

ST BASIL THE GREAT ORTHODOX CHURCH

205 Highland Avenue
Des Peres, MO 63122

A parish of the
Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

CLERGY

Archpriest Sergii Alekseev, Parish Rector
Archpriest Martin Swanson, Dean
Protopriest Radomir Chkautovich
Priest Thomas Nichols
Deacon Ephraim Galloway



JUNE 2022

Schedule of Services

- **Ascension of the Lord**
 - Wed. June 1 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Thur. June 2 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God**
 - Equal-to-the-apostles Constantine and Helen
 - Fri. June 3 Moleben 9 A.M.
- **7th Sunday of Pascha**
 - Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council
 - Sat. June 4 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. June 5 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Holy Trinity Memorial Saturday**
 - Sat. June 11 Panihida 9 A.M.
- **Holy Trinity Day**
 - Pentecost
 - Sat. June 11 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. June 12 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
 - Followed by the Great Vespers with the Kneeling Prayers
- **Holy Spirit Day**
 - Mon. June 13 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **1st Sunday after Pentecost**
 - Feast of All Saints
 - Sat. June 18 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. June 19 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Mon. June 20 — Beginning of the Apostles' Fast**
- **2nd Sunday after Pentecost**
 - Feast of All Saints of Russia
 - Sat. June 25 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. June 26 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

FOCUS PARTICIPATION

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve (FOCUS) is a national organization that seeks to provide Orthodox Christians the opportunity to serve our neighbors by distributing food, clothing, and warm meals on Sundays and Wednesdays throughout the month. Our local chapter serves from Holy Archangel Michael OCA parish located at 1901 Ann Ave. in downtown St. Louis under the administration of Fr. Matt McDonald.



There are three distinct commitments that our parish makes to our local FOCUS chapter. If you have any interest in helping contribute to these activities, please notify Joseph Steineger, Constantine Stade, Fr. Sergii, or Fr. Thomas.

First, we help prepare and serve one Sunday dinner at St. Michael's parish roughly every two months. This month we will serve the **Sunday dinner on June 19** from 3:45 to 6:00 pm. If you are interested in helping, either by providing food for or helping

cook the meal with the Sisterhood, or by distributing the meal and pantry items with the Brotherhood on site, please notify one of our St. Basil's FOCUS representatives. If you cannot help on June 19, perhaps you can do so for our August 21, October 9, or December 11 dinners.

Second, this month marked the launch of the St. Moses the Black Re-Entry Program which helps folks coming out of prison to re-integrate into society by providing job training, clothing, food, etc. The program meets every Saturday and local St. Louis area Orthodox Churches supply roughly **15 sack lunches** for the participants in the program. Our parish has already covered the lunches for the June 11 meeting. However, if you are interested in helping supply lunches for the **July 9** St. Moses meeting, please let one of the FOCUS representatives know.

Finally, we provide goods for the FOCUS **pantry**, which distributes those goods at the Sunday dinners and twice a month on Wednesday mornings. Our local FOCUS chapter tells us which goods to donate, so while your spontaneous giving is much appreciated, it is better for us to supply the requested goods for those in need. For the month of May, our parish supplied 108 cans of soup (per the FOCUS monthly request) and a bag of miscellaneous goods. Thank you! For the month of June, we need to supply the following goods:

- Men's and women's underwear (new only)
- Socks various sizes (new only)
- T-shirts (new only)
- Towels (not thick bath towels, but thinner style dish towels)

Please donate these goods in the large plastic container in our parish coat closet (that container is not for trash) before June 21. Please see the FOCUS reminder flier on our parish bulletin board where you can rip off a tag to remind yourself about these donations.

Thank you for your service to our Lord and God Jesus Christ through your service to those less fortunate. *"For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; ... Naked, and ye clothed me."*
Matthew 25.35-36

MEET YOUR MATUSHKA

As a continuation of getting to know our priests' wives from last month, we relay some details about Archpriest Martin's wife, Katherine Swanson and her experiences being married to an Orthodox priest.

