

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



PASCHA AT ST. BASIL'S

Pascha and the divine services leading up to the great feast were triumphantly celebrated at St. Basil's. For many, it was their first Pascha as Orthodox Christians and all joyfully proclaimed Christ is risen!



Pictures continued on next page

MAY 2022

Schedule of Services

- **Anti-Pascha / Thomas Sunday**
 - Sat. April 30 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. May 1 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Radonitsa / Paschal Commemoration of the Departed**
 - Tues. May 3 Panihida at St .Basil's 9 A.M.;
 - Panihida at St .Matthew's Cemetery 10 A.M.;
 - Panihida at House Springs cemetery 11 A.M.
- **Great Martyr George**
 - Thurs. May 5 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Fri. May 6 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Third Sunday of Pascha / Myrrh-bearing Women**
 - Sat. May 7 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. May 8 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Fourth Sunday of Pascha / Sunday of the Paralytic**
 - Sat. May 14 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. May 15 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Mid-Pentecost**
 - Tues. May 17 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Wed. May 18 Divine Liturgy followed by Lesser Blessing of the Waters 8 A.M.
- **Fifth Sunday of Pascha / Samaritan Woman**
 - Translation of Relics of Holy Hierarch Nicholas the Wonderworker
 - Sat. May 21 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. May 22 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodius**
 - Mon. May 23 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Tues. May 24 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Sixth Sunday of Pascha / Sunday of the Blind Man**
 - Sat. May 28 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun. May 29 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.



MEET YOUR MATUSHKA

In the Orthodox Church, unlike in the Roman Catholic West, priests can marry so long as they do so before they are ordained. The wife of a priest is called to support her husband in his ministry and if possible to facilitate his undertaking of the priestly ministry. At St. Basil's, there are three priests' wives who, in the Russian tradition, we call matushka meaning endearing mother. Although their roles may not be as public as that of a priest, since you usually will not see a matushka delivering a homily from the ambon, the calling of a matushka is that of service to her husband and the parish. Therefore, we thought it fitting to interview the matushkas of St. Basil's to learn more about their lives. The first interview is with Archpriest Sergii's wife, Svetlana Alekseev.

Where were you born?

I was born and raised in Estonia.

What is your occupation?

I have been a nurse for eight years and I am currently an emergency room nurse at St. Luke's hospital in Des Peres.

How did you and Father Sergii meet?

We met in college in Estonia where I studied history and Fr. Sergii studied school psychology and English. Since it was a small school, we were in the same circle of friends and met that way.

How long after you were married did Father get ordained to the priesthood?

Father was ordained roughly four years after we were married. We married in 1997 after we had graduated from college.

Did you do anything to prepare for being a priest's wife?

I did not have any formal preparation but since we were living at the seminary with other families, I felt like that environment prepared me for being a priest's wife since it was community of families with husbands that were preparing for the priesthood. The whole process felt very natural since church was already such a main part of our lives.

What are some of your responsibilities at St. Basil's?

My main responsibility is to support Father in whatever way I can. Some people will approach me and I try to offer advice where I am able. Really, I do whatever needs to be done. If someone needs to clean the church, I'll clean the church. If someone needs a meal, I'll cook a meal. I am also the president of the Sisterhood of St. Macrina and I help teach the younger children in the Sunday School.

What do you like best about being married to a priest?

I remember this story of a family that had their grandmother living with them. They would take her to church and sometimes join her. After the grandmother passed away, no one from the family continued attending the church services and things quickly started to deteriorate within the

family. The kids were doing poorly in school and the parents were having problems in their work. In desperation, the mother of the family went to visit the church priest. The priest commented how since the grandmother had passed away, there was no one in the household praying and how this prayer had kept the Grace of God in their home. Without that Grace, there could be no peace. This story reminds me of how happy I am that I have a husband that prays for me, our children, and the well-being of our family. God only knows what state we would be in if we did not have Father's constant prayers. That and also, Father is a very good cook!

If you could give your younger self some advice about being married to a priest, what would it be?

