

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest

Parish Council President: Matthew Adamcio

Fr. Andrew Bartek, Rector



Sunday, June 14, 2020

Gospel: St. Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30

Tone 8

Epistle: Hebrews 11:33-12:2

1st Sunday after Pentecost / All Saints / Glorification of St. John of Kronstadt

JUNE Bulletin Sponsor:

Father Andrew for the Health of all parishioners and family members

Liturgical & Events Schedule

Sunday, June 14:

9:30 a.m. - Divine Liturgy (10 people max /
NOTE: You must let Fr. Andrew know if
you want to attend)

Saturday, June 20:

4:00 p.m. - Great Vespers (10 people max. /
NOTE: You must let Fr. Andrew know if
you are coming)

Sunday, June 21:

9:30 a.m. - Divine Liturgy (10 people max /
NOTE: You must let Fr. Andrew know if
you want to attend) *Reminder: Apostle's
Fast begins tomorrow*

JUNE BULLETIN AND CANDLE SPONSORS

Bulletin: \$50 From Father Andrew: For the Health of all the parishioners & family members

Chandelier: \$50 From Fr. Andrew: In memory of my Aunt and Uncle, Irene & James

Altar Candles: \$50 From Basil: in memory of loving wife Jean

Candles on the Tomb: \$25 Diane in loving memory of her mother Ruth on the occasion of her 25th Anniversary

Eternal Light & Icon Screen: \$25 OPEN

JUNE SPECIAL COLLECTION

Mother Maria of Paris Charitable Ministry
Founded in the Diocese of the Midwest. Mission is to advance ministry work being done by Orthodox Christians within the boundaries of the Diocese of the Midwest – Orthodox Church in America.

<https://www.facebook.com/mothermariaminsty/>

110 E Main Street, Marblehead, OH 43440
www.holyassumptionmarblehead.org

For Your Prayers

Julia Guzy (96 ½ yrs old)

1601 Church Rd
Marblehead, OH 43440

Diane Tryon

109 Joslyn Street
Arcadia, OH 44804

Please remember our shut-ins especially now during this National Crisis.

PRAY FOR OUR CATECHUMENS

Rachael Adamcio

Lydia Welch

Luke Welch

Tristen Welch

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

CATASTROPHIC RELIEF FUND

Purpose of fund: To provide some small financial assistance to a parishioner, family member or community member who has suffered a catastrophic event.

Funds will be offered at the discretion & blessing of the Rector and the discretion of the Board.

Two parishioners have given a portion of their stimulus checks to this fund. Please feel free to donate as well. Thank you and God bless!

CONGRATULATIONS !



Nikki & Sean welcomed baby boy Brooks Patrick to this world on Wednesday, June 10, 2020.

Weight: 6lbs 4oz

Length: 18 inches long

According to his parents he arrived with a good set of lungs.

Many years to Brooks Patrick!

Rectory 419-798-4591 / Cell 570-212-8747
info@holyassumptionmarblehead.org

Being Afraid to Love
By His Eminence, Abp. Paul

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:25-29)

Once again, we are being challenged with the continued racial inequality that exists in our country, with the horrendous death of George Floyd and the resulting protests (most peaceful, though some violent) that have put us all on edge. This is on top of the pandemic, which appears to be impacting Afro American communities more than others. It is not as if we needed more reasons to be anxious or nervous.

Many would argue that racism has gotten better in our country, so why do we need to continue to address this? But race still continues to impact the way we view people in the world.

The above words from Galatians teach us that we are united in Christ through baptism. The color of a person's skin is not to be a determining factor when it comes to being received into the Orthodox Church. Yet when I visit the parishes of the Midwest, it is very clear to me that in many of our parishes there are no people of Afro-American descent, and if there are, the numbers are very low. I realize I may be too simplistic in this characterization, as there are people of many different ethnic backgrounds that attend our churches; but the fact remains, there are very few Afro-Americans. There is, I believe, a spiritual and moral challenge that we need to face in order to understand why this is the case. I think the nature of racism amongst us is subtle and not as overt.

