

# Holy Assumption Orthodox Church

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest

Parish Council President: Matthew Adamcio

Fr. Andrew Bartek, Rector



**Sunday, December 8, 2019**

**Gospel:** St. Luke 17:12-19

**Tone 8**

**Epistle:** Ephesians 4:1-6

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**Ven. Patapius of Thebes / Holy Apostles of the Seventy: Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Cæsar, and Onesiphorus**

**DECEMBER Bulletin Sponsor: NONE**

## Liturgical & Events Schedule

### Sunday, December 8

9:30 am: Hours followed by Divine Liturgy / Social / Choir Rehearsal

### Monday, December 9-Wednesday December 11

Father Andrew will be attending the Diocesan Council Meeting in Chicago

### Wednesday, December 11

6:00 pm: Public Village Meeting

### Thursday, December 12

6:30 pm: Lions Christmas Party

### Friday, December 13

10:00 am: Respect Life Meeting

### Saturday, December 14

4:00 pm: Great Vespers

### Sunday, December 15

9:05 am: Hours followed by Divine Liturgy / Memorial Sunday / Social

## DECEMBER

	<u>Cleaners</u>	<u>Readers</u>	<u>Social</u>
<b>8</b>	Marguerite	Tim	<i>Open</i>
<b>15</b>	Open	Ron	<i>Open</i>
<b>22</b>	Fred & Terry	Wayne	<i>Open</i>
<b>29</b>	Basil & Tim	Natalie	<i>Open</i>

## VIGILS- NOVEMBER 24

**Marguerite Bird (1)** In loving memory of Mom

**Laura Kovach (4)** Health of Joe H, Joe R, Margi, Maureen, Chuck, Mark, Lisa, Julia; In memory of Uncle Alex; Birthday blessings to Andrew; Special intentions

**Sandy Martin (1)** Special intentions

**Jim Mazur(2)** Health of family and friends

**Darlene, Nick & Gabe Mazurik (1)** special intentions

**David & Roddie Mazurik (3)** In memory of Uncle Darwin; In memory of Nancy's Mom and Dad; Health and Blessings for Nancy and family

**Ron and Bobbie Royhab (1)** In loving memory of Paulette Vargo

**Twarek (5)** In memory of Nancy's Mom; Health and recovery of Chuck , Steve, Bohdi, Jim, Joe Habegger; Health of Nancy, Heidi, Judy, Liz, Christine, MaryAnn and Bob; Health of Joe, Sonya, Julia, Diane, Stella, Ron, Becky, Jake, Helen; Special intentions; Special intentions

## PRAY FOR OUR CATECHUMENS

Rachael Adamcio

Luke Welch

Tristen Welch

Lydia Welch

Jake Muscaro

### Possible Catechumens:

Loreen Welch

Cheyenne Welch

May God & the Holy Spirit guide them in their journey in the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox way of Life.



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**ATTENDANCE - NOVEMBER**

**Sunday November 3:** 32 Total (20 members; 1 non-reg. Member; 2 children; 9 guests; 23 communicants; 6 attended Vespers

**Thursday, November 7:** 9 for Vespers of St Michael

**Sunday, November 10:** 25 Total (18 members; 1 non reg. Member; 3 children; 3 guests; 15 Communicants; 12 attended Vespers

**Monday, November 11:** 8 attended Liturgy

**Sunday, November 17:** 22 Total (16 members 1 non reg. Member; 1 child; 4 guests; 12 communicants; 7 attended vespers

**Sunday, November 24:** 19 total (18 members; 1 non-reg. Member; 11 communicants; 8 attended Vespers

**CANDLE / BULLETIN SPONSORS FOR DECEMBER**

- Bulletin:** (\$50) **OPEN**
- Chandelier:** (\$50) Elchisco Family: in loving memory of mom Helen Elchisco
- Altar Candles:** (\$50) **OPEN**
- Candles on the tomb:** (\$25) Diane: in loving memory of Aunt Marion & Uncle Norm
- Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** (\$25) Jean: In memory of her father William Pipenur

**40 DAY REMEMBRANCE**

- December 1:** 3 soldiers killed in training in GA
- December: 8:** Serge Mihaly Jr, / John McDonald
- December 15:** Detective from Dayton / Mike Chemorov
- December 22:** CA school shooting, San Diego shooting; FF Jas from MA
- December 29:** Fresno shooting; Police officer killed in Detroit, Nick Hunt / Francis Zatorsky, Paulette; Sheriff in Alabama

