

St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

A p r i l 2 0 2 5

2 0 5 H i g h l a n d A v e n u e
D e s P e r e s , M O 6 3 1 2 2

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

Clergy

Archpriest Sergii Alekseev, Parish Rector

Protopriest Radomir Chkautovich

Priest Thomas Nichols

Deacon Ephraim Galloway



Holy Week Explained

Holy Wednesday (April 16)

6:00 P.M. Holy Unction – *This is the Mystery of healing of soul and body. Only baptized Orthodox Christians seven years old and older (i.e. those who confess their sins, since the Holy Unction is for those who repent) may come to be anointed.*

Holy Thursday (April 17)

8:00 A.M. Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great – *Commemorating the Mystical Supper. All Christians should try to commune at this Liturgy – the day the Lord communed His disciples with His precious Body and Blood.*

6:00 P.M. Matins with the Reading of the 12 Passion Gospels. All the Gospel accounts of the events of Holy Thursday and Friday (divided into twelve readings) are read in front of the Golgotha in the center of the temple. *The faithful stand with lit candles during the Gospel Readings.*

Holy Friday (April 18) – Most Solemn Day of the Year

9:00 A.M. Royal Hours and Typica are read with the Golgotha being in the center of the temple.

4:00 P.M. Great Vespers (with the Reading of the Gospel account of the Passions of the Lord), at the end of which the Holy Shroud – a cloth icon depicting the taking of the Body of Christ from the Cross – is solemnly brought out of the altar and placed in the middle of the church.

6:00 P.M. Matins, during which the Lamentations (the lamentation of the Mother of God over her crucified Son) are sung and the Procession with the Shroud (symbolizing the carrying of the lifeless Body of the Lord to the Tomb) around the temple takes place.

Holy Saturday (April 19)

9:00 A.M. Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great for Holy Saturday. Fifteen Old Testament Readings (recounting the events which point to the Resurrection of the Lord) are read. After the Epistle Reading, all the church vestments are changed from black and purple to white, signifying that the Lord descends into Hades to destroy the power of the enemy and to raise

Adam and Eve, along with all the righteous of old.

Noon (approximately) At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy – Blessing of Paschal Baskets

9:30 P.M. Blessing of Paschal Baskets

10:00 P.M. Reading of the Book of Acts of the Apostles. *The faithful read the Book of Acts in different languages. The English text will be provided, while the texts in other languages should be brought by the readers.*

10:30 P.M. Blessing of Paschal Baskets

11:00 P.M. Blessing of Paschal Baskets

11:30 P.M. Service of the Midnight Office, at the end of which the Holy Shroud is brought back into the altar.

Holy Pascha (April 20)

Midnight: *All the Lights (lampadas and candles) are put out. The priest comes out of the altar with a lit Paschal triple candle and passes the flame to the*

candles which the faithful hold in their hands (passing the flame one to another). Paschal procession around the temple. Matins begin outside in front of the closed main doors of the temple. After Matins, the Paschal Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom begins. The services usually end around 2:30 A.M. The faithful stay in the church hall to break the fast together.

2:30 A.M. Blessing of Baskets following the Midnight Liturgy

Pascha Sunday afternoon (April 20)

1:30 P.M. Blessing of Paschal Baskets

2:00 P.M. Paschal Vespers - *We read the Holy Gospel in different languages, reminding us that the Gospel was spread throughout the whole world.*

2:45 P.M. Blessing of Paschal Baskets

3:00 P.M. Parish Pascha Potluck (every family brings something to share with everyone) and Egg Hunt for the children.

Schedule of Services

• **Wednesday, April 2**

- Divine Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts 8 A.M.
- Matins with the Great Canon and the Reading of Life of Ven. Mary of Egypt 6 P.M.

• **Saturday of the Akathist**

- Fri., April 4 Matins with Akathist to the Mother of God 6 P.M.
- Sat., April 5 Divine Liturgy 9 A.M.

• **Fifth Sunday of Great Lent**

- **Forefeast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God**
- **Holy Hierarch Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, the Confessor**
 - Sat., April 5 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., April 6 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

• **Annunciation of the Mother of God**

- Sun., April 6 Vigil 6 P.M.
- Mon., April 7 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.

• **Wednesday, April 9**

- Divine Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts 6 P.M.

