

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



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

AUGUST 27, 2023

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**Liturgical Schedule**

**MONDAY – AUGUST 28**

*Ven. Job of Pochaev*

**VESPERS, 6:00 PM**

**TUESDAY – AUGUST 29**

**Beheading of St. John, the Baptist**

**9:10 AM HOURS, 9:30 AM**

**DIVINE LITURGY**

**FRIDAY – SEPTEMBER 1**

**Church New Year (Indiction)**

**SATURDAY – SEPTEMBER 2**

*Ven. Anthony and Theodosius of the Kiev  
Caves*

**VESPERS, 4:00 PM**

**SUNDAY – SEPTEMBER 3**

**13th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

*Hieromartyr Anthimus*

**9:10 AM HOURS, 9:30 AM**

**DIVINE LITURGY** Followed by Coffee Hour



*Beheading of St. John, the Baptist*  
*Feast Day – August 29<sup>th</sup>*

**EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**


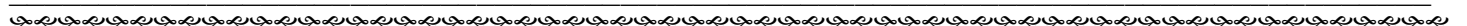
Brethren: I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you

believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 19:16-26**

At that time a certain young man came to Jesus and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So, He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, “You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ “The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again, I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”


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### **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


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### **AUGUST CANDLE SPONSORS**

**Altar Candles:** In memory of LaVerne Schutt & Violet Bargdill (**\$50**); **Chandelier:** In memory of Dorothy Czuha (August 23) (**\$50**); **Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** In memory of Howard Bailey, Damian Bailey, Sophia Grgich (**\$25**); **Candles at the Cross:** Laura Kovach, Birthday blessings to Matt and birthday memory of my dad Steven (**\$15**); **Candles at St. Tikhon's Icon:** For Safety and Health of Nicholas, Tikhon, Gleice, & Chloe (**\$15**)

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### **VIGILS FOR AUGUST 20**

**Sandy Martin 1** Special intentions

**Natalie Twarek 8** For God's grace and peace for Ashley Mooney Below, For the health and recovery of Barbara, Health and recovery of Basil, Health and recovery of Don Kiser, Health and recovery Roger, Carol, Tony, Irene, Father David, Diane, Marilyn, Pauline, Sandy, Judy, Mimi, For the health of Tina, Ed, Ron, Carole, Gary, Sharon, Kurt, Leslie, Health of 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

**Dennis Lapso & Family** - Donation for eternal memory and Blessed repose of Annette Ressetar Lapso whose "40 days" was celebrated on the feast of Dormition 8/15/23. This is very apropos as Annette loved attending Holy Assumption's Festival



## AUGUST REPOSED

**7-** Dorothy Romig (2017); **12-** Jim Mazur (2021); **13-** Andrew Millie (1958); **21-** Sophia Monak (2004); **23-** Martha Brooks (2010); **24-** Damien (cousin of Valerie S (2019)); **28-** Rev. Dr. William Walter Worstall (2011); **31-** Larry Noon (2014)

## PRAYER LIST

**Parishioners & Family:** 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 / Stacy Kaplan / 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:** 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 Wiedenhoft / Chris / Tamman Haddad. **Military:** Craig Cassell / Jake Ellithorpe / Jordon Fulton / Justin Issler / Tikhon / Nicholas / & All Military



## ATTENDANCE

8/19 Vespers, 9 attending (1 guest); 8/20 Divine Liturgy, 50 attending (34 guests)



## READERS LIST

Sunday Aug 27 – Tim  
Sunday Sept 3 – Ron  
Sunday Sept 10 – Natalie  
Sunday Sept 17 – Jake



## INVITATION, CEREMONY FOR FR. BASIL STOYKA

You are invited to the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy which will be celebrated by **His Eminence Archbishop Daniel** at Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Lorain, OH with the beginning at **9:30 AM** on **Saturday, September 9, 2023**. During the Divine Liturgy the **Very Reverend Archpriest Basil Stoyka** will be blessed to wear a Miter. The Luncheon will follow the Divine Liturgy. Please see the flyer in the vestibule.



