

# St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church

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

Very Reverend Michael Speck – Parish Priest (315) 246-6051 [mspeck100@gmail.com](mailto: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, August 18, 2024 - Afterfeast of Holy Dormition**



***There will be no coffee hour this Sunday because of the Sisterhood Brunch.***

**Saturday, August 17 - 5:00 PM – Great Vespers**

**Sunday, August 18 – 9:30 AM - Divine Liturgy followed by the  
**Sisterhood Brunch - No Coffee Hour****

**Wednesday, August 21 – 8:30 AM - Divine Liturgy**

**Saturday, August 24 – 9:30 AM – Baptism of Annalese Baumes  
- 5:00 PM – Great Vespers**

**Sunday, August 25 – 9:30 AM - Divine Liturgy and Coffee Hour**

***The Diocesan Parish Council Meeting will be held on Saturday, August 31 at Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Endicott, NY. The presentations will be very helpful and informative. All parish council members are asked by Archbishop Michael to attend, but all interested individuals are invited as well!***

***Many thanks to Bob Horsford who donated the lovely flowers that have adorned the grave of the Theotokos during this Feast of Holy Dormition. Please support all of the local growers who sell their fresh produce and flowers at the Farmers Market that is held in the Curley's Restaurant parking lot every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 7:00 AM until 2:00 PM. Let's support our local farmers and help to keep the small farm agricultural heritage of Central New York alive and well!***

### **Upcoming Events**

**Thursday, August 29 – Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist**

**Sunday, September 8 – Birth of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Sisterhood Meeting**

**Saturday, September 14 – Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**

**Sunday, September 22 – Parish Council Meeting**

**Tuesday, October 1 – Feast of the Protection of the Holy Theotokos**

**Sunday, October 6 – Adult Education resumes at 8:40 AM Sunday Mornings**

**Sunday, October 27 – Pork Chop Dinner**

**Saturday, November 9 – Sisterhood Bazaar**

*We pass along heartfelt condolences to Andrew and Amanda Armitage and all their family on the Falling Asleep in the Lord of his father Joseph Armitage. May his memory be eternal!*

Joseph B. Armitage, 68, passed away Monday, August 12, 2024 as a result of Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease, with his loving and supportive family by his side. Friends and family are invited to a Mass of Christian Burial Saturday, August 24, 2024 at 10:00AM at St. Mary's Church, Waterloo, NY. Joe was born March 23, 1956 in Lyons, NY to the late Bernard C. and Nancy J. (DiSanto) Armitage. He graduated from Newark High School in 1974 and went on to proudly serve in the U.S. Navy. After his service, Joe met his wife of 40 years, Ellen (Dinan). Joe earned a degree in Criminal Justice from FLCC and later attended RIT. Post college, he worked for the Seneca Army Depot. After the closure of the Depot, Joe held various jobs in the community until his retirement. Joe was intelligent and had the ability to fix anything. He was not afraid of a challenge. Joe enjoyed golfing, camping, and cheering on the Red Sox and NY Giants. He loved to take his family to see the Red Sox play in Toronto, Cleveland, or Boston. Most of all, Joe loved spending time with his immediate and extended family. He was a communicant of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Waterloo, NY. Joe leaves behind his wife Ellen (Dinan), his sons: Andrew (Amanda) and Philip, and beloved grandsons: Oliver, Cameron, and Hughett. Joe is also survived by his siblings: Deborah Silverman, Paul Armitage, Lisa (Paul) Visca, and Tina McMullen.

# Martyrs Florus and Laurus of Illyria



Commemorated on [August 18](#)

**The Martyrs Florus and Laurus were brothers by birth not only in flesh but in spirit. They lived in the second century at Byzantium, and afterwards they settled in Illyria [now Yugoslavia]. By occupation they were stone-masons (their teachers in this craft were the Christians Proclus and Maximus, from whom also the brothers learned about life pleasing to God).**

**The prefect of Illyria, Likaion, sent the brothers to a nearby district for work on the construction of a pagan temple. The saints toiled at the structure, distributing to the poor the money they earned, while they kept strict fast and prayed without ceasing. Once, the son of the local pagan-priest Mamertin carelessly approached the structure, and a chip of stone hit him in the eye, severely injuring him. Saints Florus and Laurus assured the upset father, that his son would be healed.**

**They brought the youth to consciousness and told him to have faith in Christ. After this, as the youth confessed Jesus Christ as the true God, the brothers prayed for him, and the eye was healed. In view of such a miracle, even the father of the youth believed in Christ. When the construction of the temple was completed, the brothers gathered the Christians together, and going through the temple, they smashed the idols. In the eastern part of the temple they set up the holy Cross. They spent all night in prayer, illumined with heavenly light. Having learned of this, the head of the district condemned to burning the former pagan priest Mamertin and his son and 300 Christians.**

