

**St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance in conjunction with Orthodox Campus Fellowship,
University of Mt. Union Dewald Chapel**

Divine Liturgy: 9:00 am.

**Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (Bulgarian Diocese OCA)
Mission Phone # 330 768-7633**

**Mission Website "<http://www.stnikolaiorthodoxmission.com/>
October 5, 2014: 17th Sunday after Pentecost/Martyr Charitina of Amisus**



Tone 8 Troparion (Resurrection)

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One!
Thou didst accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!!!
O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Tone 4 Troparion (Martyr Charitina)

Thy lamb Charitina, calls out to Thee, O Jesus, in a loud voice:
"I love Thee, my Bridegroom, and in seeking Thee, I endure suffering.
In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in Thee,
and I died so that I might live with Thee.
Accept me as a pure sacrifice, for I have offered myself in love."//
Through her prayers save our souls, since Thou art merciful!

Tone 4 Troparion (St. Nikolai)

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you. Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

Tone 8 Kontakion (Resurrection)

By rising from the tomb, Thou hast raised the dead and resurrected Adam.
Eve exults in Thy Resurrection, and the world celebrates Thy rising from the dead, O greatly
Merciful One!

Tone 8 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)

Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!
v: In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

Tone 8 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

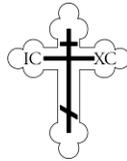
v: Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!

v: Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!

Gospel: Luke 6:31-36

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



The Martyr Charitina of Rome was orphaned in childhood and raised like a daughter by the pious Christian Claudius. The young woman was very pretty, very sensible, kind and fervent in faith. She imparted to other people her love for Christ, and she converted many to the way of salvation. During a time of persecution under the emperor Diocletian (284-305), St Charitina was subjected to horrible torments for her strong confession of the Lord Jesus Christ, and she died in the year 304.

Are you Greek? This is the question I get asked the most when I tell someone that I am an Orthodox Christian. At first, this question rankled, because I am not Greek. (I am, among other things, Lithuanian.) Mind you, I would have no problem being Greek. It's a wonderful, ancient culture with much to recommend it. But what rankled was the sense that being Orthodox means being Greek. It is a touchy subject for many Orthodox Christians in America, especially those who converted to the faith, because the implication of such a close identification of culture with faith implies that the faith is not really for people who aren't from that culture. And no doubt it can also be touchy for the many Orthodox Christians in America who are from traditionally Orthodox cultures who are not Greeks. There are actually quite a lot of them—in America, there are Orthodox churches representing the Albanian, Antiochian, Bulgarian, Carpatho-Russian, Georgian (the Caucasian republic, not the southern state), Romanian, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian traditions.

But I've come to see the question as mostly the fault of the Orthodox themselves, who have not quite figured out how to convey that Orthodoxy—being Christianity—is for everyone and doesn't require a particular cultural identification. We eventually will figure it out, I think. Roman Catholics in America for a long time were pretty ethnicity-bound, as well (everyone knew which was the Polish church and which the Irish), but now hardly anyone expects a Roman Catholic to be from Rome. And it's less than a century since the average American Lutheran church conducted services in German, Swedish, or Norwegian.

I also can't blame the asker of that question too much, because recent demographic studies have shown that some 60 percent of Orthodox in America belong to the Greek Archdiocese of America. So, statistically speaking, "Are you Greek?" is a pretty decent guess, even if I wish it were irrelevant. That the question is a viable one points to something that may be less obvious to those outside of Orthodoxy's circle, and that is that the Orthodox in America are in the process of figuring out just who we are. It's not a doctrinal issue—we do not, for instance, vote every few years on moral standards or doctrines. We are also free of the churning wars of worship innovation that seem to keep Evangelical blogdom busy and inspire laments among traditional Catholics. For better or for worse (depending on one's view), the Orthodox aren't going to be giving up on our dogmatic ecumenical councils or revising our Divine Liturgy. Neither new morality nor Novus Ordo (liturgical reform) for us.

But we do have an identity problem, nonetheless, namely, that Orthodoxy is divided into roughly a dozen "jurisdictions" in America. This administrative division is wholly against our canonical tradition,

which stipulates that for any given piece of real estate there should only be one bishop who has territorial authority—that's been our standard for about 1,700 years or so. But that's not how things work for the Orthodox in America, where we have overlapping territories. In the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania where I live, for instance, there are nine Orthodox parishes with six bishops governing them, none of whom live anywhere near here.

This is a problem not just because it's administratively complicated, but because it presents a pastoral mess. Parishioners can literally shop between different Orthodox churches in their area to find the one whose policies and traditions suit them best. Don't like the membership requirements to have your child baptized? Find another parish. Don't like how long pre-marital counseling takes? Find another parish..... Instead of having to learn to live as a single Orthodox Christian family with all the messiness—and possibility for growth—that that entails, we can just retreat into our respective comfort zones.