I can only speak for myself here. But in my upbringing it was modeled to me to be afraid of Afro-Americans (then it was black people). When Afro-Americans began to move into our neighborhood in Detroit in the early 1970's, we left and joined the mass white flight to the suburbs of

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VIGILS - 6/7

Laura Kovach (4) God's blessings and healing to everyone battling or suffering during the COVID-19 pandemic; God's blessings of peace and healing for our country; For healing or health of Betty, Betty, Julia, Andrea, Mark, Joe, Margi, Dana, Bohdi, Chuck, and Steve; Health of Nikki and unborn baby Brooks.

Sandy Martin (1) Special intentions

Jim Mazur(2) In memory of Matthew; For health of family and friends

Twarek (6) God's Blessings and Peace; For the health of Nikki and unborn Brooks (being induced 6/9); Health and safety of Sean and all troopers and first responders; Anniversary remembrance for Mom and Dad (June 4); Prayers for safe surgery and speedy recovery for Tom Twarek (6/9), and Jeannie Roth Snowball (6/10); For the health of Jason, Nancy, Mary, Margi & Joe, MaryAnn and Bob, Judy, Chuck, Steve, Bohdi, Heidi, Liz, Joe, Sonya, Julia, Diane, Stella, Ron, Jake, Helen.

MONTHLY TITHING ONLY
JUNE

Goal Pledged per month: \$4,600

Sunday, June 7- \$634

OTHER INCOME FROM JUNE

Sunday, June 7: \$6 Candles; \$50 Vigils; \$50 Special Collection (Mother Maria); \$50 Bulletin; \$200 donation

40 DAY REMEMBRANCE

June 7: Security guard killed in Flint, MI / Mat. Irene / George Floyd
June 14: Archpriest Paul Lazor / Donald Cholcher
June 21: Protopresbyter George Hutnyan / Mitred Archpriest Nicholas Timko
June 28: Betty Billy
July 5: Popadia Marilyn Nedelkoff / 2 military soldier's killed in ND / Police officer from UT / Federal Police officer killed in CA
July 12: Police officer killed in St Louis; Police officer killed in AL
July 19: Protopresbyter Michael Psenechnuk / Matthew Gould / John Sutko

PRAYER LIST Updated 6-3

Clergy:

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius
His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman
John Duranko (*Father's home pastor*)
James Gleason (*Father's Spiritual Father*)
Moses Barry
Steven Frase
Joseph Gibson
Gregory Grivna
Emilian Hutnyan
Josef Von Klarr
Dan Kovolick
Vladimir Lecko
Myron Manzuk
Philip Lasbrook
Christopher Phillips
Dan Ring (*St Joes*)
Benjamin Tucci
Peter Tutko
Deacon Nicholas Denysenko
Deacon Paul Gansle
Deacon Gregory Krutchak
Deacon Paul Mitchell
Sub-deacon Wylie Meath

Matushkii:

Pani Patricia Duranko
Myra Kovolick
Virginia Lecko
Maura McCartney
Jillian Rettig
Snezana Ruzic
Sonya Tutko

Parishioners / & their Family:

John Beadle (*Elcishko*)
MaryAnn Cook (*Cousin to Twarek's*)
John Richard Elchisco
Ruthe Flewelling
Debbie Garnek (*Roddie's sister*)
Michael Glovinsky (*Basil's nephew*)
Heidi Golob
Shirley Gresh (*Wife of Ernest*)
Julia Guzy
Joseph Habegger (*Laura brother-in-law*)
Barb Heffernan
Tom Hileman
Charisse Hileman