**MONTHLY TITHING ONLY NOVEMBER**

Goal Pledged per month: \$4,100

<b>Sunday, November 3:</b>	\$958
<b>Sunday, November 10:</b>	\$860
<b>Sunday, November 17:</b>	\$1,592
<b>Sunday, November 24:</b>	\$603
<b>TOTAL FOR THE MONTH:</b>	<b>\$4,013</b>

**OTHER WEEKLY INCOME**

**Sunday, November 3:** \$19 Candles; \$25 Extra Candles; \$72 Vigils; \$25 Eternal Light; \$10 Restoration; \$110 Food Pantry; \$125 Special Collection (St Vlad); \$21 Special Collection (Holiday Bureau)

**Sunday, November 10:** \$19 in candles; \$80 in Vigils; \$50 Bulletin; \$61 Special Collection Holiday Bureau

**Sunday, November 17:** \$15 Candles; \$50 altar Candles; \$95 Vigils; \$281 Special collection (Holiday B.); \$100 Christmas Flowers

**Sunday, November 24:** \$15 candles; \$80 Vigils; \$58 Special Collection (Holiday Bureau); \$100 Christmas Flowers

**OTHER WEEKLY INCOME NOVEMBER**

Bulletin	\$50
Altar Candles	\$50
Candles:	\$68
Extra Candles:	\$25
Vigils:	\$327
Eternal Light:	\$25
Restoration:	\$10
Food Pantry:	\$110
Christmas Flowers	\$200
Special Collection:	
St. Vladimir Seminary	\$125
Holiday Bureau	\$721
(\$300 Church + \$421)	

# PRAYER LIST Updated 10-24

## Clergy:

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius  
His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman  
John Duranko (*Father's home pastor*)  
James Gleason (*Father's Spiritual Father*)  
Moses Barry  
Joseph Gibson  
Gregory Grivna  
Emilian Hutnyan  
Josef Von Klarr  
Vladimir Lecko  
Myron Manzuk  
Christopher Phillips  
Peter Tutko  
Deacon Paul Gansle  
Deacon Gregory Krutchak  
Deacon Paul Mitchell  
Deacon Mark Sauskojus  
Sub-deacon Wylie Meath

## Matushkii:

Pani Patricia Duranko  
Melania Adamcio  
Virginia Lecko  
Glenda Madlom  
Snezana Ruzic  
Sonya Tutko  
Victoria Kopistiansky

## Parishioners / & their Family:

John Beadle (*Elcishko*)  
MaryAnn Cook (*Cousin to Twarek's*)  
Bob Cook (*Twarek*)  
John Richard Elchisco  
Ruthe Flewelling  
Debbie Garnek (*Roddie's sister*)  
Michael Glovinsky (*Basil's nephew*)  
Ernest Gresh (*Basil's nephew*)  
Shirley Gresh (*Wife of Ernest*)  
Aldin Griffith (*Soski*)  
Julia Guzy  
Joseph Habegger (*Laura brother-in-law*)  
Alice Jackson (*Mazurik*)  
William Jappsen (*Diane T.*)  
Michael Kouznetsov (*Mary Hiser's son*)  
Kristen (*Cassell's daughter*)  
David LaValle (*Fr.'s cousin*)  
Helen Lis

Greg Mazur  
Judy Mazurik (*Paul Mazurik's*)  
Baby Stella Miller  
Katelyn Pipenur (*Niece of Jean*)  
Earl Rindfleisch  
Helen Jean Rofkar (*Elchisco*)  
Margaret Rose  
Steven Schirtzinger (*Soski*)  
Christy Schutt (*Joe's sister*)  
Peter Truta (*Jean H's cousin*)  
Diane Tryon  
Greg Tryon  
Christine Twarek  
Katie and her newborn Bodhi  
(*Cassell's daughter-in-law*)  
Pani Stacey Mihaley & her  
unborn baby