## 2023 LIFE CONFERENCE

The 2023 Life Conference will take place on September 30, 2023 at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church Hall. For more information, please see the flyer in this bulletin and the schedule and speakers bios on the bulletin board in the church vestibule.



## HALUPKI FESTIVAL – THANK YOU!

We wish to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to our Festival Co-chairman Natalie and Laura, our Head Baker Tina and our Baker Greg, all Volunteers both Parishioners and non-Parishioners for your hard work, time and talent which helped make this year's 66<sup>th</sup> Halupki Festival in Marblehead a great success! It is impossible to mention everyone by name. So, if you volunteered, then we most certainly appreciate your hard work! Your dedication, the many hours spent using your time, your talent and dedication is greatly appreciated! Thanks to all who came out in support of Halupki Festival. Your patronage and good will are very much appreciated. May the good Lord Bless each and every one of you and may He continue to shine His graces upon our Parish of Holy Assumption!



## NUT ROLLS BAKING – THANK YOU!

Sincere thanks to the following parishioners who came on Friday to bake Nut and Poppyseed Rolls for the Market Days: Tina, Laura, Fred, Kathy, Roddie, David, Bobbie, Mat. Michelle and Fr. Peter. May our Lord and God reward you all for your hard work and love for our church with His Special Blessings!



## GIANT COOKIES BAKING – THANK YOU!

We wish to express our sincere thanks to Greg Mazur for baking the Giant Cookies for our Market Days last Friday. May our Lord and God reward you for your hard work and love for our church with His special blessings!



## MARKET DAY

Our next Market Day will take place on **Saturday, September 9th** starting with set up at **8:00 AM**. We will have perohi, kielbasa and kraut, spanakopita, and a large variety of baked goods. Your help is greatly appreciated!



## SUNDAY OFFERING

**Sunday, August 20, 2023**

Tithe	\$ 572.00
Candles	\$ 32.00
Vigils	\$ 40.00
Donations	\$ 765.00
Holy Day Donation	\$ 10.00
St. Herman's Seminary	\$ 10.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,429.00</b>

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



## CLEANING SCHEDULE

Aug 28, Laura  
Sept 4, Sandy  
Sept 11, Laura  
Sept 18, Roddie



## HOLY ASSUMPTION CHURCH - 125<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration which will take place on **Saturday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>** with the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy to be celebrated at 10:00 am by **His Eminence, The Most Reverend Daniel**, Archbishop of Chicago, and the Midwest.

**Please Note:** Laura is seeking any old photographs you have of our church, groups of people at the church, or events at the church to be published in our 125th anniversary commemorative booklet. She promises to scan them and return them to you right away so your precious photographs are not lost or misplaced. Thank you!



## CHARITY OF THE MONTH

St. Herman's Seminary is the charity we donate to for the month of August.



## NEW MEMBER OF HOLY ASSUMPTION PARISH

We would like to congratulate and welcome the new member of our parish family ANGELA BRICKER who was received into the Holy Orthodox Church by the Mystery of Holy Chrismation on the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. May Our Lord and God Bless her and grant her long life, good health, peace, and happiness for Many Happy and Blessed Years!



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



**Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>** Beheading of St. John the Baptist

**Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>** Kolachi Baking at 8:00 AM

**Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>** New Liturgical Year

**Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>** Nativity of the Theotokos

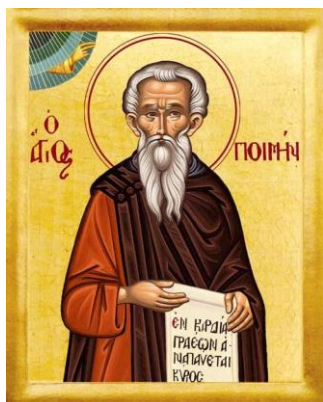
**Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>** Market Day at 8 AM

**Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>** Exaltation of the Precious Cross

**Sept. 23<sup>th</sup>** 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

**Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>** Market Day at 8 AM

- Consider sponsoring a Sunday coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy



## Venerable Pimen the Great

*Commemorated on August 27*

Saint Pimen the Great was born about the year 340 in Egypt. He went to one of the Egyptian monasteries with his two brothers, Anoub and Paisius, and all three received monastic tonsure. The brothers were such strict ascetics that when their mother came to the monastery to see her children, they did not come out to her from their cells. The mother stood there for a long time and wept. Then Saint Pimen said to her through the closed door of the cell, “Do you wish to see us now, or in the future life?” Saint Pimen promised that if she would endure the sorrow of not seeing her children in this life, then surely she would see them in the next. The mother was humbled and returned home.

Fame of Saint Pimen’s deeds and virtues spread throughout the land. Once, the governor of the district wanted to see him. Saint Pimen, shunning fame, thought to himself, “If dignitaries start coming to me

and show me respect, then many other people will also start coming to me and disturb my quiet, and I shall be deprived of the grace of humility, which I have acquired only with the help of God.” So, he refused to see the governor, asking him not to come.

For many of the monks, Saint Pimen was a spiritual guide and instructor. They wrote down his answers to serve for the edification of others besides themselves. A certain monk asked, “If I see my brother sinning, should I conceal his fault?” The Elder answered, “If we reproach the sins of brothers, then God will reproach our sins. If you see a brother sinning, do not believe your eyes. Know that your own sin is like a beam of wood, but the sin of your brother is like a splinter (Mt. 7:3-5), and then you will not enter into distress or temptation.”

Another monk said to the saint, “I have sinned grievously and I want to spend three years at repentance. Is that enough time?” The Elder replied, “That is a long time.” The monk continued to ask how long the saint wished him to repent. Perhaps only a year? Saint Pimen said, “That is a long time.” The other brethren asked, “Should he repent for forty days?” The Elder answered, “I think that if a man repents from the depths of his heart and has a firm intention not to return to the sin, then God will accept three days of repentance.”

When asked how to get rid of persistent evil thoughts, the saint replied, “This is like a man who has fire on his left side, and a vessel full of water on his right side. If he starts burning from the fire, he takes water from the vessel and extinguishes the fire. The fire represents the evil thoughts placed in the heart of man by the Enemy of our salvation, which can enkindle sinful desires within man like a spark in a hut. The water is the force of prayer which impels a man toward God.”

Saint Pimen was strict in his fasting and sometimes would not partake of food for a week or more. He advised others to eat every day, but without eating their fill. Abba Pimen heard of a certain monk who went for a week without eating, but had lost his temper. The saint lamented that the monk was able to fast for an entire week, but was unable to abstain from anger for even a single day.

To the question of whether it is better to speak or be silent, the Elder said, “Whoever speaks on account of God, does well, and whoever is silent on account of God, that one also does well.”

He also said, “If man seems to be silent, but his heart condemns others, then he is always speaking. There may be a man who talks all day long, but he is actually silent, because he says nothing unprofitable.”

The saint said, “It is useful to observe three things: to fear God, to pray often, and to do good for one’s neighbor.”

“Wickedness never eradicates wickedness. If someone does evil to you, do good to them, and your goodness will conquer their wickedness.”

Once, after Saint Pimen and his disciples arrived at the monastery of Scetis, he learned that the Elder living there was annoyed at his arrival and was also jealous of him, because monks were leaving the Elder to see Abba Pimen.

In order to console the hermit, the saint went to him with his brethren, taking food with them as a present. The Elder refused to receive them, however. Then Saint Pimen said, “We shall not depart from here until we are permitted to see the holy Elder.” He remained standing at the door of the cell in the heat. Seeing Saint Pimen’s humility and patience, the Elder received him graciously and said, “Not only is what I have heard about you true, but I see that your works are a hundred times greater.”

He possessed such great humility that he often sighed and said, “I shall be cast down to that place where Satan was cast down!”

