

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 23 Issue 5

May 2023

April Council Highlights

- ✘ There was no Council meeting in April.
- ✘ Special thanks to Bill and Rosemarie Osolinsky for filling eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt, and to Hailee, Sophie and Heidi for helping to hide all 500 eggs!



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Venerating Icons—It’s So Much Other Than You Think

Fr. Stephen Freeman

In 1991, I sat in a room at Duke University with Geoffrey Wainwright, Stanely Hauerwas, and Susan O’Keefe. The purpose was the defense of my thesis, “The Icon as Theology.” I was an Episcopal priest, who was turning his doctoral work in Systematic Theology into an M.A. and heading back to parish life (a long story, that). The defense was friendly, thorough, with few surprises. The one major surprise, of course, came from Hauerwas. His question caught me off-guard in that it left behind academic questions and became intensely personal (that’s typical Hauerwas – there are no hiding places). His question was straight-forward: “Do you believe the veneration of icons to be necessary for salvation?”

The loaded part of the question was quite intentional on his part. Anglican priests take an oath at their ordination that “I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to contain all things necessary to salvation.” It had been drilled into me at a certain point in my life and my answer should have been a knee-jerk repetition of my vow. Instead, I was mute. What he had done was to bring

me to see something my soul had pushed into the background. What was interesting and academic was suddenly revealed to be a matter of existential authenticity. What did I believe? After a time of quiet, I stammered out my answer: “I know that my oath of ordination says that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain all things necessary to salvation. However, I believe that the veneration of icons is necessary to its fullness.”

It was the first time the thought had occurred to me. In truth, it would be some years before I fully understood what I had just said. My response was more a matter of instinct than understanding. I *knew* it was true. I was not entirely sure how. The upshot of that day came the next morning. I woke up with a clarity of soul. I knelt by my bed and prayed, “Oh God, make me Orthodox.” I meant two things by that: first, I wanted to become Orthodox; second, God was going to have to *make* me. That second point was simply my awareness of my own cowardice and the duplicity of my soul. It was not an act of bravery or noble conversion. It was an acquiescence in the face of what I now saw

to be true. At least half of me wished it weren’t so. The rest of me was willing to be dragged into the Kingdom of God. It took seven years for that prayer to be fulfilled. There were heel marks on the entire length of the path. Here are some mature reflections on the act of veneration: No spiritual activity permeates Orthodoxy as much as veneration. For the non-Orthodox, veneration is often mistaken for worship. We kiss icons; sing hymns to saints; cry out “Most Holy Theotokos, save us!” And all of this scandalizes the non-Orthodox who think we have fallen into some backwater of paganized Christianity. It is not unusual to hear Orthodox who more or less apologize for this activity and seek to minimize it. “We are only trying to give honor to the saints, etc.” What is lacking, all too often, is a vigorous explanation for the work of veneration and its central place in the Christian life. The normal mode of “seeing” in our daily world can be called “objective.” We see things as objects, *and nothing more*. Indeed, we see most people as objects unless we have reason to do otherwise. Sometimes we see people as objects in order not to see them as otherwise. But this

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Message From Our Rector

Christ is risen!
Indeed He is risen!

We are now out of the Great Fast and probably getting back to a more normal life, but we should not forget the things that we learned during the Fast and Holy week.

There were many different readings and teachings throughout the Fast, but especially important was Holy Thurs-



day which is the 1st Communion. So on Holy Thursday the celebration of the Lord's Supper takes place, but it is not just remembering the event, it is being there with Christ Himself, just as in every Divine Liturgy, so the sacrament of Holy Communion is us participating with Christ to partake of His Body and Blood . This is the central sacrament of the Christian Faith. Also on this day the reserve Sacraments for the sick that were made last year are consumed, and new sacraments for the sick are made for the coming year. So we can see that the entire mission of Christ is to call us to a holy life and to participate in His Body and Blood, He did not leave us to fend for ourselves but gave us His commandments to follow, and His Body and Blood to help us in our struggles. The whole reason for the creation of the world is for us to worship God, we are made in His own divine image and likeness, and we are called to be in communion with Him for eternity. But we have to properly be prepared to receive His Body and Blood, through Confession, prayer, and fasting. The one thing that

stands out about the institution of the Eucharist, or the last Supper is that of the 12 Disciples that were there, one left without giving thanks, and that disciple was Judas. Every Divine Liturgy the Post-Communion prayers are read, do we stay and give thanks to God for allowing us to participate in His Body and Blood, or do we just leave. In the parable of the 10 lepers, (Lk 17:11-19) Christ heals 10 men with leprosy but only 1 returns to give thanks, the others were too busy returning to their old way of life. We teach our children to say thank you when they receive a gift, the greatest gift that we receive is Christ's Body and Blood, should we not stay and give thanks for that?

