

St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

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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
Deacon Ivan Alekseev
Deacon Daniel Simpson



Schedule of Services

- **Holy Hierarch John, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco, the Wonderworker**
 - Fri., July 4 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Sat., July 5 Divine Liturgy 9 A.M.
- **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost**
 - **Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God**
 - Sat., July 5 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., July 6 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Nativity of St. John the Baptist**
 - Sun., July 6 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Mon., July 7 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Holy Pre-eminent Apostles Peter and Paul**
 - Fri., July 11 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Sat., July 12 Divine Liturgy 9 A.M.
- **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**
 - **Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles**
 - Sat., July 12 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., July 13 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia**
 - Wed., July 16 Vigil 6 P.M.
 - Thur., July 17 Divine Liturgy 8 A.M.
- **Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**
 - Sat., July 19 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., July 20 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- **Seventh Sunday after Pentecost**
 - **Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils**
 - Sat., July 26 Vigil 5 P.M.
 - Sun., July 27 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

Parish Hall Etiquette After Liturgy

Sunday afternoon after the Divine Liturgy is a wonderful time to enjoy good food and fellowship in the parish hall. As Christians, however, we should always be mindful of the work others are doing on our behalf. If we are still in the parish hall eating and conversing at

2:30 p.m., it would be helpful to move our conversations outdoors. This allows the workers to begin putting the chairs up on the tables and start sweeping and mopping the floors. Our cooperation and consideration will make their work easier and more efficient.

Playground Update

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped build the new playground at St. Basil's. Many of the volunteers worked long hours in the heat to complete the project, and we are very grateful for their time and effort. The playscape, with swings, a climbing wall, and a slide, is ready for the children of the parish to enjoy. We also thank the Sisterhood of St. Macrina, whose fundraising from the church sale held in May made the purchase possible. Thank you again to everyone who gave their time, energy, and support to make it happen.



Meet St. Basil's New Deacon

In May, Daniel Simpson was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Gabriel during his visit to St. Basil's. Below is an interview with Father Deacon Daniel about his path to ordination, what brought him to this point, and how he understands his role as a deacon in the life of the Church and within his family. We hope this gives everyone a chance to get to know St. Basil's new deacon a little better.

What drew you to the Orthodox Church just a few years ago, and how did that journey begin?

My journey into the Orthodox Church certainly involved a major theological and philosophical component, beginning over seventeen years ago as a young Protestant seminarian then for a decade as an academic philosopher—and quite an incorrigible one at that (but I repeat myself). However, what ultimately drew me into the Orthodox Church was not a path of study but of intense suffering, illness, and an eventual diagnosis with multiple sclerosis in May 2021. St. John of Damascus writes that “man, by reason of the infirmity of his body, is capable of repentance” (*De fid. orth.*, II.2), and in the Lord's

severe mercy shown to me through the fires of bodily affliction, the doors of repentance were flung wide open, leading me on a transformative path through which the truth of Orthodoxy was *seared*, as it were, into my bones.

What was it like experiencing your baptism and now, a few years later, your ordination as a deacon?

What immediately comes to mind is the joyous thread tying together the triple processions (1) around the font with my family at our baptism, (2) around the center of the nave with my wife at our wedding, and (3) around the Holy Altar table at my ordination. Moreover, the deacon's vesting prayers allude to prayers and themes found in the Mysteries of Holy Baptism and Matrimony, tying these three Mysteries and personal experiences together. Finally, the beginning of the bishop's first prayer of the Mystery of Holy Orders holds special significance for me: “The Divine Grace, which *always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking*.”

How has your family supported or grown with you through these profound spiritual transitions?

My family's eager entry into the Church alongside me was one of the first fruits of my repentance and change. We continue to learn how the Lord calls us to put the needs of each other before our own, and that includes re-ordering our family schedules and priorities, so that our family life can slowly become integrated around, and nourished by, the liturgical life of the Church, knowing that God will bless our feeble efforts.

What do your children think about your role in the Church now? Have they asked any memorable questions or shared thoughts about it?

My three sons, Micah, Noah, and Leo, have remarked how much they enjoy serving with me in the sanctuary. My older daughter, Elena, said that she enjoys watching me serve. Moreover, she informed me that she prefers that I wear a cassock.

What aspects of Orthodox theology or worship most deeply resonate with you, especially compared to your past experiences in ministry?

Sin and the passions as various forms of spiritual diseases; the therapeutic nature of salvation as divine healing, which is appropriated through our ascetic struggles and participation in the life and Holy Mysteries of the Church (and that healing is possible in this life); suffering as constitutive of the Christian life, which is to be endured patiently and *unmurmuringly*; *theosis* as the ultimate purpose of our life and the deepest longing of our hearts.

How do you see your role as a deacon enriching both your family life and your parish community?