• **Lazarus Saturday**

- Fri., April 11 Vespers and Matins 6 P.M.
- Sat., April 12 Liturgy 9 A.M.

• **Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem**

- **Palm Sunday**
 - Sat., April 12 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., April 13 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

• **Wed., April 16 Great and Holy Wednesday**

- Holy Unction 6 P.M.

• **Thur., April 17 Holy and Great Thursday**

- Vespers and Liturgy 8 A.M.
- Matins with the Reading of Twelve Passion Gospels 6 P.M.

• **Fri., April 18 Great and Holy Friday**

- Royal Hours 9 A.M.
- Vespers with the bringing out of the Shroud 4 P.M.
- Matins with Procession 6 P.M.

• **Sat., April 19 Great and Holy Saturday**

- Vespers and Liturgy 9 A.M.
- Midnight Office 11:30 P.M.
- Procession, Matins and Liturgy – midnight

• **Sun., April 20**

- **Bright Resurrection of Christ**
- **Pascha of the Lord**
 - Paschal Vespers 2 P.M.

• **Mon, April 21 Bright Monday**

- Divine Liturgy 9 A.M. at House Springs

• **Thomas Sunday**

- **Second Sunday of Pascha**
 - Sat., April 26 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., April 27 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

• **Tue., April 29**

- **Radonitsa**
- **Holy Martyr Irene of Aquileia**
 - Moleben 9 A.M.
 - Panihida at St. Matthew Cemetery 10 A.M.
 - Panihida at St. John's Church in House Springs 11 A.M.

Notes on the Mystery of General Unction / Соборование

The Mystery of Blessing of Oil, also known as Unction, is an ancient practice of the Church, attested to by the Apostles: *If any of you is sick, let him call upon the presbyters of the church, so that they would pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him; and if he had committed sins, they will be forgiven to him. Therefore, confess ye to one another your transgressions and pray for one another that ye may be healed* (James 5:14-16).

The Unction service consists of prayers for blessing of oil, seven readings from the Apostol and the Gospel and intercessions to God for the healing of our souls and bodies.

The Mystery of Blessing of Oil is administered to the gravely ill. The Church in her wisdom allows for all of us to avail ourselves of this mystery during the holy days of Great Lent.

Only Orthodox Christians of seven years and older (i.e. those who come for the Mystery of Confession) may participate in this mystery (younger children may not). For all of us, this can be done only once during the Great Lent.

In our parish we, according to our local tradition, serve the Mystery of Blessing of Oil on Holy Wednesday night. One of the prerequisites for being anointed is a recent confession of sins. Try to confess at the appropriate times before the Holy Week and try to lead a life undisturbed by sin on the days of

Our Lord's suffering.

During the General Unction, the faithful stand with lit candles. At the end of the service, when the clergy blow out their candles, the faithful do the same. Then the priests lift up the open Gospel Book and pray, while the faithful prostrate (we arise once this prayer is finished).

When you come for anointing, first you will come to venerate the Holy Gospel and you will come (in orderly fashion) to each priest and be anointed on the forehead, eyes, nose, lips, upper part of your chest (have your shirt unbuttoned by the neck) and both sides of the palms of your hands. Having been anointed by the first priest, you will come up to the second and the anointing is repeated. If you have excess oil, there will be paper towels (and the bucket to collect those towels once used) available to wipe off the excess oil (the paper towels will be burned afterwards). According to the instructions of Archbishop Gabriel, on the night of Unction we avoid washing the parts of the body where we were anointed (washing them the following morning is appropriate).



Confessions in Preparation for Holy Week and Pascha

We are beginning the countdown of days to Holy Week and Pascha. Everyone is trying to be prepared to partake of Holy Communion on the most holy days of the year. However, we would like to ask you not to postpone your confession until the end of the Holy Week. Most of you who read this article come to church regularly and have opportunities to confess also regularly. Those who come to church very infrequently (sometimes once a year or even rarer) choose to ask to be confessed at the last moment – for instance, on Holy Saturday night, so that instead of getting ready to meet the Risen Lord the priest would be hunched over the anoly hearing

confessions of those who did not care to come when it would be convenient for everyone. But such is the nature of the fallen human race.