SCHOOL SUPPLY DONATIONS NEEDED

The Parish has started it's annual 'Back-to-School' outreach program. We will again provide backpacks filled with necessary school supplies to the 48 most needy students at Whittier Elementary. School supply costs have increased dramatically this year, so we ask you to be even more generous than you always have been. Please give your pledges/donations to Mary Flynn at coffee hour, or place your donation in the collection basket marked 'school supplies'. Our donations really do help many students start their new school year with their best foot forward.

Mary Flynn

EASTER EGG HUNT



Images of Our Journey to Pascha

Lazarus Saturday



Palm Sunday



Bridegroom Matins



Holy Thursday



Holy Friday



Images of Our Journey to Pascha

Holy Saturday



Pascha



Venerating Icons—It's So Much Other Than You Think

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objective viewing is an extremely limited and limiting way of seeing anything. Veneration brings us to a different form of seeing.

It is carefully noted in the accounts of Christ's resurrection that he is unrecognized at first, and on more than one occasion. Mary Magdalen mistakes Him for the gardener. The disciples on the road to Emmaus talk with Him while they are walking but do not recognize Him until the moment at which He disappears. The disciples who are fishing do not recognize Him until after they have a miraculous catch of fish.

The silliest explanations of these failures to recognize are the ones that try to attribute it to grief. The stories clearly have something else in mind. This "something else" is particularly revealed in Christ's encounter with Mary Magdalen. She thinks He is the gardener and wants to know to where the body of Jesus has been moved. But suddenly this "gardener" calls her by name, "Mary." And she recognizes Him.

What has taken place is the change from an *objective* seeing to a *personal* seeing. It is only in the realm of personhood that we experience communion. We do not and cannot commune with "mere" objects. The Resurrection, among many things, represents the triumph of the personal over the objective. The Resurrected Christ cannot be seen in an objective manner, or, at least, He cannot be seen for who He is in such a manner. It would be more accurate, or helpful, to say that He is discerned, or perceived, rather than merely seen. Both "discerned" and "perceived" imply something more from the observer than simple seeing. (In truth, "seeing" should be more than "mere seeing." In Greek, the verb, "to know," is derived from a root meaning "to see.")

Veneration is far more than the acts of bowing, kissing, crossing oneself, offering incense or lighting candles. Those things become *veneration* when they are offered towards the *person* who is made present in

an icon. An icon that becomes an object ceases to be a true icon and becomes mere art, or worse, the object of a fetish. The Fathers taught that an "icon makes present that which it represents." The veneration of an icon is an encounter with a *person*.

It is worth noting that in one of the better treatments of the theology of icons – saints are generally painted "face-to-face" rather than in profile. Judas and demons are frequently seen depicted in profile, on the other hand. There are exceptions to this rule, some by the hands of very competent iconographers. Nonetheless, the general observation remains important. We encounter persons, as *person*, *face-to-face*. The impersonal, objective treatment of another person is an act of shaming and inherently hides our own face from them.

At some point, the Church's use of iconography became distorted and became the Church's use of *art*. Art is interesting and serves the end of beauty (when done well). But this development in the Church (primarily in the West, and occasionally in the East as well, as certain styles were copied) represents a turning away from the icon as encounter and the objectification of human beings and nature. It is among the many serious steps that created the notion of a secularized world.

Jesus, as an artistic subject, is equally accessible to all. His use in art renders Him as object. Indeed, Jesus is frequently used to "make a statement." But this is the anti-icon, the betrayal of the personal as made known to us in the Resurrection. Christ becomes historicized, just one object among many to be dissected and discussed.

Of course, Christians are free. We may decorate our lives with art as we choose so long as we don't confuse art with iconography, nor religious sentiment with spiritual encounter. But our engagement with art can easily overtake our experience of icons. Our culture knows how to "see" art, but icons remain opaque. Only the true act of veneration reveals what is made present in an icon.

I can recall my first experience with an icon. I had bought a print from St. Vladimir's and mounted it. I would have it in front of me during my prayer time. I would look and think, and look harder. I think I expected to "see" something or for there to be a trail of thoughts inspired by my looking. But it was simply empty. I was a young college-age Anglican at the time and had no idea how to find my way into the world of an icon.

Some decades later, I became Orthodox, having written a Master's thesis on the theology of icons and come to understand them. The summer following my conversion, I visited St. Vladimir's Seminary for my first time. I was surprised when I walked into the chapel to see that the icon of the Virgin on the iconostasis was the original of the small print I had begun my journey with.

