



## Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

714 Westmoreland Avenue

PO Box 3

Slickville, PA 15684-0003

[724] 468-5581

[www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org](http://www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org)

Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor

23 Station Street

Carnegie, PA 15106-3014

[412] 279-5640 home [412] 442-4160 office

[412] 956-6626 cell

**ON THE MEND:** Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: **Metropolitan Constantine**, Patriarch Pavle, Archimandrite Raphael, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, **Father Paul Stoll**, Father Deacon Joseph Bulkanowa, Frank & Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Joe Karas, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Angela Wesolosky, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Terry Reinhart, Bernie O'Masta, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mary Pekich, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Amy, Nigel Daniel, & Daniel Pocura, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachele, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Sandy Gamble, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Khoruia Joanne Abdalah, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 3-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 10-month old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Cindy Rita, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Jeff, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Bill, Sophia Grace, Erin, Jimmy Fennel [6<sup>th</sup> Grader], Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Peter Paul & Louise May Sprock, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Claudia [Horvath] Gradicheck, Alberta, Margaret Mueller, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Tony Notaro, John Holupka, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Denny Doran, Pete Special, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Kay Tomson, Ann Ostaffy, Steve Sakal, Elisabeth Arasin, Homer Paul Kline, and Harry Ostaffy.** We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

My most sincere apology to Liz Obradovich and Debbie & John Paouncic for incorrectly listing the last Parastas in Blessed Memory of Rudy Obradovich. Debbie and John were the sponsors and I listed it as someone else. I promise to try harder to keep these things straight! Fr. Bob

**There is a new COFFEE HOUR sign-up sheet downstairs. Please pick a Sunday or two to bring in treats to share!**

Please remember ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR "BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION" AND CAMPBELL'S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex's Fourth Grade and Matt's Second Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! *Alex and Matt*

**REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!**

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

**AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.**



And the world celebrates Thy Rising from the dead,  
O greatly Merciful One!

### **PROKEIMENON—TONE 8**

**READER: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!**

**PEOPLE: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!**

**READER: In Judah, God is known; His name is great in Israel!**

**PEOPLE: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!**

**READER: Pray and make your vows.**

**PEOPLE: Before the Lord our God!**

### **ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 8**

**Come let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!**

**Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with psalms.**

## **THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD** *Reflection on the Feast*



The question is often asked, *"What's in a name?"* If it is the name of Jesus, everything: *forgiveness, power, love, salvation, God, the Messiah, the Savior.* "YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS, FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS" says the Bible.

Sometime ago, a rabbi said to a Christian minister, *"YOU CHRISTIANS HAVE A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OVER US. WHEN I MENTION GOD IN A SERMON, MANY OF MY PEOPLE HAVE A VAGUE CONCEPT OF SOMEBODY WAY OUT THERE WHO IS HARD TO RELATE TO. / BUT WHEN YOU MENTION GOD, YOUR PEOPLE CAN VISUALIZE JESUS. HE IS SOMEONE THEY CAN UNDERSTAND."* The book, *"Way of the Pilgrim"* (which I recommend everyone to read at least once in their lives -- especially during the Great Lenten Season) is the story of a young widower's pilgrimage, walking from monastery to monastery in both Ukraine and other countries searching for life's answers. As he progresses, he learns the Jesus Prayer (*"LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME A SINNER"*). Through this prayer he finds inner peace and strength. His whole life is changed. *For there is great power in the name of Jesus.* It can dispel evil. It can lift our spirits to knowing we are one with God. This "Jesus Prayer" is also called the "Prayer of the Heart" because when said properly it makes our whole being the place of the perpetual presence of God. St. Paul tells us that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, and this prayer of our Church stresses that point.

When Christ Jesus was 30 years old, He came to the Jordan River to His forerunner, and cousin, John the Baptist, to be baptized. Up to this point we know Him only as the son of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, who 30 years before was born in Bethlehem because His folks had to go there for tax purposes. As he approaches the River Jordan, John IMMEDIATELY identified Him as "THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD". When he was baptized, the heavens opened and the voice of God the Father said: "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED." The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended and remained on Him. From this point in our Nativity-Christmas celebration we no longer see Him as simply the son of Mary and Joseph. We now see Him as God -- The Son of God. With good reason, the Tradition of the Orthodox Church singles out this event as a great celebration. *She calls it Theophany -- "the revelation of God. At the very beginning of His public ministry Jesus is fully authenticated as the Messiah.* The Holy Fathers of our church say: -- *the voice of the Father and the descent of the Holy Spirit confirm that the MAN Jesus is simultaneously the SON OF GOD: one of the Three persons of the Holy Trinity.* This revelation -- this Theophany -- marked a change in the thinking of people which is felt to this very day.