**The martyrs Florus and Laurus, having been sent back to the prefect Likaion, were thrown down an empty well and covered over with earth.**

## Virgin Martyr Syra of Persia



Commemorated on [August 24](#)

**The martyr Syra lived during the sixth century in Persia and was the daughter of an illustrious pagan priest of the fire-worshippers (i.e. Zoroastrians), Syra became a priestess at the heathen temple of fire, and occupied herself with honorable activity. But once, after speaking with some Christian beggars, Syra believed in Christ the Savior and began to live as a Christian. She began to learn prayers and Psalms, to fast and to read Christian books.**

**Syra's family began to suspect that she wanted to accept Christianity, and they asked Syra's stepmother to persuade her to abandon this intention. Syra began to hesitate about accepting Baptism, but when she saw a vision in her sleep about the desolate fate which befell her mother after her death, and about the luminous abodes foreordained for Christians, she made up her mind and went to the bishop, asking him to baptize her. Once during the morning sacrifice, Saint Syra was stoking the priestly fire worshipped by the Persians as their god, and overturning the sacrifice she proclaimed loudly: "I am a Christian and reject false gods and I believe in the True God!"**

**The Lord granted Saint Syra the gift of wonderworking. Succumbing to her tortures, Saint Syra fell deathly ill. She began to entreat the Lord that He not permit her to die from the illness, but rather to grant her a martyr's crown. The Lord heard her and granted healing. Seeing the martyr healed, the prison guard and jail warden went to dishonor the holy maiden, but the Lord struck one with illness and the other one was struck dead. The martyr was condemned to be strangled.**

**They conducted the execution with refined cruelty. After a while they left go of the rope, asking the saint whether she wanted to change her mind and remain among the living. But the martyr, barely alive, refused and requested the execution be done quickly. The body of the saint was thrown to dogs to be devoured, but they would not touch it. Christians then buried the body of Saint Syra.**

# Why Repent, When I Know I'll Only Sin Again?



**For many believers, repentance is a natural and essential element of spiritual life, a heavenly gift, and a healing medicine indispensable in spiritual warfare. Not only regular parishioners hurry to Confession for a second chance, but also “Paschal Christians” subconsciously feel the need to approach for confession once a year and talk to the priest about their pressing issues. However, not everyone understands what repentance truly is, what its secret is, or how it works, if we can be put it that way. Months and years pass, people repent and repent, but they come back with the same sins. A person gets the feeling that he is standing still or spinning in a wheel: there is movement, but no progress is seen. Finally, doubts and thoughts come: Why repent if I will sin again? What is the point, and is there one at all?**

**First, it is necessary to understand that God does not command anything meaningless. It would be absurd to claim that God has established “ineffective” sacraments without providing a guarantee. He does not require our labor for the sake of labor itself. He desires our salvation and the restoration of human dignity so much that He did not spare His Son to achieve this goal. This very act shows how serious and important the issue of our salvation is to God. Therefore, every one of His commandments is supremely purposeful and wise. If there is indeed meaning in divine prescriptions, then the problem lies within us. Perhaps it is we who are doing something wrong.**

**Indeed, we confess specific sins, we identify and carefully record them, but we forget about the causes of sins—the passions. It is the passions, that is, persistent**

**habits and vicious tendencies that, through frequent indulgence, become part of our very nature, which form the massive base of the iceberg, the tip of which we bring to Confession. Sin is merely the manifestation of a particular passion, its consequence, a sprout that has a deep and branching root – the passion. In our piety, we are like unskilled workers assigned to clear a field by sunset. By plucking the tops of the weeds and neglecting the roots, we survey the cleared area with satisfaction and rejoice at the completed task. We can report the work done and sleep peacefully. But soon it rains, creating favorable conditions for growth, and our weeds rapidly and in even greater numbers fill the field.**

**To illustrate, consider a simple example from daily life. Suppose a person works in a supermarket. He knows that in one of the refrigerators in the warehouse, they store “unfit” and “expired” dairy products. He also knows that some of this “unfit” stock will be returned, some will spoil, and some will be taken by other employees. Therefore, when he leaves, he occasionally takes a bottle of milk, some cottage cheese, or yogurt with him. And since he needs to partake of Communion for the feast day, he confesses this sin along with others during Confession. But then he returns to his usual environment and continues stealing from the warehouse, only to “confess” again at the next feast day. The person genuinely feels that what he is doing is wrong, but not as wrong as the actions of murderers and rapists. He reveals only the obvious sin but does not want to look deep into his heart to understand that the cause of his theft is a hidden and ingrained habit of constantly justifying and excusing himself. If he delved deeper, he would see that he internally justifies and permits his theft. After all, he works diligently, covers shifts for sick colleagues, works overtime when circumstances demand it, and generally feels undervalued and underpaid. He has long made a deal with his conscience and morally justified his theft to himself. Such a person will continue to list the number of stolen bottles at Confession, but deep down he considers himself deserving of this small reward.**