Jessica Issler (*Hileman*)
Alice Jackson (*Mazurik*)
William Jappsen (*Diane T.*)
Michael Kouznetsov (*Mary Hiser's son*)
Kris Kollar (*Fr.'s cousin*)
Betty Kovach
Kristen (*Cassell's daughter*)
Terri Lariccia (*Fr's cousin*)
David LaValle (*Fr.'s cousin*)
Helen Lis
Greg Mazur
Judy Mazurik (*Paul Mazurik's*)
Toddler Stella Miller
Katelyn Pipenur (*Niece of Jean*)
Earl Rindfleisch
Helen Jean Rofkar (*Elchisco*)
Joe Rose
Maryann Royhab
Steven Schirtzinger (*Soski*)
Christy Schutt (*Joe's sister*)
Peter Truta (*Jean H's cousin*)
Diane Tryon
Greg Tryon
Tom Twarek
Katie and her baby Bodhi (*Cassell's daughter-in-law*)
Nikki & her newborn Brooks
Patrick
Katherine & her unborn baby (*Fr.'s cousin*)
Sarah and her unborn Child (*Laura's daughter*)
Brittany And her unborn baby (*Fr's cousin*)

Other Requests:

Sandra Alex (*Muzyka*)
Alexia
Infant Baylor
Anna Burch (*Wayne's friend*)
Breeana (*Kowal*) Teenager who ran away from foster home
Delores Danchisen
Layne Demkosky
Paul Demkosky (*Fr's friend*)
Betty Dubbert (*Kovach*)
Marge Dziama
Mary Dziak (*Twarek*)

Ben Franklin (*Laura friend*)
Theodore Geletka (*St. Michael Broadview Heights' choir director*)
Brad George (*Christi's friend*)
Donald Gresh (*Basil*)
Robert Hritsko (*Glovinsky*)
Elliot Joy (*Police chief's son*)
Andrea Joy (*Kovach*)
Tommy Leonchik (*Fr's friend*)
Jake Lipstraw (*Twarek*)
Mark Ludvik (*Guzy*)
Anna Maiani (*Friend of Wayne*)
Mark Masica (*Kovach*)
Claudia McDonald (*Twarek*)
Pauline Meath (*Fr's*)
Cole Miller (*Cassell*)
Doug Millinger (*Kovach*)
Tim Nash (*Royhab*)
Charlie Nowak (*Avery's*)
Beth Reinhard (*Diane friend*)
Chris Reinheimer (*Bruno's*)
Sandy Scafaria (*friend of Jean*)
Arby Shenesky (*Pastor Bob's sister*)
Betty (Elizabeth) Slanta (*sister-in-law of Kathy Jacob*)
John Slanta (*brother of Kathy Jacob*)
Jeanne Roth Snowball (*Twarek*)
Matthew Sterling (*Tyron*)
John Sutko (*Fr.'s Friend*)
Andrea Szabo (*Sonya friend*)
Devin Thomson (*Jamestown*)
Janice Timko
George Timko
Philip (Andy) Timko
Steve Turinsky (*Twarek*)
Chuck Wiedenhoft (*Twarek*)
Rachel (*Darlene M.*)
Mollie & her unborn baby (*Fr.'s friend*)
Molly and her unborn baby (*Fr.s friend*)
Those suffering from the Coronavirus

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The Holy Church, Holy Communion, and an Orthodox Ethos

By His Grace Bishop Alexis

When believers enter an Orthodox Church, they are passing from this world of sickness, strife, and death into a realm of spiritual health, peace, and life. In a consecrated Orthodox Church, the Kingdom of God is at hand and the King of all is in their midst. Believers can feel the presence of the Godman through the life-giving, uncreated divine energies that are especially concentrated in a Holy Orthodox temple. These energies purify, illumine, and even deify the believer according to the receptivity of each. The sacred icons are not only windows to heaven, but a meeting place between the believer and the saint, a place of comfort, a place of healing, and a place of life. When believers venerate an icon with faith, they not only touch the Saint depicted, the depicted Saint also touches them. And when they partake of Holy Communion, receiving the most precious, most pure, most holy, Body and Blood of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, they receive the Good Physician into their heart, cleansing it of all impurity. These are basic truths that Orthodox Christians espouse and that many are trying to defend in these uncomfortable days.

