

Holy Assumption Orthodox Church

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest

Parish Council President: Ron Royhab

V. Rev. Archpriest Andrew Bartek, Rector



Sunday, November 28, 2021

Gospel: [St. Luke 13:10-17](#)

Tone 5

Epistle: [Ephesians 2:4-10](#)

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Martyr Irenarchus and Seven Women Martyrs at Sebaste

NOVEMBER Bulletin Sponsor:

Fr. Andrew in memory of my mother Dorothy

Liturgical & Events Schedule TWO WEEK EDITION

Sunday, November 28

9:10 am Hours / Divine Liturgy / Social

Tuesday, November 30- December 4

Fr. Will be in Chicago for Diocesan Council

Saturday, December 4

6:00 pm Great Vespers in Lorain (St. Tikhon's Mission Choir singing)

THERE WILL BE NO VESPERS HERE

Sunday, December 5

9:05 am Hours / Liturgy / Social

(fr. Will be leaving after Liturgy to attend Luncheon with the Seminarians)

Monday, December 6

9:20 am Hours followed by Liturgy

Tuesday, December 7

5:00 pm Memorial Service @ VFW for WWII

Thursday, December 9

6:00 pm Lions Club Meeting / Christmas party

Saturday, December 11

NO VESPERS HERE / Fr. Andrew will be in Columbus working on the Church Budget for 2022

NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE

Week of Nov. 28	Laura
Week of Dec. 5	Stephanie
Week of Dec. 12	Sandy
Week of Dec. 19	Bobbie
Week of Dec. 26	Natalie



NOVEMBER BULLETIN CANDLE SPONSORS

Bulletin: (\$50) Fr. Andrew in memory of his mother Dorothy

Chandelier: (\$50) Fr. Andrew in memory of his grandmother Mary Billy / Basil in loving memory of my sister Marion

Altar Candles: (\$50) Fr. Andrew in memory of Archbishop David from Alaska

Candles on the Tomb: (\$25) Fr. Andrew in memory of his family & friends reposed in November

Eternal Light & Icon Screen: (\$25) Fr. Andrew in memory of former Pastors who reposed in November / Jean, in loving memory of my uncle, Dan Opritza, who fell asleep Nov 5th

Candles @ the Cross: (\$15) From Laura & Jim for the health of Betty Kovach

Candles @ Icon of St Tikhon: (\$15) For the Health of Tim and the safety of Nicholas, Tikhon & Gleice

Archbishop Paul set as Main Speaker for FOCA Patronal Celebration

The National Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) will be celebrating their patron saint, Saint Andrew, the First Called, with a virtual akathist and talk.

On November 30, Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church, Mogadore, OH, will host the service bringing clergy and faithful together from all over the country. Clergy are invited to participate in the service live via zoom and His Eminence Archbishop Paul of Chicago and the Midwest will be the main speaker for the event.

The stream will begin at 8:00pm (EST). Those interested in serving the Akathist should contact Archpriest Nicholas Wyslutsky, FOCA National Spiritual Advisor, at focaspiritualadvisor@gmail.com.

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www.holyassumptionmarblehead.org

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

NOVEMBER: MONTHLY TITHE ONLY

Goal Pledged per month: \$4,825

Nov. 7: \$2,285

Nov. 14: \$1,165

Nov. 21: \$ 715

Month Total: \$4,165

NOVEMBER: OTHER INCOME

Goal for the month in this category: \$2,670

Nov. 7: \$65 Candles; \$20 donations; \$250 Vigils; \$100 holy Day donations; \$50 bulletin; \$100 Chandelier; \$25 Candles on Tomb; \$100 Altar Candles; \$30 Candles @ St. Tikhon; \$25 Eternal Light & Icon Screen

Nov. 14: \$10 Candles; \$150 Vigils; Donations \$2,050, \$125 Holy Day Donations; \$46,517.45 fundraising

Nov. 21: \$17 Candles; \$260 donations; \$85 Vigils; \$55 Holy Day Donations;

TOTAL FOR MONTH: \$3,517 (not including fundraising efforts)

NOVEMBER: RESTRICTED FUND DONATIONS

Nov. 7: \$150 Holiday Bureau; \$110 St Vladimir's Seminary; \$87.50 Building Restoration

