



St. Vladimir Orthodox Church

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3rd Sunday of Great Lent: Veneration of the Cross / Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer April 4, 2021

Troparion – Tone 2

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead. And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out:// “O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!”

Troparion of the Cross – Tone 1

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance! Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Thy Cross,// preserve Thy habitation!

Kontakion – Tone 7

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden; it has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; for Thou, O my Savior, hast come and cried to those in hell:// “Enter again into Paradise!”

Prokeimenon – Tone 6

O Lord, save Thy people, / and bless Thine inheritance!

V. To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!

3rd Sunday of Great Lent: Veneration of the Cross

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ’s redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. “He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Mt.10:38). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both “the power of God and the wisdom of God” for those being saved (1 Cor.1:24).

Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer

Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, “the sweet-voiced nightingale of the Church,” was born in Sicily in 816 into a pious Christian family. His parents, Plotinos and Agatha, moved to the Peloponnesos to save themselves from barbarian invasions. When he was fifteen, Saint Joseph went to Thessalonica and entered the monastery of Latomos. He was distinguished by his piety, his love for work, and his meekness; and he gained the good will of all the brethren of the monastery. He was later ordained as a priest.

Saint Gregory the Dekapolite (November 20) visited the monastery and took notice of the young monk, taking him along to Constantinople, where they settled together near the church of the holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus. This was during the

reign of the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820), a time of fierce iconoclast persecution. Saints Gregory and Joseph fearlessly defended the veneration of holy icons. They preached in the city squares and visited in the homes of the Orthodox, encouraging them against the heretics. The Church of Constantinople was in a most grievous position. Not only the emperor, but also the patriarch were iconoclast heretics.

At that time the Roman bishops were in communion with the Eastern Church, and Pope Leo III, who was not under the dominion of the Byzantine Emperor, was able to render great help to the Orthodox. The Orthodox monks chose Saint Joseph as a steadfast and eloquent messenger to the Pope. Saint Gregory blessed him to journey to Rome and to report on the plight of the Church of Constantinople, the atrocities of the iconoclasts, and the dangers threatening Orthodoxy. During the journey, Saint Joseph was captured by Arab brigands who had been bribed by the iconoclasts. They took him to the island of Crete, where they handed him over to the iconoclasts, who locked him up in prison. Bravely enduring all the deprivations, he encouraged the other prisoners. By his prayers, a certain Orthodox bishop who had begun to waver was strengthened in spirit and courageously accepted martyrdom.

Saint Joseph spent six years in prison. On the night of the Nativity of Christ in 820 he was granted a vision of Saint Nicholas of Myra, who told him about the death of the iconoclast Leo the Armenian, and the end of the persecution. Saint Nicholas gave him a paper scroll and said, "Take this scroll and eat it." On the scroll was written: "Hasten, O Gracious One, and come to our aid if possible and as You will, for You are the Merciful One." The monk read the scroll, ate it and said, "How sweet are Thine oracles to my throat" (Ps 118/119:103). Saint Nicholas bade him to sing these words. After this the fetters fell off the saint, the doors of the prison opened, and he emerged from it. He was transported through the air and set down on a large road near Constantinople, leading into the city.

When he reached Constantinople, Saint Joseph found that Saint Gregory the Dekapolite was no longer among the living, leaving behind his disciple John (April 18), who soon died. Saint Joseph built a church dedicated to Saint Nicholas and transferred the relics of Saints Gregory and John there. A monastery was founded near the church. Saint Joseph received a portion of the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew from a certain virtuous man. He built a church in memory of the holy apostle. He loved and honored Saint Bartholomew, and he was distressed that there was no Canon glorifying the holy Apostle. He desired to adorn the Feast of Saint Bartholomew with hymns, but he did not dare to compose them himself.

For forty days Saint Joseph prayed with tears, preparing for the Feast of the holy apostle. On the eve of the Feast the Apostle Bartholomew appeared to him in the altar. He pressed the holy Gospel to Joseph's bosom, and blessed him to write church hymns with the words, "May the right hand of the Almighty God bless you, may your tongue pour forth waters of heavenly wisdom, may your heart be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and may your hymnody delight the entire world." After this miraculous appearance, Saint Joseph composed a Canon to the Apostle Bartholomew, and from that time he began to compose hymns and Canons in honor of the Mother of God, of the saints, and in honor of Saint Nicholas, who liberated him from prison.

During the revival of the iconoclast heresy under the emperor Theophilus (829-842), Saint Joseph suffered a second time from the heretics. He was exiled to Cherson [Chersonessus] for eleven years. The Orthodox veneration of holy icons was restored under the holy empress Theodora (February 11) in 842, and Saint Joseph was made keeper of sacred vessels at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Because of his bold denunciation of the brother of the empress, Bardas, for unlawful cohabitation, the saint was again sent into exile and returned only after Bardas died in 867. Patriarch Photius (February 6) restored him to his former position and appointed him Father-confessor for all the clergy of Constantinople.

Having reached old age, Saint Joseph fell ill. On Great and Holy Friday, the Lord informed him of his approaching demise in a dream. The saint made an inventory of the church articles in Hagia Sophia, which were under his official care, and he sent it to Patriarch Photius. For several days he prayed intensely, preparing for death. He prayed for peace for the Church, and the mercy of God for his soul. Having received the Holy Mysteries of Christ, Saint Joseph blessed all who came to him, and with joy he fell asleep in the Lord in 886 (some sources say in 883). The choirs of the angels and the saints, whom Saint Joseph had glorified in his hymnology, carried his soul to Heaven in triumph.

