

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
Protopriest Radomir Chkautovich
Priest Thomas Nichols
Deacon Ephraim Galloway



NEW CATECHUMENS AT ST. BASIL'S

The prayers for the making of a catechumen were said at St. Basil's before the Divine Liturgy for Marshal Berra on Sunday, October 30th and for Misty Stiller and her children: Penelope, Silas, Amos, and Evangeline on Sunday, November 20th.

These prayers are said by the priest to bless the new catechumens that the Lord will guide them and keep them "sheltered under the shadow of Thou wings" until they are prepared to be brought into the Orthodox Church.



Marshal is pictured to the left and although there were no photos taken of Misty and her children, let us continue to pray for these new catechumens as they continue on their journey to the Orthodox Church.

DECEMBER 2022

Schedule of Services

- **25th Sunday after Pentecost**
 - Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple
 - Sat., Dec. 3 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., Dec. 4 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **St Alexander Nevsky**
 - Mon., Dec. 5 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Tues., Dec. 6 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God**
 - Sat., Dec. 10 Moleben 9 A.M.
- **26th Sunday after Pentecost**
 - Sat., Dec. 10 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., Dec. 11 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Apostle Andrew the First-Called**
 - Mon., Dec. 12 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Tues., Dec. 13 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Great Martyr Barbara and**
 - **Venerable John of Damascus**
 - Sat., Dec. 17 Moleben 9 A.M.
- **27th Sunday after Pentecost**
 - **Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified**
 - Sat., Dec. 17 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., Dec. 18 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Holy Hierarch Nicholas the Wonderworker**
 - Sun., Dec. 18 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Mon., Dec. 19 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Holy Hierarch Ioasaph of Belgorod**
 - Fri., Dec. 23 Moleben 9 A.M.
- **28th Sunday after Pentecost**
 - **Sunday of the Holy Forefathers**
 - **Venerable Herman of Alaska**
 - Sat., Dec. 24 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., Dec. 25 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

MAKING HOLY IMAGES IS A DIVINE COMMAND

By Priest George Maximov

Orthodox Christians often hear this question: "Why do you have icons? It is idolatry! You transgress the commandment: *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them* (Ex. 20:3-5). However, those people do not see that the commandment forbids creation of images of other gods which the pagans usually depicted as animals, birds and so on.

But the icons are not idols, since they do not depict some "other gods". Moreover, a testimony to the fact that the icons are not only allowed but, in fact, mandatory, we find in the same Book of Exodus where the Lord tells Moses: *Thou shalt make two cherubim of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat* (Ex. 25:18) of the Ark of the Covenant.

Those images of the cherubim were not only above the Ark of the Covenant but on the walls of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:27-29) and even in Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the Celestial Temple (Ezek. 41:20, 25).

Modern iconoclasts think that the Jerusalem Temple had walls as bare as in their churches, when, in fact, the walls were covered with the images of the cherubim. And this was the Temple where Christ would frequently visit and called it "My Father's House" (John 2:16), and where the first Christians gathered daily (John 2:46) until they were forbidden by the enemies of Christ. Therefore, it is not they who may ask us "why do you have icons", but we should inquire: "Why don't you have icons, as it is described in the Holy Scripture?"

The Old Testament mentions icons only of the cherubim simply because at that time nobody else could be depicted in the Temple. The Theotokos was not yet born. The Lord Jesus Christ was not yet

incarnate and could not be seen as Man (whereas the divine nature may not be depicted). The righteous men and women who lived before Christ were not perfected in holiness and, after their death, had been descending into the dark place where Christ descended to lead them out before His Resurrection. It was only after the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ that the righteous of the New Testament Church were able to be truly pure and holy, just like the cherubim, and, therefore, they can be depicted.



Holy Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council proclaimed that the honor given to the image passes over to the prototype. To put in other words, when we pray before an icon we do not pray to the icon but to the one who is depicted on the icon. Here is a simple analogy: when a man, who is far away from his family, gets homesick he can kiss a photograph of his mother or wife. By doing this he expresses his love not for the photo paper but for the one whose image is on it.

Iconoclasts resent us for bowing before the icons, for kissing them. But by doing this we do not treat what we venerate as idols or as "other gods". We, the traditional Christians, bow to one another; we kiss one another, we send greetings, following the commandment of the apostle: "Greet ye one another with a holy kiss" (1 Cor. 16:20). So, we can see that expressing love and expressing reverence to the icons is not something reprehensible. The icons help us to pray, to focus our mind in prayer, and to fulfill the commandment: "Remember them who have spoken unto you the word of God" (Hebrews 13:7), and we remember them with love and reverence.