Matushka was born right here in St. Louis and lived the majority of her life in the area. Her parents were immigrants from Albania and settled in St. Louis as a young, hard-working family. Matushka attended an all-girls Catholic grade school but her family was piously Orthodox and regularly attended St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. As an adult, matushka was a Realtor in the St. Louis area for twenty-five years. She received many awards as a top Realtor and her merit is ultimately what introduced her to Father Martin.

Father Martin and matushka met when Father Martin arrived in St. Louis working for St. Louis University. Matushka was recommended to him as a Realtor in order to find a home in the area.

Although, at the time, Father Martin was a Roman Catholic, he still attended Orthodox divine services with matushka and her family. It was even matushka's mother that introduced Father Martin to the parish priest during a family dinner at their home. As Father learned more about the Orthodox faith through his studies and through matushka's family, he ultimately decided to convert to Orthodoxy and eventually pursue priesthood. Father Martin was ordained to the priesthood about four years after they were married and matushka remembers that her mother was very

happy to have her son-in-law become an Orthodox priest. Matushka mentions that she never thought she would become a priest's wife growing up but accepted the role obediently and supported her husband from the very beginning.

Matushka remembers the days during St. Basil's humble beginnings in a converted garage where she would bring thermoses filled with hot coffee for the few parishioners that attended to enjoy after the services. Matushka would then have to leave to work as most realtors are very busy over the weekends. Every Sunday, matushka would do

whatever was necessary to support a growing parish. That very often meant serving the trapeza meal from a tent outside in the parking lot, driving university students to the services, or simply visiting with everyone that came in through the door.

Matushka has learned that over the years, the best thing you can do as a priest's wife is to be patient and to always be kind. She reminisces on all of her experiences and says that St. Basil's has grown into the parish that she and Father Martin always hoped and prayed for.

ST. BASIL'S BOOK REVIEW

BY PARISHIONER PHILIP PIERANGELO

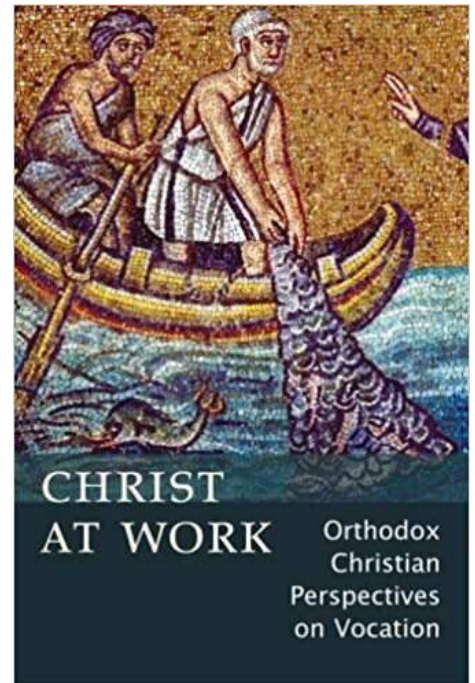
Christ at Work: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Vocation

edited by Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides

Edited: 2006

Genre: Essays/Religion-Orthodox Christianity

My life is but a weaving betwixt my God and me
I do not choose the colors He worketh steadily
oft times He weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside
Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unfold the pattern and explain the reason why
For the dark threads are as needful in the Weaver's Hand
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned
--- Grant Colfax Tuller



Here we see this poem so eloquently being said about choosing a vocation, and how we only tend to see the bottom of what God has in store for us. *Christ at Work* goes into detail on how to *approach* the subject of vocation, rather than give you, the reader, a blunt answer of what one should do in life, since there are multiple ways to view the subject of vocation, rather it be a true calling from God (*The Call of the Virgin Mary*, by Debora Malacky Belonick), or seeking the Kingdom of God (*Seek First His Kingdom: an Invitation to the Calling*, by John Barnet).