In 890, his biographer John the deacon of the Great Church wrote about the spirit and power of Saint Joseph's Canons: "When he began to write verses, then the hearing was taken with a wondrous pleasantness of sound, and the heart was struck by the power of the thought. Those who strive for a life of perfection find a respite here. Writers, having left off with their other versification, from this one treasure-trove, from the writings of Saint Joseph, began to scoop out his treasure for their own songs, or better to say, daily they scoop them out.

“And finally, all the people carry it over into their own language, so as to enlighten with song the darkness of night, or staving off sleep, to continue with the vigil until sunrise. If anyone were to peruse the life of a saint of the Church on any given day, they would see the worthiness of Saint Joseph’s hymns and acknowledge his glorious life. Actually, since the lives and deeds of almost every saint are adorned with praises, is not he worthy of immortal glory, who has worthily and exquisitely known how to glorify them? “Now let some saints glorify his meekness, and others his wisdom, and others his works, and all together glorify the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who so abundantly and immeasurably has bestowed his gifts on him.” Most of the Canons in the MENAION are Saint Joseph’s work. His name may be found in the Ninth Ode as an acrostic. He also composed many of the hymns in the PARAKLETIKE.

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” As He also says in another place: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”;

Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

Service Schedule for the week of April 4 – services will be streamed live

Today – MASKS NOT REQUIRED 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

Wednesday April 7 – MASKS REQUIRED 5:30 PM Confession, 6:30 PM Pre-Sanctified Liturgy followed by Confession

Friday April 9 – MASKS REQUIRED 8:30 AM Confession, 9:30 AM Pre-Sanctified Liturgy followed by Confession

Saturday April 10 – MASKS NOT REQUIRED 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy **Memorial Saturday**, 5:00 PM Vespers followed by Confession

Sunday April 11 – MASKS REQUIRED 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour

Weekly Giving

March 28 – 63 adults, 13 youth, \$2,960

Parish Announcements

Masks will be required at all Holy Day services. Masks may be worn during any service, even those indicating No Mask.

Upcoming service schedule (Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM):

Saturday April 3 – Masks required

Sunday April 4 – Masks not required

Saturday April 10 – Masks not required

Sunday April 11 – Masks required

Saturday April 17 – Masks required (*no Divine Liturgy, Vespers only*)

Sunday April 18 – Masks not required

Saturday April 24 – Masks not required

Sunday April 25 – Masks required

Monday April 26 through Monday May 3 – Masks required

Saturday May 8 – Masks not required

Sunday May 9 – Masks required

The church picnic grounds will be cleaned up on Saturday April 17 at 9:30 AM. The church will be cleaned for Pascha on Saturday April 24 after Divine Liturgy. If you can help with these projects, please contact Father Volodymyr.

Matthew Barrett will be Chrismated into the Orthodox faith at 9:30 AM next Sunday, April 11. Please welcome Matthew and his fiancé Nana into our parish!

Karina and Justin Kotelnicki are proud to announce the birth of their second daughter, Viviana Irina, born March 31. Congratulations!

Please remember to partake of the holy sacraments of Confession and Communion in preparation for Pascha. As a reminder, prior to partaking of Communion you must have received Confession. Additionally, you must fast (ages 8 and above) from noon on Wednesday (Pre-Sanctified Liturgy) or from midnight on Friday (Pre-Sanctified Liturgy), Saturday (Divine Liturgy), or Sunday (Divine Liturgy). If you need to schedule Confession on a Sunday prior to Divine Liturgy, please contact Father Volodymyr ahead of time.

Our parish has grown so much over the last few years – thank you Father Volodymyr! - so at our last FOCA Club meeting we thought it would be a good idea to share information about the mural in Daria Hall. Several years ago, the FOCA Club undertook a Daria Hall improvement and beautification fundraiser, which is the painting of the large mural on the wall facing the church. Our very talented parishioner and club member, Anne Cheslock, created the beautiful mural and is working on completing the painting. The mural was divided into 200 “blocks” (if you look closely at the bottom left area of the mural you may see block outlines) and the blocks were sold for \$200 each. The buyer could dedicate the block “In Memory Of” or “Donated By”; you can see all of the dedications by looking at the plaques on either side of the mural. The plaque at the bottom of the mural includes the names of all priests associated with St. Vladimir Church, either by assignment or for many years of serving and assisting in our church. There are still blocks for sale! If you are interested, please see Anne Cheslock or a member of the FOCA Club. Improvements made have included replacing the kitchen screen door, a new 8-burner Vulcan stove with convection ovens, replacement of the hood fan motor, new kitchen ceiling lights and electrical improvements, a large freezer in the coatroom, two S/S utility tables, repairing the dishwasher, and a warming oven. Future plans include energy-efficient entry doors to Daria Hall, new pots and pans, additional baking trays and/or whatever other need may arise. We thank everyone who supported this project in the past and look forward to everyone’s continued interest!

New Parish Directories are available at the candle desk. Two corrections –

Email for the Milosav family is mihaelam@verizon.net

New phone number for Carmine & Marianne Guagenti is 908-483-5473

If anyone finds any other mistakes please let Darice know!

In order to properly social distance, we ask that parishioners **fill the front pews as well as all pews in the church before congregating in the back. Individuals should attempt to sit in a pew (one at each end) with another individual in order to free up pews for families. If your family is in need of a pew, please ask the person at the candle desk for assistance to see if individuals can be moved to open up a pew.** The choir loft is also available for a family. We must be vigilant in trying to prevent the spread of germs, so please do not attend church services if you have a fever, sniffles, cough, cold, sore throat, loss of smell or taste, etc. If individuals who attended church services are diagnosed with Covid, the church may need to shut down for a period of time. Father Volodymyr live streams Saturday Vespers and Sunday Divine Liturgy every weekend, so if you are home you may still participate in the services on line. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation!

During the pandemic we are grateful that our parishioners have continued to contribute every week so the church can remain operational. Please continue to pray for everyone’s health and well-being!