

# ORTHODOX POST

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## Pastor's Message

I don't have many pictures of myself. In truth, my apartment has mostly books and artwork and icons, few photos at all. Those pictures I do possess and have taken the trouble to hang are mostly of family or places or long-gone pets. Like most of us who live here, my wall space is limited so what merits placement there must be worthy: interesting, provocative, or amusing. And that face I can see so easily in each mirror or readily in darkened windows rarely ascends to any of these qualities by my assessment. Nevertheless, last month I found myself purchasing a nice frame, waiting on its delivery, then carefully razoring through some cardstock to mount it with matting. A small sketch warranted this, ink in simple black applied to a torn-out piece of sketchbook, a single figure vaguely familiar in profile. I'd been presented with this little drawing some months ago and had set it aside, puzzling over it, intrigued but doubtful about what to do with it. That it was well done I could readily agree, but that its subject was worthy of such notice with pen and paper, I doubted.

When I was last at the monastery, standing in preparation for the prayer that would gather the brotherhood for dinner, I was gestured over by one of the older monks. Unbeknownst to me, he had used even this little period of waiting industriously, jotting down the sketch. He smiled handing it over but waived away my thanks, and it took me a moment to realize that what my hands held was a picture of me. Even now, I sometimes struggle in this recognition. The beard and glasses, the soft cap—the skoufos—I was wearing that day, I see these things, yes, yet the man in ink and paper with these familiar features seems somehow better than I am, better than I feel I am most days. There is something confident in the way he peers forward. His face is shaded with a smile I rarely catch sight of and don't find at all in the corner of my Zoom meeting's screen. He seems at peace, so I have trouble trusting that it's actually me. Eventually I relented, bought a frame, and entrusted this little picture within its boundaries, these boundaries now on open display in my home.

One of the great gifts of community is to be called outside of one's self. Many times we think this is simply a matter of sacrifice—offering our gifts for the betterment of others, our time, our talents. But to know the places we hold in the lives of others and to experience the disjunction that is sometimes there between our own self-perception and the promise or prominence others invest us with can be truly revelatory. Ecstasy in its classical, literal sense means standing outside of, and community gives this us: ecstatic glimpses of who we might and can and often must be. This is mostly humbling. I've heard enough and made enough confessions to know that most of us struggle to think we merit the worth and love of others. What we might draw in self-portrait and what others recognize of us can be wildly and widely at odds. Yet when we trust that our one set of eyes is not the only assessor and that appraisal is weakest practiced solo and that the many around us both speak and see in some harmony of kindness, we may find ourselves remade, reworked by the view of the renewing community, and ready to rise to meet this gaze.

St. Nicholas Church is this: a place to be seen in, a place to commence or recommit to that gradual and stumbling process of change which is nothing less than the work of salvation, a place to refine our vision of ourselves while aiding others in the same. Invested with every promise, endowed with sight as grace, we gather again and again to frame this shared life, making room for other pictures that will hold other faces looking out for us.

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### President's Message

I was just thinking that this will be the last Orthodox Post where Father Nikodhim's message will be above my message. This will truly be a time of change and uncertainty for all of us at St. Nicholas as we start the journey of finding a new priest for our parish. This search is made more difficult due to the environment in which as Father has indicated, the pool of candidates is small to none. Therefore, we all need to get a bit creative and reach out to friends, family and other clergy to make it known that our parish is searching for a new priest. When we do find a prospect for the position, we then have to notify the Chancellor of our Archdiocese to contact the priest and discuss his availability with his hierarch before we can start serious discussions. We have formed a Search and Transition Committee that will, along with our Council, have discussions with the candidate.

During this transition period, the life of religious services must continue; and therefore, we have to find priests that can fill in as needed. Unfortunately, the pool of retired priests is substantially reduced, thus making this the most immediate challenge. We have contacted Fr. Dennis Rhodes, who at one point was our parish priest, and he has agreed to provide some coverage for St. Nicholas. However, this will only provide partial coverage, so if you know of any priest that can work with our parish, please let me know. If we cannot find a priest to cover, we will have to reach out to Deacons in the area. A Deacon cannot do the full service, so the service will be a bit shorter.

We all have to make a great effort regarding this issue and pray that our parish will find a new priest sooner rather than later.

