael

March 13, 2020

Statement of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America on the Corona Virus - March 13, 2020

Since January of this year, the world has witnessed the rapid spread of a virus named SARS-CoV-2, and the disease it causes that has been named Coronavirus Disease 2019, or Corona Virus, often abbreviated as COVID-19. We make the following statement in response to the increase in the number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19, and the anxiety that the spread of this virus has understandably caused amongst our faithful in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. In this statement, we also offer pastoral guidance for the parishes and institutions of the Orthodox Church in America in taking certain necessary, but temporary precautions, so as to mitigate the possibly extreme effects of this virus.

The Church is the mystical body of Christ. Nothing can affect or change this sacred mystery. Furthermore, nothing that is done in all reverence, piety, and fear of God in response to this virus should be construed as anything other than a prudent pastoral and temporary response to a situation that has the possibility of severe consequences. As the body of Christ, we should meet the challenges posed by this virus with the assurance of faith, in oneness of mind, and in imitation of the Great Physician and Healer of souls and bodies, our Lord Jesus Christ. All members of the Church should seek to console the anxious, assist those afflicted, and encourage those working in medical professions. All faithful should pay special attention to those who might be at risk of more serious complications from this virus: the young, the elderly, and those who already have respiratory or cardiac illnesses. Indeed, no one should be stigmatized or ostracized because they have contracted the virus.

If, however, any member of the Church – clergy or laity – presents symptoms of COVID-19, they should refrain from attending services for the period of time directed by medical authorities, presently fourteen days. As always, we encourage our clergy to note carefully who might be absent from liturgical services and reach out to them, ascertaining if they are ill or in need of pastoral care due to this virus. We assure all members of the Orthodox Church in America that we, the members of the Holy Synod, love and pray fervently to our Almighty God for all those whom he has entrusted to our pastoral care. May the God of every consolation, the God of mercy, love, and compassion restore to health those who are ill, strengthen the families of those afflicted, and guide those ministering to them.

We should be mindful of our stewardship commitments to our parishes, but also increase our charitable giving so that those who fall ill might not also fall into debt and hardship, because of lost wages.

The outbreak of COVID-19 requires our dioceses, our parish communities, and their faithful to be vigilant in keeping our parishes safe. Careful, precautionary, and temporary steps taken now can prevent extreme spread of this virus.

Churches and institutions should adopt [common-sense measures as advised by the CDC](#). In addition to these measures, we direct the following steps to be taken in the Church until such a time that this virus no longer poses a serious danger:

Members of the Church should become familiar with the symptoms of the Corona Virus (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and other symptoms as may be publicized by medical authorities), and, if these symptoms present themselves, both seek medical help immediately and self-quarantine for fourteen days. If clergy present such symptoms, they too should seek medical assistance and self-quarantine for fourteen days, and inform their dean, chancellor, or bishop that they are unable to serve the sacred services. Even though they might be absent from

services, affected clergy and faithful should maintain their prayer rule, engage in spiritual reading, watch services transmitted over the internet, and utilize the wealth of liturgical resources available on the website of the Orthodox Church in America.

Everyone should wash their hands thoroughly and frequently, cover coughs and sneezes, and avoid sharing personal items. In particular, all persons who serve in the altar, before they cut bread, pour wine, pick up candles, etc., as well as those who are involved in serving at social events, should make every effort before they fulfill their roles to wash their hands thoroughly.

Church leaders should see to the careful cleaning of frequently touched objects such as icons, chalices, Communion spoons, and the blessing cross. Communion cloths should be respectfully washed more regularly, or discarded and replaced. Disposable cups should be used for water and wine that is often offered after Holy Communion (so-called *zapifka*), or the practice of using *antidoron* alone may be implemented. Furthermore, as with our temples and sacred objects, Church leaders must take every effort to keep scrupulously clean every part of our facilities, social halls, kitchens, bathrooms, etc. Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be readily available, as well as soap and disposable towels in the bathrooms, and disinfectant wipes.

For this period, as a temporary measure, the faithful should respectfully refrain from physical contact when receiving blessings from and greeting a bishop or priest. Likewise, the faithful should temporarily refrain from greeting one another with the traditional three-fold Kiss of Peace.

During this time, Churches should exercise what the authorities call social distancing. As such, communities should minimize, for the interim, occasions for social gatherings. Those parishes that have coffee hour should be sure that food is distributed by individuals wearing gloves, and that disposable paper plates and cups and plastic utensils are used. Choral leadership should also consider the arrangement of choir members and place them at a safe distance from one another.

As with other local Orthodox Churches, in response to the challenges posed by this virus, and ever mindful that we must do our part to contain its spread, we nevertheless do not permit changes to the practice of giving Holy Communion. In cities and communities where the effect of this virus is severe, the diocesan bishop must be consulted for the blessing to adopt further *limited* measures to prevent the spread of disease in the context of liturgical gatherings, which could include a temporary alteration of normal liturgical life. In the New York metropolitan area, we have already witnessed at least one Orthodox Church, as well as other religious congregations, closed down because of emergency orders by the civil authorities. If parishes of the Orthodox Church in America are directed to do the same, they should a) alert their diocesan bishop immediately, and b) seek to comply with the directions of civil authorities.

We seek in these measures to follow the principles enumerated by His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogeia of the Church of Greece who said, “All measures that undermine faith and hope in God, anything that doubts the efficacy of Holy Communion and the mysteries is to be rejected. Anything that honors the community of the faithful and our fellow man is an expression of love for them and for God.” In the midst of our Lenten journey to Pascha, beloved children in the Lord, we are given an opportunity, paradoxically, to honor and serve our neighbor as we struggle with this virus. May our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, enable us to bear the struggle that is set before us, granting us the wisdom and discernment to know what is well-pleasing to him, and the strength to accomplish it.