

# THE ORTHODOX POST

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## Pastor's Message

by Fr. Nikodhim

Yesterday afternoon I met with Metropolitan Tikhon, our current supervising bishop, and with the other clergy of our archdiocese. I say I met with them, but the truth is that I saw and spoke with them digitally via one of the many online platforms that have now become the new normal for meetings of most types these days. Over the course of an hour and a half, we discussed plans for our communities in the coming months, most especially the gradual process by which our parish and others may be reopened. Although I am still awaiting final and formal directives on how we are to proceed, I thought it best to let you know that, though gradual return will be happening, this will in no way be immediate. Many weeks, if not months, await before us, and what we once knew as “normal” is gone for good. Our routine of Church, as indeed our routines for all civil interaction, must change, must adapt and form into something new, forged afresh from these recent tough times. Rather than greet this as discouraging, I invite you to consider it a challenge, an invitation that we may rise to meet as a community.

Since meeting with the bishop and priests of our diocese, I have been thinking about one story from the Gospel of St. Luke. It is the passage we read in the Church when we are celebrating any occasion of thanksgiving. In brief, ten lepers ask Christ for healing; He prays over them and sends them away; and they realize, after walking some distance, that they have been healed. Only one of the ten rushes back to the Lord and kneels and gives thanks. You can read the full story for yourself ([Luke/Luka](#) 17:12-19).

I have been thinking about this story not only because I will relish chanting it aloud from our pulpit when that day comes and we are offering public thanks, but also because of the lepers—the social outcasts, whose contagious disease kept people away and afraid. With more than a month behind us already of isolation and quarantine and the necessary shunning of keeping in, with more than a month of fear behind

us and no certain sense of how much is yet before, and with

handshakes and hugs now considered hazards given the very real contagion around us, I suspect many of us may be gaining a little insight into the position of those ten lepers. What we know now, in this short time of our sequestration, is some minute portion of those ten ailing men's suffering, doomed, so they thought, to wander their lives away far from the healthy. Christ, in this story, seems to have walked fearlessly among them as He walks fearlessly everywhere—even into and out of Hell. He wasn't afraid to touch them or to stand close to them or to breathe the air they exhaled. Even if He didn't heal, certainly being with them in these other ways would have been an exceptional experience for these outcasts with whom no one wanted to speak or walk with or to risk talking to. But He did. And when just the one came back with thanks, even Jesus was amazed.

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The monotony of our fear and loneliness won't end all at once. These coming weeks must be full still of caution and responsible care for those around us as well as ourselves. Yet when we are able, let's plan to be more than just free. Let us prepare to be grateful to that God Who always stands with us even when it seems we are locked away or alone. Christ is risen! Krishti u ngjall! Christ is risen, and no place is empty of Him!

## St Nicholas in The Digital World (from April's Post)

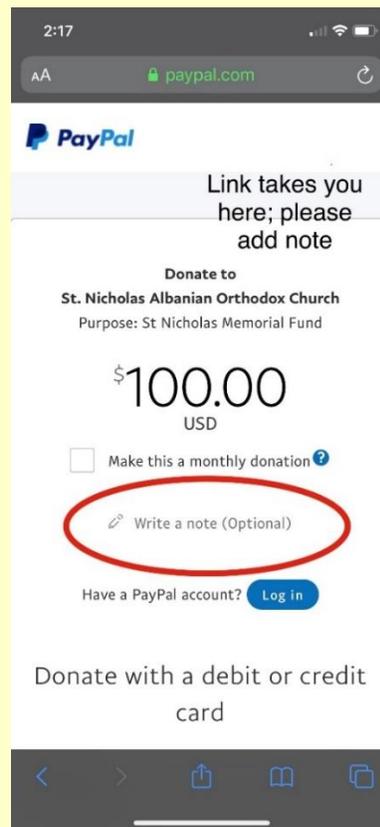
I hope this finds everyone safe and doing well. Businesses, and life itself, have already moved to a digital world. Though we have had a website at St Nicholas for some time now, have we truly utilized it to its maximum capabilities? Are we getting the best out of its potential functionality?

