

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

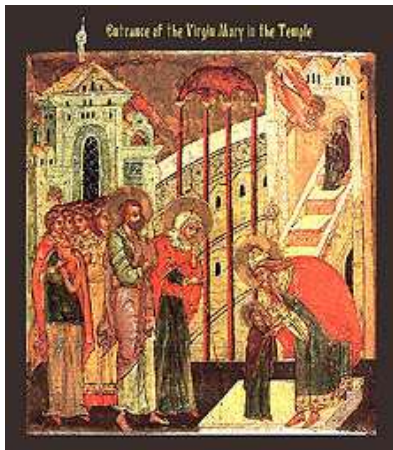
Jr. Warden – Reverend Deacon David Donch

Secretary – Jane Kimak

Treasurer – Glenn Peters

Sunday, November 17, 2024

21st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 4. St. Gregory, Wonderworker of Neo-Cæsarea (ca. 266-270). Ven. Nikon, Abbot of Rádonezh, disciple of Ven. Sergius (1426). Ven. Lazarus the Iconographer, of Constantinople (ca. 857). Martyr Gobron (Michael) and 133 soldiers, of Georgia (914). Ven. Genadius of Vatopedi (Mt. Athos).



Saturday, November 16 - 5:00 PM – Great Vespers

Sunday, November 17 – 8:40 AM – Adult Education

- 9:30 AM - Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, November 20 - No Morning Divine Liturgy

— 5:00 PM – Great Vespers with Litya

Thursday, November 21 – 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

Saturday, November 23 — 5:00 PM – Great Vespers

Sunday, November 24 - 9:00 AM – Confessions

9:30 AM - Divine Liturgy and Coffee Hour

Please remember that we are now in the time of the Christmas Fast of the Church. Our lives should be directed to spiritual efforts as we approach the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Thanks to all who worked so hard to make Our Sisterhood Bazaar a success. May God Bless you for your dedication to The charitable work of this organization!

We also thank you for your Food Pantry Ministry donations. Please continue your generous support so that we may assist as many people as possible as Thanksgiving and Christmas approach. Thank you very much!

Our contribution envelopes for 2025 have arrived. Please pick them up in the church basement.

Orthodox Prayer of Thanksgiving

O Lord my Savior and my Master, I, Thine unprofitable servant, with fear and trembling give thanks unto Thy loving goodness for all Thy benefits which Thou hast poured so abundantly upon me, Thy servant. I fall down in adoration before Thee and offer Thee, O God, my praises; with fervor I cry to Thee: O God, deliver me from all adversities and mercifully fulfill in me such of my desires as may be expedient for me. Hear me, I entreat Thee, and have mercy, for Thou art the Hope of all the ends of the earth, and unto Thee, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed glory, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple



Commemorated on [November 21](#)

According to Holy Tradition, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple took place in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15). There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called “Psalms of Ascent.”) The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home. The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple.

According to the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Luke 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters around the Temple, in which those who were dedicated to the service of God dwelt.

The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. “If anyone were to ask me,” said Saint Jerome, “how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian.”

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin’s stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen (May 21) built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry.

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God’s blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.



Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple



Sometime ago, article by a prominent Orthodox bishop claimed that, historically, the Entry of the Theotokos into the Holy of Holies could not have taken place. He said that Jewish law forbade anyone to enter the Holy of Holies except the High Priest, and him only once a year. He also said that it would have been even more impossible for a woman to enter into the Holy of Holies; Jewish law prohibited this. (It is true that Jewish law did forbid this, but actually many of the major events in the Gospel would also fall under the prohibition of Jewish law.) This critical approach to faith, contrary to what you might think, is not new. From the Virgin Birth to the Resurrection of Christ, our Orthodox Faith has always fallen under the critical eye of those who think in a worldly way. Some of Our Savior's own disciples fell away because they could not believe that He could give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink in Holy Communion. From the very beginning, the Church has had a long history of fighting heresies and proclaiming the truth. But today this critical approach has become very widespread and even dominant in many mainline churches.

