

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church
Celebrating 125 years witnessing to the Apostolic Faith

110 EAST MAIN STREET,
Marblehead, OH 43440

Rev. Fr. Peter Tomas, Rector



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***Holy Assumption Orthodox Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America,
Diocese of the Midwest***

OCTOBER 15, 2023

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Liturgical Schedule

SATURDAY – OCTOBER 21

Memorial Saturday of Saint Demetrius
Venerable Hilarion the Great

VESPERS, 4:00 PM

SUNDAY – OCTOBER 22

20th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

*Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Abercius, Bishop
and Wonderworker of Hieropolis
The Holy Seven Youths ("Seven Sleepers") of
Ephesus*

9:10 AM HOURS, 9:30 AM

DIVINE LITURGY Followed by Coffee Hour



Parable of the Sower

EPISTLE: 2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9

Brethren: The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows –

how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

GOSPEL: Luke 8:5-15

The Lord spoke this parable: A Sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS



Basil Glovinsky, 1007 Glendale Drive, Port Clinton, OH 43452; Subdeacon Roger Pinta, P.O. Box 39, Middle Bass, OH 43446; Diane Tryon, 109 Joslyn Street, Arcadia, OH 44804; Ed & Irene Vangeloff, 454 Strouse Lane, Sandusky, OH 44870

OCTOBER CANDLE SPONSORS



Altar Candles: Available (\$50); **Chandelier:** God's Blessings upon Barbara Wroblewski (\$50); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** Natalie, In loving memory of my mom's birthday October 28 (\$25); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, Birthday blessings to Katelyn and in memory of Uncle Alex and John Kovach (\$15); **Candles at St. Tikhon's Icon:** For Safety and Health of Nicholas, Tikhon, Gleice, & Chloe (\$15)

OCTOBER REPOSED



William Martin (1982) No date provided; **3-** Anna Tomko (1990); **4-** William Peter Guzy (1974); **5-** John Elchisco Sr. (1982); **5-** Mark Conroy (2018); **5-** Patricia

Schirtzinger (2021); **6-** Andrew Tomko (1970); **6-** Helen Elchisco (1956); **7-** Michael Gresko (1963); **8-** Archpriest Michael Kostyk (1964) Former Pastor; **11-** Helen Pipenur (2009); **12-** Pauline Mary Gresh (1981); **13-** James E Jump (2011); **13-** Tom Grgich (2018); **13-** Michael Mazurik (2018); **14-** George Kaitsa (1991); **15-** Michael Mazurik (1972); **15-** John Kovach (1983); **16-** Mary Kobb (2017); **16-** Tom Wiseman (2020); **18-** Nadežda Kaitsa (1992); **20-** Elizabeth Naiser Royhab (2006); **20-** Terry Fink (2017); **21-** Alex Mazur (1920); **21-** Terry (Bobbie's cousin) (2017); **27-** Gordon J. Schutt (2021); **28-** George Elchisco (1996); **28-** Anthony Glovinsky (1946); **31-** George Rusincovitch (1994)



VIGILS FOR OCTOBER 8

Laura Kovach 2 For health and/or healing of Hannah S., Barbara D., Pauline O., George K., Joe H., Margi H., Betty K., Ben F., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Sharon D., John D., and Karen D.

Special intentions.

Sandy Martin 3 Health of Tony, Safe travels for Dan & Jane, Special intentions

Darlene & Gabe Mazurik 1 Special intentions

Diane Tryon 4 In loving birthday memory of Uncle George, Birthday blessings to cousin Tim, Special intentions, Special intentions

Natalie Twarek 4 For the health and recovery of Barbara, Basil, Diane, and Don Kiser, Health of Roger, Tony, Ed, Irene, Father David, Marilyn, Pauline, Judy, Mimi, Tina, Ron, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Kurt, Leslie, Amber, Zach, Jeanne, Dottie, Jamie, Ezra, David, Helen Lis and Tina's dad, Earl, Tom, Loren, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Betty, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Chuck, Bodhi, Stella, Jake, Pat, Karen, special intentions, special intentions

