

ARCHPRIEST MARTIN SWANSON, PASTOR  
PRIEST SERGII ALEKSEEV, ASSOCIATE PASTOR  
ARCHPRIEST RADOMIR CHKAUTOVICH, ATTACHED

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MID-AMERICA  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

June 2019

### The Meaning of The Divine Ascension

*Excerpt from The Feasts of the Lord*

We should look at why Christ was raised up forty days after His Resurrection, because what happened in Christ's life is not without reason. All things have their reason and purpose.

St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite says that Christ in His human nature had three births, the first from the Virgin Mary, the second by Baptism and the third by Resurrection. And with reference to these three births He was called first-born, because in the first He is first-born among many brothers according to communion of the flesh, in the second He was called first-born of the new creation, and in the third, first-born of the dead. If we are attentive, we shall discover that forty days after these three births, after each of these three happenings of the Lord, there followed an important event. Forty days after His birth He was brought to the Temple, and we have the feast of the Circumcision. Forty days after His Baptism in the Jordan River He conquered the devil in those three temptations. And forty days after His Resurrection He ascended into Heaven and offered to His Father the first-fruits of our own nature.

To be sure, Christ could have raised human nature to Heaven immediately after His Resurrection, but He did not do it, lest the Resurrection should seem to be an illusion. After His Resurrection Christ showed Himself to His Disciples, performed miracles and thus strengthened their faith so that they became witnesses to His Resurrection. In this way, after undoing the suspicion that He was an illusion and referring to the things concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit and His Ascension, in the end He made them spectators of His Ascension (Athanasios the Great). In this way we have a true witness of this divine happening.

If Christ had not become incarnate, the Resurrection and the Ascension would not have taken place. And if He had not risen from the dead, the incarnation would have appeared to be in vain.

St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, analysing the greatness and the value of the feast of the Ascension, says that many people who do not know the greatness of this feast regard it as lower than the others. However, just as the head is the jewel of the body, so also the feast of the Ascension is an embellishment of



### Special Services & Events

- 6/5 Wed. Leave Taking of Pascha 6:00 p.m. Vigil for the Feast of the Ascension
- 6/6 Thurs. 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord
- 6/8 Sat. 4:00 p.m. Pannyhida for the 40 days of the repose of Archbishop Alypy
- 6/15 Sat. 4:00 p.m. Pannyhida Memorial Saturday
- 6/16 Sun. 10:00 am. Pentecost Sunday Liturgy followed by kneeling Vespers
- 6/17 Mon. 6:00 p.m. Vespers for the Third Day of Pentecost
- 6/18 Tues. 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy served in Church Slavonic by Fr. Radomir for the Third Day of Pentecost
- 6/28 Fri. 6:00 p.m. Vigil
- 6/29 Sat. 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy for the feast of St. John of Shanghai & San Francisco

### Weekly Services:

Saturday - Vigil 5:00 p.m.

Sunday - Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

# Parish News

## Choir Voices Needed

All parishioners are welcome to join the choir, all voices are needed. Choir practice is held every Wednesday evening in the church at 6:30. All members of the choir should attend as many practices as possible in order to prepare for the services of the coming week. The choir is an important ministry of the church and if you can sing, you serve God by joining the choir. WE NEED YOU!

## Weekly Tours of St. Basil's

Tours of St. Basil's church are conducted by one of the parish clergy every Wednesday between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., and are designed to acquaint the community with the church, its architecture, traditional design, iconography, and history. No appointments are necessary and the tours will accommodate both individuals and groups. Advance notice would be appreciated for groups over 5. For additional information or to schedule a group tour contact Fr. Martin at 314-835-1569.

## Parish Prayer List

Nadya Danett - Health  
Archimandrite Seraphim - Recovery  
Susanna Roth - Repose

Keep our parishioners, and those who ask us to pray for them in your prayers this month. Contact Fr. Martin to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals do not notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

## Sunday School

Our Sunday School program is completed for the 2018-2019, as we usually have classes from Labor Day till Memorial Day. We would like to thank the Sunday School director Sophia Galloway, as well as her helpers Matushka Svetlana and Valeria Nania for their efforts to make the Sunday School both informative and entertaining. We all know that having the Sunday School in the church hall (with trapeza teams cooking, people going back and forth) is often a challenge, but the teachers are working hard to make the program a success.