Once, a monk from another country came to the saint to receive his guidance. He began to speak about sublime matters difficult to grasp. The saint turned away from him and was silent. They explained to the bewildered monk that the saint did not like to speak of lofty matters. Then the monk began to ask him about the struggle with passions of soul. The saint turned to him with a joyful face, “Now you have

spoken well, and I will answer.” For a long while he provided instruction on how one ought to struggle with the passions and conquer them.

Saint Pimen died at age 110, about the year 450. Soon after his death, he was acknowledged as a saint pleasing to God. He was called “the Great” as a sign of his great humility, uprightness, ascetic struggles, and self-denying service to God.



## **The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John**

*Commemorated on August 29*

The Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist: The Evangelists Matthew (Mt.14:1-12) and Mark (Mark 6:14-29) provide accounts about the martyric end of John the Baptist in the year 32 after the Birth of Christ.

Following the Baptism of the Lord, Saint John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (ruler of one fourth of the Holy Land) and governor of Galilee. (After the death of king Herod the Great, the Romans divided the territory of Palestine into four parts, and put a governor in charge of each part. Herod Antipas received Galilee from the emperor Augustus).

The prophet of God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife, the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. Salome, the daughter of Herod, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl, he swore to give her whatever she would ask, up to half his kingdom.

The vile girl on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias asked that she be given the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod became apprehensive, for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He also feared the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of Saint John and to give it to Salome.

According to Tradition, the mouth of the dead preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: “Herod, you should not have the wife of your brother Philip.” Salome took the platter with the head of Saint John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in a unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod had a parcel of land. (The Uncovering of the Venerable Head is celebrated February 24). The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebastia, there where the wicked deed had been done.

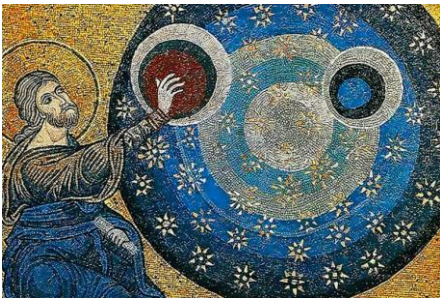
After the murder of Saint John the Baptist, Herod continued to govern for a certain time. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, later sent Jesus Christ to him, Whom he mocked (Luke 23:7-12).

The judgment of God came upon Herod, Herodias and Salome, even during their earthly life. Salome, crossing the River Sikoris in winter, fell through the ice. The ice gave way in such a way that her body was in the water, but her head was trapped above the ice. It was similar to how she once had danced with her feet upon the ground, but now she flailed helplessly in the icy water. Thus she was trapped until that time when the sharp ice cut through her neck.

Her corpse was not found, but they brought the head to Herod and Herodias, as once they had brought them the head of Saint John the Baptist. The Arab king Aretas, in revenge for the disrespect shown his daughter, made war against Herod. The defeated Herod suffered the wrath of the Roman emperor Caius Caligula (37-41) and was exiled with Herodias first to Gaul, and then to Spain.

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a Feast day established by the Church, is also a strict fast day because of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint. In some Orthodox cultures pious people will not eat food from a flat plate, use a knife, or eat food that is round in shape on this day.

Today the Church makes remembrance of Orthodox soldiers killed on the field of battle, as established in 1769 at the time of Russia's war with the Turks and the Poles.



## The New Church Year

by Archpriest Andrey Chizhenko

The “canon” of celebrating New Year’s Eve on January 1 has firmly rooted itself in our minds. However, this is just one of the possible dates. In the history of different peoples (or even one nation in different historical periods) this date depended on many factors – religious, political, social, climatic (spring as the awakening of nature

hence the beginning of the New Year) etc.

For example, Jews celebrate the New Year between September 5 and October 5, the Chinese – between January 21 and February 21, the Iranians do it on March 22, and the Bangladeshis – on April 14.

Our ancestors at different times celebrated the New Year on March 1st. As mentioned above, this is most likely due to the awakening of nature. Later (after about the 13th century) when church traditions become deeply rooted in the folk and state consciousness, the public celebration of the New Year comes in accordance with the church new year, which begins on September 1 in the old Julian calendar and September 14 in the new Gregorian calendar, respectively.