PRAYER LIST

Parishioners & Family: Tony Monastra / Don Kiser / Ruth / Basil Glovinsky / Dale / Sophie / Jeanne Smith / Carol / David Martin / Fred Soski / Chris Hannon / Subdeacon Roger Pinta / Ed Vangeloff / Irene Vangeloff / Diane Tryon / Sonja Rose / Ron Royhab / James Bargdill / John Beadle / Carole Conaway / Gary Conaway / Sharon Dietrich / Michael Glovinsky / Shirley Gresh / Joseph Habegger / Elaine Hileman / Betty Kovach / Helen Lis / Child Stella Miller / William Pipenur / Earl Rindfleisch / Helen Jean Rofkar / George Royhab / Marianne Royhab / Stephanie Royhab / Kathy Jacob / the child Bodhi Cassell / Gleice & Chloe / Gabrielle and her newborn Josey / Carol / Debbie & Marco / Nora. **Other Requests:** Charles Schlett / Kathy Debevits / Maxwell Chaney / Barbara Wroblewski / Sidharth Bijilani – friend of Subdeacon Roger and Debbie Pinta / Anthony / Archpriest David Lis / Bishop Matthias / Archpriest Emilian & Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan / Marge Dziama / Kurt Franck / Ben Franklin / Donald Gresh / Mark Ludvik / Marsha / Mark Masica / Robert Piznar / Valerie Ritzenthaler / William / Rick Rowe / Chuck Wiedenhof / Chris. **Military:** Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



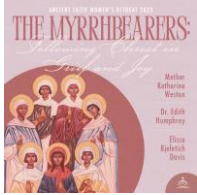
ATTENDANCE

10/07 Vespers, 7 attending (1 Guest); 10/08 Divine Liturgy, 20 attending (2 Guests)



READERS LIST

Sunday Oct 15 – Natalie
Sunday Oct 22 – Jake
Sunday Oct 29 – Tim
Sunday Nov 5 – Ron



2023 ANCIENT FAITH WOMEN'S RETREAT

The 2023 Ancient Faith Women's Retreat will be held **Thursday Nov. 9 through Sunday, Nov. 12** at **Antiochian Village Conference Center**, 140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA. The retreat "seeks to create a peaceful, loving, and reflective gathering of women who have come to learn, worship, make friends, and rest at the entrance into the holy Nativity season." For more information see 3-page posting on bulletin board in church hall.



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

October 17 – Tim Glovinsky



MARKET DAY – THANK YOU!

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the following parishioners and friends who helped us with our last Market Day of the season: Tina, Ryan, Natalie, Cliff, Roddie, David, Laura, Greg, Susan, Mimi, Tim, Mat. Micelle and Fr. Peter. The gross income from the sale was **\$2,598.81**. May Our Lord reward you all for your time and energy and especially for braving the weather, with good health, peace, and happiness for

Many Happy and Blessed Years!

Our next Market Day will take place in the Spring. We wish to thank everyone for all your help you offered this year with baking, and for your help with setting up and cleaning up after our Market Days. We wish you a happy and restful autumn and winter seasons. May the Lord reward you all for all you do for our parish with His Special Blessings!



CLEANING SCHEDULE

Oct 16, Natalie
Oct 23, Laura
Oct 30, Basil & Tim
Nov 6, Laura



SUNDAY OFFERING

Sunday, October 8, 2023

Tithe	\$1,357.00
Candles	\$ 39.00
Vigils	\$ 120.00
Donations	\$ 56.00
Holiday Bureau	\$ 230.00
Eternal Light & Icon Screen	\$ 25.00
St. Tikhon's Icon	\$ 15.00
Bookstore	\$ 43.00
Total:	\$1,885.00

May the Lord reward you for your financial and spiritual support!

CHURCH MONTHLY INCOME AND EXPENSES

Month of **SEPTEMBER 2023**

Church Donations income was	\$ 4,962.00
Church Operating Expenses totaled	<u>\$11,312.29</u>
net loss for the month	-\$ 6,350.29



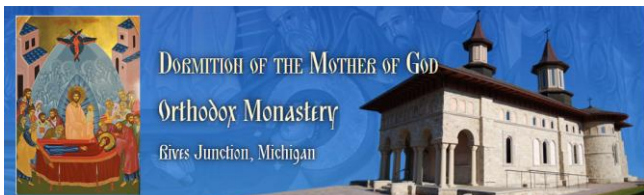
CHARITY OF THE MONTH

“Danbury Holiday Bureau” is the charity we donate to for the month of October.