Therefore, try to confess during the week before Palm Sunday and try to maintain the same prayerful and humble disposition from that time till Pascha (and beyond). Usually, our priests are available for confessions before and during most Divine Services. If you confessed before Palm Sunday and, with the help of God, maintained prayerful disposition, there is no need to come again for confession before Pascha.

Upcoming Church Yard Sale

The Sisterhood of St. Macrina is hosting a yard sale on **May 23rd and 24th**. Donations will be needed of gently used clothing, household goods, books, toys, furniture, and more, with all proceeds supporting the Sisterhood and our parish. **Please price all items before bringing them to the church** and drop them off the morning of the sale so we can easily sort and

He's *Just* a Catechumen! Subdeacon Daniel Simpson

On a severe winter night in 4th century Gaul (modern day France), a young, twenty-something catechumen was out walking in the city, for he was a Roman soldier on duty. Perceiving something out of the corner of his eye, he turned his head and beheld a near-naked beggar by the gates of the city, hunched over, shivering uncontrollably from the bitter cold. Deeply moved with compassion for this beggar, the young soldier, Martin—whom the Orthodox now commemorate on November 11/24 as St. Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours—hurriedly approached the beggar. Standing before him, Martin removed his cloak and cut it in half with his sword, giving half of it to the beggar so that he would stay warm through the night. Later that evening, as Martin lay asleep in his bed, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream, splendidly arrayed in the half-cut cloak that Martin had given to the beggar (cf. Matthew 25:31-46). Compassed about by His glorious angels, our Lord, pointing to Martin, exclaimed to the angels, “Martin is *just* a catechumen but has clothed Me with this garment.”

Martin is *just* a catechumen.

What are we to make of our Lord's words here, particularly the adverb “just?” Are they words of surprise that a catechumen would do something so *uncharacteristic*? Or to ask the question somewhat differently: if Martin had *not* clothed the beggar, would he have avoided moral blame, since such an action would be so *unexpected*? (“Well, what else did you expect from him? He's *just* a catechumen, after all.”) Answering this question requires answering a logically prior one: what was the nature and purpose of the catechumenate in Martin's time?

In his book, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, Casimir Kucharek describes the

organize everything on-site.

You can also support the sale by volunteering to help with set-up, organizing, running the sale, or clean-up. Even if you can't volunteer, stop by to shop and spread the word! Every contribution—whether through donations, time, or purchases—makes a difference. Thank you for your support!



catechumenate in Martin's time as follows:

The purpose of the catechumenate was a strict and thorough intellectual, moral and ascetical training of the candidates. Becoming a Christian meant a capital decision, a complete break with the past, with customs and traditions, even with family in many cases. One had to be trained to live according to God's precepts. This entailed not only the acquisition of the necessary knowledge but also a period of testing, proving one's ability to lead a Godly life in a world reeking with immorality, corruption and vice. Until A.D. 313, the terrifying possibility of torture and death for one's beliefs proved an additional strain. It was warfare, total warfare, with the enemies of darkness, and the catechumenate was its basic training. The Church was stern in those days. It had to be. In warfare the most successful soldiers are those best trained, the best disciplined. The same is true of spiritual warfare, which must also count on God's grace. The phenomenal growth of the Church and the thousands of martyrs proved the effectiveness of rigorous discipline and training. A candidate who did not measure up was rejected. Total regeneration of the candidate took place at baptism, but his transformation had started years before when he had been accepted as a

catechumen. Training transformed the recruit into a soldier of Christ, able to battle the powers of evil (p. 86).

Here Kucharek describes how the catechumenate was a rigorous, multi-year intellectual, moral, and spiritual “boot camp” to test, train, and transform newly-enlisted recruits, so that years later, they would emerge from the regenerative waters of baptism as battle-hardened soldiers of Christ. Furthermore, we see from Kucharek’s description of the ancient catechumenate that striving to live a Godly life was not something that began after baptism. Rather, it was a necessary condition *for* baptism.

