

STS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH



GLORY BE TO
JESUS CHRIST!
GLORY BE
FOREVER!

SLAVA ISUSU
CHRISTU!
SLAVA NA VIKI!



SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

NEW CALENDAR: **MARCH 5, 2017**
OLD CALENDAR: **FEBRUARY 20, 2017**

- ❖ We welcome all of our guests who are with us today! Please come and worship with us often. It is a great joy to dwell together in common faith worshipping our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!
- ❖ There is a large amount of retreats being offered in New Jersey all posted on the bulletin board downstairs.
- ❖ Nut Roll pre-orders are being taken by Elizabeth Lion #973.541.0008. Walnut, Poppy Seed, and Prune are \$13 per roll. Pickup date is Saturday April 8 10am-1pm.
- ❖ There are sign-ups for Lenten Soup sale, You only need to make 6 quarts for this one! There is also a signup for our Lenten Mission. Sign-up today! The first soup sale is this Friday between 4-6pm.
- ❖ We are looking for an architect that can sign off on the plans for our hall changes. The Boro is requiring that our plans have a 'P.E.' number on them. We also need a contractor as well.
- ❖ Camp Nazareth Registration is now open. Register your kids to go today!

Epistle Reading Schedule

3/12 Alexa Fitzgerald
3/19 Joe George
3/26 Lance Michealsen

Sunday Social Hour

3/12 Thank You Luncheon
3/19 Judy Rugg
3/26 Ann Smith

"If someone has repented once of a sin, and again does the same sin, this is a sign that he has not been cleansed of the causes of the sin, wherefrom, as from a root, the shoots spring forth."

— St. Basil the Great

Sunday School Schedule:

3/12 : Toddler w/ Christyn, K-2 w/ Linda, 3-5 w/ Mary Beth
Teens w/ Pani Amy
3/19 : Toddler w/ Leigh, K-2 & 3-5 w/ Pani Amy
Teens w/ Lance

- ❖ Fr. David Cochran, the director of the Diocesan Altarboy Retreat Program has asked that inform you that the 2017 Diocesan Altarboy Retreat will take place from June 25-28, 2017. The Young Women's Encounter will take place the same days.
- ❖ The first nut roll baking session will be Tuesday, March 7 at 9:30am. Please come and help out our fundraising efforts!
- ❖ ACRY Dues are \$15. Please see Barbara Fitzgerald.
- ❖ We are looking for a volunteer to sell butter braids as a fundraiser to parishioners and perhaps close contacts as well. Proceeds will go towards the deanery Camp Bus!
- ❖ There is a meeting of Officers on Monday, March 6 at 7:30pm.
- ❖ The ACRY Youth are collecting change over the Lenten Fast to donate towards St. John the Compassionate Mission. This is a great way to give alms, which we are called to do during the fast.

February:	
Income	\$
Disbursements	\$

American Carpatho-Russian Diocese of USA
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

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WEEKLY SERVICE SCHEDULE

- ❖ Sunday, March 5, Sunday of Orthodoxy: Matins 8:15am; Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am
- ❖ Sunday, March 5, Sunday of Orthodox: Vespers in 76 Whitehead Ave, South River, NJ 08882; Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church @5pm
- ❖ Monday, March 6, Akathist to the Holy Cross @ 9 am
- ❖ Tuesday, March 7, Lenten Matins @ 8am
- ❖ Wednesday, March 8, Presanctified Liturgy @ 6:30pm at Holy Trinity in Randolph
- ❖ Thursday, March 9, Moleben to St. Nektarios @ 9am
- ❖ Friday, March 10, Akathist to the Virgin Mary @ 7pm
- ❖ Saturday, March 11, Soul Saturday Divine Liturgy @ 9am;
- ❖ Saturday, March 11, Canon of Repentance @ 6pm at 668 S. Broad St, Elizabeth, NJ
- ❖ Sunday, March 12, St. Gregory Palamas: Matins @ 8:15am; Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am

Please Note: If you need to speak with a priest during the week please call Fr. William at 862.432.9174. Rectory # 973.627.1462. If Fr. William is unavailable and it is an emergency please call Fr. John Theodosion his number is 973.584.0388.