## Other Requests:

Alexia  
Dick Biro (*Natalie's friend*)  
Anna Burch (*Wayne's friend*)  
Ben Franklin (*Laura friend*)  
Theodore Geletka  
(*St. Michael Broadview Heights'*  
*choir director*)  
Brad George (*Christi's friend*)  
Donald Gresh (*Basil*)  
Elliot Joy (*Police chief's son*)  
Scott Kluding (*Twarek*)  
Tommy Leonchik (*Fr's friend*)  
Jake Lipstraw (*Twarek*)  
Mark Ludvik (*Guzy*)  
Anna Maiani (*Friend of Wayne*)  
Pauline Meath (*Fr's*)  
Charlie Nowak (*Avery's*)  
Debbie Pribanic (*Golob*)  
Beth Reinhard (*Diane friend*)  
Elvis Reyes (*Fr's friend*)  
Sandy Scafaria (*friend of Jean*)  
Scott Smith (*Sammy friend*)  
Matthew Sterling (*Tyron*)  
Janice Timko  
Philip (Andy) Timko  
Steve Turinsky (*Twarek*)  
Chuck Wiedenhof (*Twarek*)  
Rachel (*Darlene M.*)  
Tracy (*Cassell*)

Elizabeth McDonald & her  
newborn Kirin (*Fr's friend*)  
Kristina and her unborn baby  
(*Fr. Friend*)

## Military:

Craig Cassell  
Nathan Brown

## Captives:

Metropolitan Paul  
(*Orthodox Archdiocese of  
Aleppo*)  
Archbishop John  
(*Syriac Archdiocese of  
Aleppo*)

The UN & IOCC humanitar-  
ian aid workers in & around  
Syria; Those suffering perse-  
cution in Iraq, Syria, Israel,  
Egypt, Ukraine and through-  
out the world

*NOTE: Please let Fr. Andrew  
know when someone needs to  
go on or come off the list.*

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## For Your Prayers

Julia Guzy (96 yrs old)  
1601 Church Rd  
Marblehead, OH 43440

Please remember her & Susan  
(her daughter) in your prayers.  
Send a card of greeting.

## Deacon Gregory Eric Jewett

Deacon Gregory Eric Jewett, 43, fell asleep in the Lord here on Friday, November 29, 2019. He was attached to the Church of the Holy Theophany, Colorado Springs, CO.

Born March 3, 1976 in Sterling, IL, Deacon Gregory was a graduate of Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois, where he earned a Bachelor Degree in Business Management. In 2016, he completed the Orthodox Church in America's [Diaconal Vocation Program](#). Deacon Gregory was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin on the Feast of Holy Theophany in 2017.

Deacon Gregory married his wife Carrie Mary Jewett in 1997. She survives him, as do their four children, Wyatt, Sophia, Emmy, and Maximus.

His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West presided at the funeral services for Deacon Gregory.

May Deacon Gregory's memory be eternal!

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## PRAYERS REQUESTED BY HIS GRACE, BISHOP PAUL

Please pray for the servant of God Christopher and his children: Devon, Marissa, and Nathan who recently lost his wife and their mother suddenly.

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## CHRISTMAS DAY MEAL



Have you ever spent a holiday alone at home? Many people do. Depression tends to increase for many during the holidays.

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church will be sponsoring a Christmas Day meal. Location: the church social hall. Further details to come. Fr. Andrew will be organizing, cooking and serving the event.

## Giving Tuesday: Continuing the Mission

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon often reflects on "How to Expand the Mission," noting the Apostolic work we are called to do is not just a theory, or an idea, but the present reality of our lives as Orthodox Christians in North America.

The mission we have received from St. Herman, St. Tikhon, and the other saints of North America is unambiguous and unequivocal: It is nothing less than proclaiming the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the peoples of this land.

Over the past two decades the Orthodox Church in America has invested over 1 million dollars to mission communities across this continent. These grants provide salaries for full-time pastoral care for fledgling missions. "Receiving the OCA Church Planting Grant has made it possible for me to devote the time and energy necessary for developing our mission while strengthening its relationship with the wider community," said Archpriest Mikel Bock of [Saint Juvenaly and His Companion Mission](#), Wasilla, AK,

Today, thanks to the [Parish Planting Grant](#), Holy Cross Church today numbers for than 150 faithful and is about to break land on a new temple.

Father Mikel's words echo through each of the communities which have received planting grants over the years.

As Orthodox Christianity begins its 225th year in North America, our mission has never been more clear — bring the Orthodox Faith to a people eager to receive the Good News of the Gospel.

From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us follow the life and labors of Saint Herman and those early missionaries by investing in our parishes, seminaries, and most importantly, in those who are planting mission communities throughout North America.

On this Giving Tuesday, prayerfully consider how you can contribute to the OCA's commitment to bring North America to Orthodoxy through the Parish Planting Grant Program.

Learn more about the work of the Department of [Evangelization](#).



## DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

ANNIVERSARY	BIRTHDAY	BIRTHDAY
12-5-2004: Archbishop Mark of Philadelphia 12-19-1971: Retired Bishop Seraphim of Sendai 21- Ed & Irene Vangeloff 27- James & Lauren Jerome 12-27-2014: Bishop Paul of Chicago 31- Justin & Jessica Issler 31- Fred & Christi Soski	1-Ileana Bruner 1- Thomas Mcdonald 1- Holly Mesavage 3-Police officer Chris Suppelsa 4- Mat.Ksenia Bruner 4- Chris Lariccia 4- Steven Calzone 5- Mat. Laryissa Bremer 6- Mat. Susan Northrup 8- Joe Rose 9- Pauline Meath 9- Angie Dardovsky	11- Tina Rindfleisch 11- Emmelyn Monschein 12- Rowan Issler 13- Gabe Mazurik 15- Terri Lariccia 17- Tim Heffernan 23- Teri Cassell 25- Darlene Mazurik 28- Carol Mazurik 30- Jeff Stokely 30- Christina Adzima

*If there are those names to be added or removed, please contact Fr. Andrew. He would like to list all members of your family Orthodox and non-Orthodox.*

## D E C E M B E R R E P O S E D

1-Helen Elchisco (1990)	20- Julia Brosojah Millie (1953)	26- Fr. Robert Sally (2002)
3- Mary Hubicki (2013)	20- John Mazurik (2017)	26-- Julia Malchisky (1971)
8- Bill Soltis (2014)	20- William Pipenur (2003)	29- Alexandra Dotsenko (1980)
12- Anna Bretz (2002)	21- Mary Sennich (1985)	30- Bishop Boris (2000)
13- Joseph Mazurik (1986)	22- Antonima Vecsey (1972)	30- Rita Felenchak (1996)
13- Archimandrite Seraphim Oblivantseff (1954) Former Pastor	23- Steven Danchisen (1982)	31- Jevgeny Cernonok (1980)
15- Michael W. Belenky (1971)	23- Fr. David Sedor (2008)	31- Hermenegildo Guerrero (2018)
18- Archbishop Job (2009)	24- Alexandra Turkul (1980)	Peter Onyock (1952)
19- Edward Malchisky (2001)	24- John Bird	Anna Mazurik (1968)

### LITURGICAL SUPPLIES

Wine: \$100    Incense: \$100    Charcoal: \$25

In your generosity, if anyone would like to donate towards these Liturgical supplies, the parish would be most grateful.

### BUILDING / RESTORATION FUND

Our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is coming!

Fund Purpose: To collect funds to pay for the restoration, repair and beautification of the building and parish room. This will avoid using general funds which are earmarked for budgetary items.

Please consider contributing generously to the *Building/Restoration Fund.*

*Upcoming Events:*

**Sunday, Dec. 8:** Pledge Cards due back

**Wednesday, Dec. 25:** Christmas Meal provided for Community (See Fr. Andrew to participate)

**Sunday, Jan. 5:** Holy Night Supper for Theophany (See Terri for info.)

**Saturday, Jan 11:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Blessing of the Lake (See Rachael for more info)

## Metropolitan Tikhon to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Representation Church in Moscow

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon will travel to Moscow this week to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the [Church of Saint Catherine-in-the-fields](#) as the representation of the Orthodox Church in America to the Church of Russia.

Metropolitan Tikhon will be joined by His Eminence Archbishop David of Sitka, Archimandrite Andrei, Bishop-elect of Cleveland, Auxiliary to His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel of the Romanian Episcopate; Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak, first representative to the Church of Russia; Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Chancellor of the OCA; and Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, Secretary to the Metropolitan.

Metropolitan Tikhon and the members of the OCA delegation will arrive in Moscow on Thursday, December 5. On Saturday, December 7, the feast of Saint Catherine, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill will concelebrate the Divine Liturgy with Metropolitan Tikhon at the Church of Saint Catherine to celebrate the anniversary.

The historic Church of Saint Catherine-in-the-fields was designated as the representation church of the Orthodox Church in America in 1994 by the late Patriarch Alexy II. On December 7, 1994 His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II and His Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius, served a moleben to commemorate the official opening of the representation of the Orthodox Church in America to the Church of Russia. The temple, having been closed during the communist era, was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church in the early 1990's, the moleben was the first service to be held in the temple in over sixty-years.

On Sunday, December 9, Saint Tikhon's University in Moscow will host a symposium on Orthodoxy in America. Metropolitan Tikhon will deliver the keynote address, with Archimandrite Andrei and Igu-men Joseph [Kryukov], rector of the Church of Saints Sergius and Herman, the Moscow podvorie of the Valaam Monastery, and a graduate of [Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary](#) [STOTS], will offer responses to Metropolitan Tikhon's

address.