Unfortunately, some are using these same truths to criticize and even condemn the shepherds of Christ's holy flock for decisions that are in line with civil directives about social distancing, wearing of masks, and the means for distributing Holy Communion. They may argue quite convincingly that these temporary directives harm Orthodox liturgical worship, depriving it of its ability to be an icon of the Kingdom or for the faithful to feel as though they are one Body. They forget that we are living in dangerous times with far too many Orthodox Metropolitans, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons now taken from us into the mansions of the righteous through the corona virus. Unfortunately, these critics go further, construing concerns for safety as faithlessness, love for the flock as disdain for the fathers, and economy as apostasy. In so doing, they are rending the garment of Christ, becoming "false witnesses who speak lies and sow discord among the brethren."¹ They have zeal, but "not according to knowledge,"² for if it were according to knowledge, their words would be kind, longsuffering, thinking no evil, not easily

provoked, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things and enduring all things.³

The Church has overcome such controversies in the past and She will overcome them today. The Church historian Socrates Scholasticus writes about a similar situation at the time of the Origen heresy:

By clever arguments, he [Dioscorus] took advantage of the simplicity of these monks and thus a fierce controversy was stirred up among them... The less informed, who greatly exceeded the others in number, were inflamed by an ardent zeal, but not according to knowledge. They immediately raised their voices against their brethren. Thus, they were divided with both parties branding each other as impious.⁴

Today, by clever or not so clever arguments, some are taking advantage of the simple faith of believers in order to stir up controversy at the very time when Christians should be united in love and care for one another. Behind these arguments, however, is a deep misunderstanding about the nature of grace and even the incarnation itself.

With respect to the incarnation, our Lord is perfect God and perfect man. Saint John of Damascus thus teaches that in our Lord "the created remains created, and the uncreated, uncreated. The mortal remains mortal; the immortal, immortal. The circumscribed remains circumscribed; the uncircumscribed, uncircumscribed. The visible remains visible; the invisible, invisible. 'The one part is all glorious with miracles: while the other is the victim of insults.'"⁵ The same is also true for the Church, the Theanthropic Body of Christ. It is a divine place where miracles take place, where the blind see the true Light and the deaf hear the Gospel of grace. It is also a human place where we give the last kiss to the dead. Corruption and incorruption are both present in Church as they are both present in our lives as Christians. Those who claim that it is impossible to catch a cold in Church are also teaching that it is not possible to be fully human in Church with all the fragility that surrounds our human condition, because that fragility is somehow swallowed up by the surrounding divinity. On December 28th of each year, we celebrate the memory of the two thousand Christians who died, being burned alive in Church. The Church did not magically keep them healthy or immune from *Con't Pg 6*

JUNE Celebrations

Anniversary	Birthday
6-18-1972- His Grace Bishop Matthias Priest ordination 6-20-80- Fr. David Lis 25- Fr. Andrew & Pani Yoanna 26- Jim & Laura Kovach 6-27-2009: Archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh	2- Jake Muscaro 5- Peter Adzima 6- Nathan Koren 8- Tanya Koren 13- Fr. Nick Mihaly 15- Emily Kusinski, Aijire Dardovski 16- James Jerome 19- Emily Sarisky 23- Loreen Welch 24- Matthew Adamcio 28- Vincent Cavaliere

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.

PRAYER LIST CONTINUED

Captives:

Metropolitan Paul (*Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo*)

Archbishop John (*Syriac Archdiocese of Aleppo*)

The UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers in & around Syria; Those suffering persecution in Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and throughout the world

Military:

Craig Cassell, Nathan Brown, Alena Grabavoy, Alex, Jake Ellithorpe

TENTATIVE READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, June 14: Joe