Each essayist within this book gives scriptural advice, quotes, as well as historical reasonings on *how* to approach the subject of vocation, and how to approach the calling for everyone. Since everyone is different and is made in the Image of God (*Made in the Image of God*, by Demetrios Katos) we must then seek out each calling and the Will of God.

Now, what do we do if we can't find a proper vocation, where do we go? Well quoted in Barnet's essay *Seek First His Kingdom*, Barnet relates a story where he asks an abbot if he should get married, or be a

monastic: "God doesn't care, God only cares that you *Seek His Kingdom*" (emphasis and pun added). With these words, we must do our worldly vocation with due honor to God who gave us these Gifts for us to use within the world and to Glorify Him.

The last essayist had something to say about the royal priesthood of the laity (*Royal Priesthood*, by Paul Meyendorff). Here he talks about how the laity are to partake in the royal priesthood to spread the message of Christ (1 Pet. 2:9), and while he goes over the brief history of priests in pagan and ancient Judaism, he goes over that we as the laity are to fulfill the part of Christ's ministry in the world and how we need to glorify God within our actions and to show the love of Christ in the world.

This book is an excellent read, only 230 pages, and easy to understand and follow. I highly recommend it for everyone to read.



GETTING TO KNOW OUR CHOIR DIRECTOR

Orthodox liturgical music is one of the main aspects of any service in the Orthodox Church. The words and even melodies have been preserved in these timeless services and it is the role of the choir to create this mystical ambiance for the participants, both earthly and heavenly, that attend them. This task is dutifully executed under the direction of the choir director and St. Basil's is fortunate to have Carol Surgant in this role. Below is an interview with Carol in order for the parish to get to know her and her background better.

Can you tell us about yourself and your family?

I was born in St. Louis, and have lived in the area all my life. I was raised as a Lutheran, and my grandfather, three great grandfathers, and five uncles were ordained Lutheran ministers (a ministerial heritage my family records back to the 16th century.) Several of them also served as Christian missionaries in India, Africa and Venezuela.

How did you find the Orthodox Church?

I often think it was by accident that I came to Orthodoxy, though that is not really true, as each of us are continually called by the Holy Spirit. When I was in college, one night a friend randomly asked: "Do you want to come along to choir practice at my Greek Church?" And thus I began my Orthodox journey. Several years later, I met my husband at the annual Greek picnic at that church – he was serving beer and I was dressed in a Greek

costume performing Greek folk songs! Today, my husband John, and I, have a son and a daughter and 7 grandchildren, and this year celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary.

What is your music background?

I grew up with a lot of music in my family. I sang in school choirs and also sang for six years in a select regional youth choir which performed in the Germanic choral style of the Vienna Boys Choir, and played trumpet all through grade school and high school. After childhood, I studied voice and music theory in college, though I ultimately completed a degree in Business Studies with an emphasis on Information Technology. I am a graduate of the ROCOR Synodal Summer Liturgical Music School which for many years was held each summer at Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY. I have continued my music education at every opportunity and have attended nearly every ROCOR choir conference, served as a conductor at one of them as well as at several Orthodox mission conferences, and I have been a lecturer at several

diocesan music seminars.

How long have you been singing in church choirs or been a choir director?

I sang for five years at the Greek Church, taught hymns in Greek to their Sunday school children, and directed a youth choir. Then after getting married, we began to visit other Orthodox Churches in the area looking for a parish that had more English. I ended up being asked to direct the choir at St. John the Theologian Serbian Orthodox Church, when the priest begged me to please help them, because he said he was unable to pray because of the singing (or lack thereof). Later we joined the Russian Church Outside of Russia, at St. John Chrysostom in House Springs, where we were founding members and major benefactors, and where I directed the choir from 1984-2007. After coming to St. Basil, I sang in the choir and served as assistant director, and eventually became the primary choir director.

How did you become a choir director?

I've been directing various Orthodox choirs since 1978. It's not a position I aspired to, rather I stepped in when there was a need.

What other services do you provide for the diocese?