Prayer List:

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” — James 5:16 NKJV

For those who need prayers:

Desiree Stanchina, Peter Lyasko, Esther Horchor, Ann Willis, Marilyn/Tony George, Margot, Adam, Debbie, Rosalie Nemerovich, Michael Carmona, Klava Trofimova, Inna Kudryavtseva, Joan King, Eleni Matangos, Evangelia Portelos, Jeannette Webb, Elizabeth T., Mary Elizabeth, George Matangos, Gregory Griff, Lillian, Sandi Mahtook, Sandi Reisbeck, Anna Hollis, Catherine Bowan, William O’Keefe, Ann Smith, Sonia Geiger, Tatyana and Zoe Ellis, Dolores Falk, Joann Talmadge, Estella Vreeland, Barbara Kmech, Roy Michealsen, Florine Nandrajog

Stewardship around the Parish

- Paint trim on Shed
- Add a water spigot to the far side of hall
- Repaint Narthex
- Paint trim in-between altar wall and ceiling red in altar boy and priest sacristy
- Build bookshelves in priest sacristy
- repair/touch-up tomb

READINGS AND SAINTS FOR THE COMING WEEK:

Sun: Sunday of Orthodoxy; Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2; John 1:43-51

Mon: Venerable Timothy of Symbola; Isaiah 4:2-6; Genesis 3:21-4:7; Proverbs 3:34-4:22

Tues: Uncovering of relics of martyrs in Eugenius; Isaiah 5:7-16; Genesis 4:8-15; Proverbs 5:1-15

Wed: Hieromartyr Polycarp; Isaiah 5:16-25; Genesis 4:16-26; Proverbs 5:15-6:3

Thurs: 1 & 2 findings of head of St. John the Baptist; Isaiah 6:1-12; Genesis 5:1-24; Proverbs 6:3-20

Fri: Saint Tarasius of Constantinople; Isaiah 7:1-14; Genesis 5:32-6:8; Proverbs 6:20-7:1

Sat: Venerable Prophyrius of Gaza; Hebrews 3:12-16; Mark 1:35-44

St. John Chrysostom, On the Respect Due to the Church of God and to the Sacred Mysteries

“How absurd and foolish is it that should a harper, or a dancer, or any one of these kind of people, invite us to his house, we would go there with all haste, and thank him for having invited us, and spend almost half the day there; paying attention only to him. But when God is speaking to us through His holy Prophets and Apostles we yawn, and we scratch, and we turn this way and that! And at the circus, without a roof above them to keep off the rain, the crowds stand there crazy, the rain pouring down on them, and the wind blowing it in their faces, and they think nothing of the cold or the rain or the distance, and nothing will keep them from going there, and nothing will keep them at home! But to go to the Church, a shower, or the mud on the road, is a serious obstacle!”

SALVATION HISTORY: PASSOVER; BY FR THOMAS HOPKO

As the people pass through the wilderness of life in this world, they are fed by Jesus, the true Bread of Life, the true “bread from heaven.”

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world.”

“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread, which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this meal, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

“Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6.25–59).

Jesus is not only the true “bread from heaven,” He is also the true “living water.” He is the One Whom, if men drink of Him, they will never thirst again.

“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” (Jn 7.37)

“... whoever drinks of the Water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4.14).

Saint Paul, speaking of the exodus and the rock, which Moses struck, from which the spring of water flowed, says plainly that this refers to Christ.

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1 Cor 10.1–4)

Thus it is that Jesus Christ fulfilled the passover and exodus in the events of His life. This fulfillment came to its climax at the time of His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus was killed at the feast of the passover to show that the old passover has been completed and the new passover has begun. When the paschal lamb was being killed in the temple, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was being crucified on the cross outside the city.

When the great day of the passover, which that year was the Sabbath, was being observed as the rest from work, Jesus lay dead, resting from all His work, in the tomb. When the “day after Sabbath” dawned, the first day of the week, the day of God’s original creation, Jesus arose from the dead.

All of this took place that the New Passover and New Exodus could be effected, not from Egypt into Canaan, but from death to life, from wickedness to righteousness, from darkness to light, from earth to heaven, from the tyranny of the devil to the glorious freedom of the Kingdom of God. The death and resurrection of Christ is the true passover-exodus of the People of God. Those who are marked with Christ’s blood are spared from the visitation of death.

Jesus inaugurated the celebration of the new passover at the last supper with His disciples, which was the paschal meal. He told them that no longer would they keep the passover feast in remembrance of the old exodus. They now would keep the paschal celebration in remembrance of Him.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, “This is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes (1 Cor 2.23–26; see also Mat 26.26–29, Mk 14.22–25, Lk 22.14–19).

In the same letter, Saint Paul also says:

... Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor 5.7–8).