Our thanks go also to the Sunday School children's parents for their participation in the educational process and in preparing for the celebrations of the Nativity and Pascha.

## Gardening Help

Parishioner, John Malcom, welcomes any who are willing to help gardening on the church grounds. John Malcom will be working at the parish Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9am to noon weather permitting. Tools, gloves, and water will be provided for all who come to help.

## Use eSCRIP and Amazon Smile Rebates

It costs \$0 and benefits the parish. Get cards at the candle counter. Sign up for the Amazon rebate program to have a portion of your Amazon purchase donated by Amazon to the parish. Please find sign up instructions next to the stair case in the hall.

## SERVERS WANTED!

Boys may begin to serve in the altar at St. Basil's from the time they begin to go to Confession (usually about 9 years old). We encourage all of our boys to serve in the altar! For more information please contact Michael Orlando.

## St. Basil's Parish Facebook Page:

Check out <https://www.facebook.com/SaintBasiltheGreatSTLMO/> for daily edification and interesting updates. Like our Facebook Fanpage! "Like" us to have us appear in your Facebook Newsfeed.



May Picture  
Hunt Answer

Icon of the  
Resurrection  
displayed on  
Pascha

## Divine Ascension continued

all the feasts. It is the fullness of all the feasts of the Lord. The first feast is the awe-inspiring and wonderful Nativity of Christ in the flesh. Second is the feast of Theophany, which has a greater vision of God than the first. The third feast is the Resurrection, which was shown to be more glorious than the preceding ones, because death was conquered, but even this did not have the fullness of joy, because Christ was still on earth. However, the feast of the Ascension filled the world with rejoicing, because when Christ opened the heavens, He showed us an extraordinary sight, "our flesh lifted up on the kingly throne" at the right hand of God the Father. So the value of the Ascension is in the fact that the human flesh which was deified by its union with the divine nature of the Word, is seated on the kingly throne, at the right hand of God the Father.

By His incarnation, Christ deified human nature, but men did not have much knowledge of the greatness of His glory, and that is why they misunderstood Him, slandered Him and finally crucified Him. But when Christ ascended into heaven, then men gained perfect knowledge of Christ. Thus the incarnation, with the Ascension which followed, filled the world with knowledge of God (St. Diadochos of Photike).

St. Athanasios the Great, referring to the two feasts of the Lord, those of the Resurrection and the Ascension, says that the feast of Resurrection grants to men the prize of victory over death, while Christ's Ascension lifts man up to heaven, and since it changes man's way of life on earth, it makes heaven accessible to him. Therefore, victory over death is one thing and another is the ascent of human nature to the throne of God.

## One of the Parish's Treasures

Most likely many of us take our parish church for granted: it is there for us and always will be. The same goes for what we experience when in church: traditional church music which some of us grew up with, while others grew to love it. Choral singing is an indispensable part of the authentic church experience.

Our parish choir consists of talented men and women of different ages and different walks of life. What all of them have in common is their talent, love for church singing and dedication to

their ministry.

To recognize our singers' commitment and special role they play in the life of the church, the parish sponsored a choir appreciation dinner on the evening of Sunday, May 12. Two choir members - John Malcolm and Marushka Royse - opened the doors of their spacious and, at the same time, cozy house to our singers.

The dinner was presided by our rector Fr Martin. As John Malcolm was grilling the steaks, the church singers were coming with their contributions to the meal. The choir members were addressed with the words of appreciation for their dedication to the vital ministry of church singing. This could not be more timely, since the dinner took place only two weeks after the completion of the Holy Week and Paschal services, which, along with the Lenten services, make the most strenuous time for all who serve, sing and read in the church. The feast was abundant - no one was left hungry or thirsty. Many participants expressed how much they enjoyed being together that evening. Perhaps, this could be a beginning of a new tradition in our parish.



## Ask Your Priest

**Q:** What is the correct way to make the sign of the cross? What is the significance of the positioning of our fingers when we make the sign of the cross? When is it appropriate to make the sign of the cross? Is it ever not appropriate to make the sign of the cross? How should we incorporate bows before, during, or after making the sign of the cross?