Nov. 14: \$100 St Vladimir; \$5,000 building fund

Nov. 21: \$200 Christmas Flowers; \$200 St. Vladimir Seminary; \$100 Building Fund

NOVEMBER: LITURGICAL ATTENDANCE

Saturday, Nov. 6: 6 attended Vespers

Sunday, Nov. 7: 20 attended Liturgy (7 of which were visitors) / 16 received Communion

Monday, Nov. 8: 11 attended Feast Day Liturgy

Thursday, Nov. 11: 8 attended Liturgy

Saturday, Nov. 13: 9 attended Vespers

Sunday, Nov. 14: 16 attended Liturgy (1 being a guest) / 10 Communicants

Saturday, Nov. 20: 5 attended Vespers

Sunday, Nov. 21: 18 attended Liturgy (4 of which were visitors) / 13 Communicants

VIGILS- NOVEMBER 21

Tim Glovinsky(2) Belated birthday memory of Aunt Marian and Uncle

Susan Gusy(2) In loving memory of grandfather Michael, Godfather Peter, Special intentions

Jean Hileman(1) For health of Doug Cowan

Laura Kovach(4) Birthday blessings to Betty and Andrew. Anniversary blessings to Matt and Amy. For health of Betty K., Ben F., Earl R., Mary P., Andrea J., Wendy R., Mark M., Dana M., Bodhi C., Hattie K., Molly K., David M, Marguerite B., Stephanie R., Kathie J., Joe H, Joe S., Mark P, and George K. Safe travels for family and friends.

Sandy Martin (3) For health and healing of Marg, In loving memory of Butch, Special intentions

Pat Rentz(1) In memory of Robley Blackford

Royhab (1) For health of Stephanie Royhab

Janice Timko (2) In blessed and loving memory of my precious parents Sophia and Peter Monak. "Vechnaya Pamyat!", In blessed and loving memory of my precious son Philip "Andy", 6 months November 21st. Thanking God for blessing me with my son for 61 years. Love you and miss you. "Vechnaya Pamyat!"

Diane Tryon (2) In loving memory of Uncle Norm "Tig" on his birthday, Blessing to Greg and Kathryn and unborn child

Twarek (8) For the health of Amber, For the health and recovery of Zach, Health and recovery of Marguerite, Health and recovery of Jamie Philpot, Health and recovery of Joe Schutt, Health and recovery of Jim, Stephanie, Ron, Ezra, Health of David, Helen Lis and Tina's dad, Earl, Matt, Tom, Loren, Joe, Sonya, Margi & Joe, Betty, Jackie, MaryAnn & Bob, Chuck, Bohdi, Diane, Stella, Jake, Cheryl, Special intentions

**AN EVENING WITH ST. TIKHONS
SEMINARY MISSION CHOIR**

WHEN: On Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021
WHERE: SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church in Lorain (Our closest sister parish to us)
TIME: 6:00pm Vespers, H'orderves & Cocktails, Christmas & Liturgical Concert (A free will offering will be accepted) &

Sunday, Dec. 5
9:30am Divine Liturgy with responses sung by St. Tikhon's Mission Choir

St. Tikhon's Mission Choir

St. Tikhon's Mission choir is a choral group from St. Tikhon's dedicated to God through the Church's primary evangelistic and teaching tool: Her Liturgical worship; the mission Choir strives to bring life, invigoration, and inspiration to the parishes which are visited throughout the year. Not only do parishioners interact with and see Seminarians who are attempting to follow the call of the Lord, but this interaction also puts a real human face with an institution that has been providing the Church in America with Her clergy and many lay leaders for over eighty years. The Mission Choir also teaches, preaches, and provides animated interesting presentations about the work of the St. Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery. The Mission choir raises funds for the work of the Seminary which primarily relies on donations from the Church and Her faithful to continue its work for the Church in America.

Not only will there be a free-will offering accepted, but there will be sponsorship levels available:

- Bronze: up to \$150
- Silver: \$151-250
- Gold: \$251-\$500
- Platinum: Over \$500

Gold & Platinum donors will be invited to lunch and a private concert following Divine Liturgy on 12/5.

NO VESPERS HERE DECEMBER 4

There will be no vespers here so I can attend the event in Lorain. If anyone is interested in going, please let me know.