OCA NATIONAL CLERGY RETREAT

Fr. Peter will be attending the Spiritual retreat from **Tuesday, October 17** till **Friday, October 20th** at **University of St. Mary of the Lake Conference Center** in Mundelein, Illinois (Chicago Area). In case of emergency, please call Fr. Peter's cell phone at (607) 206-5523. Please pray for the graceful and uplifting spiritual gathering of the clergy and the bishops from the entire USA.



Fall Work Day at Holy Dormition Monastery in Michigan

Want to enjoy the great outdoors, and at the same time visit a monastery and help with their yard/garden maintenance? Make plans to go as a group to Holy

Dormition Monastery on Friday and Saturday, November 3 and 4, in Rives Junction, Michigan, about 2 and a half hours from here, and help with maintaining the grounds.

The monastery organizes two work days every year, in spring and fall, and welcomes anyone who is available and desires to participate. Holy Dormition Monastery is situated on 200 acres of land, partly wooded, and partly developed into gardens, meadows, ponds, walking trails, and open spaces in south central Michigan.

We will leave Friday morning, stop in Ann Arbor for lunch, and arrive in the afternoon, staying overnight in the guest house. There is Divine Liturgy on Saturday at 8:45 AM, followed by yard work from 10 AM to 4 PM, including lunch. We are asked to bring rakes and gloves.

Please let Father Peter or Bobbie Royhab at 419-340-4560 know this week if you are interested so that arrangements can be made.

Holy Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery (www.dormitionmonastery.org) is a monastic community for women under the omophorion of His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America.

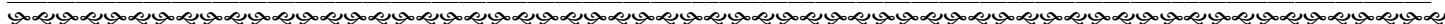


PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Parish Council Meeting will take place tomorrow, **Monday, October 16th** at **6:00 PM** in our Parish Hall. Attendance of all parish Council members is requested.

UP-COMING EVENTS IN OUR PARISH – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Oct. 16th** Parish Council meeting at 6:00 PM (*Monday*)
- Nov. 5th** Daylight Saving time ends (*Sunday*)
- Nov. 15th** Nativity Fast begins (*Wednesday*)
- Nov. 21st** Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple (*Tuesday*)
- Dec. 6th** St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (*Wednesday*)
- Dec. 9th** Conception by Righteous Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos (*Saturday*)
- Consider sponsoring a Sunday coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy





Venerable Euthymius the New of Thessalonica, and Monk of Mount Athos

Commemorated on October 15

Saint Euthymius the New of Thessalonica and Mt Athos, in the world was named Nicetas, and he was a native of the city of Ancyra in Galatia. His parents, Epiphanius and Anna, led virtuous Christian lives, and from childhood their son was meek, pious and obedient. At age seven he was left fatherless and he soon became the sole support of his mother in all matters. Having entered military service, Nicetas married, on the insistence of his mother. After the birth of a daughter, he secretly left home in order to enter a monastery. For fifteen years the venerable Euthymius lived the ascetic life on Mount Olympus, where he learned monastic deeds from the Elders.

The monk went to resettle on Mount Athos. On the way he learned that his mother and wife were in good health. He informed them that he had become a monk, and he sent them a cross, calling on them to follow his example. On Mt Athos he was tonsured into the Great Schema and lived for three years in a cave in total silence, struggling with temptations. Saint Euthymius also lived for a long time as a stylite, not far from Thessalonica, instructing those coming to him for advice and healing the sick.

The monk cleansed his mind and heart to such an extent that he was granted divine visions and revelations. At the command of the Lord, Saint Euthymius founded two monasteries in 863 on Mount Peristeros, not far from Thessalonica, which he guided for 14 years, with the rank of deacon. In one of these his wife and mother received monastic tonsure. Before his death he settled on Hiera, an island of Mt Athos, where he reposed in 898. His relics were transferred to Thessalonica. Saint Euthymius is called “the New” to distinguish him from Saint Euthymius the Great (January 20).



Martyr Lucian the Presbyter of Antioch

Commemorated on October 15

The Hieromartyr Lucian, Presbyter of Antioch, was born in the Syrian city of Samosata. At twelve years of age he was left orphaned. Lucian distributed his possessions to the poor, and went to the city of Edessa to the confessor Macarius, under the guidance of whom he diligently read Holy Scripture and learned the ascetic life. For his pious and zealous spreading of Christianity among the Jews and pagans, Lucian was made a presbyter.

