

St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

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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



Schedule of Services

- **Third Sunday of Pascha**
 - **Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women**
 - Sat., May 3 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., May 4 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer**
 - Mon., May 5 Vigil 6 P.M. *at House Springs*
 - Tue., May 6 Divine Liturgy 9 A.M. *at House Springs*
- **Fourth Sunday of Pascha**
 - **Sunday of the Paralytic**
 - Sat., May 10 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., May 11 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Mid-Pentecost**
 - Tue., May 13 Vespers and Matins 6 P.M.
 - Wed., May 14 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
followed the Lesser Blessing of Water
- **Fifth Sunday of Pascha**
 - **Sunday of the Samaritan Woman**
 - Sat., May 17 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., May 18 Meeting of the Hierarch 9:30 A.M. followed by the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
 - **Translation of the Relics of Holy Hierarch Nicholas Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, the Wonderworker**
 - Wed., May 21 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Thur., May 22 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
 - **Sixth Sunday of Pascha**
 - **Sunday of the Blind Man**
 - Sat., May 24 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., May 25 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
 - **Ascension of the Lord**
 - Wed., May 28 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Thur., May 29 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.

The Miracle of the Holy Fire

Interview with Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodorus I († 2000) by Niels Christian Hvidt

Your Beatitude, what actually occurs when you enter the tomb on Holy Saturday during the ceremony of the Holy Fire?

After all the lights are extinguished, I bow down and enter the first chamber of the tomb. From here I find my way through the darkness to the inner room of the tomb where Christ was buried. Here, I kneel in holy fear in front of the place where our Lord lay after his death and where He rose again from the dead.

Praying in the Holy Sepulcher in itself for me is always a very holy moment in a very holy place. It is from here that He rose again in glory and spread His light to the world. John the Evangelist writes in the



first chapter of his Gospel that Jesus is the light of the World.

Kneeling in front of the place where He rose from the dead, we are brought within the immediate closeness of his glorious Resurrection. Catholics and Protestants call this church "The Church of the Holy Sepulcher." We call it "The Church of the Resurrection". The Resurrection of Christ, for us Orthodox, is the center of our faith, as Christ has gained the final victory over death,

not just His own death but the death of all those who will stay close to Him.

I believe it to be no coincidence that the Holy Fire comes in exactly this spot. In Matthew 28:3, the Gospel says that when Christ rose from the dead, an angel came, dressed all in a fearful light. I believe that the intense light that enveloped the angel at the Lord's Resurrection is the same light that appears miraculously every Pascha Saturday.

Christ wants to remind us that His Resurrection is a reality and not just a myth; He really came to the world in order to offer the necessary sacrifice through His death and Resurrection so that man could be re-united with his Creator.

In the tomb, I say particular prayers that have been handed down to us through the centuries and, having said them, I wait. Sometimes I may wait a few minutes, but normally the miracle happens immediately after I have said the prayers. From the core of the very stone on which Jesus lay an indefinable light pours forth.

It usually has a blue tint, but the color may change and take on many different hues. It cannot be described in human terms. The light rises out of the stone as mist may rise out of a lake - it almost looks as if the stone is covered by a moist cloud, but it is light. This light behaves differently each year. Sometimes it covers just the stone, while other times it gives light to the whole sepulcher, so that people who are standing outside the tomb and look into it see the tomb filled with light. The light does not burn - I have never had my beard burnt in all the sixteen years I have been Patriarch in Jerusalem and have received the Holy Fire. The light is of a different consistency than the normal fire that burns in a lampada.

At a certain point the light rises and forms a column in which the fire is of a different nature, so that I am able to light my candles from it. When I thus have received the flame on my candles, I go out and give the fire first to the Armenian Patriarch and then to the Coptic. Thereafter I give the flame to all people present in the Church.

How do you yourself experience the miracle and what does it mean to your spiritual life?

The miracle touches me just as deeply every single year. Every time it is another step towards being closer to God. For me it is of great comfort to consider Christ's

faithfulness towards us, which He displays by giving us the holy flame every year in spite of our human frailties and failures. We experience many wonders in our churches, and miracles are nothing strange to us.

It happens often that icons cry, when Heaven wants to display its closeness to us; likewise, we have saints, to whom God gives many spiritual gifts. But none of these miracles have such a penetrating and symbolic meaning for us as the Miracle of the Holy Fire. The miracle is almost like a sacrament. It makes the Resurrection of Christ as real to us as if He had died only a few years ago.

Reminder: Upcoming Church Yard Sale

A reminder that the Sisterhood of St. Macrina will be holding their yard sale on **May 23rd and 24th**. They are still accepting donations of gently used clothing, household items, books, toys, small furniture, and more. All proceeds go to support the Sisterhood and our parish.

Please remember it is **mandatory** to price your items before dropping them off

Wednesday evening, Thursday morning and evening, and Friday morning before the sale—this helps us sort and organize everything more efficiently on-site.