Of great importance also in the new passover of Christ is the new gift of God’s law, the law not written on tablets of stone, but on human hearts by the very Holy Spirit of God (See 2 Cor 3, Jer 31.31–34, Ezek 36.26–27, Joel 2.28–29).

The giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai is fulfilled in the time of the Messiah in the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples of Christ in the upper room on the feast of Pentecost. In the Old Testament, this was the festival of the reception of the law, fifty days after the passover (Acts 2). Thus, once again, in the time of the Messiah, the old event is completed in the new and final one: the exterior law of Moses is completed by the interior law of Christ, the “perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas 1.25, 2.12), the “law of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 8.2).

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God had done (in Christ) what the law (of Moses), weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin ... in order that the just requirements of the law (of Moses) might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Rom 8.2–4, See also 2 Cor 3, Gal 3–5).

Thus the apostle John writes: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1.17).

Within the total fulfillment and perfection of the passover-exodus of the Old Testament in the time of the Messiah, it must be noted as well that the crossing of the Jordan into the promised land corresponds to baptism in Christ into the Kingdom of God. Also worthy of note is the symbolic fact that the one who actually crossed the Jordan and brought the people into the “land flowing with milk and honey,” was not Moses but Joshua, whose name in Greek is Jesus, thus prefiguring the One Who was to come of the same name, which means Savior, the One Who began His messianic mission of bringing the Kingdom of God by His baptism in the Jordan River.

Thus, every aspect of the old passover-exodus is completed in Christ, perfectly, totally and forever. All of this is renewed and relived in the Church of Christ each year on Easter and Pentecost,

and on each Sunday, the Day of the Lord. Whenever the Church gathers, it celebrates the perfect passover of Christ the Lamb of God, Who is also the divine I AM Who exists eternally with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who was slain for the life of the world.

ON STEWARDSHIP AND THE ORTHODOX LIFE: PART 83: THE GIFT OF GENEROSITY:

“Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!” (Psalm 37:7 RSV)

This Psalm ponders how well the wicked appear to fare in this life. The Psalmist finds this not only unjust but distasteful. The situation is often pondered even today, more than two thousand years later. We today often compare our own situations in life with others who seem to thrive due to “ill-gotten gains.” We work and play by the rules, yet never seem to get ahead. The Psalm, however, is clear: *“Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil”* (Psalm 37:7 RSV).

There has always existed those in the churches some form of what has been called the “gospel of prosperity.” This corrupt understanding of the Holy Gospels urges believers to give to God so that God will give back to them. Ben Franklin wrote that God helps those who help themselves. Those who preach the gospel of prosperity also use that Franklin slogan as if it were from the Bible itself.

This Psalm provides sage advice for those who are fretting over the gospel of prosperity. It advises Christian stewards: *“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security”* (Psalm 37:3 RSV). This is a total reversal of that prosperity Gospel. God is not good to us because we first give to Him. Rather, God frees us from our insecurities about earthly things so that we may then give to and for others. We do this by offering to God our gifts and talents.

And then what happens? The Psalm tells us clearly: *“...wait patiently for him.”* Wait. Be patient. Wait on Him! Oh how hard this is in our world today. To wait. And wait. And wait. We want what we want, and we want it now! It is God who prepares life for us. It is not something that, as the TV commercials proclaim, we “grab by the horns.”

God offers us prosperity as a gracious gift. There are no strings attached. There is no way to “buy” it by our stewardship. There is no way to get by giving. God in His graciousness supplies our needs, not our wants. James Hudson Taylor, a missionary to China in the nineteenth century said, “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack for God’s supply.”

The great stewardship gift given by God is the gift of generosity.

OUR EXAMPLES OF HOLINESS

Sainted Leo was bishop of the city of Catania, in Sicily. He was famed for his benevolence and charity, and his Christian love for the poor and the vagrant. The Lord granted him the gifts of healing of various illnesses, and also wonderworking. During the time when Saint Leo was bishop in Catania, there lived a certain sorcerer magician named Heliodorus, who impressed people with his fake miracles. This fellow was originally a Christian, but then he secretly rejected Christ and became a servant of the devil. Saint Leo often urged Heliodorus to be done with his wicked deeds and return to God, but in vain. One time Heliodorus got so impudent that, having entered into the church where the bishop was celebrating Divine-services, he by his sorcery sowed confusion and temptation there, trying to create a disturbance. Seeing the people beset by devils under the sorcerous spell, Saint Leo realised, that the time of gentle persuasions had passed. He calmly emerged from the altar and, grabbing the magician by the neck with his omophorion, he led him out of the church into the city-square. There he forced Heliodorus to own up to all his wicked deeds; he commanded a bon-fire be built, and without flinching he jumped together with the sorcerer into the fire, while having on his omophorion. Thus they stood in the fire, until Heliodorus got burnt, while by the power of God Saint Leo remained unharmed. This miracle while still during his lifetime brought Saint Leo reknown. When he died, at his grave a woman with issue of blood received healing. The body of the saint was placed in a church of the holy Martyress Lucy, which he himself had

built, and later on his relics were transferred into a church of Sainted Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours (Comm. 12 October).

