

# THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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## THE FEAST of the PROTECTION

IT MAY SURPRISE us that we would celebrate a feast based on a vision seen by a man, known as a fool-for-Christ, so very long ago, in a land so far away, in a city no longer Christian. Of course, there have been many visions of the Mother of God praying for the world. Our own St. Seraphim saw the Theotokos on three separate occasions. However, on this feast of October 1 we do not celebrate the vision of St Andrew-the-fool-for-Christ seeing the Virgin holding her veil over the City, we celebrate the fact that what he saw was something about the Church—the Body of Christ—something that we too experience when we pray together, or venerate a myrrh-streaming or miracle-working icon of the Theotokos, or simply pray before any of her icons: we experience the unbreakable and unending bond of the Lord’s Holy Body of the Church—both visible and invisible. This feast is also a confirmation that until the Coming of our Lord—and the resurrection and healing of all creation—all existence beyond the grave, of the righteous and the saints, is one untiring prayer, one ceaseless intercession and mediation in love. When we sing at the Funeral and *Panikhida* that “their souls shall dwell with the blessed” this is what we mean. We have become used to imagining that the Holy Theotokos, and all the saints, all the deceased, the entire spiritual world in general—are somewhere over there, far away in the heavens, somehow “upstairs” while we are “downstairs.” It is unusual and even difficult for us to believe and the Mother of God and all the saints are so close to us that they can pray together with us in our churches. Do not let go of the chance, dear brethren, to make use of the Theotokos’ nearness, and to pray to Her with childish simplicity, loyalty and sincere faith, calling out to Her: “Rejoice, O our Joy, protect us from all evil with Thy most precious veil.”

*The Vigil for the Protection will be celebrated on Wednesday, September 30 at 6:15 PM*

*The Divine Liturgy for the Feast will be celebrated on Thursday, October 1 at 9:30 AM*

*We are hoping His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin will be with us at Liturgy—serving without the hierarchical ceremonies*

*A brief Service of Thanksgiving and Supplication (Molieben) will follow the Liturgy.*



## WHAT’S HAPPENING AT CHURCH

Even now during this time of restrictions on gathering, when we are without our beloved Sunday Agape Meals and in person meetings, and are limited with our indoor attendance at Church Services, the life of the Parish goes on. In fact, it’s quite vibrant. Before we get to that, let’s first think about the activities in the life of the individual Christian—a member of the Body of Christ. Because of our love for Jesus Christ, we practice daily prayer (the marvelous [Prayer Book](#) has prayers of repentance, glorification of God, thanksgiving, intercession, prayers before and after meals and preparation for Communion). The mature Christian prays each morning and evening, in times of need and in times of thanksgiving. He or she also consciously and intentionally sets aside time to read the Scriptures according to whatever

plan that works best. Such a person stays in contact with the “brethren of this Holy Temple” in ways—very convenient ways—that those before us couldn’t have imagined. Email, text, the telephone. Let’s be diligent to stay in touch with each other. Goodness, we have our [Parish Photo Directory](#) to remind us who is who and this should lead one to pray, one for the other.

As for Parish activities, we have Church Services aplenty, at which anyone may attend (Liturgies on Sunday, Saints Days, various Feasts and “Catacomb Liturgies”—see below—as well as Vespers, Akathists and Matins). We have Church School on Sunday, both in-person and on-line; Wednesday evening spiritual talks on Zoom; Food Bank twice a month; Saturday Catechism

starting Oct. 3; Lessons for catechumens during Liturgy; work parties; gardening; the Women's Fellowship speaking together on Sundays; the Men's Group meeting around the fire pit; charitable outreach by members of our parish; Church cleaning; Friday confessions; etc.

These are all activities that arise from our personal involvement, participation, love and care for the parish. Worship of course is central, especially the Divine Liturgy and our participation in the Eucharist. This is our encounter with the Risen Lord, and our integration in His Divine Life—without the Eucharist the soul is parched, the struggle to acquire the Godly virtues founders, and there is no transfiguration of the Christian into the image of Christ. One cannot put the life in Christ on hold—one either goes forward (with all the falls and trips and repentance that goes with it) or faith atrophies.

