



## ***St. John Chrysostom Church***

A Mission of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
[www.stjohnchrysostomchurch.org](http://www.stjohnchrysostomchurch.org)

Holding Services at  
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### **November SJCC News**

My Joy in the Lord,

We have now been one year on S. Golden Rd. We have seen many changes and some things have remained the same. Further down you will read of our Annual Assembly coming up, the Inquirer's class we have started and other events. But I want to remind everyone that in the midst of this world are many people more needy than us. Thank you for the support you gave to the Special Olympics, now please remember those who need food and simple comfort. We will again support the St. Philothea project, the transition project run by Rita and Howard Channell, and a food bank in the neighborhood. Details for the St. Philothea project are below, we will have information about the transition needs after Thanksgiving. For the Food Bank, we will have a box under the table as you walk in, to collect cans and other non-perishable food items. These will be delivered to the Food Bank before Christmas or as soon as the box is full.

Orthodoxy often talks about transfiguring our lives – this is done in many ways – but it also begins with transfiguring the society in which we live. One of the most simple ways that this can be done is by adding the Church's celebration to the political and governmental holidays that exist. We already have St. Basil's day / Circumcision for January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Nativity for Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, but we are very scattered about adding to Memorial day and have nothing for July 4<sup>th</sup> or Labor day or even Thanksgiving. I have tried, in every parish that I have been in to begin this transfiguration by adding a liturgy to Thanksgiving day and to use it to celebrate All Saints of America. I hope that you will be able to join me on Nov. 27, in the morning for a liturgy and begin the day of Thanks by giving thanks to God first.

With love, in Christ,  
Fr. Seraphim

#### **Annual Assembly**

Our Annual Assembly will be held after Liturgy on November 16. Notices have gone out to all our pledging members, but everyone is welcome. Besides reports we will be adopting a budget for next year and we have one member to elect to the Parish Council (for a two year term). PLEASE NOTE – Coffee hour on November 16 is a potluck!!!!

#### **Nativity Fast**

The Nativity Fast begins on November 15. November 14<sup>th</sup> is a fast free day. There is always a remission of fasting for Thanksgiving. Some traditions begin a strict fast on Nov. 15, others only on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until either Dec.20 or Dec.11, with a lesser Fast on the other days. Whichever is your tradition, please don't skip the Fast entirely.

## **Inquirer's Class**

We have started an Inquirer's class at 5:30 pm on Saturdays. Based on Bishop Basil's suggestion, we are using the three Professions of faith that every Bishop makes before his consecration as the basis for part of the class. The other part is based on what are called, the "Rainbow" books – the four volumes of "The Orthodox Faith", available through the Orthodox Christian Publications Center:

Orthodox Christian Publications Center [OCPC]  
4653 Memphis Villas S.  
Brooklyn, OH 44144  
Mr. Frank Tkacz, OCPC Manager

Phone: 1-216-351-1838  
Fax: 1-216-351-1842  
E-mail: [ocpc@oca.org](mailto:ocpc@oca.org)

Their web site is currently down unfortunately.

## **Pledge Drive**

We are continuing our Pledge Drive during November. In the next few weeks you will receive a pledge form at church. Please fill it out carefully. Both Time and Talent and your Financial support are important.

Pledges are just that – Pledges. They are neither installment contracts or unchangeable Promissory Notes. Nor are they license to give less than you can because you promised less.

The start of every pledge is Time and Talent. please look at the choices carefully, you will be asked to follow through on what you pledge – perhaps not all the time and perhaps not every item, but each person will be asked to donate their own personal efforts, not just money

The base of every financial pledge is a tithe. Note that this is from the Old Testament. The new Testament asks for all, every penny – allowing Christians to retain one third or one half for themselves because of the understanding that everything is God's to begin with, and what we receive, even though we think it might come from our employer, actually does come from God, who has put us into that job or that career.

With that said, let me add that if we arbitrarily try to tithe, out of a sense of responsibility or guilt, we will run into trouble. God asks us to be "cheerful" givers, "sacrificial" givers, "hidden" givers. Our giving needs to be enough for us to make changes to the normal way we live – give up certain things (even if only a Starbuck's coffee) for the sake of God, giving, instead, that money to Him.