"This symposium will provide an excellent opportunity to share the history, life and work of the Orthodox Church in America with an audience unfamiliar with Orthodox life in North America," said Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk, Dean of the Church of Saint Catherine.

Metropolitan Tikhon and delegation members will return to the United States on Tuesday, December 10.

### The Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven" By Fr. Lawrence Farley

We continue this series examining the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase, using Matthew's version of the Prayer rather than Luke's. We will begin by working from the archaic version of the text as commonly prayed in our liturgical tradition (e.g. "Our Father who art in heaven", rather than "Our Father in heaven") because this is the version familiar to most people. But differences found in the original Greek text will be noted and mined for meaning.

We note at the outset the corporate nature of the prayer: the Lord taught us to say "*our* Father", not "*my* Father" so that even when we say this prayer on our own with no one else around, we still pray as part of a family. The Lord did not act as a one-on-one mentor to individuals, but as a Master to a group of disciples, and His commands to us presuppose that each person is part of a larger group. He was not offering a course in spirituality to individuals who might be interested, but forming a *qahal*, a gathering, an *ekklesia*, a church. As such, when He was asked by this group for instruction on prayer (Luke 11:1), he offered a model prayer which presupposed prayer in a group.

The Christian faith in fact presupposes membership in this group, this *ekklesia*, and its spirituality is relentlessly corporate throughout. All the images of salvation are corporate: we are branches on a larger vine (John 15:1f), sheep in a sheepfold (John 10:1f), part of a city (Galatians 4:26, Revelation 21:2f), members of a single body. As far as our salvation is concerned, Christ is inseparable from His body—in fact when St. Paul referred to the church being a body with many members, he called the church "Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12). **Con't Pg 8**

## Forgetfulness (of God) is Foolishness

By Fr. Steven Kostoff

*Dear Parish Faithful & Friends in Christ,*

I regretted passing over the Lord's parable appointed to be read at the Divine Liturgy yesterday. Yet at the same time, I wanted to bring the discussion of our new Parish Bylaws into a liturgical context to make the point of how all things that we do in the Church are interconnected, and ultimately directly connected to the Gospel, on one level or another. Hence, the homily focusing on the purpose of parish bylaws and their significance for our communal life. Getting back to the Gospel reading, it was that of the Parable of the Rich Fool/Landowner. This is a relatively short parable, so I will simply present it below as a reminder and a reference:

*And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things your have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (LK. 12:16-21)*

Whenever I hear this particular parable, I think of the words of Tevye the Dairyman in Shalom Aleichem's delightful Yiddish stories about that warm and attractive character. (Also, of course, the main character in the musical "Fiddler on the Roof"). In his musing about God one day, Tevye said: "The more man plans, the harder God laughs." Profound theological thought from a poor dairyman!

It is hard to recall a more straightforward parable in terms of its over-all meaning and intent. The Lord is here speaking of the inevitability and unavoidable of impending death. Death is universal and ubiquitous. And it remains the great equalizer between rich and poor. More specifically, though, the Lord is here dramatizing an unexpected death, one that catches a person totally unprepared and thus rendered a "fool" in the process. The rich landowner's foolishness is revealed in the fact that he had

forgotten about God in his pursuit of his "treasure." His forgetfulness is his foolishness. There is no indication that the landowner was a particularly sinful person. He may have even seemed pious and God-fearing on the surface. But Christ often specifically warns against surface appearances, or what we call "lip service" to God, while the heart is actually quite distant. Then again, the word sin, from the Gk. *amartia*, actually means "missing the mark." So, while a person may refrain from committing sinful acts, that same person can be completely "missing the mark" when it comes to a real relationship with God. One can have social status and be totally lost at the same time. The rich landowner reached a point where he began to evaluate everything in life based on the "self" and not on God. His "portfolio building" resulted in an impoverished relationship with God.

Universal truths are often taken for granted or limited to banal platitudes of recognition. This is probably the most true when we speak of our own impending deaths. It is so true, that very truth has lost any revelatory dimension. There is also the unconscious denial and the rationalizations that we use to "cope" with the hard truth of death. And we cannot spend our time living in fear of an unexpected death. That would only paralyze our capacity for living. Yet, how many human beings throughout the world will this very day experience what the rich landowner of the parable did! A "cardiac episode," a fatal accident, victimization through a horrific crime. This is the "stuff" of daily living. And these things will happen to countless human beings this very day. A Christian needs to have a realistic awareness of precisely such possibilities. But beyond such a realistic awareness, hopefully a life rich toward God.