Those of us that are here at church all the time, clergy and faithful alike, often lament that “church life isn't what it used to be.” We all know that already, and really, so what? Christians have survived and flourished in so many different situations throughout history—we can't limit church life to one or two things that we know and expect. Reading the lives of the saints, as well as that of

the new martyrs under the Turkish Yoke and those under Soviet oppression, we see that many responded either by apostasy or increased piety. Under the Soviets and Turks Christian education was forbidden. Going to church services was severely curtailed, Christians were oppressed in brutal and devious ways and martyrdom was not all that unusual. To “take up the Cross and follow Christ” meant that Christians had a much lower average life expectancy than non-believers. Fear of death was not a factor, since Christ is risen from dead. But, Church life continued in ways that it could. Our situation is not so bad. We can flourish too.

Let's thank God that amongst all the problems that face us in our County, State and Country (we don't hide our head in the sand about it) we have the grace of God given to us in the Divine Services, especially the Eucharist, as well as in all our other activities. Through these sanctified and Godly activities, let us prove our faith by good works to those in need, to those who hate us, to those who love us, to the poor, marginalized and down-trodden: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (*Matt 5*) —*Fr Lawrence*

## A VISITATION FROM GOD

**T**he sick are under God's special protection. They have God's special blessing. They have God's love. They are in His embrace, whereas someone who has health might not be. The sick person, the suffering person, the person with illness is in a privileged place, or a potentially privileged place, with respect to God. Those who have never known sickness, and those who have never known suffering, often have a lack of empathy; and often their heart is narrow and small and restricted, and not able to open up and embrace the suffering of others because they just don't know it.

The sick, on the other hand, are often the most loving and understanding and compassionate people that you will ever meet, and they are the ones who will have boldness before God in their prayers for others. So don't be afraid of your illness. Leave it to God. Do what the doctors tell you. When you take your medication, you receive Christ...Do what the doctors say, take your medications, go for your tests, but have no anxiety. Sometimes what's worse than being sick is being afraid of getting sick. Leave it to God. Whatever God gives you is best for you. God never gives you a Cross without first weighing and measuring it very carefully to make sure that the Cross will result in your spiritual growth. So don't think it's random, don't think it's chance, don't think it's too much. It's been very carefully weighed and very carefully measured, so that it will result in spiritual growth and spiritual benefit.

As much as the body wastes away, that much is our life in God renewed. God cannot be born within us without birth pangs. And the suffering that we experience, whether it's emotional suffering or physical suffering, these are the birth pangs, the travail, the suffering in our life that will enable God to be born and to grow within us. So we should feel pity for the person who has not tasted involuntary pain because that person is not likely to impose upon himself a sufficient amount of voluntary pain. So feel pity for the person who does not know involuntary pain because they're not going to inflict it on themselves. They're going to want to stay in their comfortable place, their comfort-zone, and they're going to resist all kinds of change. Sickness is a visitation from God, a divine visitation. Sickness humbles us, it teaches us, it reshapes us, it awakens us to reality, it enables us to see what is truly important and of value. It is not a punishment, but a divine visitation for our correction and education. —*Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra Monastery*

## EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **IN HONOR OF THE FEAST DAY** our Parish Council approved an offering of \$2000 from our 2017 Fire Relief Fund to help St. Gabriel Orthodox Church in Ashland minister to fire victims in their area. Fr. Andreas Blom, the rector at St. Gabriel, has been working closely for the last two weeks with the Latino community, providing clothes, food, housing and counseling for many hundreds of people in need. Glory to God.
- **DUPLEX HOUSE REPAIRS:** Deferred maintenance and upgrade work has been going on for a number of weeks at the Duplex, thanks to a \$15,000 anonymous gift specifically for the work. The Parish is very grateful for the gift.
- **PRAYERS AND FASTING FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION:** I invite you to join with me in praying the “Akathist to the African Saints” and the Prayer for Racial Reconciliation at 12 Noon, Saturday October 3, and to keep a fast from noon until dinner. If you cannot pray and fast at noon on that day, then choose another meal from which to fast, and another time to pray the Akathist. You can find the text of the Service here. During these days of social anxiety and conflict one of the things we can do as the Church is to fast and pray, asking for God’s help, protection and guidance for all especially now during these difficult days. —Fr Lawrence
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** is held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month—October 14 and 21. Volunteers: please arrive around 4 PM to help set up. This Food Bank is an important way in which our parish does outreach to the community.
- **THE PARISH WORK party** on Saturday, September 19 was a big success: gutters were cleaned, windows in St. Seraphim were washed, light fixtures were dusted and washed, gardening was done, trash was dumped, and so on and so forth. Our thanks to Matushka Ann for cleaning out and reorganizing the first bay of the storage building. We have a few other items left to do on the property: Check the play structure for stability; tighten bolts, make a new canopy; set out yellow jacket traps. No “Work Party” necessary—just come when you can to do the work.
- **“Family Bubble Liturgies”** now known as “Catacomb Liturgies” — I am offering to serve the Divine Liturgy, of course in the morning and usually at 9 AM, for any individual or family that is being especially careful about exposure during Covid 19, and has not felt comfortable coming to Church services. No, it is not at all traditional to have “private liturgies,” since the Divine Liturgy is about the gathering of Church community to BE the Church. However, these are challenging times, so it seems to me a good thing, using the principle of “economia” (allowance for a reason) if as many as possible can participate in the Divine Liturgy in this specific way. If you would like to have a Divine Liturgy scheduled, for you and your family, simply call me, and we will arrange it. How will it work? You come to church, just you and yours. I serve in the Altar without an altar assistant. There’s one singer. We close the doors (“The doors, the doors, in wisdom, let us attend”) and we have the Divine Service. —Fr. Lawrence
- **WEDNESDAY EVENING SPIRITUAL TALKS:** Father James Jorgenson will give a series of talks via Zoom on selected chapters of the Prophecy of Isaiah, beginning October 7, at 7 PM. Info to follow so we can all prepare.
- **CATECHISM, part 1** begins with sessions on Saturday, October 3, at 3:30 PM, at the Parish Hall, all are welcome:
  - 10/03: On the True God
  - 10/10: On the Human Being
  - 10/17: On Sin
  - 10/24: Jesus Christ the Son of God
  - 10/31: Jesus Christ the Savior of the world
  - 11/07: Repentance and Faith
  - 11/14: The Holy Spirit
  - 11/21: The Church and the Virgin Mary
- **WHEN TO COME TO CONFESSION:** By appointment, at whatever time and day suits you, simply call, email or text to set up a time.  
**SET TIMES:** Fridays from 11:30 AM–1 PM, no appointment necessary  
Saturday before, during and after Vespers  
Phone appointment

# PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## OCTOBER 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>September 27</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8:30 AM, Matins</li> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:45 AM, Church School</li> </ul>	28	29	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6:15 PM, Vigil for the Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos</li> </ul>	<b>OCTOBER 1</b> <i>Protection of the Holy Virgin Feast Day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy and Molioben</li> </ul>	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noon, Akathist to the African Saints (Fasting)</li> <li>• 3:30 PM, Catechesis</li> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>4 – Martyrs Domnina and Veronica</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8:30 AM, Matins</li> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:45 AM, Church School</li> </ul>	5	<b>6 – St. Innocent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> </ul>	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> </ul>	<b>9 – St. Tikhon of Moscow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>11 – Holy Fathers/7th Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8:30 AM, Matins</li> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:45 AM, Church School</li> </ul>	12	13	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank</li> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> </ul>	15	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3:30 PM, Catechesis</li> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>18 – Holy Apostle Luke</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8:30 AM, Matins</li> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:45 AM, Church School</li> </ul>	19	20	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> </ul>	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting</li> </ul>	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	<b>24 – Memorial Saturday</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 3:30 PM, Catechesis</li> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>
<b>25 – St. Tabitha</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8:30 AM, Matins</li> <li>• 10 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> <li>• 11:45 AM, Church School</li> <li>• 1:30 PM, Vespers for St. Demetrios</li> </ul>	<b>26 – St. Demetrios</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 AM, Divine Liturgy</li> </ul>	27	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank</li> <li>• 5 PM, Vespers</li> </ul>	29	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions</li> </ul>	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3:30 PM, Catechesis</li> <li>• 5 PM, Great Vespers</li> </ul>