When Dr. Albert Schweitzer, famous musician, theologian and medical doctor, left for Africa as a missionary doctor, he was asked, "Why are you here? Why do you do this?" He replied: "Because Jesus sent me." When saintly Mother Theresa was asked why she spends her life serving the poor, she replied: "Because I love Christ Jesus." Ask St. Paul who made him the greatest Christian missionary who ever lived and you will hear him say in his letter to the Philippians: "I COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD." This knowledge of Jesus Christ was not only a sound theological belief about Him in mind, it was also a deep personal love relationship with Him in heart. A love so deep and so total that Paul could ONLY SAY that Christ was his life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ makes Himself known as God to us on Theophany. The message of the final celebration of the Christmas season is very simple - *To know Christ is to live in Him and HE IN US.*  
*Amen.*

**On Monastic Life—*via e-mail from Father Joshua***

***Abbot Jonah of the Monastery of St. John of San Francisco, California***

What is a monk? One who strives to love God with all his heart, all his soul and all his mind and all his strength, and to love his neighbor as himself.

Monasticism is the heart of the Christian Church. It is radical discipleship to Christ, taking the Lord at His word in the Scriptures, and striving to live by it in an integral way.

Monasticism is not about being all dressed up. It is not about doing all the church services. It is not about being involved in church politics, or even knowing about them. Monasticism is not about religion—all the practices, beliefs, rituals and traditions. It is not about ascetic acts. It is not about a solitary life of pursuing one's own religious path.

Monasticism is about living the Gospel without compromise. It is about living in Christ by the Holy Spirit, and growing by grace to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Monasticism is about life lived in obedience to Christ, in self-denial and bearing the cross of whatever suffering God sends us to help us work out our salvation. Monasticism is about working out our salvation in a community of like-minded men, by learning to love our brother "who is our life" (St Silouan).

A monastery is a single body, a sacramental community of the Church, like a marriage. It is a community in which each is present to help the other work out his salvation. We are not saved alone. We are saved as the Body of Christ. The Body is constituted by communion in love: in one mind and heart, with one will and one life. To build that unity in Christ by the Spirit, in one will and vision, is the common task of the brotherhood. It is the means by which we transcend our isolated individualism, our fallenness, and attain to true personhood. Our true personhood embraces all in the one mystical Person of Christ. This is the real ascetic task: to overcome our individual isolation, our egoism, our self-centeredness and self-love, and all our agendas and concepts of ourself and even of God. Ultimately, it is to embrace the whole world, the whole creation, and each person, in love.

Who can become a monk? Anyone. BUT, that does not mean that everyone is called to it. It is a calling, a charism, a gift. There are no impediments to becoming a monk. But not every community is able to receive everyone.

It is important to remember that monastic life is about striving for Christ. A monastery is not a psychiatric hospital, not a poorhouse, retirement home, group home or halfway house. To use it as such is to abuse it. To try to use it as a means to escape the responsibilities of life, or in order to be taken care of, will only lead to disappointment. This does not mean that the monastery does not take care of the ill, elderly or those in need. Those are important ministries of a monastic community. But to join the monastery to try to escape the necessities of living, working and relating in the world is to come to it for the wrong reason. The only reason to join the monastery is for the love of Christ, and the desire to follow Him.



## **Saint Sava of Serbia**

Memory celebrated January 14 (27)

### ***Saint Sava at Mount Athos***

Rastko, youngest son of the Serbian district judge, STEFAN NEMANJA, was different than his two brothers, Vukan and Stefan, in that he was modest, quiet, retiring and pious; he enjoyed very much to read good books and to meditate in solitude. His brothers on the other hand, like many other sons of aristocrats, preferred a life of recreation and play; liked gentlemanly apparel and good food.

At one time there came to the home of Stefan Nemanja, in Serbia, a group of monks from [Mount Athos](#), who were seeking financial aid for their monasteries. Greatly impressed by their narrations of the beauties of Mount Athos, and of the pious life led by the monks, Rastko ran off with these monks to Mount Athos, where he promptly entered the monastery, and was given the name of SAVA. He lived in the monastery as a most modest monk, praying to God and fasting regularly, but, above all else, he liked to read the holy books and to listen to the instructions of the monks.

After an interim of several years, and at the invitation of Sava, old Stefan Nemanja, who had relinquished his throne to his son, Stefan, came to Mount Athos and entered the monastery as a monk, SIMEON, by name. The devout father and son founded the Serbian Monastery HILANDAR, in Mount Athos, where they then settled, and where, shortly thereafter, St. Simeon died in the arms of his son, St. Sava. The death of his father was beautifully and touchingly described by St. Sava.