And then I could see her. All of the journey seemed intensely personal, without accident or caprice. She had brought me home! This is something that veneration begins to reveal to us. We do not think about the saints or imagine them. In their icons and our veneration, we come to *know* them. We see them face-to-face and even learn to recognize them and their work and prayers in our daily lives. The world is not accident and caprice. It is deeply intentional and personal, and conspiring towards our salvation. The "objects" in our lives are nothing of the sort. It is only the dark and callous objectivity of the modern heart that has so disenchanting reality. We imagine ourselves the only sentient beings marooned on a small, blue planet in space. We wonder if there is "life" out there, as if there were anything else anywhere.

The world is icon and sacrament. But it cannot be known until we see it face-to-face. And you will not see anything face-to-face unless and until you venerate it. Veneration is a word that describes the proper attitude to the whole of creation. Listen to these sweet words from St. John of Damascus (7th century):

I honor all matter, and venerate it. Through

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Venerating Icons—It's So Much Other Than You Think

it, filled, as it were, with a divine power and grace, my salvation has come to me. Was the three-times happy and blessed wood of the Cross not matter? Was the sacred and holy mountain of Calvary not matter? What of the life-giving rock, the Holy Tomb, the source of our resurrection — was it not matter? Is the holy book of the Gospels not matter? Is the blessed table which gives us the Bread of Life not matter? Are the gold and silver, out of which crosses and altar-plate and chalices are made not matter? And before all these things, is not the body and blood of our Lord matter? Either stop venerating all these things, or submit to the tradition of the Church in the venerating of images, honoring God and his friends, and following in this the grace of the Holy Spirit. Do not despise matter, for it is not despicable. Nothing that God has made is. Only that which does not come from God is despicable — our own invention, the spontaneous decision to disregard the law of human nature, i.e., sin.

Reprinted from <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings/2019/11/18/venerating-icons-its-so-much-other-than-you-think/>*

LETTER FROM PROJECT MEXICO

Dear Fr. Mikel, Parishioners of St. Peter and Paul and Nicholas,

Thank you so much for your recent donation made through in support of the work of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage. Your generous gift of hope ensures that we are able to provide a loving home and future for our very special boys, build safe, secure and weather-proof homes for the neediest families, and host our Orthodox youth as they bear the burdens of others and spread the light of Christ. *You have helped us immensely!*

On behalf of the staff, volunteers, and boys of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage, thank you for your generosity. We pray that God richly blesses you for reaching out to the least of His children.

In Christ,

Donations Processing Team

MEN ONLY...NO WOMEN NEED READ!



I know there are some women who are reading this, now go on to the next article. Go on, really...mind how you go!

Good, now that they're gone: Men, Mothers Day is on Sunday, 14 May and I need your help? Gentlemen, please contact me to assist in making Coffee Hour special for Mother's, Grandmothers and Wife's (if I said "wives" it would seem like each of us have more than one and we don't want that). Each of you have a special dish that you can create that is a knockout. If you could, let me know what your dish is, make it and bring it on Mothers Day. This little bit of "love" will go a long way. If that doesn't work, we'll ply them with some wine.

Let me know what you'll be making and I'll organize it. Thanks in advance and um, one more thing...let's keep it our little secret and surprise them with some chef quality dishes.

Nicholas Bock

Around SS Peter & Paul

MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- May 3 Deacon John & Mastushka Julianna
- 6 Sandra and Robert Hoff
- 8 Marina Harrelson
- 12 Lydia Osolinsky
Natalya Keck
- 16 David Bieber
- 18 Darya Dolenko
- 19 Timofei Kadyrov
Hailee Behnen
- 23 Anastasia Melendrez
- 24 Amy Blischak
- 27 Marty Gala
Katrina and Joseph Delsante
- 30 Carol Yavornitzky
- 31 Katie Enoch

Many Years Mnogaya Leta!

CONGRATULATIONS AND MANY YEARS!

On Holy Saturday, our parish was blessed as we welcomed into the Church, through Baptism, Chrismation, and the Holy Eucharist, the Servant of God: Christopher.



Blaise. We rejoice with him, his sponsor, family,

and friends that the Lord has called him to live a life of discipleship as a member of Christ's Holy Orthodox Church. Many years!



PRAYER LIST

*"I was sick and you visited me."
Matt 25:36*

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

*Sandra Hoff
Barbara Harp
Marie Lobb
Elena Kerr
Ann Carroll
Pam Bolton
Elizabeth Michel
Walter Booriakin
Jamie Arango
Tammy Horton*

The suffering people of Ukraine

If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Father Mikel.

Bits and Pieces

THANK YOU to all who made our observance of Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha to be so spiritually rewarding, growth-giving, and joyous. May the Risen Lord grant His light and joy to all who work with such dedication to glorify the Most Holy Trinity through our worship and our community life.

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL OUTREACH It is time to begin this year's school supplies outreach program. Mary Flynn is taking over the lead on this, and she and David Bieber will be accepting donations at coffee hour. Please be generous toward this important community outreach. The program sponsor's 48 children, from Preschool to 8th grade. The goal is to collect \$2500.00 to accomplish this. Any money which is left over is used for the Christmas fund.