Sunday, June 21: Tim

Sunday, June 28: Joe

JUNE Reposed

3 Irene Leso (2002)	17- Archimandrite Luke Sirkun (1956)	22- Archpriest Kyrill Hartman (2010) Former Pastor
4- Alex Sennich (1994)	Former Pastor	23- Ruth Benya (1995)
4- Vicoria Guzy (1965)	17- Mitered Archpriest John Gratson (1965) Former Pastor	26- George Millie (1974)
5- Mildred Paproski (2018)	18- Fr. Michael Prevas (2018)	27- Anna Ignatenkoo- (1969)
6- Fr. Stephen Shutack (2008)	20- Jean Frances Glovinsky (2016)	28- Fr. Charles Kovich (2005)
8- Mary Hunt (2003)	20- Fr. John Yurcisin (2003)	28- Andrew Leso (2000)
9- Cristina Rindfleisch (2006)	20- Dan Karens Cousin 2019	29- Stephen Millie (1988)
9- Charles Hagmaier (2018)	21- Mary Elchisco Migala (1983)	Mike Mazur (1923)
9- John Sutko (2020)	21- Ronald Basala (2016)	Anna Mazur (1923)
14- Fr. Justin Foster (2016)		
16- Verona Pich (2010)		



Bishop Alexis Con't

the laws of nature as in the case of the three children in the fiery furnace, but it was the place from which they were transferred from this world into paradise. The Church saves the soul, but it does not, nor has it ever promised a state of incorruption prior to the general resurrection. The temple is a physical place in this world with the grace of the world to come. It is both physical and spiritual. In its materiality, the wood, the marble, the air of the temple do not differ from the same substances in the outside world. In her spiritual radiance, however, the temple provides the receptive believer with everything necessary in order to act, think, perceive, and desire in perfect harmony with the Gospel of Christ.

As Orthodox Christians, we universally believe that it is not possible to become physically sick from receiving the life-giving Body and Blood of our Savior, but we also give Holy Communion to the dying to accompany them into eternity. None are surprised that the dying die after receiving Holy Communion; we sometimes even read prayers afterwards that they may give up their souls into the hands of God. Communion itself is not received in order to preserve physical health in this world as though that were an ultimate good. Such a view in fact betrays a secular ethos that completely forgets the aim of the Christian life, becoming like Christ who pours out His life for the life of the world.

Holy Communion is received unto the remission of sins and life eternal. Through Holy Communion, we enter into the entire economy of salvation from the incarnation of God the Word to His session at the right hand of God the Father. The Blood of the Godman unites God to man and the members of the Church with each other into a single Body, a single life, a single soul. Through communion, we become one with Christ, one with our brother and our sister, one with the Saints, one with the entire Church, in which there is no separation between the living and the dead, for all are then one in Christ Jesus. Saint Justin Popovich writes “the divine blood of the Lord is a divinely human power that sanctifies, purifies, and transfigures, making the believer ecclesial, theanthropic, trinitarian, and saved.”⁶ It is not about the physically healthy remaining healthy, but about the struggling spiritually becoming holy.

Health and sickness, baptisms and funerals, are part of life. On the Holy Mountain of Athos, in the sacred cenobitic monasteries, most of the monks become sick during the flu season. No one is surprised; no one doubts their faith. And when they are sick, the monks take medication and rest up in their cells. Many of those same monks receive flu shots as a preventative measure, so that they will not become sick, so that they will be able to pray consistently before God. Parishes are now taking preventative measures, so that the faithful may be healthy enough to pray and offer up fruits of repentance. The additional measures are much like the flu shots received by Athonite monks. They are not about our faith in the mysteries, but about our love for our neighbor.

Saint Paul asks that we do all things “decently and in order.” It is right that we follow the directives now in good order, for “nothing builds up as much as good order, peace and love, just as nothing is more destructive than their opposites.”⁷ For the sake of good order, for the sake of peace, for the sake of love, let’s seek what the Church is teaching us during these difficult times: to place our brother and sister first, to walk humbly before God, and to wait patiently for the day when our glorious Divine Liturgy will be celebrated exactly as it has been in ages past. That day will surely come. May it come quickly. Amen.

¹ Proverbs 6:14.

² Romans 10:2.

³ 1 Corinthians 13:4-6.