ARCHIMANDRITE DAMIAN: "DO NOT PANIC!"

Interview with Archimandrite Damian (Cvetkovic), the Secretary of the Diocese of Žižka of the Serbian Orthodox Church

•The freedom God has granted to man is a very dangerous thing. Only my personal choice leads me either into bondage to sin, or to cleansing from it. This applies not only to an individual, but also to a nation. Judging by my personal experience, I will say that a hostile environment sometimes has its benefits: in this way a person or a nation can see more easily who their friend or enemy is, and it becomes easier for them to make right choices, if only for the sake of preserving themselves. Spiritual “hothouse” conditions are extremely dangerous: it is very easy to be overcome by pride, start lying to yourself, saying, “Everything in the spiritual sense is good with me”. Such self-satisfaction will inevitably lead to a destructive fall. “Why cultivate virtues in myself when everything (outwardly) is fine anyway—I have prayers according to schedule, beautiful music, bells, pious conversations, bows, priests’ blessings and the like?” No, efforts are always needed. That is why God sends us trials; they help us firstly to see our own weakness, and secondly they make us work hard, so that the name of Christian does not become an empty shell.

•*That is, there is also some benefit in the current trials, which, for example, Serbia and Russia have been faced with?*

•Not only a benefit, but a task from Christ, which we must fulfill in order to remain faithful to Him. It is unlikely that the Serbs will be able to remain Christians if they accept and agree with the aggressively imposed “values” under the rainbow flag, even if they are promised entry into another “civilized society” for this. And let them laugh at us, mock us, call us “barbarians” and “backward” — it is better for us to be “backward” with Christ than to betray Him together with the “civilizers” (Lord, help them return to Thee!).

•*Each one of us is called to preach Christ. Does this mean*



that we should call everyone we meet to suffer?

•I totally disagree with such calls. We do not know another person properly — his strength and capabilities; and we do not even know ourselves properly. We must preach, but in my opinion the only true preaching of Christ is our own lives. My father-confessor used to tell me: “Don’t preach Christ in anything other than your own life.” You can speak fine words from books, but what’s the use of them if you yourself don’t live according to the Gospel?

The Serbs lived under the Turkish yoke for almost 500 years. It is difficult to talk about any prosperity for the Serbian Church at that period and under those conditions. For the most part, the task of the Orthodox was just to survive physically. Somewhere in the nineteenth century we gained our autonomy, but the bishops from the Phanar who headed the Church couldn’t care less about faraway Serbia and some Slavs. True, it was a matter of material gain, but for a “very spiritual” Hellene to condescend to enlightening Slavic barbarians — that was impossible. Of course, we can and should recall the bright days of the Nemanja Dynasty, St. Sava and other great Serbian saints. But half a millennium spent under a yoke, including a spiritual one, must have had an impact.

•*But now, thank God, it’s easier for us.*

•On the one hand, yes. On the other hand, there are also challenges and troubles. For example, the desire of some laypeople to confess their sins to monks at all costs. I am convinced that it is best for a married person to confess before a married priest who has experience in family life, can give advice and recommendations in a sphere with which a monk has

nothing to do, and shouldn't have. Why should I burden a monk with my family ups and downs? Have pity on monks—after all, this is none of their business. Similarly, you might turn to an astronaut for financial advice or to a historian for a perspective on Russian football. St. Paisios the Hagiorite said that in the twenty-first century mankind would have two main troubles: insanity and divorce. How can a monk help in family matters? Once again, I say: let's leave monks their sphere of activity.

And a monk (I remember this from conversations with our beloved Patriarch Pavle and his fellow-strugglers) has no right to pretend to be a father-confessor who can resolve family problems! You can only be a father-confessor for your brethren in the monastery where you all live together, where you know every member of your small community. Leave this aspect of life to a married priest (who doesn't live worse than a monk, is not lower than him, but has a good understanding of family matters). To put it simply, stop running after monks, submissive as they are!

And it is harmful for such a runner himself. This is the usual vanity: "I go for confession to no one but schemamonk so-and-so himself!"

•We don't just hear about wars and rumors of wars daily,

but every minute. Alarming, sometimes frightening news. How should I, as a Christian, take these rumors, Father Damian?