For the diocese, I currently serve on the Diocesan Council, which is an assembly of diocesan clergy and laypersons that help advise Archbishop Peter. Also, I am a member of our diocesan Music Committee – we provide assistance to choirs as needed, organize music seminars in our diocese and also have coordinated an all-diocesan choir for some special feasts. My most important role in our diocese (and even throughout the world) is a website of Orthodox Church music that I established in 2005, where Orthodox Church music can be downloaded for free (<https://orthodoxchurchmusic.org>). On this site, I present my own arrangements in English of many familiar Russian church hymns, which I typeset and publish in PDF format. It always humbles me to find out that beyond the USA, my music has

been looked at and used in far-flung places such as Taiwan and South Africa. I am very dedicated to Orthodoxy throughout the world, and as such, my family is a major benefactor of International Orthodox Christian Charities.

In your own words, what is the importance of liturgical music?

Liturgical music is an integral part of our Orthodox worship. A priest cannot properly serve the Divine Liturgy, without a choir or chanter (or even the congregation) to sing the responses. Through the work of our choir, we hope to beautify, uplift and inspire more fervent prayer. Our work is critically important; so that even the smallest word, and every "Lord, have mercy", is necessary which might bring a worshipper to true repentance and true worship.

Do you have a favorite hymn?

The music of the church resembles a many-colored tapestry, which unfolds unendingly in great variety throughout the ages. I enjoy so much the greeting of each new feast, and especially when Holy Week and Pascha arrive each year.

What has been the most rewarding part of being a choir director?

For me, directing the choir is like playing a musical instrument composed of human beings. I find it very challenging, but am gratified by the dedication and hard work of our singers.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

I encourage anyone who likes to sing or is musically inclined to join us in the choir. Prior experience in a choir is not required, though it's helpful. And, finally, keep in mind, a random invitation issued to a friend or relative to visit our church might lead them to the Orthodox Church, as happened to me.

WEDDINGS AT ST. BASIL'S

St. Basil's celebrated two weddings during the month of May. Jacob Light and Cheryl Thomas were wed on May 1st by Priest Thomas. Jacob was recently baptized into the faith on Lazarus Saturday and Cheryl is a member of the choir. Also married in May were John Alekseev and Sarah Mueller. The young couple was married on May 8th by Archpriest Sergii. John is Father Sergii's first born and also an altar server. Sarah is also a member of the choir. Pictured are the newly weds with Mr. and Mrs. Light on the left and Mr. and Mrs. Alekseev on the right. Please join us in congratulating the new couples! May God grant them many years!



In the sacrament of marriage, a man and a woman are given the possibility to become one spirit and one flesh in a way which no human love can provide by itself. In Christian marriage the Holy Spirit is given so that what is begun on earth does not “part in death” but is fulfilled and continues most perfectly in the Kingdom of God. Marriage is the deification of human love in the divine perfection and unity of the eternal Kingdom of God as revealed and given to man in the Church.

The marriage service is divided into two parts: the Betrothal and the Crowning service. At the Betrothal service, the chief ceremony is the blessing and exchange of rings. The rings are blessed and exchanged between the bride and groom. This is also an outward symbol that the two are joined in marriage of their own free will and consent. It is celebrated in narthex of the church building before their procession into the nave of the church. The second part of the service is the ceremony of coronation, in which the heads of the bridegroom and bride are crowned by the priest. The crowns are crowns of joy, but also crowns of martyrdom, since marriage involves a self-sacrifice on both sides.

At the end of the service the newly married couple drink from the same cup of wine. This common cup is a symbol of the fact that after this, they will share a common life with one another. This also recalls the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee.

Parish Prayer List

Archimandrite Seraphim — Health
Jackie (Xenia) Peck — Health
Photini Mills — Health

 [Add to your prayer list](#)

Ian Johnstone — Health
Tatiana Zyryanova — Health
Gloria Pappas — Health

Keep our parishioners, and those who ask us to pray for them in your prayers this month. Contact Fr. Sergii 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.