The celebration of the New Year on January 1 was introduced by Tsar Peter the Great, who was somewhat influenced by the Western European fashion, in which January 1 marked the beginning of a new year. Later, already in Soviet times (1919) the celebrations were moved thirteen days earlier in accordance with the Gregorian calendar.

There are two versions explaining the establishment of the new ecclesiastical year on September 1. According to one of them, the tax year in the Byzantine Empire began on September 1. It was called the *indiction* (from the Latin *indictio* – to set a price, to evaluate). The church year also began on this date.

Later, the etymology of the word “indictio” was changed in Greek language. The word “*indiction*” has become synonymous with the word “*year*”.

According to the other version, it was on September 1 that the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine the Great defeated the Roman ruler Maxentius in 312. It was in this battle that St. Constantine was shown the image of the Cross in heaven. This battle paved the way for the signing of the Edict of Milan in 313, a landmark document that gave equal rights to Christians and pagans by legitimizing the Orthodox Church. This document stopped the persecution of Christians and allowed them to develop freely.

In memory of this great event, the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 decreed that the New Year would begin on September 1, the day that became the beginning of “Christian liberty”.

In Russia, since ancient times, it is customary to consecrate this day with celebrating Liturgy and a special prayer service for the New Year. Night Liturgies are often served in churches at twelve o’clock on the night of September 13. Our ancestors thanked God for the past year, prayed for His grace for the coming year, went to confession and received Holy Communion. It was customary to spend the New Year’s Day in works of mercy, taking care of the poor and the sick, and visiting prisons and hospitals.



This is the high Christian meaning of the New Year, a season of God's goodness, when people bow willingly under the yoke of the Lord and ask that like a loving Father He may lead his children through the stormy sea of life to the Kingdom of Heaven.

O, how we lack this true and proper awareness of the New Year today!

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## What Does the Word "Church" Mean?

By Fr. Lawrence Farley

Every Sunday the Creed is said in Church in which Christians say the words, "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church." In many ways it is an odd thing to say. In the Creed we confess things that are matters of faith, things contestable, maybe even controversial. Thus we confess that God the Father Almighty made the heaven and the earth, including all things visible (such as animals and men) and invisible (such as angels). This is not beyond dispute, and many people manage to dispute it, believing either that the universe always existed or that it began without any help from God. It is similar with our confession of Jesus Christ as light from light, true God from true God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, and raised from the dead three days after He died. This is a matter of faith, and so it finds its way into the Creed. But the Church? Surely the existence of the Church is hardly a matter of faith. We do not need faith to believe in the Church—we can see churches all around us. Why is the Church in the Creed?

In fact we often do not know the meaning of the words we are saying when we confess that we believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Sometimes we mean by the words something not much more than "we believe in the existence of an institution which is very good and worthy of respect." This is not quite what the Creed is getting at.

Let us look first at the term "church"—in Greek *ekklesia*. The word "church" is used in lots of ways. Most often the term refers to the building in which the Christians meet for worship. If I say, "I'll meet you at the church at noon," I am obviously referring to the building used for Sunday services. Sometimes, in an earlier day, the term meant simply "the clergy," so that if a young man answered the question about what career he had chosen by saying, "I am going into the church," we meant he was seeking ordination as a priest. More often by "the church" people mean "the Christians" wherever they might meet for services. Often too by the term "the church" people mean an institution, as the Smithsonian is an institution or as the British Crown is an institution. I suspect that most people when they say the Creed mean something rather like this. When they confess belief in the Church they mean to express loyalty to a venerable institution. The institution came into existence in the time of Jesus and now has branches or spiritual franchises in many places, including our little congregation down the street.