**DECEMBER BULLETIN
CANDLE SPONSORS**

- Bulletin:** (\$50) From Father in memory of his family & friends reposed in December
- Chandelier:** (\$50) From Jean for the Health and safe travels for her daughter Jessica and son-in-law Justin and for the children Hayden, Rowan, & Silas as they travel to their new deployment & home in Japan
- Altar Candles:** (\$50) From Father in memory of the former pastors of this parish & Hierarchs from the Diocese in the month of Dec.
- Candles on the Tomb:** (\$25) Open
- Eternal Light & Icon Screen:** (\$25) From Jean in memory of her father William Pipenur
- Candles @ the Cross** (\$15) Open
- Candles @ St Tikhon's Icon** (\$15) for the health of Tim and safety of Nicholas, Tikhon & Gleice

40 DAY REMEMBRANCE

- Nov. 7:** Protopresbyter Lawrence Barringer
- Nov 14:** Patricia
- Nov. 21:** Metropolitan Jonah from Uganda
- Nov. 28:** Regina Lomme
- Dec. 5:** Gordon Schutt / Fr. Maximos Herman
- Dec. 12:** Dan Opritza / AP Peter Tutko
- Dec. 19:** Robley Blackford



- Saturday, December 25- Free Christmas Dinner
- Wednesday, January 5- Theophany Holy Night Supper **(PLEASE SIGN UP IF YOU ARE COMING)**
- Saturday, January 8- Blessing of the Lake
- Sunday, January 23, 2021 @ 1:00pm - Local March for Life in Port Clinton. The March is about an hour (about a mile) followed by a reception at Knights of Columbus. If one can't walk, prayers will be offered at the Knights until the March is completed
- Sunday, January 30- Annual Church Meeting

PRAYER LIST- UPDATED NOVEMBER 22

HIERARCH'S / CLERGY: His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman; Archbishop Benjamin from San Fransico; John Duranko (Father's home pastor); James Gleason (Father's Spiritual Father); Moses Berry; Gregory Grivna; Emilian Hutnyan; Joseph Von Klarr; Michael Kuzara; Michael Macura; Basil Stoyka, Andrew Yarvonitsky; John Zabinko / Deacon Paul Gansle, Deacon Peter Rentsch, / Sub-deacon Wylie Meath

MATUSHKII: Pani Patricia Duranko; Virginia Lecko; Maura McCarntey; Roberta Spengler; Margaret Zabinko

PARISHIONERS & THEIR FAMILIES: James Bargdill (Schutt); John Beadle (Elchisco); James Billy (Fr.); Kristen (Cassell); Marguerite Bird; Maryann Cook (Twarek); Michael Glovinsky; Shirley Gresh (Glovinsky); Joseph Habegger (Kovach); Charisse (Hileman); Betty Kovach; David LaValle (Fr); Helen Lis; Child Stephanos (Loizos); Scott Lucas (Fr); David Mazurik; Child Stella Miller (Elchisco); Nancy Naiser (Royhab); Earl Rindfleisch; Helen Jean Rofkar (Elchisco); Joe Rose; Sonya Rose; Ron Royhab; Maryann Royhab; Stephanie Royhab; Joe Schutt; Christi Schutt; Steven Schirtzinger (Soski); Dacia Snider (Hileman); Diane Tryon; Greg Tyron; Tom Twarek; Tim; the child Bodhi (Cassell); Elinor Williams (Golob); Kathryn Tryon & her unborn baby

OTHER REQUESTS: Child Ezra; Jack Eilrich (Fr.); Baby Finn (Cassell); Zoe Finley (ABL); Marge Dziana; Ruthe Flewelling; Ben Franklin (Kovach); Donald Gresh (Glovinsky); Andrea Joy (Kovach); Ann Marie Krynock (Timko); Maria (ABL); Jake Lipstraw (Twarek); Mark Ludvik (Guzy); Mark Masica (Kovach); Pauline Meath (Fr); Karen Muzyka (fr); William Romanchak (Fr); Sandy Scafaria (Hileman); Janice Timko; George Timko; Loren Welch (Fr); Chuck Wiedenhof (Twarek); Sara (Jake); Chris Quotap (Fr)

MILITARY: Alex, Nathan Brown, Craig Cassell, Jake Ellithorpe, Jordan Fulton, Alena Nicholas & Tikhon

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



NOTE: ABL (Archbishop's request) / Please let FR. Andrew know who can come off the list or be put on.

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.

This money can also be used for outreach programs in the parish.

