

# St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

December 2023



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

## SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

- **26th Sunday after Pentecost**
  - Forefeast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple
  - Sat., Dec. 2 Vigil 5 P.M.
  - Sun., Dec. 3 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple**
  - Sun., Dec. 3 Vigil 6 P.M.
  - Mon., Dec. 4 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **27th Sunday after Pentecost**
  - Kursk-Root Icon of the Theotokos
  - Sat., Dec. 9 Vigil 5 P.M.
  - Sun., Dec. 10 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called**
  - Tue., Dec. 12 Vigil 6 P.M.
  - Wed., Dec. 13 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **28th Sunday after Pentecost**
  - Great Martyr Barbara and Venerable John of Damascus
  - Sat., Dec. 16 Vigil 5 P.M.
  - Sun., Dec. 17 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Holy Hierarch Nicholas the Wonderworker**
  - Mon., Dec. 18 Vigil 6 P.M.
  - Tue., Dec. 19 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Holy Hierarch Ioasaph of Belgorod**
  - Sat., Dec. 23 Moleben 9 A.M.
- **29th Sunday after Pentecost**
  - Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
  - Sat., Dec. 23 Vigil 5 P.M.
  - Sun., Dec. 24 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Holy Hierarch Spyridon of Tremithus**
  - Venerable Herman of Alaska
  - Mon., Dec. 25 Moleben 9 A.M.
- **30th Sunday after Pentecost**
  - Sunday before the Nativity
  - Sat., Dec. 30 Vigil 5 P.M.
  - Sun., Dec. 31 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

## ICONOGRAPHY UPDATE AT ST. BASIL'S

Iconographers Ivan Storchak and Roman Martynenko have completed the difficult task of writing the iconography within the center dome of St. Basil's. The impressive Christ Pantocrator is in the center with Cherubim, Seraphim, and the Archangels around the rim of the dome.

Roman and Ivan will now start working to write the evangelists on the "sails" or lower areas of the dome within the center columns. Please keep Roman and Ivan in your prayers as they continue their work.



A reminder: the iconography is funded by the generous donations of the faithful which can be deposited in the box specifically allocated for this project near the candle kiosk.



## MAKER AND BAKER FAIR

The Sisterhood of St. Macrina is preparing for the annual fair by making handmade crafts and baked goods to sell at St. Basil's the second weekend in December. The Sisterhood welcomes anyone who would like to contribute or help with the fair to sign up on the announcement board in the church hall. Please mark your calendars to support the Sisterhood's efforts. Cash and credit cards will be accepted.

## MEETING THE NEWLY ILLUMINED

Below, we include an interview with newly illumined Peter Simpson who was baptized at the

end of September with his infant son, Elijah.

### *Where did you grow up?*

I grew up in the St. Louis area and attended school in the Lindbergh school district.

### *How did you hear about the Orthodox Church and what made you want to convert?*

I was brought to the Orthodox Church through my own search for truth in the world. In late college, I began to take an interest in economics. I was searching for answers to the unfortunate financial decline the United States seemed to be stuck in for many years. This led me to eventually take an interest in geo-political topics. While searching for an answer, I began to notice many things were wrong with society in general. During this time, the pandemic came to the forefront of global political topics and starkly divided many things and people into distinct groups. Observing this, I began to follow the truth I was seeking outside the context of mere physical human activity. I began to attend the Lutheran Church of my youth with the intention of learning for the first time what Christianity was really teaching. As I began this leg of my journey I quickly saw Christianity and an individual's understanding of it to have only one foundation. The only foundation I could perceive to be built firmly upon the rock of Christ was the Orthodox Church. As God revealed this truth to me I could no longer conceive of any place outside the Orthodox Church where I could entrust the care of my or my family's souls.



### ***What was the catechumen process like with your son?***

Having my newborn son participate with me in the catechumen process was frustrating at times because he would never do the assigned readings haha. Just kidding. I found it to be an interesting process having a newborn who would also be entering into the Church with me. As I was working out in my own mind exactly what I believed and how these beliefs would affect my life I had to also consider the impact it would have on my son's life. Ultimately I could not be more thankful to God that He set me on my path to Orthodoxy just as my wife and I are getting our family started. I am absolutely thrilled my son will grow up inside the true Body of Christ.

### ***Who are your patron saints?***

Our patron saints are the "Holy Apostle Peter" and "Holy, Glorious Prophet Elijah"

### ***What is your favorite thing about being Orthodox so far?***

My favorite thing about being Orthodox is now having the tradition, teaching, and support of the Church to aid in reorienting my life and the life of my family, in all things, towards Christ.

### ***What do you most look forward to as an Orthodox Christian?***

Uncovering the grace of God in the depths of my heart and, God willing, the hearts of my wife and children.

## **FOCUS ON FOCUS**

We have two announcements this month.