•Take them as you always do—why panic! It seems to me that we should not pay such close and even panicky attention to something global—each one of us faces his own end of the world. We are experiencing the end times right now, and not when Channel 1 or the BBC reports about it. We need to change our lives now, this minute, and not sometime later when push comes to shove. Help your mother or wife peel potatoes today and this will already be something—in this way you will show love for your neighbor. Focus on your own life and please leave it to Christ to deal with problems and catastrophes on a different scale. He knows how to do this and will bring it to a good result, to His victory. And we can participate in His victory provided that in our lives — small but very valuable for Christ — we showed love to our neighbor. So, don't panic. After all, such things are not taking place for the first time, right? Everything will be fine — trust in God.

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ST. HERMAN'S CONFERENCE 2022

With the blessing of His Eminence, Archbishop Peter, we announce that the 2022 St. Herman DCMA Youth Conference will take place at Sts. Peter and Fevronia Orthodox Church in Merriam, Kansas (Kansas City) with attendees staying at a conference center in the nearby area. The conference is for college and high school youth age 14 and older. The conference will take place from December 26th to the 30th.

The conference provides an opportunity for Orthodox young people to get to know each other, to be strengthened in their faith, and to build lasting memories. The cost for food, lodging and all activities is \$250. If you need assistance with the cost of registration or travel to the conference, please contact Fr. Nicholas Park, Chairman of the Diocesan Youth Committee, at frnicholaspark@protonmail.com or (972) 839-2439. Registration for the conference is open until December 12th.

ST HERMAN'S CONFERENCE 2022

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

DECEMBER 26-30

KANSAS CITY, MO

HOSTED BY STS. PETER AND
FEVRONIA PARISH

AGES 14+

GUEST SPEAKER FR.
JOSEPH HUNEYCUTT

MATTER MATTERS: THE PHYSICAL
SIDE OF THE FALL & REDEMPTION

FALL DOWN, GET UP: THE
SPIRITUAL SIDE OF SALVATION
THROUGH ASCETICISM



More information at
www.chicagodiocese.org/stherman



PROSTRATIONS DURING THE DIVINE LITURGY

For many of us the word 'prostrations' is associated with Great Lent, when prostrations are numerous.

However, we make prostrations outside of Great Lent, too. We may make prostrations at our homes whenever we wish. In church, on the other hand, where everything should be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40), we – men and women, children and the elderly – try to worship as one body.

Most of us know that we do not make prostrations from Pascha till Pentecost and on Sundays, unless it is a Sunday when the Church honors the Precious Cross. On all other days, Monday through Saturday, during the Divine Liturgy we do make prostrations: five, to be exact.

When do we make them?

1. When the priest exclaims: "Let us give thanks unto the Lord".
2. During the epiclesis: when the priest prays to the Holy Spirit to come upon the Gifts, and he concludes this invocation by saying "Amen Amen Amen", as the choir sings: "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, O Lord".
3. At the end of the praise of the Theotokos ("It is meet to bless thee, O Theotokos, the ever blessed and most pure Mother of Our God..." or a hymn that replaces it).
4. When the Holy Gifts are brought out for the communion of the faithful and deacon or priest exclaims: "With the fear of God and love draw nigh".
5. When the gifts are transferred from the Holy Altar Table to the proskomedia table and the priest exclaims, lifting up the Holy Chalice and facing the faithful: "Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages". Those who have communed do not make a prostration at this time.

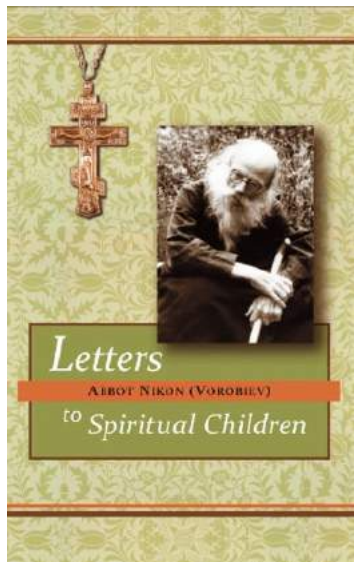
"Dear (N), How are you feeling? How goes the carrying of your cross? You are not murmuring? May the Lord help you to endure without murmuring and with thanksgiving all that He sends for the sake of your salvation." Thus begins the first of seventy letters, flowing from the pastoral heart and pen of Abbot Nikon (Vorobiev), collected and entitled, *Letters to Spiritual Children*.