Thank you and God bless!



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*.

Biblical Women: Judith
By. Fr. Lawrence Farley

The Book of Judith is a war story. It may be difficult for us to appreciate it fully, since most of us have never experienced the danger and horrors attending the invasion of one's country—especially the dangers and horrors for women during such invasion. My own nation Canada has never really been invaded. The last time America was invaded, if memory serves, was early in the 19th century, and it was us Canadians who invaded and burned down your Washington capital. Oops. Sorry about that. But the net result of all this national security and peace is that we can have little emotional understanding of what it is like to have one's nation repeatedly invaded and subject to occupation and all the horrors of war. Ancient Israel did have this experience—many times. It was the cost, I suppose, of occupying the land bridge between Africa and Asia: armies were forever tramping through your backyard and invading.

The Book of Judith's place among the so-called "Apocrypha" and its absence from modern Protestant Bibles means that many people are unfamiliar with its story. That is too bad, for it is a riveting read.

It is an historical romance, rather than actual history, as its first chapters reveal. Its first verses describe Nebuchadnezzar as ruling over the Assyrians, when in fact he ruled over the Babylonians. He was the one who presided over the destruction of the southern kingdom and its Jerusalem capital in 586 B.C. and sent the people into exile. Eventually Babylon succumbed to the Persians, and under the Persians Israel was allowed to return to their land and rebuild their Temple (2 Chronicles 36:22f).

Nonetheless, the author of the Book of Judith portrays Nebuchadnezzar as somehow still ruling after the exile ended, and as sending his general Holofernes to Palestine to invade and enforce their submission to him and to join his war against the Medes (who were, after the exile, part of the Persian empire). Holofernes had already forced all the nations of the world into submission (2:21f), and he rode at the head of an overwhelmingly large force of invading Assyrians. The surrounding peoples of Sidon, Tyre, Jamnia, and the Philistine cities of

Ashdod and Ascalon had already surrendered and lay prostrate before the Assyrian juggernaut. Now it bore down upon Israel, recently returned from the exile (4:3).

These details make it clear that we are reading romance, not history, but that is not the point. The story's purpose was to provide an example of heroism, and of courage in the face of hopeless odds. The author therefore ransacked history to find examples of brutal invaders, throwing the Assyrians and Nebuchadnezzar into the mix to come up with the most fearsome invasion force he could think of. It would be as if a modern author combined Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Khan into a single super-villain.

In this story the author describes at length how Israel cried to God, prayed, fasted, and asked the Samaritans up north to help seize the passes to slow down the invaders (4:4f). Despite this, everyone knew that their situation was hopeless, and that all these preparations would prove useless. They therefore decided to surrender in five days if God did not work a miracle for them in that time.

The account of their desperate preparations and the failing courage of the men were recounted by the author to provide a contrast with the sterner courage of the woman Judith. She is described as outwardly weak and powerless—a widow with no children—and therefore serves as an image for weak and powerless post-exilic Israel. Yet despite her outward weakness, she is pious, fasting with sackcloth all the days of her widowhood. "No one spoke ill of her, for she feared God with great devotion" (8:8). Like all heroines, of course she was beautiful and rich. She was in fact the embodiment of the little post-exilic community, for she shows that what matters is not outward power, but piety, and the courage to face down the foe. Significantly, her name "Judith" means "Jewess".

When Judith learns of the decision to surrender within five days she goes to the rulers of the people and reams them out for their lack of courage and trust in God. She tells them to wait by the city gate and she and her maidservant will save Israel by themselves.

Judith's plan was to deck herself out in all her finery and then go to the Assyrian general to seduce and assassinate him. She got dressed up, gave her maidservant a bottle of wine, a flask of oil, **Con't Pg 7**

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER Celebrations

ANNIVERSARIES	BIRTHDAYS	
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: ArchBishop Paul of Chicago 31- Justin & Jessica Issler 31- Fred & Christi Soski 31- Jimmy & Christine Billy <p style="text-align: center;">NAMESDAY</p> 11-30: His Grace Andrei of Cleveland	28- Darryl Whitham 30- Kristen Basala 1-Ileana Bruner 1- Thomas Mcdonald 1- Holly Mesavage 2- Kira Weisend 4- Chris Lariccia 4- Steven Calzone 5- Mat. Laryissa Bremer 6- Mat. Susan Northrup 6- Paul Demkosky Sr 8- Joe Rose	9- Pauline Meath 9- Angie Dardovsky 11- Tina Rindfleisch 11- Emmelyn Monschein 12- Rowan Issler 13- Gabe Mazurik 17- Tim Heffernan 23- Teri Cassell 23- Sean Williams 25- Darlene Mazurik 28- Carol Mazurik 30- Jeff Stokely 30- Christina Adzima