In Antioch Saint Lucian opened a school where many students gathered. He taught them how to understand the Holy Scriptures, and how to live a virtuous life. Saint Lucian occupied himself with teaching, and he corrected the Greek text of the Septuagint, which had been corrupted in many places by copyists and by heretics who deliberately distorted it in order to support their false teachings. The entire Greek text of the Bible which he corrected was hidden in a wall at the time of his confession of Christ, and it was found during the lifetime of Saint Constantine the Great.

During the persecution of Diocletian, Saint Lucian was arrested and was sent to prison in Nicomedia, where for nine years he encouraged other Christians with him to remain steadfast in their confession of Christ, urging them not to fear tortures or death.

Saint Lucian died in prison from many terrible tortures and from hunger. Before his death, he wished to partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ on the Feast of Theophany. Certain Christians who visited him brought bread and wine for the Eucharist. The hieromartyr, bound by chains and lying on a bed of sharp potsherds, was compelled to offer the Bloodless Sacrifice upon his chest, and all the Christians there in prison received Communion. The next day the emperor sent people to see if the saint was still alive. Saint Lucian said three times, “I am a Christian,” then surrendered his soul to God. The body of

the holy martyr was thrown into the sea, but after thirty days dolphins brought it to shore. Believers reverently buried the body of the much-suffering Saint Lucian.

Saint Lucian was originally commemorated on January 7, the day of his death. Later, when the celebration of the Synaxis of Saint John the Baptist was appointed for this day, the feast of Saint Lucian was transferred to October 15.

The October date may be associated with the dedication of a church which was built in Antioch by Saint Helen (May 21) over Saint Lucian's holy relics.

Although he was only a priest, sometimes Saint Lucian is depicted in the vestments of a bishop. The Stroganov Guide for Iconographers was published in Russia in 1869, based on a 1606 manuscript. There Saint Lucian is depicted wearing a phelonion and holding a Gospel. He does not wear the omophorion of a bishop, however. Another handbook, the Litsevoy Podlinnik, states that Saint Lucian is to be depicted with the omophorion.

It may be that the Russians thought of Saint Lucian as a bishop because of his importance to the Church, and so that is how they depicted him. Similarly, Saint Charalampus (February 10) is depicted as a priest in Greek icons, and as a bishop in Russian icons.

30 YEARS OF GRACE: REMEMBERING ST JOHN OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO



"Having followed Christ, the Chief Shepherd, he appeared to the saints, saved his sheep from the destruction of the godless, thereby establishing a peaceful refuge, and having unceasing care for the flock, he healed their spiritual and bodily ailments, and now for us, those who fall to your honest relics, pray to Christ God, Father John, that our souls may be saved in peace."

(Kontakion, tone 4)

Thirty years ago on this day, 12 October 1993, in the burial vault of the Cathedral of the Icon of Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" in the city of San Francisco (USA) the incorruptible relics of St. John (Maximovich) were uncovered.



Uncovering of the relics of St John (Maximovitch), Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco

The great ascetic of the twentieth century became the testimony of the truth of his own words: "...He who rests in grace, as a member of the earthly Church, passes from the earthly Church to the Heavenly Church" and, "uniting with the Risen Lord and through Him with the Everlasting Trinity, draws strength from the Trinity for eternal life and becomes immortal himself." In word and deed, the saints show us the way to salvation, they help and guide us on the journey if we ask them to do so in our prayers. After Vespers and Matins in the Cathedral, the

participants of the relics' examination group descended into the crypt where the tomb of Vladyka John was located. At 10:10 p.m., with trembling and fear of God, Vladyka Anthony (Medvedev) opened the coffin with the venerable remains of the ever-memorable Archbishop John. Archbishop Anthony removed the veil from Vladyka John's face, and everyone saw the imperishable face of the ever-memorable hierarchy.

Vladyka Anthony blessed the priest of the diocese Father Yaroslav Belikov to let his sick two-year-old son Vsevolod touch the incorruptible hands of St. John. The boy was healed of his illness and is healthy to this day. In July of the following year, 1994, Archbishop John of Shanghai and San Francisco was glorified as a saint.



Ark with the relics of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco

God's saints reveal to us the spiritual reality, teach us what they themselves have comprehended in their feat of faith, love and selfless service to the Lord, and instruct us to live in God. Saint John was a faithful child of the earthly Church and now shines to us from the firmament of the Heavenly Church. "Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given by *Christ in the work of ministry, in the building up of the Body of Christ*" (cf. Eph. 4: 11, 12).