**A:** *When making the sign of the Cross, we, with our right hand, trace over our body the Cross of*

*Our Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus Christ. By doing that we confess our faith in the Most Holy Trinity, in Christ - the Incarnate Son of God, Deliverer of mankind. By making the sign of the Cross we also express our love of and thankfulness to God, our hope for salvation and protection from the demonic attacks.*

*To make the sign of the Cross we join the tips of our thumb, index and middle fingers of our right hand together, while the other two fingers are bent to touch the palm of our hand. The joined three fingers signify our faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as the undivided Trinity one in essence; while the other two fingers pressed to the palm of our hand signify the two natures of the Incarnate Son of God.*

*To make the sign of the Cross we touch our forehead (sanctifying our mind), stomach (the center of our being), right shoulder and then our left shoulder (sanctifying our actions). We must do this without haste. For the best timing, while making the sign of the Cross, say: "In the Name of the Father (the fingers touch the forehead), and of the Son (we touch our stomach), and of the Holy (the right shoulder) Spirit (the left shoulder)". We should bow only after we have made the sign of the Cross, not while we are making it.*

*Holy Hierarch John Chrysostom says that we entertain demons when we make the sign of the Cross incorrectly: with haste, or bow before completing making the sign of the Cross. Whereas the correctly (i.e. without haste, with faith and fear of God) made sign of the Cross terrifies the demons, calms down passions and is pleasing to God.*

*Tertullian testifies about making the sign of the Cross in his lifetime (late second and early third century): "We protect ourselves by making the sign of the Cross at all circumstances: when we enter the house or leave it, when we get dressed, when we light lamps, when we go to bed or sit down to do any work".*

### **Getting to Know Our Subdeacon**

Last, but certainly not least, we come to our interview with our Subdeacon, Thomas. As some of our readers and parishioners may know, Subdeacon Thomas is my (Florita's) husband.

Therefore, it is my pleasure to relay his responses to our enquiries so that we can all get to know our Subdeacon better.

#### **Where were you born?**

*I was born in Dallas, Texas.*

#### **Where are you living?**

*I have lived in Dallas, Austin, College Station--these are all cities in Texas--and finally St. Louis.*

#### **When and why did you convert to Orthodoxy?**

*I became Orthodox in 2013. The initial impetus for my conversion was a class that I took in college called "History of Christianity". The class was taught objectively and at a secular university, but I was able to see clearly from the material which we studied that the Christian denomination to which I belonged deviated from the early Church in many respects. After the class ended, I read much more about the early Church. My studies eventually led me to conclude that the Orthodox Church alone preserved the fullness of the Gospel and that the Orthodox Church was the Church which Christ Himself established.*

#### **How long have you been a Subdeacon?**

*I have been a Subdeacon since January of 2018.*

#### **What do you find encouraging about the Orthodox Church?**

*I am glad to be Orthodox for a number of reasons, not least of all because I, along with all Orthodox, belong to the Body of Christ. It is only as a member of this Body that we can grow into the stature of the fullness of Christ. Only in Christ, in the Church, can we become new creations--true human beings. I am encouraged to know that, as sinful as I may be, I too have access to this true humanity in Christ, by merit of the fact that, through God's Grace, I am a member of His Church.*

#### **Where and what did you study?**

*I studied Classics and History at Texas A&M University and Classics at Washington University in St. Louis. I am studying Pastoral Theology right now at the Diocesan Pastoral Seminary.*

#### **Why did you choose your patron saint, St. Thomas the Apostle?**

*My given name is Thomas, and, although I was not specifically named for St. Thomas, I felt it fitting to keep the name which I was given at birth.*

**What do you like about St. Thomas the Apostle?**

*I like my saints for many reasons, but several stand out. For one, although he doubted the Lord's resurrection, it is through this doubt that we are confirmed in our faith in the resurrection. Secondly, I admire St. Thomas for his declaration "my Lord and my God," after the Lord appears to him. The statement is not only moving to anyone who reads it, but it is also of great theological significance. Jesus Christ truly is Lord and God.*

**Clay Family Interview**

In April, the Clay family was brought into the Orthodox church through Chrismation. We are happy to welcome the Clay family to St. Basil's parish and asked Seraphim, the patriarch of the family, to introduce us to his family and our new parishioners.