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT: SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY, FROM GOARCH.ORG

Introduction

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is the first Sunday of Great Lent. The dominant theme of this Sunday since 843 has been that of the victory of the icons. In that year the iconoclastic controversy, which had raged on and off since 726, was finally laid to rest, and icons and their veneration were restored on the first Sunday in Lent. Ever since, this Sunday has been commemorated as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

Historical Background

The Seventh Ecumenical Council dealt predominantly with the controversy regarding icons and their place in Orthodox worship. It was convened in Nicaea in 787 by Empress Irene at the request of Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The Council was attended by 367 bishops.

Almost a century before this, the iconoclastic controversy had once more shaken the foundations of both Church and State in the Byzantine empire. Excessive religious respect and the ascribed miracles to icons by some members of society, approached the point of worship (due only to God) and idolatry. This instigated excesses at the other extreme by which icons were completely taken out of the liturgical life of the Church by the Iconoclasts. The Iconophiles, on the other-hand, believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and beauty.

The Council decided on a doctrine by which icons should be venerated but not worshipped. In answering the Empress' invitation to the Council, Pope Hadrian replied with a letter in which he also held the position of extending veneration to icons but not worship, the last befitting only God.

The decree of the Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation of the rationale for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day: "We define that the holy icons, whether in colour, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honour (timitiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands".

An Endemousa (Regional) Synod was called in Constantinople in 843. Under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the Hagia Sophia Cathedral. The Empress, her son Michael III, Patriarch Methodios, and monks and clergy came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful place. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy." Since that time, this event is commemorated yearly with a special service on the first Sunday of Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy".

Orthodox teaching about icons, as defined at the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, is embodied in the texts sung on this Sunday.

From Vespers: "Inspired by your Spirit, Lord, the prophets foretold your birth as a child incarnate of the Virgin. Nothing can contain or hold you; before the morning star you shone forth eternally from the spiritual womb of the Father. Yet you were to become like us and be seen by those on earth. At the prayers of those your prophets in your mercy reckon us fit to see your light, "for we praise your resurrection, holy and beyond speech. Infinite, Lord, as divine, in the last times you willed to become incarnate and so finite; for when you took on flesh you made all its properties your own. So we depict

the form of your outward appearance and pay it relative respect, and so are moved to love you; and through it we receive the grace of healing, following the divine traditions of the apostles.”

“The grace of truth has shone out, the things once foreshadowed now are revealed in perfection. See, the Church is decked with the embodied image of Christ, as with beauty not of this world, fulfilling the tent of witness, holding fast the Orthodox faith. For if we cling to the icon of him whom we worship, we shall not go astray. May those who do not so believe be covered with shame. For the image of him who became human is our glory: we venerate it, but do not worship it as God. Kissing it, we who believe cry out: O God, save your people, and bless your heritage.”

“We have moved forward from unbelief to true faith, and have been enlightened by the light of knowledge. Let us then clap our hands like the psalmist, and offer praise and thanksgiving to God. And let us honor and venerate the holy icons of Christ, of his most pure Mother, and of all the saints, depicted on walls, panels and sacred vessels, setting aside the unbelievers' ungodly teaching. For the veneration given to the icon passes over, as Basil says, to its prototype. At the intercession of your spotless Mother, O Christ, and of all the saints, we pray you to grant us your great mercy. We venerate your icon, good Lord, asking forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God. For you freely willed in the flesh to ascend the cross, to rescue from slavery to the enemy those whom you had formed. So we cry to you with thanksgiving: You have filled all things with joy, our Savior, by coming to save the world.”

The name of this Sunday reflects the great significance which icons possess for the Orthodox Church. They are not optional devotional extras, but an integral part of Orthodox faith and devotion. They are held to be a necessary consequence of Christian faith in the incarnation of the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, in Jesus Christ. They have a sacramental character, making present to the believer the person or event depicted on them. So the interior of Orthodox churches is often covered with icons painted on walls and domed roofs, and there is always an icon screen, or iconostasis, separating the sanctuary from the nave, often with several rows of icons. No Orthodox home is complete without an icon corner (iconostasion), where the family prays.