PARISH RECORDS UPDATE There will be forms on the front counter to update personal information. If you have a different address or email address or phone # please fill out the form and return it to David Bieber, Fr. Mikel, or the Church Office.

ADULT EDUCATION/BIBLE STUDY CLASS on Wednesday evenings at 6:00pm has restarted. Class will be every Wednesday this month except for May 24th, as that is the eve of Ascension, and there will be Vespers Service.

WELCOME all visitors to SS Peter and Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, enjoy some coffee and fellowship, and visit our bookstore.

SUMMER IS ALMOST HERE! Despite what the calendar says, summer temperatures are here. As in your own homes, ***please do not prop open doors to the outside*** as this practice just vents the cool air out and the hot air in. Also, please close the doors to all interior rooms when leaving.

FOCA wishes everyone born in May a Blessed and joyous birthday. Many years! Congratulations to all graduates who are celebrating their accomplishments and looking forward to new endeavors. We are proud of you! Please know you are in our thoughts and prayers as you start the next chapter of your life.

Thank you to all who helped to make pierogies at our Pierogi Workshop on April 28th and 29th.



Please join us on Sunday, May 21 for a family bowling outing. Flyers will be available

in the hall with the details. Hope you can join us.

MOTHER'S DAY Our Church School students have been busy working on gifts for all the women for Mother's Day. Hint: Think soothing and fragrant! Please join us as we honor our mother's and god-mother's and all the women who have played a role in the lives of our youth. Rumor has it that the men may also have a special surprise for coffee hour!



CHURCH BOOKSTORE Christ is Risen! While we have just celebrated Pascha, Pentecost is right around the corner (June 4th), and we have a limited supply of service books, so make sure to purchase yours soon. Additionally the classic handbook on confession "If We Confess Our Sins", is also back in stock. It's a thoughtful primer on preparing oneself for confession. Stop by and check out what else we have in stock, or just to say "hi!"

BLESSING OF THE PLASCHANITSA

Christ is Risen!

Indeed He is Risen!

On Holy Friday, 14 April, prior to the Vespers service, the new Plaschanitsa, also known as an Epitaphios or the Body of Christ—after being removed from the Cross, was blessed by Fr. Mikel. This

Plaschanitsa was purchased, with the blessing of, then, His Grace, Bishop Daniel prior to his departure to Chicago and the Midwest Diocese.

The previous Plaschanitsa is many decades old and shows some age-related issues. Bishop Daniel had the foresight to

order the Plaschanitsa to his specifications and had it shipped from Greece. This Plaschanitsa is beautifully designed and has the words in English.



We, the Bock family, are grateful for this gift to St. Peter and Paul. We especially want to "thank" His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel for his attention to this special item and we would like to "thank" everybody who contributed to the Rdr. Stephen Bock memorial fund. This money, your contributions, were donated to purchase this beautiful new Plaschanitsa.

God Bless,

Nicholas Bock

OUR YOUTH IN ACTION

Dylan and Delillah are busy with their volunteer work at Feed the Starving Children. The food products they were packing were going to the Ukraine. SS Peter and Paul also donated \$200 to Feed the Starving Children for the Ukraine.



May 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30 Holy Myrrh-bearing Women 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHURCH SCHOOL FOCA MEETING	1	2	3	4	5	6 St. Alexis Toth Confessor of Orthodoxy in N America 5:00pm Vespers
WELCOME We welcome all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, and enjoy some coffee and fellowship.						
7 Paralytic 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHURCH SCHOOL	8 Holy Apostle John the Theologian 6:00pm Vespers	9 Prophet Isaiah 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy 6:00pm Council Mtg	10 Midfeast Pentecost Apostle Simeon the Zealot 6:00pm Class/Bible Study	11 SS Cyril & Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs	12	13 5:00pm Vespers
14 Samaritan Woman 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHURCH SCHOOL MBAS MEETING 	15	16	17 6:00pm Class/Bible Study	18	19 MBAS Meeting Sunday, May 21 Following Divine Liturgy	20 5:00pm Vespers
21 Blind Man Equals-to-the-Apostles SS Constantine & Helen 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHURCH SCHOOL MBAS MEETING FOCA FAMILY BOWLING	22 Please join us! FOCA Family Bowling Sunday, May 21, 1023 Details to follow.	23	24 Leave of Pascha 6:00pm Vespers NO Class/Bible Study	25 ASCENSION OF OUR LORD 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	26	27 5:00pm Vespers
28 Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	29 MEMORIAL DAY 	30	31 6:00pm Class/Bible Study	1	2 Leave of Pentecot	3 Soul Saturday 5:00pm Vespers