**Where are you and your family from?**

*I (Seraphim) am originally from St. Louis and grew up in Jefferson County (primarily in Festus). My wife (Alexandra) is from New York City and grew up in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We met in Nashville, TN in 1998 and got married later that year. Our children Genevieve (2002) and Sergius (2005) were born in Nashville. Nicholas (2007), Herman (2010), and Lazarus (2012) were born in St. Louis.*

**Why did you move to St. Louis and for how long have you been here?**

*St. Louis is my first home and a lot of my family is still here. After traveling and moving a lot (in and out of state), one is naturally drawn back to their roots.*

*As a family, we first lived in St. Louis in December 2003 after a year in Santa Monica, California. It was only for a few months but it left a lasting impression upon Alexandra, who felt at home here as I do. Nevertheless, we moved back to Nashville for a year (2004-2005) and then moved back to St. Louis in 2015 for 8 years. In the Fall of 2013, we moved again to Nashville, and then back to St. Louis in February 2018. We are very happy to be here and plan to stay, at least for awhile.*

*Nashville has always been a city of opportunity for arts and entertainment, with connections to likeminded people. Specifically, I have been in and out of the music industry and Alexandra has been in and out of video post production. Though St. Louis also has its own opportunities, the city has been more of a draw to us because of its down-to-earth working class values, its rich history*

*of local culture and the arts, and more traditional faith expressions. Both cities are home to us and both have vibrant Orthodox communities. But St. Louis has the Blues, and we are big hockey fans.*

**What brought you to Orthodoxy?**

*Simply, the desire to find the true Christian faith and church, with the right way to holiness and salvation. We both grew up in Protestantism and non-denominational Christianity but longed for something they could never offer and fulfill.*

*We first encountered Orthodoxy in 1998 at Alektor Cafe and Books in Nashville. We were unofficial Catholic converts (practicing but non-members) and did not know the Orthodox Church existed, thinking there was only Catholicism and Protestantism. In 1999, I told Fr. Parthenios (who owned and operated the cafe and church) we wanted to be Orthodox. But, for one reason or another, we chose to become Catholic (which we did). We later reconsidered Orthodoxy many times, due to our ongoing love for its theology and spirituality as well as Orthodox friends, such as Fr. Justin Mathews (who discovered Orthodoxy with us), friends in Russia, and Theodore and Photini at Archangels Bookstore (even visiting St. Basil's at the old location). In 2013, we decided to become Orthodox and were received into the Church in 2015 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Nashville. But after a short time away from the Church (even returning to Catholicism briefly), we were received back into the Orthodox Church here at St. Basil the Great during Holy Week of this year.*

**Is anyone else in your family Orthodox?**

No.

**Who are your patron saints and why did you choose them?**

*I chose St. Seraphim of Sarov because he was the first Orthodox saint I was drawn to, and after buying an icon, I could sense his presence and intercession. Sunshine chose St. Alexandra Romanov because we were given an icon of the Holy Royal Martyrs as a gift, and her being a wife and mother of five children, it made perfect sense. I chose St. Genevieve of Paris for Amelie because of her connection to France in her birth name and Catholic patrons. I chose St. Sergius of Radonezh for Pius, St. Nicholas of Myra for Jude, St. Herman of Alaska for Francis, and St. Lazarus of Bethany for Jonah (Lazarus is his middle name) for particular attributes that seemed suited to each child. I chose a lot of Russian saints because of my love for Russia and Russian Orthodoxy.*

**What is your favorite thing about being Orthodox?**

*My favorite thing about being Orthodox is having the peace of mind and heart that I am in the fullness of the Christian faith, with the true way to salvation and deification. It also provides the proper way of living in the world and interacting with others, namely working out one's salvation privately (with proper discretion) and not judging others but loving with mercy and compassion, because we are all sick (sinners) and need healing (grace). I truly prefer the Eastern liturgy over the Western rite and the Jesus Prayer (in the context of a prayer rule) is well suited to my inclination towards a more monastic approach to faith and life.*