We have undertaken the challenge and successfully built and brought our community closer together through social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These platforms continue to remain our staple for disseminating the most up to date information, schedules, photos and happenings within the life of St Nicholas. I strongly urge participation. More recently we have put energy into enhancing our website, [www.stnicholasalbanian.org](http://www.stnicholasalbanian.org). Some of the recent changes include:

1. Adjustments so the site is more user friendly when accessing via our mobile devices.
2. You can reserve and purchase tickets for church events directly online now (i.e. Valentine's Day Dance, Halloween Party, Golf Outing, St Nicholas Day Luncheon, etc.)
3. Ability to utilize Paypal or credit card for submitting your recurring pledge, online donations, or "In memory of..." when considering St Nicholas for "In lieu of".
4. Lastly, in extraordinary times of need, such as today's Corona Virus environment, we have added a section with church guidance and resources to help us stay strong both spiritually and physically as a community.

Below are some screen shots of what this looks like from your cell phone. We are open to any feedback or suggestions you would like to see. I hope these enhanced features come in handy!

-Damian Peters



## President's Message

by Lou Foundos

### **CHRIST HAS RISEN! HE TRULY HAS RISEN! --- KRISHTI U NGJALL! VERTET U NGJALL!**

After September 11, 2001 and the financial crisis of 2008, we thought we had seen the worst of times. Whoever expected that something more devastating could hit the United States and affect the world? This was unimaginable, but the unimaginable did happen, a pandemic, CORONAVIRUS!

We are learning new terms, "Social Distancing, Zoom, etc", and watching the news and hoping this will end soon. Well, it looks like we passed the Apex, but "normal" as we knew it, or a new normal, will take more time than we would all like. Meantime, everyone is keeping their distance and spending more time at home than they ever dreamed of. Hopefully there has been some good quality family time, and it has given us some time to think about our priorities in life.

St. Nicholas and all its parishioners are suffering. This pandemic has not only caused health, work and financial difficulties for many, but at this time our faith is challenged as we struggle spiritually. We have not been able to attend services since the middle of March. The most troubling for all has been keeping our doors closed during Holy Week and the Pascha service on Saturday night. We all did the best we could with some live streaming services, but it was not the same. Hopefully, next year St. Nicholas will be overflowing with more people than ever at Pascha, so we can renew our faith and commitment to Jesus Christ and be good Christians. This is a trying time when we all need each other more than ever and I hope you are reaching out to friends and families, especially our elderly. I would like to thank all the doctors, nurses, and hospital workers for taking care of the sick and working tirelessly in spite of the peril. Lastly, a sincere thank you to all our first responders, police, firefighters, MTA workers, grocery/food service workers and all those behind the scenes that enable these functions to continue to provide services.

Soon, the doors of St. Nicholas will be open to welcome each other, in person, to continue practicing our faith. At this time the leadership of St. Nicholas has been able to meet all financial obligations and manage our expenses. As many households have, we have made some tough choices to be good stewards of this community's financial resources in prioritizing, and postponing at times, planned expenditures. Needless to say, without regular services, our ability to maintain this long term is not possible.

I am aware there is never a "right" or "best" time to ask, but if your individual situation allows, I encourage and remind you to continue paying your routine pledge and annual Pascha donation. Traditional mail and checks are still a viable option along with alternative payment options, through VENMO, our social media platforms and our website, [www.stnicholasalbanian.org](http://www.stnicholasalbanian.org) which utilizes PayPal. Enclosed is the page from the last Orthodox Post which explains this added website feature, if you so choose. This letter will appear in the post and social media in addition to the mailing, so I apologize if it seems repetitive. Now is a time we need your help until we are back to a regular service schedule!

Thank you for your continued support and stay well!

Yours in Christ,

Lou Foundos-- President

## MAY SAINTS AND NAME DAYS

### 4 - St. Monica

Monica Adhin

### 5 - St. Irene

Renee Jones, Ira Gjoka, Rea Nune

### 9 - St. Christopher

Christopher Bode, Christopher Pulaha

### 13 - Mid-Pentecost (Rusicat)



Twenty-five days after the feast of Holy Pascha, at the midpoint of the Easter season, the feast of mid-Pentecost is celebrated. Always falling on a Wednesday but migrating

throughout the calendar with Pascha and Pentecost, the Church notes this occasion as one remembering the child Jesus, Who taught even His elders and the religious authorities of His day (see Luke 2:46). In Albania this was traditionally a day for women to celebrate. Gathering in local Churches or monasteries, they would share a simple meal of red eggs and a special pastry, qumështuar. In fact, this tradition was so persistent that government authorities in 1987 banned the distribution of milk in Pogradec in order to curtail the baking of this dish, which retained its religious association for so long against the atheist policies of the communist government. The subsequent public protests of these women were some of the first to herald popular defiance against the regime. This is fitting for this occasion which had long been a date to celebrate the women of the Gospel stories, those who fearlessly stood by the crucified Lord when others fled and who were first to hear the news of Christ's resurrection.