READERS

Sunday, Nov. 28	Tim
Sunday, Dec. 5	Tim
Sunday, Dec. 12	Ron
Sunday, Dec. 19	Tim
Saturday, Dec. 25	Ron
Sunday, Dec. 26	Tim

For Your Prayers

Diane Tryon
 109 Joslyn Street
 Arcadia, OH 44804

Marguerite Bird
 512 Ottawa Street
 Marblehead, OH 43440

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER Reposed

28- Anna Grabonsky (1972) 29-Alexander Mazur (2003) 29- His Eminence Archbishop David from Alaska Michael Guzy (1927) Mary Lou Hobson (2015) Mary Hritsko (1948)- Anna Holodnak (1951) John Danchisen 1-Helen Elchisco (1990) 3- Mary Hubicki (2013) 8- Bill Soltis (2014) 8-Mary (Marika) Lefas (2019) 10- Michael Basala (1991) 12- Anna Bretz (2002) 13- Joseph Mazurik (1986) 13- Archimandrite Seraphim Oblivantseff (1954) Former Pastor 15- Michael W. Belenky (1971) 18- Archbishop Job (2009) 19- Edward Malchisky (2001) 20- Julia Brosojah Millie (1953)	0- John Mazurik (2017) 20- William Pipenur (2003) 21- Mary Sennich (1985) 22- Antonima Vecsey (1972) 22-Susan La Valle (2019) 23- Steven Danchisen (1982) 23- Fr. David Sedor (2008) 24- Alexandra Turkul (1980) 24- John Bird No year Provided 26- Fr. Robert Sally (2002) 26- Julia Malchisky (1971) 28- Fr. John Kuchta (2019) 29- Alexandra Dotsenko (1980) 30- Bishop Boris (2000) 30- Rita Felenchak (1996) 30-Ed Pehanich, Sr (2019) 31- Jevgeny Cernonok (1980) 31- Robert LaVallee (2007) 31- Hermenegildo Guerrero Peter Onyock (1952) Anna Mazurik (1968)
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Biblical Women Con't from Pg 5

and a bag of other dainties, and then left the city to make her way to the besieging forces and the tent of Holofernes. Her cover story was that she knew that resistance was futile and so she was defecting to the enemy to save her life.

Through her charm, beauty, and flattery, she succeeds in winning over Holofernes. She offers to take him through the midst of Judea and set his throne in the midst of Jerusalem (11:19) so that he can conquer the people without any Assyrian blood being spilled. She stayed in the camp three days, leaving every night with their permission to return to the valley—ostensibly to pray and find out from God how the Israelites had made themselves vulnerable through sinning, but actually to bathe and wash away the ritual impurity of the Gentile camp. On the fourth day, after a great feast of wine, Holofernes got very drunk and then passed out.

Judith saw her opportunity. She beheaded him, stuffed his head into her food bag, and then left the camp as she had the previous nights. But this time she did not return to the camp from the valley, but returned to her city and roused them against the invader. By morning the Assyrians had discovered that their general was dead, and they all fled in panic. The Israelites pursued them, slaughtered them, and took a great quantity of spoil from them. The story ends with a great celebration in Jerusalem and Judith being honoured by all. She remained a widow despite many marriage offers and died at a ripe old age. The narrative ends with the words, “And no one ever again spread terror among the people of Israel in the days of Judith, or for a long time after her death”.

It would be an anachronistic mistake to judge the actions of Judith by our twenty-first century ethical standards, or to read the story through our modern lenses. All pre-modern readers of the story felt that deception on the battlefield was morally acceptable, and would not have had a problem with Judith's lies (nor, come to that, with those of Jael in Judges 4, nor with those sheltering Anne Frank from the Nazis). The focus was upon her courage and daring in the face of insurmountable odds. The lessons of the story are twofold.