True Christianity is a mystical religion filled with miraculous events. Think of the great mystery of the invisible God taking on flesh and walking among us, think of the appearance of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of Christ, the divine light that shone from Christ at His Transfiguration, His glorious Ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire upon the Apostles. All of these events, so fundamental to our salvation, defy space and time and all the laws of nature. And remember that Our Savior also said. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.” (John 14:12-14) Dear brothers and sisters, the miraculous events of the Gospel are certainly not the end of salvation history. The history of Christ’s Holy Church is a history of miracles, of God acting in the world, acting in our lives, healing incurable illnesses and resolving impossible problems. If we limit the activity of God to only what we can prove or understand then we are limiting God’s omnipotent power and restraining his infinite mercy. We are turning our backs on God, turning our backs on all of the Holy Scriptures and the tradition of the Church. To reduce our faith to what can only be proven historically and physically would be to alter it so fundamentally that it would no longer bear any resemblance to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the experience of the Church.

The word miracle is defined in a secular way by the dictionary thus: “A surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency.” So often, modern man is tempted to disassemble true Christianity and to create something that is more palatable for those with weak faith: something so bland that it can be easily adapted to any life style, so undemanding that personal morality becomes irrelevant, and so unchallenging that no one is made to feel uncomfortable. But today, dear brothers and sisters, we gather here to celebrate one of these extraordinary events, one of these great miracles that clearly defies the Jewish Law and goes against history: the Great Feast of the Entry of the Holy Theotokos into The Temple. Today we commemorate the day that the Holy Virgin Mary as a three-year-old child was brought to the Temple to the Holy of Holies, to be reared far away from the noise and distractions of the world. There in the House of God she was nourished by the sacred presence of God in His holy Sanctuary.

In the Old Testament, God was hidden from His people behind the veils of the Holy of Holies. No one was ever allowed to see Him or to enter His presence; only

the High Priest, and then only once a year. With the Entry of the young Virgin Mary into the Temple all of this begins to change radically. God is changing the Jewish Law and becoming visible and approachable. The Holy Theotokos was raised in the Holy of Holies, and after nine years when she departed the Temple God dwelt with her. And in only a few years after her departure from the Temple she would become herself the living Temple of God, the Gate through which Christ Himself would enter this world. She would bring forth the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ Himself. The invisible and unapproachable God hidden in the Holy of Holies would not only become visible to His people and to all creation but become a man and walk among us. Through the Theotokos, God enters this world and dwells among us. He is no longer hidden from us.

When the Holy Virgin enters the Holy of Holies, it is the beginning of a new covenant between God and man, the end of the many centuries of man's alienation from God, and the end of our bondage to sin. We also, you might say, like the Theotokos, have been brought here to this holy temple to be protected from the noise and distractions of the world. Here in this quiet, remote holler of West Virginia we have been placed by God, so that we too, like the Theotokos, can grow spiritually. Here in this monastery, in our little holler on this little mountain, we have been planted. Here under the watchful eye of the Mother of God, we are nourished with spiritual food and protected from the distractions of our world.

She dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the presence of God. She grew up in His presence and remained in His presence for the rest of her life even after leaving the Temple. In celebrating this feast, this particular feast which is the patronal feast of our holler, we too are called to dwell always in His presence. But how sad that we who are called to dwell in His presence here in this holy temple so often choose to ignore God. We stand here in His presence, in this Holy of Holies just like Mary did, but we choose to daydream and imagine that we are somewhere else. Here in this holy temple during the sacred and Divine Liturgy, when heaven and earth meet, when Christ Himself comes down upon our altar to dwell within us, we choose to look away. We so often freely choose the trivial over the sublime.

When we look at the holy face of the Mother of God in the icons, we see a woman, a human being just like us, but one who is filled with peace, because she chose not to look away but to keep her gaze always fixed on Him. No matter what

happened in her life, she did not look away from Him. This is the source of her deep inner peace that is undisturbed by the turmoil of this world.

On this holy and miraculous day, may we have the faith to enter with her into the presence of God and remain there forever. Amen.

(Holy Cross Monastery, Wayne, WV)