This problem also drains our resources. Instead of a single department of Christian education (we all have the same faith, after all), we have several. The same goes for legal departments, Internet ministries, clergy affairs, retirement, insurance—the list goes on. What's worst about all this, though, is that we present the appearance of fragmented, ethnically-defined sects rather than the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church we regard ourselves as being.

So how did we get into this mess? And is anything being done about it?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several waves of Orthodox immigration arrived nearly simultaneously in America, and they brought with them their own traditions, customs and clergy. And it only seemed natural for most of them to keep connections back home going strong, including through their churches.

Communism in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire affected traditionally Orthodox lands in profound ways, sending out immigrants across the world and dividing Orthodox people against each other. Orthodoxy in America became splintered not just along ethnic lines but along political lines, as well. And sometimes ethnic divisions even became microcosmic, with different factions sharing everything about their culture except the particular village of origin back home. At various points, there have been four Antiochian factions, two Greek, two Ukrainian, four Russian, two Serbian, two Carpatho-Russian, two Bulgarian, two Albanian and two Romanian.

Is it any wonder that we sometimes say, "I don't belong to an *organized* religion—I'm Orthodox"?

But there is hope. Many of the divisions have healed. The Greeks, Antiochians, Serbs, Ukrainians and Carpatho-Russians each now have only one canonical jurisdiction in America. And there are also pan-Orthodox agencies that do ministry on behalf of all the Orthodox in America—International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) and the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve (FOCUS), to name a few. And most of the college students who participate in Orthodox Christian Fellowships (OCF) on campus connect with each other more on the basis of common faith than common culture.

And something even bigger is happening.

Since 2010, all the active Orthodox bishops in America—around fifty of them—have been meeting annually. This annual meeting is called the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States of America. They're not a synod. They don't have actual decision-making authority. But they do have a task, a task that was given to them by their mother churches overseas—find a way to heal the anomaly that is life on the ground in the so-called "diaspora."

Ours is only one such assembly. The overlap problem is not unique to America. There are twelve other assemblies, ranging from Canada to Central and South America, from Scandinavia to Oceania. But America's is the biggest, and it may set the pattern for what could happen elsewhere.

The Assembly has fourteen committees to talk about everything from ecumenical relations to monasticism to youth ministry. And of course the "big" committee is the Committee for Canonical Regional Planning, whose job it is to figure out the nuts and bolts of how we get from where we are to where we ought to be.

Since the Assembly's introduction into Orthodox American life, it has been met with a range of reactions: hope, skepticism, ambivalence, and even outright cynicism. Some say it's all just a conspiracy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate—based in Istanbul, Turkey and the mother jurisdiction of the Greeks, Ukrainians, Carpatho-Russians and (some of) the Albanians in America. Some say this is

our best hope for unity yet. Some say this is just a stalling action so that the mother churches can keep getting donations from their rich American parishes. And some say nothing is actually happening at all, that the Assembly is just a lot of incense and mirrors.

Unity's been tried in the past, of course. But some these efforts were unilateral—such as when in 1970 the Russian church gave its American jurisdiction self-governance and renamed it “the Orthodox Church in America” and hoped the various jurisdictions would just join up. Others were multi-lateral, such as the “Federation” that was formed in the 1940s to try to get Orthodoxy recognized as a religion by the government so that its clergy wouldn't be drafted. And there was also SCOBA (the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America), which was the heads of the various jurisdictions getting together every so often from the 1960s until 2010. But all of these efforts lacked what the Assembly now has—official, unanimous sanction from the mother churches to which the various jurisdictions owe their allegiance. And there's also a deadline: An international Orthodox council is set to meet in 2016 to decide upon this and other questions, and the Assembly has to submit a plan for that council's consideration.

So now there is an imperative that was never there before. And even though parts of the Assembly might seem moribund to the casual observer, some of the committees are actually extremely active. It's also hard to imagine what kinds of knots have to be untied. How do you resolve, for instance, the difference between requiring confession before every reception of holy communion and seeing ongoing communion as being essentially parallel to regular confession? Do you even have to?

One thing that gives me a lot of hope is the difference between what I saw at the first Assembly meeting in 2010 in Manhattan (I escorted my bishop and helped him with his luggage) and what has been relayed to me about the one that met on September 17–19, 2014. In 2010, most of the bishops kept to themselves and their own jurisdictions, with little interaction between them. But in 2014, discussion was reportedly animated and engrossing, and even where there was disagreement, it was clear that the bishops had become invested enough in each other enough to engage.

And if they can become invested in knowing one another, then it is possible that a common life together might be formed. But this is not an easy process. Although this may be the first generation where all the bishops speak English, for around half of them, it's not their first language. Many of them were also not born here, and in that they are not really representative of their flocks. The Assembly is an international and multi-cultural gathering.

At least two proposals for unity were put forward at the recent Assembly meeting—one which directly addressed the territorial issues immediately and also a two-track proposal which initially unifies various ministries and departments to nurture a common life, while solving the territorial question more gradually. What's most interesting is that now the bishops are talking brass tacks, having a spirited discussion over concrete proposals for phased action to make a unity that is not just on paper but in reality.