First, the tale of Judith tells us that a single person

can make a difference. It is tempting to imagine that when things are terrible and we are faced with a hostile culture or a hostile enemy that there is nothing anyone can do. We are all of us but little people, and surely our voice would be drowned out by the multitude of other voices, our efforts proving ineffectual and going unnoticed! Judith tells us otherwise. She had everything against her: she was a woman in a man's world, a Jewess in a Gentile world, without husband or family, far from the levers of power. But her efforts proved decisive and she won the war singlehandedly, because God was with His people and with her.

Second, the tale of Judith tells us that we should never give up and never despair, but offer our little deeds to God for Him to use (or not use) as He wills. Since God is for us, the final victory is assured (Romans 8:31f), and it could be that He will use us to accomplish great things. That is not for us to know, and anyway it is not our business. Our business is to do what we can, trusting in God. The world is full of darkness, and the Enemy seems to win every battle, just as Holofernes brought the world to its knees before Nebuchadnezzar, the king of all the earth (Judith 11:1). So what? Now is the time for courage, for daring deeds, for defiance and a refusal to despair. In a little while the battle will be over and the time for the bestowing of rewards will come, and for feasting in Jerusalem. The Enemy is even now at the gates, and hearts are failing. Judith tells us to fight on.

Archbishop Paul's Travel Schedule: November 14- December 12

St. Nicholas Church, Kenosha, WI,
November 27th to 28th

Bishop's Council/Diocesan Council,
December 2nd to 3rd, Burr Ridge, IL

St. Nicholas Church, Mentor, OH,
December 4th to 5th

Ss. Peter & Paul, Lakewood, OH
December 10-12

Youth Witnessing to the Faith Video Series

At its annual meeting in October 2020, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America declared 2021 the “Year of the Youth,” with the intent of augmenting ministry to children, teens, and young adults across the country. You can find more information on the Year of the Youth Hub website.

As part of this celebration, all children and teens in grades K-12 are invited to submit short videos for the “Youth Witness to the Faith” video series which will focus on The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Videos should be 1-3-minutes in length, and answer one of the following questions based on age:

Younger Youth (Grades K-8): What is your favorite thing about Nativity?

Older Youth (Grades 9-12): What does “Christ is Born” mean to you?

Submissions will be accepted until January 7, 2022, and videos will be released throughout the remainder of Advent and Nativity season.

To learn more, watch this short video. Anyone who wishes to participate must fill out this form. After doing so, Danielle Geeza, OCA Representative on the Orthodox Youth Directors in North America committee, will reach out with specific instructions.

Monastic Martyr and Confessor Stephen the New Commemorated on November 28

The Monk Martyr and Confessor Stephen the New was born in 715 at Constantinople into a pious Christian family. His parents, having two daughters, prayed the Lord for a son. The mother of the new-born Stephen took him to the Blachernae church of the Most Holy Theotokos and dedicated him to God.

During the reign of the emperor Leo the Isaurian (716-741) there was a persecution against the holy icons and against those venerating them. With the support of the emperor, the adherents of the Iconoclast heresy seized control of the supreme positions

of authority in the Empire and in the Church. Persecuted by the powers of this world, Orthodoxy was preserved in monasteries far from the capital, in solitary cells, and in the brave and faithful hearts of its followers.

The Orthodox parents of Saint Stephen, grieved by the prevailing impiety, fled from Constantinople to Bithynia, and they gave over their sixteen-year-old son in obedience to the monk John, who labored in asceticism in a solitary place on the Mount of Saint Auxentius. Saint Stephen dwelt with the venerable monk John for more than fifteen years, devoting himself totally to this spirit-bearing Elder, and learning monastic activity from him. Here Stephen received the news that his father was dead, and his mother and sisters had been tonsured as nuns.

After a certain time his teacher John also died. With deep sorrow Saint Stephen buried his venerable body, and continued with monastic effort in his cave by himself. Soon monks began to come to the ascetic, desiring to learn from him the virtuous and salvific life, and a monastery was established, with Saint Stephen as the igumen. At forty-two years of age Stephen left the monastery he founded, and he went to another mountain, on whose summit he dwelt in deep seclusion in a solitary cell. But here also a community of monks soon gathered, seeking the spiritual guidance of Saint Stephen.

Leo the Isaurian was succeeded by Constantine Copronymos (741-775), a fiercer persecutor of the Orthodox, and an even more zealous iconoclast. The emperor convened an Iconoclast Council, attended by 358 bishops from the Eastern provinces.