With this understanding of the ancient catechumenate, we see that by the statement, “Martin is *just* a catechumen,” the Lord was not calling attention to uncharacteristic or unexpected behavior of a catechumen. Rather, the Lord was

calling attention to the fact that Martin did the *very thing* that one should expect of a catechumen—an expectation and enjoyment that still remains to this day: catechumens must begin to strive to cultivate the Christ-like dispositions of character that are necessary for those deemed fit to dwell in the Kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 5:3-12)—now. But this story from the life of St. Martin of Tours is not only an exhortation to those numbered among the Catechumens. Rather, the Lord’s exclamation, “Martin is *just* a catechumen,” is also an exhortation to those of us numbered among the Faithful. For if Martin, a catechumen, had put on Christ a half-cut garment, how much more ought we, who have “put on Christ” (cf. Galatians 3:27) and received “the garment of incorruption” in the regenerative waters of baptism, to strive zealously to fulfill the Lord’s commandments and adorn Him with splendid raiments of our faithful love and good works?

What is Radonitsa?

Excerpt from the 'Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Pentecostarion'

"On the Tuesday of St. Thomas week, according to the order instituted by our Holy Fathers, we call to remembrance, in Paschal joy, all those who have died from the beginning of the ages in faith and in the hope of resurrection and life eternal.

"Having previously celebrated the radiant feast of Christ's glorious Resurrection, the faithful commemorate the dead today with the pious intent to share the great joy of this Pascha feast with those who have departed this life in the hope of their own resurrection. This is the same blessed joy with which the dead heard our Lord announce His victory over death when He descended into Hades, thus leading forth by the hand the righteous souls of the Old Covenant into Paradise. In short, this feast is a kindred joy, to celebrate the luminous Resurrection

with our Orthodox forefathers who have fallen asleep.

"There is evidence of the commemoration of the dead today in the writings of the Church Fathers. St. John Chrysostom mentions the commemoration of the dead performed on Tuesday of St. Thomas week in his "Homily on the Cemetery and the Cross."

"The faithful departed are remembered in Divine Liturgies, 'koliva' is prepared and blessed in the churches in memory of those who have fallen asleep, and the Orthodox graves in cemeteries are blessed by the priests and visited by the faithful. Furthermore, it should be noted that due to the great spiritual joy this jubilant commemoration bears, it is called in the Slavonic tongue, 'Radonitsa,' or 'Day of Rejoicing'."

Focus on FOCUS

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 Matushka Christine MacDonald.

We will serve our next FOCUS Sunday dinner on **April 13th**. 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 at Archangel Michael parish in the city, please sign up on the trapeza bulletin board sheet. If you

have any questions, please contact Fr. Sergii or Joseph Steineger.

Thank you very much for your faithful service in providing peanut butter, jelly, and saltines during the month of March. The FOCUS ministry was extremely appreciative of the items that we donated. Again, thank you for your service.

For April, we have been asked to supply the FOCUS Pantry with the following:

- **Canned Beef Stew w/poptop (15 oz.)**
- **Chili w/Beans w/poptop (15 oz.)**
- **Chef Boyardee cans w/poptop (15 oz.)**
- **Spam w/poptop (12 oz.)**
- **Canned Tuna w/poptop (5 oz.)**

It is important that we provide cans with pop tops to the pantry since many of the recipients may not own a can opener. A flier is posted in the trapeza with tear-away tabs for reminders. Please donate these items in the large plastic container in our parish coat closet. We would like to supply a healthy donation by **Pascha on April 20th.**

If you would like to donate money directly to the FOCUS ministry, you may use the QR code above and to the right. If you would like to write a check or draw from retirement funds, please contact Joseph Steineger directly so he can help walk you through that process.



Parish Prayer List

Archimandrite Seraphim — Health
Reader Symeon Campbell — Health
Photini Mills — Health
Tatiana Zyryanova — Health
Julianna Campbell — Health
Dimitry Johnson — Health
Inna Dagaeva — Health
Mark Wiebenga — Health
Subdeacon Daniel Simpson — Health
Carol Surgant — Health
Barbara Westervelt — 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.

Catechumen Corner

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:

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|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| • Doc | • Evan | • Shiloh |
| • Ricardo | • Ryan | • Ethan, |
| • Zachary | • Eythan | Allison, and |
| • Theodore | • Tyler | children |

PLANTING PRAYER SEEDS

Monday April 28th

12 Noon

Celebrate the end of our fast by planting Basil seeds! This Monday we will be decorating our pots with an icon and prayer then reading a story. Afterwards we will have a snack and playtime outside picnic style. Supplies for pot and seeds will be supplied, please bring your own food, drink and picnic blanket. All ages welcome!