First, we will now have two teams from our parish serving the Sunday suppers. For the upcoming year, 2024, we will serve on the following six Sundays: **Feb 4**, Apr 14, **Jun 9**, Aug 4, **Oct 20**, Dec 8. The first team will cover the bolded dates to the left, and be led by the Simpson and Westervelt families, with Tetyana Webster running the kitchen and Peter Simpson running the pantry. The second team will cover the non-bolded dates in the list, and be led by the Steineger and Stiller families, with Merav Steineger and Penelope Stiller running the kitchen, and Michael Slettevold and David Peck running the pantry. The Sisterhood of St. Macrina will continue to cook and prepare the meal, but we are looking to add volunteers to work on each team. The volunteers can help with the three roles when it comes to serving a Sunday supper FOCUS meal: (i) Kitchen staff that plate the food (normally our women who we don't want on the front lines), (ii) servers (who bring the food to our guests and sit and eat with them at the tables), and (iii) pantry workers who help distribute the non-perishable items that we donate each month. We would like to have 3-4 people in the kitchen, 9 people for the serving (although we could get by with less), and only three people for the pantry. Please email Joseph Steineger at [jsteineger@gmail.com](mailto:jsteineger@gmail.com) to let him know which team you would like to join.

The next FOCUS announcement concerns our pantry donations for the month of December. We would like to supply the following items to FOCUS before December 17:

- Canned Beef Stew (15-18 oz.) w/ pop top
- Chili w/Beans (15 oz.) w/ pop top
- Chef Boyardee cans (15 oz.) w/ pop top
- Spam (12 oz.) w/ pop top
- Canned ham (16 oz.) w/ pop top

After purchasing your chosen items, please put them in the FOCUS container of the parish coat closet.

A new way to help with the FOCUS pantry items is to donate to FOCUS directly! So if you find that it's too difficult to buy the items at the store and bring them to our parish, you may give money directly by using this link (<https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E334599&id=86>) or by scanning the QR code above with your phone.

If you have any questions, please email Joseph Steineger at [jsteineger@gmail.com](mailto:jsteineger@gmail.com).



# THE WARS IN GAZA AND UKRAINE SHOW US THAT WE HAVE TO FOCUS ON SPIRITUAL LIFE AND CONFESSION

## DMITRY ZLODOREV'S TALK WITH ARCHIMANDRITE ROMAN, THE HEAD OF THE ROCOR MISSION HOLY LAND

ORTHOCHRISTIAN.COM

**Father Roman, my first and most important question is about the safety of the mission members and parishioners. Are people safe in the current conditions? And what about the safety of our sacred sites in the Holy Land?**



Thanks be to God, as far as the mission is concerned, we are all safe. Our places are pretty much safe, as well. We do not have any lands near Gaza, where the unfortunate battles are happening right now. As far as our convents are concerned, they are mainly safe, though here at the Mount of Olives convent where I live, we have some uprisings outside the walls, and there are riots, which are put down by the Israeli police. This is happening because we live in an Arab Palestinian area.

**I am correct that right now, everything is calm near the convent?**

Pretty much, yes. Sometimes, when there are problems outside the gates, we have tear gas or something else coming over the walls. We already know this happens often enough, so we just go to our rooms.

Otherwise, everything is fine, though people are pretty much staying in their convents—here, or in St. Mary Magdalene convent in Gethsemane, or in Bethany and the Bethany school for girls. Those are pretty safe. However, if somebody goes into the Old City of Jerusalem, they go in twos or threes together—going alone could be problematic because the Israelis are very tense right now, and it could cause issues.

**What do people feel and think in these dire circumstances?**

Unfortunately, of course, this was bound to happen, it was not unexpected. We have seen the problems between the Israelis and Hamas; this concerns many of our sisters, who are Palestinians. But just as they did during Intifada, or the Six-day war, they pray and hope that things will soon stop.

**Could you please describe in general what is happening now inside and outside the mission? How does the situation affect its everyday life?**

What affects us most is that there are no pilgrims. This flow completely stopped at the beginning of October when the situation began evolving. I would say that our main obedience is to take care of the pilgrims, but now we have absolutely none of them. Of course, that concerns us financially. Now we have no income; most of our income is from our pilgrims and people who kindly donate.

**Does this mean that the mission is already having significant financial problems?**

Yes, because we still haven't recovered from the COVID-19 situation when, again, there were no pilgrims for two years. Only recently have pilgrimages returned on a regular basis. But of course, there were very few pilgrims from Russia because of the situation in the Ukraine [and the sanctions against Russia]. Prices for flights are very, very high, and people cannot afford to come.