⁴ *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.7 PG 67.688bc.

⁵ Saint John of Damascus *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 3.3 PG 94.993c.

⁶ Justin Popovitch, *Philosophie Orthodoxe de la Vérité*, vol. 5 (Paris: L’Age d’Homme, 1997), 252.

⁷ Saint John Chrysostom, *Argumentum Epistolae Primae Corinthios*, 37.4 PG 61.318b.

BUILDING / RESTORATION FUND

Our 125th 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.

A Letter of a Parish Priest to His Flock

In a [letter dated June 5, 2020](#) to his clergy and monastics, His Eminence Archbishop Alexander of Dallas made available to his faithful the following reflection written by a “wise priest in the diocese”.

I have waited a long time before writing anything specifically about our current situation because I am a simple parish priest, not an epidemiologist, not a theologian, and not a bishop. Therefore, I am, for the most part, unqualified to say too much about our current situation. Unfortunately, others who are at least as unqualified have not hesitated to speak their opinions, throwing around words like “heresy”, “blasphemy”, “untraditional”, and the like.

Recently a priest whose canonical status is not easily discerned has posted videos trying to provoke schism and disobedience to the bishops’ directives in the wake of the pandemic. In one of the recent videos he interviews a so-called “Elder” who repeatedly calls the pandemic a conspiracy of the Zionists, Kabbalists, and Masons, and cites highly suspect Internet stories as evidence. Misquoting the Scriptures and the Fathers, he encourages people to disobey their bishops because, he says, the bishops are acting uncanonically (and then proceeds to quote a canon completely out of context in support of his false opinion).

It really should not even be necessary to respond to this sort of silliness, as it might appear to give it more credence than is due. However, sadly, conversations with far too many priests in the past days have revealed that some of their parishioners are watching these videos, reading these blogs, and taking as Orthodox teaching and Tradition these delusional opinions. So, out of concern for those who might fall into this snare, I share the following.

All around the world Orthodox bishops in almost all of the Orthodox Churches have taken precautions to try to prevent the spread of the COVID virus. This has involved primarily social distancing, limiting attendance at divine services, and changes in the practice of receiving Holy Communion.

The changes in practice to receiving Holy Communion are not primarily out of fear that someone

will get sick from the spoon or the Eucharist, but are aimed at trying to prevent government interference in the Church. From the very beginning Christians have sought to live at peace among their fellow citizens when at all possible, i.e. when the law of the government does not conflict with the law of God. Additionally, our bishop has said that while he “doesn’t know that the grain alcohol is necessary,” he would prefer we enact a temporary measure that will console those who (out of fear) might otherwise refrain from Communion during these extraordinary times (reference [Larchet on the Pandemic](#)). Why would we protest when this request was made by our bishop for the sake of his flock?

Many people, particularly online, often anonymously, are accusing the bishops - again, we are talking about almost every Orthodox bishop around the world - of everything from simply overreacting to blasphemy and heresy. The arguments of these people are, for the most part, reactionary and emotional, intending to generate anger and fear. And sadly, for many, this is precisely the result. So, let me just say a few things very simply.

As most of you probably know by now, for the most part, Orthodox Christians do not believe that you can get sick from receiving Holy Communion, nor are the bishops indicating implicitly or explicitly that you can. I say “for the most part” because we all are aware, no doubt, of Saint Paul’s warning to the Corinthians that to receive the Body and Blood of Christ unworthily has caused some to be sick or even to die. This should tell us right away that to state categorically as some do that “you cannot get sick from Holy Communion” is wrong. Thus, our need to prepare for Holy Communion with confession, fasting, repentance, and prayers as we are taught. Given that exception, however, we do not believe that you can get sick from Holy Communion. We have no scientific data behind this, even though some like to quote studies done in Protestant and Catholic churches over the past hundred years, but neither should we need or even want scientific data here.