"How is it then that both the Church and the Holy Mysteries are the Body of Christ? Are the faithful themselves members of the Body of

Christ, the Church, and partake of the Body of Christ in the Holy Mysteries?" St. John asks this question in one of his sermons, and immediately gives the answer: "In both circumstances, the name 'Body of Christ' is used not in the figurative, but in the most real sense of the word. We believe that the Holy Mysteries, while preserving the appearance of bread and wine, are the true Body and true Blood of Christ.

By uniting with Christ, we receive Divine grace, which gives human nature the strength to overcome sin and death. By His teaching the Lord Jesus Christ shows people the way to overcome sin and, making them participants in His eternal Kingdom by His Resurrection, He grants them eternal life. To receive the Divine grace from Him, it is necessary for us to have close communion with Him. By drawing everyone to Himself with Divine love and uniting everyone with Himself, the Lord joined those who loved Him and those who came to Him into One Church.

In his homily "The Church is the Body of Christ," Vladyka John, having gone from monk to archbishop in the earthly Church and ascending to the height of holiness in the Heavenly Church, reveals the mystery of man's salvation in the Church of Christ.



St John of Shanghai during a divine service

"The Church is unity in Christ, the closest union with Christ of all who truly believe in Him and love Him, and the unity of them all through Christ. The Church consists of its earthly part and the heavenly part. The Son of God came to earth and became human in order to raise man up to heaven, to make him again a dweller of paradise, restoring him to his initial state of sinlessness and completion, and to unite him with Himself. This is accomplished by the action of the grace of God, given through the Church, but it also needs the effort of the person himself. God saves His fallen

creation by His love for him, but man's love for His Creator is also necessary, it is impossible for him to be saved without it. By striving for God and clinging to the Lord with his humble love, the human soul receives strength that cleanses it of sins and strengthens it to fight sin until complete victory. The body, which is now the receptacle and instrument of sin, but destined to be the instrument of righteousness and the vessel of holiness, also participates in this struggle.



The body of a person united with the Lord must be an instrument of the Lord, serving to fulfil His will and become part of the Body of Christ. For the complete sanctification of man, the body of the servant of Lord must be united with the Body of Christ, and this is performed in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The true Body and Blood of Christ received by us become part of the great Body of Christ.

By uniting with the Risen Lord and through Him with the entire Everlasting Trinity, man draws strength for eternal life and becomes immortal himself. *As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. (John 6: 57).*

We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ (in the Holy Mysteries) in order to be part of the Body of Christ (the Church). It doesn't happen right away. Being in the Church is already a state of victory over sin and complete cleansing from it. Everything that is sinful removes us out of the Church and away from the Church; this is why it is read over each penitent in prayer at confession: "Reconcile, unite with Thy Holy Church." Through repentance, a Christian is cleansed, united most closely with Christ in communion of the Holy Mysteries; but then the dust of sin settles on him again and alienates him from Christ and from the Church; this is why repentance and communion are needed again.

Until the end of a person's earthly life, until the very exodus of the soul from the body, the struggle between sin and truth continues in him. No matter what high, spiritual and moral state one has reached, a deep fall, gradual or rapid, into the abyss of sin is still possible for him. Therefore, it is necessary for everyone to partake of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, strengthening our communion with Him and irrigating us with the life-giving streams of Grace of the Holy Spirit flowing through the Body of the Church. Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is the receiving of the Risen Christ, the conqueror of death, who grants victory over sin and death to those who are with Him.



St John of Shanghai and San Francisco

By retaining the grace-filled gift of Communion, we have the pledge and precursor to the eternal blessed life of soul and body. The earthly Church unites all those who have been reborn by baptism, who have taken up the cross of struggle against sin and followed Christ who had started this heroic struggle. The Divine Eucharist, the offering of the bloodless sacrifice and taking it in Communion, sanctifies and strengthens its participants, makes those who partake of the Body and Blood of Christ true members of the Body of His Church. But it is only with the death of a person that it is determined whether one remained a true member of the Body of Christ until his last breath, or whether sin triumphed in him and drove out the grace he had received in the Holy Mysteries binding him to Christ.

