

# **St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church**

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**Very Reverend Michael Speck – Pastor**

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## **Sunday, March 29, 2020 – St. John Climacus**

**We will be broadcasting the Vespers for the 4th Sunday of Great Lent at 5:00 PM tonight. Divine Liturgy will be live-streamed tomorrow morning at 9:00 AM.**

**I would ask that you please continue to support our church financially during this difficult time. We have received almost nothing in contributions over the past two weeks. Whether we survive this hardship is dependent on the dedication and love of our members.**

**Sadly our church must still remain closed to our faithful for a short (I hope) time more. Archbishop Michael has blessed Fr. Deacon Michael to serve since he stays the weekends with us anyway. One other person has been coming in to help set up the church for services, otherwise the only other people in church have been there by accident on two occasions (based on schedule confusion that was my fault). I know some people are angry with me and the Synod of Bishops for this temporary policy. It is not MY choice, and I assure you, not their choice either. I would hope for your understanding and ask for your support.**

**Archbishop Michael called last evening to tell me that the Synod of Bishops will meet early this week to devise a plan for the celebration of Holy Week and Pascha.**

**Please pray for Fr. Terence Baz and his wife Barbara. Many of you know them from St. Elias Church where Fr. Terry was pastor for several years, and then from Ss. Peter and Paul in Syracuse after he joined the OCA. They have been serving at our church in Clifton, NJ for several years. Both he and his wife have contracted the coronavirus. May God Grant them, and all virus victims, healing and comfort.**

**God bless and keep you all safe and healthy!**

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible, in thine ineffable goodness, look down upon us, thy people gathered in thy Holy Name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction. Thou knowest our weakness. Thou hearest our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O Lord who lovest mankind, deliver us from the impending threat of the Corona Virus. Send thine angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of physicians and preserve those who are healthy. Enable us to continue to serve our suffering brothers and sisters in peace that together we may glorify thy most honorable and majestic name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

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## 5th Saturday of Great Lent: of the Akathist to the Theotokos

Commemorated on [April 4](#)

**On the Fifth Saturday of Great Lent, the Saturday of the Akathist, we commemorate the “Laudation of the Virgin” Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.**

**In 625, when the emperor Heraclius was fighting the Persians, the Khan sent forces to attack Constantinople by land and by sea. Patriarch Sergius urged the people not to lose heart, but to trust in God.**

**A procession was made around the city with the Cross of the Lord, the robe of the Virgin, the Icon of the Savior not made by hands, and the Hodigitria Icon of the Mother of God. The Patriarch dipped the Virgin’s robe in the sea, and the city’s defenders beat back the Khan’s sea forces. The sea became very rough, and many boats sank. The invaders retreated, and the people of Constantinople gave thanks to God and to His Most Pure Mother.**

**On two other occasions, in 655 and 705, the Theotokos protected the city from Saracen invaders. A feast day dedicated to the Laudation of the Virgin was established to commemorate these victories. The Akathist to the Mother of God is believed to originate from this period, and its use has spread from Constantinople to other Orthodox lands.**

**The icon before which the Akathist was sung was given to the Dionysiou Monastery on Mt. Athos by Emperor Alexius Comnenos. There, it began to flow with myrrh. There were at least three wonderworking copies of this icon in Russia before the Revolution.**

**This icon shows the Mother of God seated on a throne, and surrounded by Prophets with scrolls. (OCA Lives of the Saints)**