In fact the church is not an institution, however many outward similarities to an institution it may possess. The term *ekklesia* (the Greek version of the Hebrew *gahal*) meant a gathering, an assembly. People assembled or gathered—that is, they left their homes to congregate in a particular place for a particular reason, and the result of all that individual assembling was an assembly. After they had gathered, they constituted a gathering. The assembly could be called for a number of purposes, either secular or religious. One could assemble to select a king, as Israel assembled to select King Saul [1 Samuel 10]. One could assemble to prepare for war, as Israel did to wage war on the tribe of Benjamin [Judges 20]. One could assemble for a religious convocation as Israel did when they repented before God at Mizpah [1 Samuel 7]. One could assemble to debate a civic problem, as the silversmiths of Ephesus did when they met to protest against the work of Saint Paul [Acts 19]. This last example is particularly instructive: those who assembled were pagans, and men motivated mostly by financial concern, despite their loudly professed civic devotion to Artemis of the Ephesians. Their assembly almost turned into a riot until the town clerk quieted the crowd and told them to go home. Then, as Luke reports, "When he said this, he dismissed the *ekklesia*"—i.e. the crowd which had gathered

together. These men, pagans motivated by secular concerns at a town hall meeting, were an ekklesia—an assembly.

That is the word used in the New Testament to describe Christian liturgical experience. Individual Christians left their respective homes on Sunday to assemble and gather in a particular prearranged place. Having assembled, they were an assembly. Having gathered, they were a gathering. But not just any assembly or gathering—they were an assembly to which Christ pledged His presence. Whenever they assembled together to remember Him at the Eucharist He promised that He would be in their midst, even if the assembly were so small that only two or three were there [Matthew 18:20]. (The Greek of this last passage is interesting: Christ promises to be among them even if only two or three assemble—in Greek sunago, the same word used in the word “synagogue,” which was the word James used to describe the Christian assembly in James 2:2.) Christian assembly/ekklesia is what happens after the Christians assemble. It is not so much an institution as an event. For at that assembly Christ manifests His presence as He promised He would. One can there talk of the ekklesia or church in the plural because Christians assembled in many assemblies throughout the world. One can also talk of the ekklesia or church in the singular, because wherever one went throughout the world one found the same Christ in every single assembly. The assembly in Thessalonica was the same as the assembly in Corinth because Christ was equally present in both. Christ’s presence made the different assemblies into one Assembly—one Church.

From this, three things follow.

First, one cannot consider oneself a part of the assembly unless one actually assembles, because that is what the word “assembly” means. Membership in the Ekklesia of God is not like membership in the Public Library. I am a member of the library in that I still have my library card and it does not expire. I may not have set foot in the library for years, but the card still works. It is otherwise with the Church. If you didn’t assemble on Sunday, we were not a part of the assembly, and if you haven’t attended the Eucharist for years, you are no longer a part of the Church. It is easily remedied—to be a part of the assembly, just go next Sunday and assemble. (If it really has been years since you partook of the Eucharist, going to confession is also recommended.) The name “Christian” is the term for one who assembles regularly, and one forfeits the right to use the name if you never assemble.

Secondly, one should assemble on Sunday with the expectation of meeting Christ there. That is the whole reason for assembling. Valuable as sermons are and uplifting as the choir sounds one mostly assembles to meet the Lord and to be fed with His Body and Blood. We go in our brokenness to be healed, and in our filthiness to be washed clean. We assemble because the only one who can heal and cleanse is there and He has promised to do both for us if we come in penitence and faith.

Finally, if we plan on assembling on Sunday we must live in anticipation of this event on the six days previous. The priest will call us to the Chalice by saying the words, “The holy things for the holy!”—or, in another possible translation, “The sanctified things for the saints!” The usual New Testament term for a believer is the word “saint” [Greek *agios*], which is what we are. A saint is not a sinless person, but a person who belongs to God and who is striving to please Him, whatever his or her rate of success. It is as saints that we assemble, which is why the priest uses that term. As members of the Ekklesia and the Household of God we must strive to become what we are.

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**- God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance. — St. Seraphim of Sarov**

**- But I say to you, the Lord says, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you. Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hatred, sadness, anger and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one who loves all equally in imitation of God. — St. Maximus the Confessor**