This parable is not about creating a sense of fear or trembling in the face of death. Our Christian hope is meant to liberate us of just such anxiety and fear. However, I believe that we can speak of a "warning" given to us by the Lord. Or perhaps a call to vigilance and preparedness. Of setting our "priorities" in order, as we may say today. We need not be so swept up in our activities and pursuits that we forget God in the process. There is no real excuse for that. Such an outcome renders our "successes" null and void. When we inevitably die and leave behind everything that we have accumulated, we can either hear the words, "Fool!" as in the parable; or "Well done, good and faithful servant!" According to Christ this will depend on whether or not we spent a lifetime trying to get "rich towards God."

## *Lord's Prayer Con't*

The church is thus inseparable from Christ—it is His “fullness” (Ephesians 1:22-23). One cannot even become a Christian without the Church. One can join other religions on one’s own. In the case of Islam, for example, one becomes a Muslim simply by saying, “There is no god but God and Muhammad is His messenger”. But it is otherwise with Christianity: if one wants to become a Christian, one must present oneself to the gathered *ekklesia* and be baptized by one of them. Even then one cannot even baptize oneself—the act of triple immersion must be performed by someone else. And of course having *become* a Christian through the baptismal actions of others, one *remains* a Christian by receiving Holy Communion, which is also a corporate act.

This radical identification of Christ with His gathered Body the Church means that if we depart from the Church, we thereby depart from Christ, and to the extent that we draw near to the Church in faith, we draw near to Christ. The “our” in the opening clause of the Lord’s Prayer reminds that that we need each other to be saved.

Secondly, we note also that Christ taught us to address the deity not as God, Lord, or King (all perfect good and Biblical titles), but as “Father”—almost certainly *abba* in the original Aramaic. *Abba* means not just “father”, but more specifically “papa”. Along with *imma* [i.e. mother] it was one of the first words a Jewish child learns (compare Isaiah 8:4). It is a word of sweet intimacy and loving familiarity. The title “father” denotes respect and can be uttered while kneeling or standing at attention; *abba* presupposes a loving embrace. Yet despite the immense transcendence of God whose glory fills heaven and earth, and before whose face the exalted cherubim and seraphim veil themselves in awe, we are still taught to invoke this transcendent God as our “papa”.

This is because Christ shares with us His intimate relationship with the Father. He is the Son of God by nature, and so of course calls God “*abba*” (compare Mark 14:36). He shares this sonship with us, so that all that He is by nature, we can become by grace. Thus after His Resurrection He commands Mary Magdalene to tell His disciples that He is

ascending “to My Father and your Father; to My God and your God” (John 20:17).

Here is the answer to any who are tempted to despise themselves and succumb to despair. God loves you; He embraces you; He is your *abba*, your papa. You may respond to that love or spurn it, but His love for you is not in doubt.

Finally, we note that God is described as being “in heaven”—or, literally, “in the heavens” (plural). We tend to think of heaven in the singular, with earth down here and heaven up there. The ancients thought of heaven in the plural. St. Paul referred to the paradisaal dwelling of Christ as “the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2f). Others spoke of seven heavens. The author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* spoke of Christ having “passed through the heavens” (Hebrews 4:14). One should not ask, “So, are there three heavens or seven?”, for we are not speaking the language of arithmetic, but of metaphor. This is theology, not astronomy. The point of the theological metaphor is the transcendence of God. God is not just “up there”. He is greater than that. And He is not just “up above up there”. He is higher still. There are many heavens, and God is above them all. In fact He is so exalted that He has to humble Himself to see what goes on in heaven as well as on earth (Psalm 113:6). He surpasses and defies all description (as the author of the Dionysian corpus knew only too well). He is not just “our Father”, but “our Father in the heavens”.

This means that the God who loves you is a God of power and might. He is the Lord *Sabaoth*, the Lord of the heavenly armies, and that power and might are there to help and save you. There are many that oppose us, many enemies that seek to do us harm and drag us down to death, dust, and despair. We need fear none of them, for the God who is our *abba* is in the heavens. The Psalmist told us of this long ago: our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases (Psalm 115:3). And what He pleases is to embrace us as His children, since we have taken refuge in His Christ.

Next: “*Hallowed be Thy Name*”