Note that I say "giving that money to Him", not "to His Church". Our pledge and giving to the church should be only a part of what we give. The tithe or whatever percentage we settle on, should include all of our charitable and ecclesiastical giving. Now, in many parishes one starts with a tithe to the church and adds charitable giving on top of that. That's good and I won't complain, but we need to include all of our giving in planning what we shall give. Charity, too, needs to be in our personal budget.

In giving to the church, please start thinking of giving a percentage rather than a fixed amount. Odd numbers, with cents on the check do not bother our Treasurer, nor God, nor me. But it is only by starting to do percentages that we can be on the road to a tithe. If everyone tithed, we will have no financial worries – not ever. If I had my "druthers", everyone would tithe to the church and tithe to charity, at a minimum! But what I will ask of you is only what you are ready to do – a tithe if you are ready, a percentage if you are not.

But I repeat again, I would rather you underestimate your giving and exceed what you pledge rather than overestimate and give less – whether of time or talent or money.

**Icons needed:**

**In order to facilitate a pleasing visual experience, I would like to have all of the icons from either the same source or two or three compatible sources.** Please do not take upon yourselves to order one of these icons from your favorite bookstore or icon seller. We have a sign-up list in church and will order them at the same time. Each icon is roughly 8" x 10" and costs approximately \$40. We have donations for the icons for the 12 Great Feasts and Pascha and a few others, See the sign-up sheet in church for availability and existing donations.

**Sister Diocese Project**

The Diocese of Mid-America has undertaken a "Sister Diocese" project with the diocese of Hauran – one of the earliest diocese of the Christian Church. The diocese is currently completely impoverished as it has been war-torn for the last 60 years and under partial occupation for the last 40. The diocese comprises the south-western area of Syria, including the Golan Heights which it has not been permitted to minister in since 1967. Under Bishop Basil's initiative, our diocese has committed to helping fund priests, support church reconstruction projects, and help in any way that we can. Going back to New Testament times, the church in and around Jerusalem was considered special and that our support for their sufferings and needs must be of the highest priority. More information on how you can help is available at the church in both hard and soft (on CD) copies.

We will be starting collections for support of the children this month, there is a sign-up sheet in church. Please sign up either for \$12 per year or \$60 per year. All money will be forwarded to Subdeacon James Kallai for delivery to Metropolitan Sabba.

**St. Philothea Project**

We will be asking you to participate in the St. Philothea project for Romanian Orphans as we did last year. You can get an APO/FPO Flat Rate box from the Post Office for free. The details of what to put in to the box will be provided later. The Parish Council has also decided to send monetary support from our Charity budget to the project as well.

## **On Confession – Part 6 (Conclusion)**

### **St. John of Kronstadt and General Confession**

To understand the “General” or “Mass” Confession one must understand the method of “hearing” confessions in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. The person coming to confession would come up to the analogion and instead of being questioned by the priest or being given an opportunity to confess and describe one's sins, the priest would read a series of sins and the person would say “guilty” or remain silent as appropriate. At the end, the person “confessing” would kneel and the priest would read the prayers of reconciliation. When most people went to confession once a year or less, this was rarely onerous for the priest. However, St. John began to encourage regular communion for his flock. Now, when you go to Communion once a year or less, then one must go to Confession prior to receiving Communion (or ANY sacrament), that is what people were used to and understood – so they began coming regularly (read weekly) to confession. Kronstadt was NOT a small parish so, rather than reading the same prayers over and over and over again (he would sometimes have as many as 2000 waiting for Confession), St. John began to read the prayers aloud and have all the people gathered in the church respond aloud.<sup>12</sup> Then, each would come up to the priest to receive the prayers of reconciliation. This would also allow each individual the time to add something if they felt that the general reading had not covered.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this manner of doing a “Mass” confession was altered by some clergy, who were not comfortable with Confession and did not understand either its heritage or theology<sup>13</sup>, into a simple meditation on a spiritual or pious theme. Unfortunately this destroyed the most basic element of Confession – the confession itself. There could be repentance and compunction and there were the prayers of reconciliation but the preparation for the Judgement disappeared, it truly became the non-sensical Sacrament that these clergy saw it as. On the other hand, the way they practiced individual confession was not much different, they did not want confession, they wanted a “spiritual” experience.