Icons are venerated by burning lamps and candles in front of them, by the use of incense and by kissing. But there is a clear doctrinal distinction between the veneration paid to icons and the worship due to God. The former is not only relative, it is in fact paid to the person represented by the icon. This distinction safeguards the veneration of icons from any charge of idolatry.

The theme of the victory of the icons, by its emphasis on the incarnation, points us to the basic Christian truth that the one whose death and resurrection we celebrate at Easter was none other than the Word of God who became human in Jesus Christ.

Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, there was on this day a commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of the Epistle reading at the Liturgy and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: “Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name.”

Icon of the Feast

The icon of the Sunday of Orthodoxy commemorates the “restoration” of icons in the churches and to their use in Orthodox worship. The focal point of the icon is an icon itself, the Virgin Hodegetria, a popular depiction of the Theotokos as “Directress,” or literally “She who shows the way to God.” The icon is carried by two angels.

To the left of the icon is the Empress Theodora and her son Michael III. To the right of the icon are the Patriarchs Methodios and Tarasios. The icon is surrounded by numerous saints who struggled against the Iconoclastic heresy.



The icon also represents the triumphant procession that was made on Sunday, March 11, 843, from the Church of the Theotokos in Blachernai to Hagia Sophia, where a Liturgy was celebrated to mark the restoration of icons.

Orthodox Christian Celebration of The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is commemorated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, which is preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on Saturday evening. The hymns of the Triodion for this day are added to the usual prayers and hymns of the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ.

Scripture readings for the Sunday of Orthodoxy are: At the Orthros (Matins): The prescribed weekly Gospel reading. At the Divine Liturgy: Hebrews 11:24-26,32-40; John 1:43-51.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a service is conducted in commemoration of the affirmations of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 and the restoration of the use of icons in 843. Orthodox faithful carry icons in a procession, while the clergy offer petitions for the people, civil authorities, and those who have reposed in the faith. Following is a reading of excerpts from the Affirmation of Faith of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the singing of the Great Prokeimenon.

It is becoming a common practice that the Procession of the Icons is conducted as part of a Pan-Orthodox Vespers service on the evening of the Sunday of Orthodoxy. This is a service when Orthodox Christians of the various jurisdictions in America come together for worship and in a united affirmation of the Truth of the Orthodox Faith.

On the Saturday before this Sunday, the third of three Saturdays of the Souls are held. This is a special commemoration when the Church offers a Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service for the departed faithful. This is considered a universal commemoration of the dead. Through the memorial services, the Church is commending to God all who have departed and who are now awaiting the Last Judgment.

This specific Saturday is a special commemoration of the Great Martyr Theodore of Tyre and the miracle of the kolyva. In 361, Julian the Apostate was doing his utmost to restore pagan customs. Knowing that the Christians were accustomed to sanctify the first week of Lent by fasting and prayer, the wily tyrant told the Prefect of Constantinople to have all of the food set out for sale in the markets sprinkled with the blood of animals sacrificed to the gods, so that no one in the city would escape the contagion of idolatry. However, the Lord did not abandon His chosen people, but sent His servant Theodore to outwit the tyrant. Appearing in a vision to Patriarch Eudoxius (360-364), the holy Martyr informed him of what was happening and told him to instruct the Christians not to buy food from the markets but instead to eat kolyva made from grains of boiled wheat. Thus, thanks to the intervention of the holy Martyr Theodore, the Christian people were preserved from the stain of idolatry. The Church has commemorated this miracle ever since on the first Saturday of Great Lent, in order to remind the faithful that fasting and temperance have the power to cleanse all the stains of sin.

Hymns and Prayers of the Feast of the Prodigal Son

Apolytikion (Tone Two)

O Christ our God, begging forgiveness of our sins, we venerate your pure image O Good One. Of Your own will You condescended to ascend upon the Cross in the flesh and delivered those you created from the bondage of the enemy. Wherefore, thankfully we cry out: When You came to save the world You filled all things with joy, O our Savior.

Kontakion (Tone Eight)

The undepictable Word of the Father became depictable when He took flesh of you, O Theotokos; and when He had restored the defiled image to its ancient state, He suffused it with divine beauty. As for us, confessing our salvation, we record it in deed and word.