**What are you most excited about in your new Orthodox life?**

*I am most excited about the sense of finally being home (for good) without any ties to our former expressions of faith (namely Catholicism). Though we've had wonderful experiences in the Antiochian and Greek churches, my heart is in the Russian expression of the faith, and we are so grateful to have St. Basil the Great as our church*

*home. This also provides a greater sense of connection with friends in Russia.*

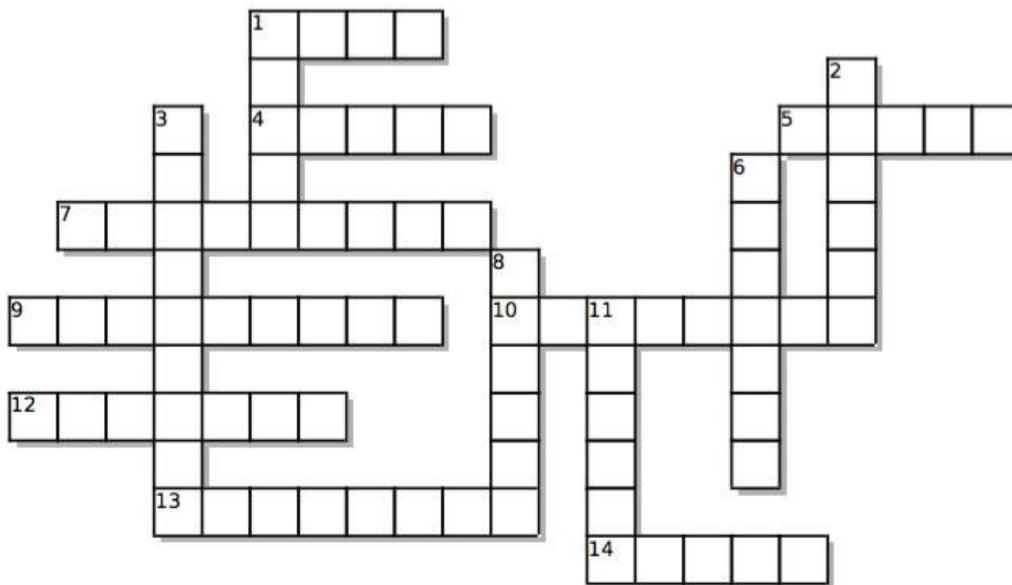
**Do you have any plans to serve the church in some capacity?**

*Alexandra plans on singing in the choir and helping with the garden. I am open to facilitating a men's group (that's being discussed) as well as social media and merchandising (if needed). Obviously, whatever we can do to serve that makes sense, we will do.*

**Is there anything else you would like for the parish to know about you or your family?**

*We owned and operated a business / apostolate, selling merchandise and promoting Catholic and Orthodox monasticism for the laity for 15 years (2002-2017). Apart from the challenges of running a business full-time, our faith and livelihood were inseparable. It was good to have that integration but it also put the burden of one upon the other. So, our primary focus now is simply to live the Orthodox faith without having to make it our "everything" (if that makes sense). In short, we just want to be Orthodox – nothing more, nothing less.*

**June Crossword Puzzle**



**Across**

- 1. Tongues of \_\_\_\_: Form in which the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles
- 4. Length of time between the Resurrection of Christ and His ascent into heaven
- 5. Object which took Christ out of the disciples sight during His ascent
- 7. Fish and \_\_\_\_: First meal of the resurrected Christ
- 9. Feast of Jesus Christ's ascent into heaven
- 10. Apostle to take the place of Judas the betrayer
- 12. Luke and \_\_\_\_: Disciples to see Christ on the fourth appearance of the resurrected Christ
- 13. Sea of \_\_\_\_: Location of the reinstatement of Simon Peter

- 14. Feed My \_\_\_\_: Christ's response to Simon Peter's witness of love

**Down**

- 1. Length of time between the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles
- 2. Mount of \_\_\_\_: Location of Christ's ascent in Bethany
- 3. Feast of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles
- 6. Mountain in \_\_\_\_: Where the resurrected Christ met over 500 disciples
- 8. Road to \_\_\_\_: City where Christ dined with two disciples on His fourth appearance
- 11. Doubting Apostle