



*Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,
 a young and, God willing, growing community of worshipers.*

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Please join us for prayer and fellowship.

Upcoming Services:
Saturday, Mar 30, Apr 6
 Great Vespers: 5pm

**The Third Sunday of Great Lent:
 Veneration of the Cross
 April 7**

Sunday, Mar 31, Apr 7
 Divine Liturgy: 10am
 Coffee and fellowship will
 follow the service



*The above services are at
 St. Olympia Church
 34 North Main Street
 Norwood, NY, 13668*

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***O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your inheritance.
 Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians, over their adversaries.
 And by virtue of Your Cross preserve Your habitation!***

Troparion of the Cross

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

Kontakion of the Sunday of the Cross

Through the Cross... Joy! Fr. Steven Kostoff

“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comprehension” [2 Corinthians 4:17].

The Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross extends throughout the entire week. Thus, we continue to “bow down” and venerate the Cross whenever we gather together for any services throughout this week up to, but not including, Great Vespers on Saturday evening. The Cross is the goal of our Lenten journey—as is the empty tomb and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross and Resurrection are the two components of the one integral paschal mystery. This is not only the crown of our liturgical year, but the very substance of our Orthodox Christian Faith. A Cross without the Resurrection would have buried Jesus in the oblivion of historical time. But according to the design of God, there could be no Resurrection without the scandal of the Cross. No death—“**even the death on a Cross**” [Philippians 2:8]—no Resurrection. It would be very difficult to find a scriptural text that makes explicit mention of the Cross without a balancing text that connects the Cross to the Resurrection, or to an understanding of the Cross that reveals its fulfillment in the Resurrection. In the divine *oikonomia*, suffering leads to glorification. As Saint Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised Him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” [Acts 2:23-24]. In a compact formulation, the Apostle Paul writes of our Lord Jesus Christ, “**Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification**” [Romans 4:25].

Further, in what amounts to be something of a creedal formula of the early Church, the Apostle Paul proclaims the Gospel that endures to this day when he writes,

“**for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve**” [1 Corinthians 15:3-5].

We find this organic connection between the Cross and glorification already revealed in the Lord’s “passion prophecies” as recorded in the Gospels. At the conclusion of the Gospel reading prescribed for the upcoming Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, we will hear Christ proclaim, “**the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He is killed, after three days He will rise**” [Mark 9:31]. As difficult as it may be to look beyond the suffering and anguish of the Cross—and of our own personal crosses—the promise of God is that this is the true way to glorification:

“**Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God**” [Hebrews 12:1-2].

Our liturgical life of prayer and practice is fully consistent with the scriptural witness of uniting the Cross and Resurrection in an endless proclamation of how God has transformed suffering into joy: “For through the Cross, joy has come into the world!” The purpose of the hymnography and rites of the Church is never to cover up the scandal and shame of the Cross endured “for our sake” by the “Lord of glory.” But the mystery of Christ is the disclosure that what is sown in dishonor will be raised in glory [1 Corinthians 15:43]. In the holistic life of the Church that appreciates and recognizes the human person as a psychosomatic unity of “soul and body,” we express this belief by literally—that is, bodily—prostrating ourselves before the life-giving Cross as we sing the powerful hymn, “Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify.”

We worship the One Who was nailed to the Cross and we simultaneously glorify His resurrection. This hymn perfectly captures the Good News in a world often overwhelmed by bad news. And in a world paralyzed by uncertainty and “relativism,” what a blessing and privilege to bow down before the Lord Jesus Christ, “**the same yesterday and today and forever**” [Hebrews 13:8], crucified and raised for our salvation!

Third 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” (Matthew 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 Corinthians 1:24).



Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer April 4

Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, “the sweet-voiced nightingale of the Church,” was born in Sicily around the turn of the 9th century 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.

Come, let us acclaim the divinely inspired Joseph, the twelve-stringed instrument of the Word, the harmonious harp of grace and lute of heavenly virtues, who lauded and praised the assembly of the saints. And now he is glorified with them.

Troparion

Your divinely inspired tongue was the pen of a ready scribe, according to the words of David. You sang of the contests of the saints and described the grace they received through their labors. Therefore, we cry to you: "Rejoice, O blessed harp of holy melody!"

Kontakion

PARISH WISH LIST

A wish list to help our parish grow!

RECURRING needs:

Paper Plates (small and large), **Paper Bowls**, **Hot Cups**
Napkins
Plastic Utensils, especially **Forks**
Paper Towels
Toilet Paper

Holy Mother Olympia, pray to God for us!

UPCOMING DIOCESAN & PARISH EVENTS

Presanctified Liturgy with Archbishop Michael

Wednesday, April 17, 6 PM

Presbyter's Council Meeting

Thursday, April 25, 11 AM

Zoom



*To repent is not to look downwards at my own shortcomings,
but upwards at God's love;
it is not to look backwards with self-reproach,
but forward with trustfulness;
it is to see not what I have failed to be,
but what by the grace of Christ I might yet become.*

St. John Climacus