A deacon strives with love and sobriety to lead others toward attentive and sincere prayer to God, while trying to disappear, so that neither he nor his needs are the focus; he is at his spiritual family's disposal as their servant (*diakonos*), both in the context of the services and more broadly in parish life. The same

principle should apply in family life: there are no longer my needs around which family life turns; I should strive to be fully at my family's disposal as their servant, cultivating a disposition of love, joy, gentleness, and quietness. A deacon is also charged with the cleaning and care of the sacred vessels and the folding of various vestments and cloths, so I would be remiss if I didn't note a striking parallel of needing to ease my wife's burdens at home by helping wash the dishes and fold the laundry.

Are there particular saints, Church Fathers, or spiritual writings that were pivotal during your conversion and formation?

The culmination of that season of suffering coincided with Great Lent. The different saints commemorated on the Sundays of Great Lent, such as St. Gregory Palamas and his insistence that true philosophy begins with cleansing one's heart, and St. Mary of Egypt and her example of a fierce and fiery repentance, pointed the way forward for me. I especially remember coming across a passage from Fr. Seraphim Rose's biography that affected me very deeply: *"Let not us, who would be Christians, expect anything else from it than to be crucified. For to be Christian is to be crucified, in this time and in any time since Christ came for the first time. His life is the example — and warning — to us all. We must be crucified personally, mystically; for through crucifixion is the only path to resurrection...there is no other way to be Christian."* In terms of formation: attending the divine services; re-reading the Gospels — especially the words of Jesus — with new eyes; beginning a prayer rule; reading the daily lives of the saints and the writings of both ancient and modern saints, such as St. John Chrysostom and St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, and the Russian spiritual classic, *The Way of a Pilgrim*.

What encouragement would you offer to others who may be considering the Orthodox faith or discerning a late vocation to ordained ministry?

I find the *conjoinment* of the Church's theology,

her ascetic way of life, her heavenly worship, and the spiritual intensity of her saints to be a powerful argument for the truth of Orthodoxy. But it is the words of Christ Himself that I find to be utterly compelling: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). In terms of discerning a vocation to Holy Orders, the words of the Psalmist come to mind: "Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice in Him with trembling"

Orthodox Motorcycle Brotherhood

Our diocese has an "Archangel" motorcycle brotherhood that organizes group rides to holy sites. A recent ride to Holy Cross Monastery included Archpriest Mikhail Volzhanskii (Dormition Cathedral, Ferndale, MI), Priest Antony Alekseyenko, Yevgeny Braychenko (St. Vladimir's, Rock City), and Theophan Helbig (St. Basil's, St. Louis). During the visit, they attended the Divine Liturgy, spoke with the monks, toured the new church, and witnessed the joy and pride

Mother's Blessing

There will be a Mother's Blessing hosted at St. Basil's on **July 19th from 1-3 PM**. The gathering will honor and support three expecting mothers through prayers, blessings, and thoughtful gifts. Attendees will help create a prayer board, postpartum care bag, and a birthing necklace or bracelet for each mother. Guests are

St. Basil's Choir at Music Symposium

ROCOR's Synodal School of Liturgical Music held the first Music Symposium at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Wayne, WV, from June 11-14, 2025. With the blessing of Fr. Sergii and the encouragement of our choir director, Carol Surgant, three members of our choir attended: Russ (Theophan) Helbig and Iovane and Aleksandre Sakhelashvili.

Distinguished faculty was comprised of instructors from the Synodal School of Liturgical Music: Protodeacon Serge Arlievsky, Reader Lawrence (Kurt) Sander, Dr. Peter Fekula, Dr. Irina du Quenoy, and Mark Hrebinka.

(Psa. 2:11). Although there is a promise of great joy and confidence for those who serve faithfully to the end (cf. 1 Tim. 3:13), the sober warning remains that a stricter judgment awaits us (Ja. 3:1). Given how high the stakes are raised with ordination, we must diligently apply the words proclaimed by the deacon at the Divine Liturgy, "Let us stand well! Let us stand with fear! Let us attend!"—ever crying out, "Lord, have mercy!"

on the faces of local contractors who are helping build it. As former

abbot Schema-Archimandrite Panteleimon once said, "This monastery is not merely for us or for the Church alone—it is for the whole nation."



encouraged to bring a finger food or drink to share, along with individual gifts to place in the mothers' care bags. For more information or to access the mothers' gift registries, participants are invited to contact Meagan or Mary at mr82393@gmail.com or 314.707.9217



Reader Lawrence opened by introducing three overlapping tensions and eight misconceptions. One tension is Orthodox immigrants' holding fast to the liturgical culture they brought to America. A greater tension lies with converts who both leave behind their former liturgical

culture and immerse themselves in Orthodoxy. Together, both must slowly and carefully form an Orthodox culture in America. Reader Lawrence offered corrections to eight misconceptions which could steer Orthodoxy into liturgical damage requiring generations to correct. These may be explored in future newsletters.