He who has reposed in grace as a member of the earthly Church passes from the earthly Church to the Heavenly Church, but he who has fallen away from the earthly Church will not enter the Heavenly Church, for the earthly part of the Church is the way to the Heavenly Church. The more a person is under the grace of Communion and the more closely he is united with Christ, the more he will enjoy communion with Christ in His coming Kingdom. He who is united in spirit and body with Christ in this life will be with Him in spirit and body in the life to come. The blessed streams of the Life-Giving Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ are the source of our eternal joy in communion with the Risen Christ and in the contemplation of His Glory."

Holy Father John, good shepherd, pray to God for those who honor your memory that we may be honored with salvation and eternal joy in the Lord.



Can AI Be the Antichrist?

by Vitaly Kaplan

Q: *As high technology continues to weave its way into our lives, it's become an undeniable presence. Computers govern vast domains of our existence, and we find ourselves increasingly in conversation with artificial intelligence, whether it's when we're reaching out to our bank or consulting our doctors. Even the prospect of taxis being driven by AI rather than human operators is looming on the horizon.*

In light of this technological trajectory, we're compelled to ask: where does this path lead? What if our relentless pursuit of advanced technology gives rise to a universal, immensely powerful artificial intelligence that not only controls but also shapes the destiny of every individual on our planet, guided by its unique set of criteria?

And if that were the case, could it be that the cryptic visions described by Apostle John the Theologian in his "Revelation" find a new resonance in the digital age? After all, his words are steeped in allegory, and perhaps the entity he foresaw as the Antichrist might not be a human being at all but an artificial intelligence. Could it be that, in glimpsing the future, the apostle struggled to articulate his vision clearly, as the concepts we now take for granted were entirely alien in his time?

A: In the pages that follow, I'll endeavor to explore these questions. However, I must emphasize that I am not a theologian. As I present my perspective, I don't lay claim to infallibility, but I hope to shed some light on this intriguing, modern-day inquiry.

"Can the Antichrist be a Program?"

Let's begin with a profound question: can the Antichrist be something other than a human being, perhaps an artificial intelligence, in simpler terms, a computer program? In the text of the Revelation (Chapter 13), the Antichrist is described not as a man but as a "beast." It's written, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast coming out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns: upon his horns were ten diadems, and upon his heads were blasphemous names. The beast which I saw was like a leopard; his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his strength, and his throne, and great power." Interestingly, there are not one but two beasts: "And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; he had two horns like lambs and spoke like a dragon." At a glance, the text from the Apocalypse (the Greek word for Revelation) leaves us perplexed about the nature of the Antichrist. It's important to note that the word "Antichrist" doesn't even appear in the Apocalypse, and in the New Testament, it's used solely in the first and second epistles of the Apostle John the Theologian. This suggests a wide range of interpretative possibilities. The word "beast" is undeniably an allegorical expression, but its precise meaning remains elusive. It could signify a human being, a demon, or, in the context of our technological age, even a computer program.

Nonetheless, interpreting Holy Scripture requires a broader perspective that considers not only individual fragments but also the entirety of what the Bible conveys on the subject. Apostle Paul, for instance, offers his perspective: “Let no one deceive you in any way: for that day will not come, until the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess 2:3). Here, the Apostle unequivocally identifies the Antichrist as a man.



The Red Dragon of the Apocalypse and the Woman Clothed with the Sun

Should we dismiss the words of the apostles? And if so, on what grounds? To disregard a passage of Holy Scripture simply because it challenges our understanding would set a precedent for interpreting the Bible selectively, accommodating our own theories. Some have pursued such a path, like Leo Tolstoy, whose biblical interpretations have been deemed erroneous.

Furthermore, when grappling with the interpretation of specific passages, we must consider the insights of the Holy Fathers. Various interpretations of the Revelation by John the Theologian exist, each with its unique nuances.

Yet none of them ever veers from the understanding that the Antichrist is fundamentally a human being. One might argue that the Holy Fathers lived in times devoid of computers and programs and couldn't have fathomed such an entity. However, if we truly believe in their sanctity and inspiration by the Holy Spirit, we must credit them with the ability to express this vital idea, albeit allegorically, in the context of their era (i.e., that the Antichrist is not a human). Yet the Holy Fathers conveyed no such interpretation.

In this manner, we respect the wisdom of the Holy Fathers, who articulated profound theological ideas within the context of their times, and their silence on the Antichrist being anything other than a human figure speaks volumes.

“Does Artificial Intelligence Pose a Danger?”