### **Confidentiality**

Confession should be fearless, in the conviction that the priest will not disclose anything we say before the Judgement comes. This may seem contradictory with the concept of a public confession, but it is based more on the evasion of pride - “I was told...” “Fr. X told ME...” or gossip “Mrs. G said she's having problems with.....” rather than the “privacy” involved in confession.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> My father used a General confession in all of his parishes, going back to Germany and ROCOR, when there were too many to hear individually, usually during Great Lent and sometimes before the Holiday of the Nativity of our Lord. But the practice he used was to read a list of the sins aloud and have the people present acknowledge them silently. The list was not a copy of the list from the Book of Needs, but rather a modernized and abridged version (no references to seeking the advice of a witch or a going to a soothsayer.....) but in all other aspects it was identical to the procedure introduced by St. John.

I was privileged to witness a general confession done by one of St. John's disciples in Los Angeles. He used the identical text used by my father, BUT, he demanded that, as he read the list of sins, the people gathered would respond aloud - “Guilty”, “I have sinned” “Грешен!”.

A translation of the General Confession text as used by my father is appended at the end of this article.

<sup>13</sup> One rather prominent West Coast priest referred to Confession as “Medieval nonsense” to his parishioners.

<sup>14</sup> Particularly in America, this can bring up a conflict with civil authorities, if a priest is asked to provide testimony in a trial – whether civil or criminal. It should be noted that without then permission of the individual, the priest cannot divulge anything said in confession. In American law it is rather straightforward – since a Confession is to God and the priest is only a witness, what he hears can be considered hearsay since he is “overhearing” a communication to God. This has never been tested in the courts so this idea is, at best, a theory which may or may not be accepted. It is definitely not in accord with English or European legal principles which govern the confidentiality of Western confessions.

The principle of confidentiality in Orthodoxy goes way beyond anything in the West. NEITHER participant may disclose what has been said without the permission of the other. The only exception is if things are said in such a way that confidentiality is preserved – you can say “A Father Confessor once told me.....” as long as the time frame and the circumstances are vague. Or, a priest can say, “I once heard in confession a person say....” Now, in each case, the relevant individual may be present, but if it is done correctly, it will seem that what they said is a repetition of what someone else also said.

The theology of Confidentiality is simple – the person is confessing to God, not to the priest. Anything the priest may say about it, would be gossip. On the other hand, what the priest says is said to the individual, but it is “tailored” to the spiritual needs of that individual at that time. It is not general advice or the perfect answer to everyone's spiritual dilemmas. Spreading that advice without the context can be spiritually damaging (and usually is). So in both cases, discussing what occurred in confession not only can but will be spiritually damaging.

It is an unfortunate truth that there have been cases of clergy discussing confessions with parishioners without discretion or confidentiality. It is also true that, in many instances, the respective bishops either remained ignorant of these failings, or turned a blind eye to them. The canonical penalty for disclosure is suspension and spiritual discipline (including forbidding to hear confessions) and, if it persists, removal from the clergy. We are witnesses and will witness to the truth at the Judgment, if we do so before men, it is gossip and we are unworthy of the trust placed in us.

### **Conclusion**

For too many years, even centuries, the Sacrament of Confession has been ignored, set aside, minimized and mis-applied. As more and more people come to the Orthodox Church, it behooves us to return this Sacrament to the place and function where it belongs.

Confession should be regular – whether weekly, monthly or quarterly - depending on our spiritual development. Confession should be fervent. And, finally, confession should be loving – as our father in heaven is loving.