However, some have taken this belief and incorrectly drawn the conclusion that you cannot get sick in church at all, from anything or anyone. Taking quotes from the fathers and saints completely out of context they have tried to argue that the church building and services are a “zone of incorruption” and that therefore someone could not get sick at all in church. The same so-called “Elder” mentioned above calls the idea that you might catch a cold from a fellow parishioner *Con’t next Pg*

Wise Priest con't

in church “blasphemy”. It does not take much, though, to demonstrate that this view is false. Let me just give a couple of examples.

The precious Body and Blood of Christ, is instructive. In Great Lent, when preparing Communion for the Presanctified Liturgy, the priest must take care that the consecrated Lamb does not get moldy. Thus, he takes precautions to make sure it gets sufficient air to dry out. The consecrated Lamb which has become the Body of Christ and intincted with the Blood of Christ remains a physical reality of our world even as it is now not of this world. Likewise, on Holy Thursday or anytime the priest prepares the reserved sacrament for the sick that will be kept on the Holy Table, the priest is warned in the strongest of terms to be careful lest it be burned (one method for removing the moisture in the Lamb is to warm it on some sort of hot plate) or become moldy.

These examples alone should suffice to purge our thinking of superstitious or magical notions about the Holy Mysteries. From the very beginning the Church has emphasized the very physical nature of the Mysteries. Think just for a moment of Saint Symeon Metaphrastes’ prayer before Communion which we read in our prayers of preparation in which he asks the Lord by Holy Communion to “enter into my members, my veins, my heart.” In fact, read any of those prayers before Communion (as we should always do before receiving) and you will notice the utter physicality of them. We are praying for this bread which is now the Body of Christ to enter our mouth, our throat, our belly - to be, that is, digested as food always is - and through the digestive process to strengthen us and save us.

This is, in fact, the great marvel of Holy Communion, that the risen Son of God seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven deigns to become food! As we sing on Holy Saturday, He comes “to give himself as food to the faithful.” Brothers and sisters, superstitious thinking leading to condemnation and charges of heresy needs to stop. Taken to extremes, as is happening with some, it leads to dangerous false teachings.

Are we not aware that many for whom we pray for

healing and anoint with the Holy Unction die soon thereafter? Does this mean we did not pray with enough faith? Does it mean that their faith was weak? Does it mean - God forbid! - that the mystery was somehow ineffective? Of course not. But this is where this sort of thinking leads.

All of the saints died. Even the Mother of God, who we believe was without personal sin, fell asleep in the Lord and, in imitation of her Son, commended her soul to God. Lazarus, who was raised from the Lord after four days, died again.

Finally, a word about the Communion spoon. Many people, particularly online, are now in a huff about practices concerning cleaning or even replacing the spoon. The use of a spoon for Holy Communion is approximately 1000 years old. That means, prior to that, there was no Communion spoon. I will not take time to go into the more ancient practices for receiving Holy Communion, I will only say that to make a dogma out of the spoon is wrong. One critic online insisted on the use of only one spoon (as opposed to multiple spoons) because there is only one Eucharist, one Christ, etc. But is she not aware that almost all of us have communed in a Liturgy at which there were multiple chalices (and, therefore, multiple spoons)? When I visited Moscow last year there were multiple chalices on the Holy Table even at the consecration of the Gifts. When there are hundreds of communicants practical necessity requires the use of several chalices and spoons, along with several priests to administer Communion.

Brothers and sisters, there is real danger of another sort of Old Believer schism affecting the Church today as it did in Russia a few hundred years ago when people refused to accept changes to the service books and some of the practices of the faithful even when it became clear that the old ways were mistaken. At that time the corrections were often introduced heavy-handedly, but that is not the case in our situation, where the bishops have consideredately and in the face of a serious health crisis introduced temporary changes, changes which in no way affect the dogmas or teachings of our Faith.

If you read just a little bit about what happened to the Old Believers after the schism you will find a history marked by fear, condemnation, unorthodox apocalyptic speculations, and in extreme cases mass suicide. Schism is always a grave sin and false teachings ***Con't Next Pg***