So, it's clear that artificial intelligence won't assume the role of the Antichrist. But does this mean that the discussion ends here, and AI poses no spiritual threats or challenges to Christian consciousness? I believe that the question we've raised encompasses both threats and challenges that extend beyond the specific nature of artificial intelligence.

The crux of the matter lies in the fact that there's no spiritual life in isolation from the constant moral choices each of us must make daily. But what is spiritual life? In its simplest form, it's a communion with the spiritual realm: with God, saints, angels, and even demons. This communion occurs not on the physical plane but internally, within the depths of one's soul. It's our soul that serves as the vessel and purpose for such communion.

Simultaneously, our souls take shape through our everyday lives, where we interact with others and make a slew of choices. These choices can involve helping those in need or walking past, believing or doubting someone, standing by the oppressed, or opting for the path of least resistance. Each choice, regardless of its nature, leaves its imprint on the soul, either drawing us nearer to God or distancing us from Him.

These choices are, in no small measure, influenced by external circumstances – the world that surrounds us. While it's true that some individuals possess the spiritual fortitude to withstand the most formidable trials, others are far more susceptible to faltering under severe duress. In situations marked by violence, oppression, and abuse, it's often easier to transgress God's commandments than to uphold them. For many, such circumstances form insurmountable barriers.

This is why we cannot remain indifferent to the organization of our surroundings and the extent to which it nurtures or hinders our moral values, and indirectly, our spiritual life. It's often said that the Church remains outside politics, which holds true in the sense that the Church shouldn't entangle itself in political strife, seek political dominance, or fragment its members based on political affiliations. However, this doesn't imply that the Church is bereft of the right to provide a moral assessment of certain aspects of our everyday lives.



Therefore, believers should consider artificial intelligence from a broader perspective: How will life transform if information technology becomes its cornerstone? Will AI influence our daily decisions? Will it render it simpler to adhere to God's commandments, or will it encourage us to defy them?

In essence, it boils down to who wields artificial intelligence and to what end. Will it serve as a tool for constructing a totalitarian society that forcibly imposes specific values, issuing instant penalties for dissenters? Discussions about an "electronic concentration camp" abound, often marred by morbid conspiracy theories, yet within the hyperbole, a grain of truth is discernible. The harsh reality is that an "electronic concentration camp" is technically plausible and has already found limited implementation in certain regions (the Chinese "social rating" system being a prime example).

Nevertheless, it's essential to recognize that, despite the pervasive integration of high technology in all spheres of contemporary society, ultimate decisions remain in the hands of those in power. Artificial intelligence isn't a distinct form of consciousness; it's not a sentient, thinking entity, but merely a computer program, a creation of human hands that can be adjusted or deactivated. The tales of a "machine uprising" where AI usurps the world and eradicates humanity belong to the realm of science fiction rather than plausible predictions. Any malfunctioning computer can be switched off, even if it requires a bolt cutter to do so, as evidenced by the recent global Facebook server outage caused by a programming error.

Moreover, the myth of artificial intelligence's omnipotence conveniently absolves those in authority of moral responsibility for ensuing events. I encountered a miniature version of this scenario a few years ago when my bank's artificial intelligence blocked my payment and froze my personal account. In response to my inquiries, the bank's personnel grimly asserted, "We're not to blame; it's all the System's fault, and we're powerless to intervene." Yet, as was revealed in the subsequent social media uproar, the System could be tamed.

To reiterate, artificial intelligence is essentially a tool, capable of both virtuous and malevolent applications. It holds promise in fields like medicine, safety control in manufacturing, online translation, transportation, and more. Simultaneously, it harbors the potential to engender a dystopian reality, akin to an electronic concentration camp, reducing Orwell's 'telescreen' to child's play. This risk escalates when information and biological technologies intersect, a theme frequently explored in science fiction and entirely feasible, if not in the present, then in the near future.

How probable is this scenario? In my estimation, it's quite plausible. Historical precedent demonstrates that if there's a means to exploit an object for malicious ends, it will occur sooner or later. Yet, the source of this malevolence lies in the volition of flawed human beings. This is the evil we must resist, both in word and deed, while there remains a chance to do so.

Indeed, the Antichrist will not manifest as artificial intelligence. However, AI, harnessed for nefarious purposes, holds the potential to craft a world where the true Antichrist, the "man of perdition," could find a welcoming embrace. The foundation for such a reality is already in place.