Volunteers are also welcome to help with setup, running the sale, or cleanup. Even if you're not able to volunteer, we'd love for you to stop by, shop, and help spread the word. Every bit of support counts—thank you!

On Prayer

By Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) († 1936)

The Holy Fathers strictly forbid people to squeeze feelings of prayerful exaltation or compunction out of themselves or to stimulate them artificially in any way. A person who does this is mistaking a purely physical sensation for spiritual exaltation; his heart palpitates, his breath comes in gasps, he has spasms and so on, and then, satisfied by such sensations, he begins to think that he is a great man of prayer, a spiritual person, and falls into proud self-delusion. While they forbid people to force their *feelings*, the fathers command us to force our *attention*

into all the words and thoughts of a prayer — it is better to read fewer prayers, and pay more attention. Feelings do not depend on our will, but are sent



by God as a gift of grace, which we can and should value very highly, but we must in no way deem ourselves superior to others or boast if we receive it. If it is long withheld from a person who prays or is taken away at times, then he should carefully think whether he is being hindered by some unrecognized sin, a secretly conceived passion or sinful worry over some worldly matter, and, if so, start struggling against it. But if his memory and conscience testify that this is not so, then he should patiently continue laboring at prayer, and the Lord will send compunction when it will be most useful for his soul — when he stops being impatient and presumptuous. Also, the priest should persistently warn the faithful not to ask for visions and miracles, since Christians who begin asking for these are well on the way to *spiritual delusion (prelest)* and superstitions. Also, they should not be in a hurry to see the machinations of demons at work every time they experience some failure: we are too insignificant, in the spiritual sense, for evil spirits to take much trouble over us, since even without this we do what pleases them.

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.

Thank you to everyone who served on April 13! It was a great success. Isaac Crabtree and Nicole Steineger cooked an incredible meal of

We should consider attacks demonic only when we are set upon by an onslaught of malicious hatred, or of despondency and despair, if they have no other cause, or of unexpected and unself-induced attacks of lust. While restraining his spiritual children from desiring miracles and visions and demanding them from God, the priest should remind them that they should mentally place themselves before God during prayer. Furthermore, and this is especially important, he should remind them that not only do we look up mentally to God during prayer, but also the Lord, as ever, is looking down upon us, looking into our hearts, reading our thoughts and attending to our petitions and our words of praise. This thought always drives inattention and distraction away from a person who is praying; for if a person talking to a king pays close attention to every word the king says and penetrates into its meaning, concentrates and is respectful, then it follows that someone talking to the Lord, feeling the gaze of the All-Seeing One directed upon him, will be filled with reverent trembling and holy compunction.

lemon garlic chicken and rice on location, and we had a very strong showing of volunteers. We served 58 people, handed out 127 meals, \$686.47 in pantry goods, and \$453.68 in hygiene and clothing items. Thank you all very much for your service to the Lord on Palm Sunday.

We will serve our next FOCUS Sunday dinner on **June 15th**. If you are interested in helping, either by providing food for or helping cook it, or by distributing the meal and pantry items at on location, then please sign up through the following Sign-Up Genius website:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0945ABAC2FA7F9C70-56029142-sunday#/>

There is also a sign-up sheet on the trapeza bulletin board along with this Sign-Up Genius link. If you have any questions, please contact Fr. Sergii or Joseph Steineger.

For May, we have been asked to supply the FOCUS Pantry with **large (18 oz.) and small (10 oz.) Soup Cans with pop-tops**. A flier is posted in the trapeza with tear-away tabs for reminders. Please donate these items in the large plastic container found in our parish coat closet. We would like to supply a healthy donation by **May 18th**.

If you would like to donate money directly to the FOCUS ministry, you may use the QR code 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.



Sign Up Genius QR code
for Sunday Suppers



FOCUS Donation
QR code

Baptisms at St. Basil's

David Plocek and the Leber family were baptized into the Orthodox Church following the Divine Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday. This beautiful moment marked the beginning of their life in Christ through the sacraments of baptism, chrismation, and Holy Communion. It was especially meaningful that they were

able to fully participate in the sacred journey of Holy Week and celebrate their first Pascha as newly illumined members of the Church. May God grant them many years as they continue to grow in faith, love, and communion with Christ and His Church!





New Catechumens at St. Basil's

We announce the making of catechumens before the Divine Liturgy on Palm Sunday. Jacob Wertheimer and Rachel Rukavina are beginning their formal journey toward baptism and full entry into the Orthodox Church. Please keep them in your prayers as they take this important step in faith.

Parish Prayer List

Schema-Archimandrite Panteleimon — Repose

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

Ruth Bradley — 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:

- **Doc**
- **Ricardo**
- **Zachary**
- **Theodore**
- **Evan**
- **Ryan**
- **Eythan**
- **Tyler**
- **Shiloh**
- **Ethan, Allison, and children**
- **Jacob**
- **Rachel**