Someone from outside the Orthodox Church may look at all this confusion and declare us hopeless. Certainly, this division makes it harder to see American Orthodox Christians as the local representatives of the second largest Christian communion in the world. Yet Orthodox doctrine, worship and spiritual life are remarkably unified *despite* all our administrative confusion, disunity and even rivalries—and given a choice between administrative confusion and confusion over doctrine and worship, I'll take the first any day. Yes, we have an untidy organization, but we know who we are when it comes to what really matters. Orthodox is Orthodox, no matter what other adjectives it might wear.

Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick is pastor of St. Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church of Emmaus, Pa.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS requested

For The Health and Salvation of:

Candi (friend of John and Lynette Baier)

Wendy (friend of Lana Baier)

Jim (Cousin of Fr. David)
George Borojevich (brother of Wally and Debby)
Ava Cooper (infant who is undergoing surgery for heart defects)
Mother Ana
Nanci Stradley (Pancreatic Cancer)
Dawn Shaheen
Sharon Budd (Teacher from Perry, injured when rock thrown from overpass)
Patricia Kosivich, friend of and helper to Mother Ana
Father Joe Cervo
Doreen Wishnok (friend of the Krupko's who is battling breast cancer)
George Ralich, (Dan's father who is in Cleveland Clinic following emergency surgery)
Katie (Granddaughter of Father Stevo Rocknage, St. Sava Church in McKeesport, who is battling a rare genetic disease)

For The Repose of the Souls of:

+Emily Waseman (with Parents and family)
+Zora Penovich (with Bob and family)
+Bertha (Friend of Jaga Radosevic)
+Proto Milan Zubenitsa (newly departed Kum of Father Dragan)
+Helen Mieloff (Friend of Jaga Radosevic)
+D-Na Cracium (Friend of Corbin and Georgie Washington)
+Mark Bolan

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19:

Due to Homecoming events at the University of Mount Union on October 19, we are unable to hold Divine Liturgy in the Dewald Chapel on that date. The Council has decided to accept the invitation of the Baiers to have Divine Liturgy at their Lake house on October 19. We will have a pot luck picnic following Divine Liturgy. Please see Cathy Krupko to sign up for a dish. We plan to roast a lamb that day! Please join us for Divine Liturgy and fellowship!

COFFEE HOUR:

Coffee Hour on Sunday, September 28 was provided the Krupko/Catania Families. Thank you!!!
Coffee Hour on Sunday, October 5 will be provided Dan Ralich.
Coffee Hour on Sunday, October 12 will be provided by Wally and Debbie Borojevich.
Please see Cathy or Tom Baier if you would like to help.

DONATIONS:

Please note, any special donations will be added directly to our building fund unless otherwise specified by the donor. God bless all who have generously donated to and support our mission.

BUILDING PROJECT:

We are finalizing plans to begin phase one construction of our mission building project. If you have not made a commitment and would like to, please discuss this with either Father Joe or Deacon James by email or phone and/or by making your check payable to St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance. May God Bless all donors for their support of our Mission and purpose in celebrating Orthodoxy.

SPECIAL COLLECTION:

We will be taking a special collection to send to Father Stevo Rocknage to assist financially with medical expenses for his granddaughter Katie, who is battling a rare genetic disease. Below are excerpts from an article about Katie. Please make your check payable to our mission and we will send one check.

“At the young age of two years old, Katie was diagnosed with an extremely rare disease that attacks her lymph nodes, Castleman’s Disease. When Katie was 18 months, a large mass was found in her arm pit under her right arm. Over the course of seven months she underwent a multitude of tests, scans, blood work, and biopsies to rule out everything from a cold to cancer. In October of 2013, her biopsy revealed the diagnosis of Castlemans. Since her diagnosis, she has undergone several procedures which included two surgeries in attempts to completely remove all of the infected lymph nodes in that area.

Castleman's Disease (CD) is very similar to lymphoma types of cancer and can lead to lymphoma later in life. This disease attacks the lymph nodes and other immune cell structures in the body. It is very rare in children and has never been seen in someone as young as Katie.

The fight continues to gain knowledge, expand research, and find the best way to continue giving Katie the best outcomes possible. She continues to be a fun-loving, strong, and courageous 2 year old against something that we have yet to begin to understand and she will not until she is much older.

All proceeds will go towards continuing Katies care as well towards Castleman's research.”

If you are interested in reading the full article, here is the link:

<http://www.crowdrise.com/katiesfightagainstcastlemandisease/fundraiser/milevarepasky>

CHOIR PRACTICES:

Choir Practice will be held at the Gresh Home on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm. Please join us.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS:

Debby Borojevich – 14th
Deacon James Gresh – 16th
Raymond Krajci – 18th
Tom Krupko - 27th
Amy Catania – 30th

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES:

John & Lynette Baier – 2nd
Father Joe & Linda Cervo – 9th
David & Kim Krajci – 22nd
Tom & Cathy Krupko – 23rd

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