The Monastery Hilandar became the fount of Serbian Orthodoxy and Serbian education. Here books were translated and written; icons fashioned, as well as other church articles, thence to be dispatched to every Serbian village and hamlet. To the monastery, too, came many of the youth of Serbian heritage, to be taught and eventually to become priests of the church.

### ***The work of Saint Sava***

With their father now gone, Sava's brothers, Vukan and Stefan, were at strife over the throne, and as a result of their discord, the Serbian State, as well as the Orthodox faith, was gravely threatened with extinction.

In the face of these difficult circumstances, Stefan remembered his youngest brother, Sava, and asked him to return to his homeland and to bring with him the body of their father. Bearing the remains of St. Simeon, St. Sava returned to his country, coming to the Monastery of STUDENITZA, the endowment of Nemanja, and over the remains of their father, effected the reconciliation of his warring brothers.

Following this, he was appointed Superior of the Monastery of Studenitza, instructing and training many of the monks to become Serbian priests and teachers, and in addition, assisting his brother Stefan, in affairs of state, counselling him wisely at all times.

The Serbian State had progressed to the point of being respected and powerful. Thus, at this time, Stefan, proclaiming himself king and placing the royal crown upon his head, became the first Serbian king, STEFAN, THE FIRST-CROWNED. There was a need also, that the Serbian Church become independent, for, up to the time of St Sava, the church superior or BISHOPS in the Serbian State, had been Greeks, who, to the Serbs were considered aliens. Realizing the necessity for the Serbs to have their own archbishops and bishops, St. Sava, in accord with his brother, King Stefan, departed for the city of NICEA (Asia Minor), where lived the Greek king and PATRIARCH. Sava requested the appointment of a Serbian bishop, which would further strengthen the Orthodox Faith, whereupon the Greek Patriarch elevated St. Sava to the office of the first Serbian ARCHBISHOP. Thus, the INDEPENDENCE OF ARCHBISHOPRIC of the Serbian Church was established in the year of 1219.

Upon his return to Serbia, St. Sava, in agreement with his brother Stefan, divided the Serbian land into bishoprics and appointed Serbs as bishops. For himself he chose as his seat, the endowment of King Stefan, the Monastery of ZITCHA. In this, the Monastery of Zitcha, St. Sava, with great solemnity, crowned his brother as king. Thus, the coronation of the first king of Serbia, Stefan, the First-Crowned, took place in an Orthodox Church, by a Serbian Archbishop. St. Sava worked especially toward the enlightenment of the Serbian people. Numerous churches and monasteries were erected everywhere, throughout the state. Monasteries in that time served as schools, in which the Serbian youth were taught to read and write. Following completion of their learning, they were appointed priests and teachers. Thus, thanks to the efforts of St. Sava.

### ***St Sava's repose***

In his declining years, St. Sava made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, there to visit Christ's grave. Prior to his return, he stopped at TRNOVO, to be the guest of his friend, the Bulgarian emperor. St. Sava, celebrating the Divine service of [Theophany](#), on a chilly day, caught cold, became ill and died on January 14, (27) in the year of 1235.

The Bulgarian emperor insisted that the body of St. Sava remain in Bulgaria. Consequently, the Serbian king, VLADISLAV, nephew of St. Sava, with great difficulty succeeded in claiming the body of his uncle and interring it in Serbian soil at the Monastery of MILESHEVO, an endowment of St. Sava.

To the Serbs, the grave of St. Sava was most sacred. During the time of Turkish dominance, the Serbs came from all sides to his grave, offering prayers to God, and seeking consolation in their suffering, and strength in their hope for liberation. Realizing to what extent the Serbs revered their saint, the Turks disinterred the body of St. Sava from Milieshevo, taking it to BELGRADE at a place called VRACHAR, where on a pyre, his body was burned to ashes, in the year of 1594.

In burning the body of St. Sava, the Turks believed that the people would forget entirely their great benefactor and enlightener, even that his name would be forgotten. But they were wrong!

Albeit centuries have passed since the cremation of his remains, there does not exist today, a Serb who is not familiar with his name, nor is there a Serbian school existing which fails to venerate him every year.

By reason of his meritorious and holy life, Sava was proclaimed a Saint. The Serbian Church celebrates St. Sava as their greatest saint and enlightener. His memory is commemorated by the Orthodox Church on January 14 (27).

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PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

Here's my foreword to a book by Fr. Andreas Andreopoulos, "The Sign of the Cross," which just came out from Paraclete Press.

<http://www.frederica.com/writings/sign-of-the-cross-foreword.html>



Hope you had a good Christmas holiday. I just sent the absolutely-we-mean-it-final version of "The Lost Gospel of Mary" to Paraclete. they have it on a fast schedule to come out in a little over two months. Amazing what they can do these days.