However, except for Constantine, the Archbishop of Constantinople, illegitimately raised to the patriarchal throne by the power of Copronymos, not one of the other patriarchs participated in the wicked doings of this Council, thus making it less likely to style itself as “ecumenical.” This council of heretics, at the instigation of the emperor and the archbishop, described icons as idols, and pronounced an anathema on all who venerated icons in the Orthodox manner, and it described icon veneration as heresy.

Meanwhile, the monastery of Mount Auxentius and its igumen became known in the capital. They told the emperor about the ascetic **Con’t Next Pg**

Monastic Martyr con't from previous pg

life of the monks, about their Orthodox piety, about the igumen Stephen's gift of wonderworking, and of how Saint Stephen's fame had spread far beyond the region of the monastery, and that the name of its head was accorded universal respect and love. The saint's open encouragement of icon veneration and the implied rebuff to the persecutors of Orthodoxy within the monastery of Mount Auxentius especially angered the emperor. Archbishop Constantine realized that in the person of Saint Stephen he had a strong and implacable opponent of his iconoclastic intentions, and he plotted how he might draw him over to his side or else destroy him.

They tried to lure Saint Stephen into the Iconoclast camp, at first with flattery and bribery, then by threats, but in vain. Then they slandered the saint, accusing him of falling into sin with the nun Anna. But his guilt was not proven, since the nun courageously denied any guilt and died under torture and beatings. Finally, the emperor gave orders to lock up the saint in prison, and to destroy his monastery. Iconoclast bishops were sent to Saint Stephen in prison, trying to persuade him of the dogmatic correctness of the Iconoclast position. But the saint easily refuted all the arguments of the heretics and he remained true to Orthodoxy.

Then the emperor ordered that the saint be exiled on one of the islands in the Sea of Marmora. Saint Stephen settled into a cave, and there also his disciples soon gathered. After a certain while the saint left the brethren and took upon himself the exploit of living atop a pillar. News of the stylite Stephen, and the miracles worked by his prayers, spread throughout all the Empire and strengthened the faith and spirit of Orthodoxy in the people.

The emperor gave orders to transfer Saint Stephen to prison on the island of Pharos, and then to bring him to trial. At the trial, the saint refuted the arguments of the heretics sitting in judgment upon him. He explained the dogmatic essence of icon veneration, and he denounced the Iconoclasts because in blaspheming icons, they blasphemed Christ and the Mother of God. As proof, the saint pointed to a golden coin inscribed with the image of the emperor. He asked the judges what would happen to a man who threw the coin to the ground, and then trampled the emperor's

image under his feet. They replied that such a man would certainly be punished for dishonoring the image of the emperor. The saint said that an even greater punishment awaited anyone who would dishonor the image of the King of Heaven and His Saints, and with that he spat on the coin, threw it to the ground, and began to trample it underfoot.

The emperor gave orders to take the saint to prison, where already there were languishing 342 Elders, condemned for the veneration of icons. In this prison Saint Stephen spent eleven months, consoling the imprisoned. The prison became like a monastery, where the usual prayers and hymns were chanted according to the Typikon. The people came to the prison in crowds and asked Saint Stephen to pray for them.

When the emperor learned that the saint had organized a monastery in prison, where they prayed and venerated holy icons, he sent two of his own servants, twin-brothers, to beat the saint to death. When these brothers went to the prison and beheld the face of the monk shining with a divine light, they fell down on their knees before him, asking his forgiveness and prayers, then they told the emperor that his command had been carried out. But the emperor learned the truth and he resorted to yet another lie. Informing his soldiers that the saint was plotting to remove him from the throne, he sent them to the prison. The holy confessor himself came out to the furious soldiers, who seized him and dragged him through the streets of the city. They then threw the lacerated body of the martyr into a pit, where they were wont to bury criminals.

On the following morning a fiery cloud appeared over Mount Auxentius, and then a heavy darkness descended upon the capital, accompanied by hail, which killed



Ephesians 2:4-10 (Epistle)

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Luke 13:10-17 (Gospel)

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.



2 Corinthians 11:1-6 (Epistle) / Sunday Dec. 4

Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly – and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted – you may well put up with it! For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.

Luke 12:32-40 (Gospel) / Sunday Dec. 4

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