I would tell my younger self to not take things too personally. As a priest's wife, we do have a more public role in the parish so it is natural that people approach us with many issues. I have learned to not stress over these things and to find peace in our service.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself and your experiences?

I would like to share some details about our children. We have three children: Ivan, Melania, and Marfa. Ivan is our oldest child and he studied accounting in college and has recently completed training to be a plumber. Melania is in high school and likes to play sports. Marfa is our youngest and is in elementary school and likes to play with our dog, Bagel.

FOCUS DINNER SUCCESS

The Sisterhood of St. Macrina and the Brotherhood of St. Alexander Nevsky served a dinner and provided provisions to the pantry at FOCUS on April 10th. For those who are unaware of this ministry, the Fellowship of Orthodox

Christians United to Serve is a national organization that seeks to provide Orthodox Christians with 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.

For our dinner on April 10th, the Sisterhood provided a delicious

meal which the Brotherhood and some volunteers from our parish served to nearly thirty people. David Peck, Tatiana Webster, and Taylor Scott prepared plates of food from the kitchen, which were distributed to our visitors by Basil Kopel, Michael Slettevold, Constantine Stade, Nicole and Joseph Steineger, and Danny Simpson with his boys Micah and Noah. In addition to the distribution of a dinner, FOCUS provides a pantry from which patrons may take two items while visiting for the meal. Douglas Waller, Bill van Ronzelen, Drew Arnold, and

Andrew Hosna graciously oversaw the distribution of roughly \$600 of goods from the pantry. Fr. Matt reported that our parish "did an amazing job" and that "it was nice to see how naturally our group interacted with the people." Those of us who attended left feeling closer to one another and to our God. We hope that even more volunteers will come next time!

Our parish will be serving again on the following four Sundays from roughly 3:45 to 6:00 P.M. – June 19, August 21, October 9, and December 11. If you are interested in helping, either by providing food for or helping

cook it with the Sisterhood, or by distributing the meal and pantry items with the Brotherhood on site, please notify Joseph Steineger, Constantine Stade, Fr. Sergii, or Fr. Thomas.

Keep in mind that we have a large plastic container in the parish closet (no, it is not a secret garbage can ☺) where we should donate food for the FOCUS pantry. Each month we are asked to provide specific items. For May, please provide large 18 oz. and small 10 oz. cans of soup (no chicken, no pork, or tomato soup please; only beef).

MEETING ST. BASIL'S NEWLY ILLUMINED



St. Basil's was blessed to have over ten catechumens baptised over the last weeks of Great Lent. The white garments of baptism in line for Communion made the sanctifying services of Palm Sunday even more special. The majority of the baptisms were on Lazarus Saturday. However, the first was on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent where we celebrated Venerable Mary of Egypt. Adam Stiller was baptised following the Divine Liturgy on this day and is seen pictured below with his family and sponsor, Joseph Steineger.

Since we cannot fit an interview for every newly illumined into one newsletter, we offer an interview below with Adam and plan to include the interviews of the other newly illumined in the newsletters to come. Please continue to pray for Adam as he embarks on his Orthodox journey.



Where did you grow up?

I was raised here in Saint Louis, in a house about five minutes from St. Basil's current location, as a relatively serious Protestant. After university in Kansas I returned to Saint Louis to teach in the public schools I'd attended as a young man, and eventually moved back into the house I'd grown up in to raise my family.

What brought you to Orthodoxy?

Like many converts, a dissatisfaction with the incompleteness and poverty of Protestant Christianity. This led me along a path that retraced the splintering of the church, reading and exploring over many years through Anglicanism, to Roman Catholicism, and finally into Orthodoxy.

What was something memorable about your first time attending an Orthodox service?

The power of the auditory experience—solemn and piercing, and with a sort of self-authenticating beauty that I can only compare to Rivendell. And along with that lofty thought, the humbling impression that, if I continued in Orthodoxy, my spirit and my legs were going to need some serious strengthening!