**Here’s another example. A person repents for his anger. This passion torments him and gives him no peace. His loved ones, subordinates, and random people suffer from it, but above all, he himself suffers. He repeatedly confesses this sin, listing all those he yelled at and under what circumstances, but the situation does not change. It does not change because the person needs to fight not the results of the passion, but the passion itself.**

**Since passion is a habit, it must be countered with another habit. The reasons for our dissatisfaction with others can include our pride and arrogance, envy, inability**

**to sincerely rejoice in the success of others, lack of patience, inability to remain silent, and generally our inability to accept people as they are, with their personality traits and shortcomings. At the same time, we want to be accepted as we are, without being asked to change. Until a person learns to pray for others, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to at least support others with sympathy in their troubles, their Confession will remain just a list of people they lashed out at.**

**Someone might repent of lustful sins but neglect impure fantasies and ignore the habit of looking at “explicit” images on the Internet. Another repents of other sins they fell into due to habitual and uncontrolled judgment of others. No matter what sin we use as an example, the meaning is the same: Sin is only an external manifestation of internal causes rooted in the human heart. In other words, sin is an action, while passion is its motive. It is no coincidence that one of the Fathers says that the mind is easily polluted but also easily cleansed. The heart, however, is long to be polluted and long to be cleansed. This is the difference between sin (an action) and passion (a habit).**

**“Passion, fulfilled in reality or ingrained in the soul through long-term sympathy for it and nurturing it, gains dominion over a person. It takes a long time, bloody ascetic labors, and special divine mercy and help to overthrow the yoke of passion, voluntarily accepted” (St. Ignatius Brianchaninov). However, the problem is not only in the difficulty of fighting passions but also in the fact that not everyone can see this connection. A person may confess sins for decades without understanding where they come from and why they do not go away. It takes a lot of experience and gracious help to come to the right understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship. Although, the monastic saints laid out the principles of lawful struggle and proper repentance many years ago:**

**“Only the one who zealously eradicates the causes and occasions of sins can uproot passions; for example, if someone falls into fornication or adultery because of acquaintance with women, they must avoid even looking at them; if someone gives in to intemperance due to excessive food and drink, they must sober themselves with strict abstinence; if greed leads someone to perjury, theft, murder, and blasphemy, they must eradicate the object of their avarice; if someone succumbs to anger out of pride, they should uproot their arrogance with humility. Thus, any vice can be erased if its cause and occasion are removed—for in this way, the sins committed can be forgotten” (St. Abba Pinufius).**

**Therefore, our hypothetical merchandiser from the supermarket needs to stop deceiving and justifying himself. He needs to come to his senses in a gospel-like way, conduct a ruthless and impartial analysis of his actions and motives. He needs to come to the realization that this is not permissible: “These products are not my property, and I have no right to take them. No reason can justify my theft.” As soon as he solidifies this thought, feels it, and fully agrees with it, the theft will cease by itself, as the root (its cause) will be uprooted. But this enlightenment may take years. It will be a great blessing if a person can realize the reasons for their wrongdoing before being caught red-handed.**

**The Sacrament of Confession is a great and generous gift from God. Happy is the one who understands this, and unhappy is the one who neglects it.**

**However, one must approach it honestly, with a sincere heart, without a trace of self-pity and self-justification. The confessional analogion is our Golgotha, on which we must crucify our self-love and self-justification. God accepts the repentance of any person, and in this sacrament He grants the grace to overcome the passions. But we do not make use of it. Instead, at best, we turn repentance into a report on our sinful deeds, and at worst, we invent reasons to justify our actions and even accuse the sacrament of Confession of being ineffective. The question, “Why should I repent if I know I will only sin again?” is indicative in this sense. It reveals the spiritual ignorance of a person unfamiliar with true repentance, demonstrating his veiled cunning and unwillingness to change. It is as if the person is saying, “I repent, but repentance does not work.” True are the words: “He who wants to act finds a way, he who does not want to act, finds an excuse” (Socrates).**

**God, for whom there are no unforgivable sins, is Good and Merciful. But He expects from us self-denial, the absolute and uncompromising abandonment of ungodly thoughts and deeds. Self-justification and false shame devalue repentance, making us like Adam, who blamed God for his fall. God-pleasing repentance does not fear temporary shame. On the contrary, it prefers it to the eternal shame from which there will be no salvation—forever. Sincere and honest repentance can work miracles, heal the old wounds of the soul, make a person like the wise thief, and lead him into paradise along with the righteous who have pleased God through repentance.**

**Hieromonk Roman (Kropotov)**