Born in Russia in 1894, an ardent pursuit for ultimate truth within the sciences and philosophy only brought him, as an adolescent, to the brink of suicidal despair until he called out to God to reveal Himself. And He did. Tonsured a monk in 1931 and later ordained a priest, he was arrested in 1933 and spent four years in the prison camps. After his release, he labored tirelessly and faithfully in numerous parishes until his repose in 1963.

Written in the 1950s and 1960s, his letters provide profound guidance, gentle consolation, and sober exhortation to those desiring to heed Christ's call to a

LETTERS TO SPIRITUAL CHILDREN: A BOOK REVIEW BY DANIEL SIMPSON

life of self-denying, cross-bearing faithfulness, where one, as a response to divine love, endures all things unto the very end for His sake and one's own salvation (Matthew 16:24-25; 24:13; Letters 14, 18, 53, 60). The law of the Spirit—firmer than heaven and earth—thunderously proclaims that our future resurrection with Christ is found only through the narrow, tear-soaked, muddy path of our present crucifixion with Him (Romans 8:17; Letters 35, 51, 61), a purgative path of illness, suffering, and sorrows, which can cleanse us from sin and the passions (1 Peter 4:1; Letters 12, 52, 57, 58, 69), if only we patiently and *unmurmuringly* endure life's difficulties with attentive prayer, thanksgiving, and ardent love for God (Letters 1, 4, 11, 22, 37, 42, 45, 66), crying out to Him with compunction for forgiveness, mercy, and help in dispelling demonic attacks (Letters 15, 19, 21,



25, 34, 56) and in earnestly keeping His commandments with the ever-deepening resolve that it's better to die than displease Him (Letters 2, 3, 23, 26).

But even the strictest keeping of the commandments cannot please God, if not done from a heart of humility, which we acquire through many sorrows and

temptations, by blaming only ourselves for our innumerable faults, failures, and frailties, by daily recalling the future certainty of death, the demonic tollhouses, and the Dread Judgment, by quickly exposing and confessing all of our sins to our spiritual father, and by patiently and lovingly bearing one another's burdens without judgment or condemnation (Letters 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 17, 24, 30, 33, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 55, 59, 68). In short, it is for us to be, not like the Pharisee, but rather the Publican, who, with a contrite heart, judged only himself a sinner and insolvent debtor before God, and then, having opened wide the abyss of his sinful heart, entrusted himself

entirely to God and the unfathomable abyss of His compassion (Letters 9, 10, 16, 20, 31, 36, 63, 64, 65).

Our spiritual sources of hope, clarity, and weaponry along this circuitous path of sorrows are found, not in the world's so-called "wisdom," but in Holy Scripture, fasting, repentance, watchful sobriety, unceasing prayer, the writings of the Fathers, the lives of the saints, and the mysteries of the Church, to which we must make constant recourse for healing and strength (Letters 27, 28, 29, 32, 39, 40, 46, 54, 62, 67, 70). But even more so, it is the consoling and powerful presence of the very Lord Himself, who lovingly gave Himself up for us (Galatians 2:20) and promised to be with us always unto the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Above all, we must never become despondent and despair amidst life's sorrows, trials, and difficulties (Letters 38, 41). Rather, with the eyes of faith, we see that by Christ's crucifixion, the cross we now carry has been transfigured into a ladder, by which, with the Spirit's help, we may steadily ascend to the Kingdom of Heaven (Elder Paisios of Mount Athos, *Spiritual Counsels IV: Family Life*, 205). And having, by God's mercy, there arrived, we may throw ourselves down before the feet of the Lord and cry out, "Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee! I thank Thee for all Thou didst send to save me!"

Parish Prayer List



Archpriest Martin Swanson — Repose
Katherine Swanson — Health
Archimandrite Seraphim — Health
Jackie (Xenia) Peck — Health

Photini Mills — Health
Tatiana Zyryanova — Health
Gloria Pappas — Health
Julianna Campbell — 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.

Praying for Catechumens

Praying for catechumens is a very important responsibility of an Orthodox Christian. So important, that a special litany or series of petitions in the Divine Liturgy is completely dedicated to asking the Lord to have mercy on all catechumens preparing for illumination. *"Let us the faithful pray for the catechumens, that the Lord will have mercy on them."*

Let us fulfill the words of the litany and pray for our fellow brothers and sisters:

Alexander	Chloe
Alexander	Marshal
Rob, Melinda and family	Misty and children