What was the catechumen experience like? What books did you cover as part of your catechesis?

My time as a catechumen was rich and exciting. In study we focused on Pomazansky's *Dogmatic Theology*, St. Theophan the Recluse for practical aspects of the spiritual life, and Met. Hilarion for the history of the Church, along with many smaller pieces. Plenty of the reading was over my head, but that was OK. Also important was the

work of starting to conform to the Church's patterns of prayer and fasting, and other practical aspects of bringing Orthodoxy into our home.

Do you have a favorite spiritual book and can you tell us why you like it?

Met. Kallistos Ware and Frederica Mathewes-Green offered invaluable entry-points for a bewildered Protestant. So too in his own way did J.R.R. Tolkien, whom I've read from childhood: as a committed Roman Catholic he wove much of the good retained by the Latin church into his fiction. More recently Fr. Michael Shanbour's *Know the Faith* was of great practical help for its clear and persuasive contrast of Orthodox beliefs with those of Protestantism and Rome.

Who is your patron saint and why did you choose him?

Righteous Adam the First-Created. Initially I was hesitant, unsure if Adam (known to me only for his sin) was even acknowledged as a saint. But I had been wisely advised to retain my birth name if possible, and Father reassured me that Righteous Adam was, because of his long repentance, righteous. A good and challenging example for me.

Do you have a favorite feast or liturgical service so far?

Some high points include the kneeling prayers of Pentecost (experienced first on my day of entry into the catechumenate) and the reading of the Great Canon of St. Andrew at the beginning of Lent. Best of all was the baptismal service, which proved a stunning contrast with the watered-down version I'd seen in Protestant circles.

ASK YOUR PRIEST

Q: What are Old Believers?

A: In 1652 Nikon was elected Patriarch of Russia. Nikon was a brilliant man but harsh in temperament and unforgiving. One of his first actions as Patriarch was to reform the service books and practices of the Church which had become changed from the original Greek during the more than 500 years since

Russia's conversion to Orthodoxy. Nikon's reforms were accepted by the Holy Synod and promulgated throughout the Russian Church. The reforms were accepted by most, but there was a sizable minority who saw the reforms as heretical and contrary to the teachings of the Church. These were called the Old Believers who separated themselves from the Church and went into schism. One of their primary advocates was a priest named Avvakum who was persecuted, placed in prison for over 20 years and finally put to death by the orders of the Czar. One of the rallying cries of the Old Believer's was the Sign of the Cross which according to Nikonian practice (which was commonplace in the East) was made with three fingers while the Old Believers used two fingers, the practice they claimed to be more ancient. This characterizes the nature of the Schism which was largely rooted in practice (ritual) and not in doctrine.

The Old Believers eventually broke into two factions, primarily known as the priestless (as not a single bishop joined the schism), and the Priested who obtained priests from those expelled from the Church or through monetary payment. The priestless Old Believers obtain their religious leaders from elders in their communities.

Today a small number of Old Believer communities continue to exist in Orthodox Lands despite the fact that the Russian Church has made a concerted effort to lead them out of schism and reunite them to the canonical Church. In the United States today there are several communities of Old Believers especially in the State of Oregon and in Pennsylvania. A sizable community in Erie, Pennsylvania, reconciled itself with ROCOR in 1983, were given a Bishop and have been allowed to maintain many of their traditional practices.

- Archpriest Martin Swanson

APPROPRIATE SUMMER ATTIRE IN CHURCH

When we dress to go to church, we know that the most important criterion is modesty. But since the notion of modesty is largely forgotten in our society, we would like to offer you a few suggestions.

Shorts should not be worn in church by adults.

Women should avoid wearing mini skirts, short or revealing dresses.

Tattoos should not be visible.

Avoid wearing clothing with slogans, brand names or graphics on them.

The idea behind these simple suggestions is to help others not to be distracted from prayer.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Archimandrite Seraphim — Health

Jackie (Xenia) Peck — Health

Photini Mills — Health

Ian Johnstone — 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.



[Add to your prayer list](#)