**Do you need financial support right now?**

Yes, very much. If people would be kind enough to donate to us—they can just go to the ROCOR Synod of Bishops website, there is a square there that says, "For the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission." <https://www.synod.com/rem.html>

**We spoke with you just a couple of weeks ago when you were in the US, and you were sure at the time that everything is more or less calm around the mission. However, several days after that, you urgently changed your plans and returned to Jerusalem. And it took you five days to reach Israel. Does this mean that not everything is so good as you thought while in the US?**

When I was in the US, and these events started happening, I had already made my mind up to return to the mission, though the mission itself was not in direct danger. But I understand that I should be here as a head of the mission. If nothing else, just so that our monks and nuns would feel that the head of the mission is there with them.

**You have already mentioned the school for Palestinian girls in Bethany. How are they living now, what is the situation there, and what help do they need?**

We have a school of 375 girls, the majority of whom are Muslims. Mother Maria, who is the elder sister at the convent there—the Convent of the Resurrection of the Lord—takes care of them. But she also was caught in the US in the beginning of these events. Thank God, she, like me, returned to Israel.

It is important for us to help people to stay calm. Of course, passions are very strong, and people are very emotional about this situation. We have to keep children calm and keep their minds on education and not on the political situation.

**Several days ago, you appealed to the people in ROCOR with a very, I would say, emotional letter asking for support. What was the outcome?**

Thank God, people are responding. Many of them, particularly those who have visited the Holy Land in the past, take everything that happens here somehow closer to their hearts. They were here, they prayed here not only at the Holy Sepulcher and other sacred sites, but in our convents, as well. They know how people live here, and they help. We thank Lord for that.

As I already said, since the pandemic and because of the situation in the Ukraine, we have had some problems with funding. And things will be more difficult now. Thank God, the convents and the mission continue to live, but we have financial obligations that we have to keep.

**What do you think we should learn from this situation?**

This situation should lead us to repentance. God is showing us what is happening in the world: illnesses, conflicts, fratricidal war in the Ukraine, war in the Holy Land—people are suffering. That says that we have to focus on our spiritual life and confess our personal sins. This is the only way to our salvation, through prayer and confession. And we find it in the Church of Christ.

## **VENERABLE BARSANUPIUS THE GREAT AND JOHN THE PROPHET: PART VII**

254. Question: Having many sins, I wish to repent, but because of bodily infirmity I cannot labor like the Fathers. I beg you, tell me: how can I make a beginning?

Answer: Brother! They are poor whom the Lord glorifies because they have renounced all their possessions, that is, all their passions, and have become stripped of them for the sake of His Name; such ones are poor in truth, and to them belongs the blessedness. And there are other poor who have acquired nothing good, whom the Lord threatens, saying: Depart from Me, ye cursed (Matt. 25:41). He who has such possessions and is burdened by them, let him renounce them, so that he may remain without care. And so, if you desire to make a beginning of repentance, look at what the harlot did: with her tears she washed the feet of the Master (Luke 7:38). Lamentation will wash anyone of sins; but a man attains lamentation with difficulty, by means of much instruction in the Scriptures, of patience, of reflection on the terrible Judgment and eternal shame, and through self-renunciation, as the Lord has said: *He who would come after Me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow after Me* (Matt. 16:24). And to renounce oneself and take up one's cross means to cut off one's own will in everything and consider oneself to be nothing. Since you have said

that you are infirm in body and can do nothing; therefore, do according to your strength, taking bread and drink a little less than ordinarily, for God accepted the two mites of the widow and rejoiced over them more than over all the rest. Instruct yourself not to be free in your relations with others, and you will be saved.

*To Be Continued.*

## NEW CATECHUMENS AT ST. BASIL'S



Glory to God that on Sunday, November 12th, Fr. Thomas read the prayers for the making of a catechumen over one of the largest groups of catechumens that St. Basil's has ever received. Those in the group from Fr. Thomas's right to left: Andrew, Anthony, Veronica,



Brandon, Russell, Christian, and William. All of the new catechumens have been attending catechumen classes given by Fr. Thomas where they will continue to learn about the Orthodox Faith. Please keep them in your prayers that our Lord may continue to guide them in their Orthodox journey.

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:

**Doc**  
**Ricardo**  
**Christiano**  
**Ivan**

**Chad**  
**Ryan**  
**Gage**  
**Gabrielle**

**Shannon**  
**Andrew**  
**Anthony**  
**Veronica**

**Brandon**  
**Russell**  
**Christian**  
**William**

## CATECHUMEN CORNER

## PARISH PRAYER LIST

**Archimandrite Seraphim — Health**  
**Archpriest Moses Berry — Health**  
**Reader Symeon Campbell — Health**  
**Photini Mills — Health**  
**Tatiana Zyryanova — Health**  
**Julianna Campbell — Health**  
**Dimitry Johnson — Health**  
**Inna Dageeva — Health**

**Mark Wiebenga — Health**  
**Daniel Simpson — Health**  
**John, Xenia, and Faith — Recovery**  
**Christopher — Recovery**  
**Archpriest Martin Swanson — Repose**  
**Katherine Swanson — Repose**  
**Gloria Pappas — Repose**

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.