Meanwhile I have realized to my shock that I scheduled 16 speeches between now and the end of February. I'm doing a lot of scrambling to ensure that I'll be able to take that much time away from my home & desk and still keep things running. I don't have an assistant, and it's amazing how much time it takes just to select & book airline tickets, for instance; replying to email is also time-consuming, but I try to answer everybody who writes me (sometimes being a "Dear Abby"). When I'm traveling, the household bills and the laundry pile up too. Still, I can't think of a better job.

### **Foreword [The Sign of the Cross]**

At my Orthodox church every Sunday I see families arrive at church and go up to the iconostasis, to greet the icon of the Lord. The parents stand before his searching gaze and make the sign of the cross fluidly: the right thumb and first two fingers together to recall the Trinity, and the last two fingers together and pressed down to the palm, to recall Christ's two natures and his descent to the earth. They touch forehead, abdomen, right shoulder, left shoulder, then sweep the right hand to the floor with a deep bow. After making two of these metanoia, they kiss Christ's hand, then make one more sign of the Cross and a last bow.

With practice, what sounds like a very complicated ballet becomes second nature. Behind the parents come their children, who execute the same moves but have a shorter trip to reach the floor. And then there are the toddlers. If you're seated to the side, you can see a look of stern concentration come over the chubby face. Then there's a blur, as a tiny fist flies from ear to elbow to knee to nose, or just makes quick wobbly circles over the tummy. If these gestures were literally analyzed as to their symbolic meanings, they might be signaling heresies not yet imagined. But all this commotion is concluded by the little one stretching up on tiptoe to kiss the hand of the all-compassionate man in the painting. That hand is giving a blessing; it is making the sign of the Cross.

These children are doing what we all do to some extent: we take part in mysteries we can only partly comprehend. We do it within the safety of our Father's home, following in the footsteps of our elders.

In this case, the footsteps go back further than history can discover. It was perhaps 204 AD when the brilliant North African writer, Tertullian, composed his essay The Crown. He begins with a story then in the news: the Roman emperor had given laurel crowns to a band of victorious soldiers, but in the procession it was seen that one

went bareheaded. When challenged by his tribune, he responded that he was not free to wear such a crown, because he was a Christian. At the time of Tertullian's writing the soldier was in prison awaiting martyrdom.

Some local church members criticized the soldier for rocking the boat; they had been enjoying a period of peace, and feared such boldness would provoke another bout of persecution. (Tertullian observed tartly that they were no doubt already preparing to flee from one city to the next [Matthew 10:23], since that's all of the gospel they care to remember: [T]heir pastors are lions in peace, deer in the fight.) But some retorted that nowhere is it written that Christians are forbidden to wear ceremonial crowns.

It is in responding to that challenge that Tertullian gives us a very intriguing glimpse into the daily lives of early Christians. There are many things we Christians do, Tertullian says, that don't have a written mandate. In the Orthodox tradition, at baptism a person is immersed three times, after renouncing the devil, his pomp, and his angels. He makes a profession of faith somewhat ampler than the Lord has appointed in the Gospels. Christians receive the Eucharist only from the hand of the one presiding over the assembly. If for these and other such rules, you insist on having positive Scripture injunction, you will find none: The proper witness for tradition [is] demonstrated by long-continued observance.

Among the items that had had long-continued observance, even at the dawn of Christian history, was the sign of the Cross. In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting off our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our foreheads with the sign of the Cross, Tertullian wrote.

It seems that the sign of the Cross was such an entrenched element of Christian practice that a believer would not consider refraining from it. Tertullian believed it to be universal, and already ancient in 204 AD.

I will leave Fr. Andreas to fill in the story of how this sign came down to us today, and how its expression varied with time and place. His appealing book provides us not only with this history, but with insights into the limitless, profound meaning of the sign of the Cross. The sign of the Cross is a prayer in itself, one that is easy to include in the busy day "at the sound of an ambulance siren, as an expression of thanksgiving, as preparation for a difficult task, or on learning of a need for prayer. And, despite its mystery, the sign is a gesture simple enough for a child to adopt.

It is my hope that this small book will acquaint many readers with a Christian custom that has roots deeper in the common history of our faith than anyone knows. The action may at first seem awkward; it may take time to acquire the gracefulness of

those who have woven it through their prayers for decades. But there is hardly a more visible way to take up your cross, as the gospel of Matthew says, than this, and join the company of those who in all ages have borne witness to Christ before the world.

Frederica Mathewes-Green

[www.frederica.com](http://www.frederica.com)