**If you have a recipe for qumështuar, please bake this for your family and share it on our parish Facebook page so that others can enjoy taking part in this tradition.**

With thanks to Robert Elsie's excellent book: *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology, and Folk Culture*)

## MAY SAINTS AND NAME DAYS

### 13 - St. Glykeria

Gliqeri Mizaku

If you don't see your name please contact Fr. Nikodhim.

### 14 - St. Isidore

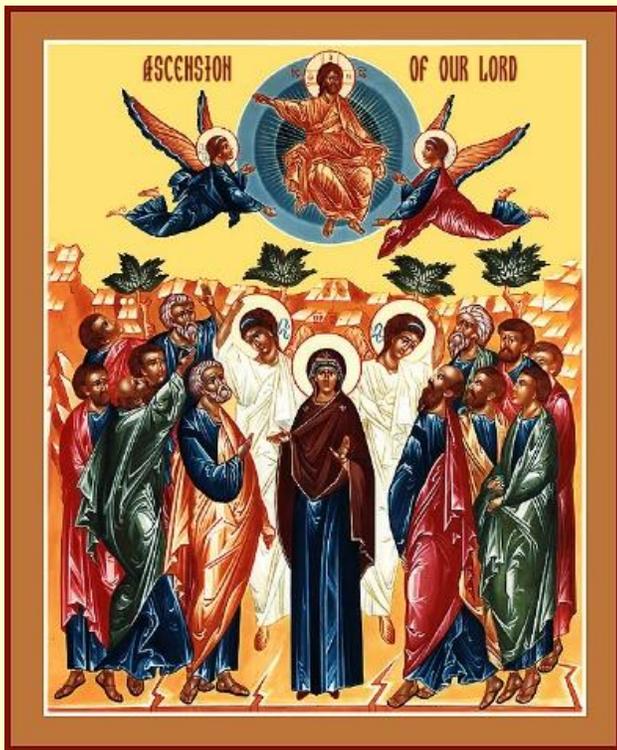
Isidoros Tsamblakos

Nese nuk sheh emrin tend, te lutem lajmero priftin.

### 21 - Sts. Constantine and Helen

Cleo Filis, Helen Panajoti, Helen Gradt, Lenore Apostolu, Eleni Coka, Koco Grazhdani, Lina Kondili, Helena Mertiri, Lenora Peter, Iliana Rehova, Leonora Vozhilla, Elona Zekthi, Sonja Troja

### 28 - Ascension of the Lord



“I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God, and Your God” (John 20:17).

In these words the Risen Christ described to Mary Magdalene the mystery of His Resurrection. She had to carry this mysterious message to His disciples, “as they mourned and wept” (Mark 16:10). The disciples listened to these glad tidings with fear and amazement, with doubt and mistrust. It was not Thomas alone who doubted among the Eleven. On the contrary, it appears that only one of the Eleven did not doubt—Saint John, the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” He alone grasped the mystery of the empty tomb at once: “and he saw, and believed” (John 20:8). Even Peter left the sepulcher in amazement, “wondering at that which was come to pass” (Luke 24:12).

The disciples did not expect the Resurrection. The women did not, either. They were quite certain that Jesus was dead

and rested in the grave, and they went to the place “where He was laid,” with the spices they had prepared, “that they might come and anoint Him.” They had but one thought: “Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us?” (Mark 16:1-3; Luke 24:1). And therefore, on not finding the body, Mary Magdalene was sorrowful and complained: “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him” (John 20:13). On hearing the good news from the angel, the women fled from the sepulchre in fear and trembling: “Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8). And when they spoke no one believed them, in the same way as no one had believed Mary, who saw the Lord, or the disciples as they walked on their way into the country, (Mark 16:13), and who recognized Him in the breaking of bread. “And afterward He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen Him after He was risen” (Mark 16:10-14).

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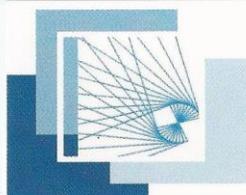
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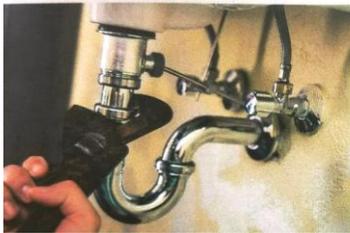


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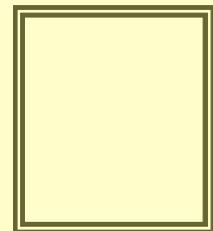
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