## The "General" Confession

- I, a sinful soul, confess to our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ all of my evil acts which I have done, said or thought from baptism even to this present day.
- I have not kept the vows of my baptism but have made myself unwanted before the face of God.
- I have sinned before the Lord by lack of faith and by doubts concerning the Faith and the Holy Church; by ungratefulness for all of God's great and unceasing gifts: His long-suffering and His providence for me, a sinner; by lack of love for the Lord, as well as fear, through not fulfilling the Holy Commandments of God and the canons and rules of the Church.
- I have not preserved a love for God and for my neighbor nor have I made enough efforts, because of laziness and carelessness, to learn the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Holy Fathers.
- I have sinned: by not praying in the morning and in the evening and in the course of the day; by not attending the services or by coming to church, but half-heartedly -- lazily and carelessly; by conversing during the services, not paying attention, letting my mind wander, and by departure from the church before the dismissal and blessing.
- I have sinned by judging members of the clergy
- I have sinned: by not respecting the Feasts, breaking the Fasts, and by immoderation in food and drink.
- I have sinned: by self-importance, disobedience, willfulness, self-righteousness, and the seeking of approval and praise.
- I have sinned: by unbelief, lack of faith, doubts, despair, despondency, abusive thoughts, blasphemy, and swearing.
- I have sinned: by pride, a high opinion of myself, narcissism, vanity, conceit, envy, love of praise, love of honors, and by putting on airs.
- I have sinned: by judging, malicious gossip, anger, remembering of offenses, hatred, and returning evil for evil; by slander, reproaches, lies, slyness, deception, and hypocrisy; by prejudices, arguments, stubbornness, and an unwillingness to give way to my neighbor; by gloating, spitefulness, taunting, insults, and mocking; by gossip, by speaking too much and by empty speech.
- I have sinned: by unnecessary and excessive laughter; by reliving and dwelling upon my previous sins; by arrogant behavior, insolence and lack of respect.
- I have sinned: by not keeping my physical and spiritual passions in check; by my enjoyment of impure thoughts, licentiousness, and unchasteness in thoughts, words and actions.
- I have sinned: by lack of endurance towards my illnesses and sorrows, a devotion to the comforts of life, and by being too attached to my parents, children, relatives, and friends.
- I have sinned: by hardening my heart, having a weak will and by not forcing myself to do good.
- I have sinned: by miserliness, a love of money, the acquisition of unnecessary things and an immoderate attachment to things.
- I have sinned: by self-justification, a disregard for the admonitions of my conscience and by failing to confess my sins through negligence and false pride.
- I have sinned many times by my confession: belittling, justifying, and keeping silent about sins.
- I have sinned against the Most Holy and Life Creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord by coming to holy Communion without the necessary preparation, prayer, and without humility or the fear of God.
- I have sinned in deed, word, and thought, knowingly and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly, thoughtfully and thoughtlessly, and it is impossible to enumerate all of my sins because of their multitude. But I truly repent of these and all others not mentioned by me because of forgetfulness and I ask that I be forgiven through the abundance of the Mercy of God.

## Schedule of Services and Events

### November

<b>13</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>6:30 pm</b>	<b>Liturgy</b>	<b>St. John Chrysostom</b>
15	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
		5:30 pm	Inquirer's Class	
16	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Followed by <b>Parish Annual Assembly</b>
19	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 12
21	Fri	6:30 pm	Liturgy	<b>Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple</b>
22	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
		5:30 pm	Inquirer's Class	
23	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
26	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 13
27	Thu	9:00 am	Thanksgiving Day Liturgy	
29	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
		5:30 pm	Inquirer's Class	
30	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	

### December

3	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	
6	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
		5:30 pm	Inquirer's Class	
7	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
10	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	
13	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
		5:30 pm	Inquirer's Class	
14	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday of the Forefathers
17	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	
19	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers	
		5:30 pm	Inquirer's Class	
20	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday of the Fathers
24	Wed	9:00 am	Royal Hours & Vespereal Liturgy	
		10:30pm	Vigil	
			Nativity Liturgy	
27	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers (No Inquirer's class)	
28	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	Sunday after the Nativity

**2008/2009 Tentative Schedule for the 12 Great Holy Days**

**November**

21 Fri 6:30 pm Liturgy **Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple**

**December**

24 Wed 8:00 am Royal Hours & Vespers Liturgy Nativity Eve  
10:00 pm Vigil  
Liturgy **Nativity of our Lord**

**2009**

**January**

6 Tue 6:30 pm Liturgy **Theophany of our Lord**  
and Blessing of Water

**February**

1 Sun After Coffee hour Vespers

2 Mon 6:30 pm Liturgy **Presentation of our Lord**

**March**

25 Wed 6:30 pm Vespers Liturgy **Annunciation to the Theotokos**

**August**

6 Fri 6:30 pm Liturgy **Transfiguration of Our Lord**

15 Sat 9:00 am Liturgy **Dormition of the Theotokos**

**September**

8 Tue 6:30 pm Liturgy **Nativity of the Theotokos**

13 Sun After Coffee hour Vespers

14 Mon 6:30 pm Liturgy **Elevation of the Cross**

**November**

21 Sat 9:00 am Liturgy **Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple**

**December**

24 Thu 8:00 am Royal Hours & Vespers Liturgy Nativity Eve  
10:00 pm Vigil  
Liturgy **Nativity of our Lord**