Successful reception of Orthodoxy by Alaskan Native Americans was cited as an example to follow. As Natives accepted liturgical forms of Russian Orthodoxy, changes were limited to fitting their language within Orthodox liturgical forms. Over time, the musical forms slowly and naturally adapted until a genuine Orthodoxy took root in Native American souls. Further, we were reminded that America is not our home. We, immigrants and converts alike, are walking into eternity without looking back: our liturgical music should safely convey us there.

Protodeacon Serge Arlievsky led an information-dense study of calendars, hours, and resources used to build services such as the Horologion, Menaion, Triodion, Pentecostarion and Octoechos. The goal of the above is not merely to mark the times but to structure Orthodox time with content needed to help us toward divinization and eternal life. A symposium could be held on this alone.

Dr. Fekula responded to the misconception that the Eight Tones should be replaced with an impressive demonstration of the Western origin of the Tones and their virtue of flexibility and adaptability. Using keyboard and screen, he playfully showed how the Eight Tones allow the melody to be shifted to the strongest group within small choir of singers with uneven ability. We experimented changing key, accenting thirds, fifths, sixths, doubling, and more.

Dr. Irina du Quenoy introduced Taste in Music: "I know it when I hear it." Elements required by

Newly Illumined at St. Basil's

Kayla (Irene) Rosen was received into the Orthodox Church through chrismation on June 7th. On the same day, the infant George, son of Isaac and Arlie (Maria) Crabtree, received Holy Baptism. On June 21st, James, the newborn son

conductors include experience, healthy spiritual development, and resource availability. Great care should be given to develop future choir conductors! A career opportunity lies in making existing resources available online. A pressing need is intentional training for choirs regarding clergy ordinations and funerals.

Numerous lecturers reminded us that the Church in Russia is still recovering from being under the seventy-year Communist yoke. Compounded with the great number of converts among clergy, choirs and laymen, great care is required. Yet there are blessings. For example, a woman listening to choir rehearsal in Moscow during the 2007 reunion of the Moscow Patriarchate and ROCOR asked where the choir was from. "The United States," answered the conductor. She replied, "They don't sing like that in Russia anymore." Again, Dr. Fekula reminded us of a composer whose repression prevented him from composing for the Church. Conviction prompted him to compose anyway, filling files with material that would be discovered only after his repose, convinced that the Church never stops singing even during the darkest times. She would find his work and a future generation would sing. We were then informed that we – that day – were the first choir to sing Golovanov's Cherubic Hymn. There were numerous moments like that: when tears had to be held back as the singing, angelic harmonies and delicious sounds lingered while ascending in praise.

The symposium choir sang during the Vigil and the Divine Liturgy at Christ Our Saviour in Wayne, WV, after which St. Basil's choir members attended the Liturgy at Holy Cross Monastery.

It would be worthwhile for others to schedule time off work a year in advance to ensure attendance at the next symposium. It can directly benefit St. Basil's.

of Joseph and Vanessa (Olga) Rameer, was baptized. We give thanks to God for these joyous occasions and pray He grants the Newly Illumined many blessed years!

Focus on FOCUS

Thank you very much to those who helped serve on June 15th. It was a blessing to all involved. If you are interested in helping at our next Sunday dinner, scheduled for **August 3rd**, either by providing food for or helping cook it, or by distributing the meal and pantry items on location, then please sign up through the following SignUpGenius website:

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

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



Parish Prayer List

Schema-Archimandrite Panteleimon — Repose

Reader Symeon Campbell — Health

Photini Mills — Health

Julianna Campbell — Health

Inna Dagaeva — Health

Mark Wiebenga — Health

Deacon Daniel Simpson — Health

Barbara Westervelt — Health

Ruth Bradley — Health

Tatiana Zyryanova — 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.

For those who are interested, FOCUS is **now serving Wednesday morning breakfast** to those experiencing need. If you are interested in helping at the Wednesday breakfast meals, please contact Matushka Christine McDonald at 417.861.6649

For July, we have been asked to supply the FOCUS Pantry with **hygiene kits**. A flier is posted in the trapeza with tear-away tabs for reminders. To facilitate this request, we have created a parish SignUpGenius for you to choose the items you would like to provide for the hygiene kits. Please remember to sign up so that we do not get too many of one item and too few of another. Once you have purchased the items you signed up for, please place them in the large plastic container found in our parish coat closet. We would like to supply a healthy donation by **July 20th**.

You may access our SignUpGenius for the hygiene kits at <https://rb.gy/jh08nu> or with the following QR code:



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 | • Shiloh |
| • Zachary | • Ethan, Allison, and children |
| • Theodore | • Jacob |
| • Evan | • Rachel |
| • Ryan | • Justin |
| • Eythan | |
| • Tyler | |