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### Sunday Of the Cross





### Holy Week at St. Nicholas

(Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> at 7pm and Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> at 10am)

#### Lazarus Saturday

A taste of joy in advance, we recall Jesus' devotion to his friends today and His lived-out promise to help them and us. In recalling Lazarus from the tomb, Christ extends His hand to one whom He loved, showing Himself the possessor of that mighty and unbreakable love for which He will die and rise.

#### Palm Sunday

(Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup>)

The children lead us. With palms of honor and victory, they show us how to greet that King of All who has made His way into our midst. Yet these are also the palms of martyrdom, indicating that the triumphal entry of our Lord is not an event of worldly victory alone, for the spiritual work of endurance and suffering and return is yet to come. We rest on this day between the austerities of the Great Fast and the joyful sorrows of Holy Week.

#### Bridegroom Matins

(Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> 7pm)

These services, which at St. Nicholas we do on Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, offer a quiet hour of contemplation. Before the icon of Christ the Bridegroom (Dhëndëri), we pray for forgiveness and unity with God. This bridegroom, however, is fitted with a crown of thorns to marry us, His people. His hands encircled with a rope of bondage, a ring to betroth us. His wedding garment one of mockery that will be torn from His body to be the gambled stake for a game of dice. Christ celebrates the banquet of His betrothal to His people with a feast of tears and vinegar, toasted with jeers and contemptuous laughter.

#### Holy Unction

(Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm)

This sacrament of our faith is prescribed for any time of the year; we pray these prayers of anointing when any of our faith community suffer grave illness. Performed, when possible, with the ministrations of at least seven priests, this is a great and powerful witness of the care with which we are supposed to approach sickness and suffering. In Holy Week, confronted by the overwhelming frailty of our souls and the profound sickness of the sins in which we dwell and persist, this anointing with holy oil gives us hope that we, too, can learn to see beyond our spiritual sickness and look toward the wholeness of lives given over to Christ.

#### Holy Thursday Liturgy

(Thursday the 13<sup>th</sup> at 10am)

On this morning, we recall the Last Supper, that meal wherein Christ instituted the practice of Holy Communion but also and at the same time noted the betrayal and end that would come by the hand of one of his closest friends—Judas Iscariot. During this Liturgy, we prepare and set aside the Holy Communion that is kept in reserve throughout the year so that the sick and dying, those unable to come from their homes or rise from their beds, all may receive the Holy Body and Blood of Christ offered from His table, from His Holy and Final Supper.

#### The Passion Gospels

(Thursday the 13<sup>th</sup> at 7pm)

With these twelve Gospel readings, we make pilgrimage through Christ's final hours. From betrayal to judgment to death, we witness the tragedy of His end but see and seek still a bright preparation for what is yet to come. This simple service of hymns and readings ushers us into Good Friday and brings us near to the place where He will be laid down and from which He will arise.

### Holy Week at St. Nicholas

#### Lamentations

(Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> at 7pm)

This is the funeral of the Lord. Chanting our grief, we pay our last respects, anoint His body with incense and sweet-scented perfume—the aroma of our tears and content of our hopes. Carrying the bier around the Church three times, we encircle our temple, our home, marking it as the place where God Himself rests, tracing in outline the place whence He will spring from and return.

#### Holy Saturday Liturgy

(Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> at 10am)

A preamble to that joy that is yet to come, this service indicates the turning point in the saga of passion week. We sense the deep rumbling of time and nature as the descended Christ encounters those depths hidden to us. The dead, hearing the voice of their Master, are freed; the spirit of evil flees as every dark place burns with the light of God. Tasting the presence of God in communion, we strew fragrant herbs throughout the Church to welcome and honor His ascent and re-entrance.

#### Great and Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts (Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:30pm)

Arriving into that darkness that is not oppressive but incipient, we behold the holy fire come to greet us, symbol of the unquenchable flame of faith. But this fire is only the start of our rejoicing. Christ returns, and all of creation is made new. Christ returns, and the past slips away cowering our fear. Christ returns, and we have cause to hope, to sing, to taste again the sweetness of His renewing presence. In His body and blood, in His story and image, He chooses to make His home with us. Do not reject this invitation, leaving before the feast has begun but stay with the holy fire burning on your candle and in your heart, stay to receive Holy Communion on this holiest day of all year and all of time.

#### Paschal Vespers

(Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> at noon)

Warmed by Christ, we inaugurate a new life with Him. On this evening of the first day, the Resurrection commences a new way of being for all; raised with Christ, all is being perfected. With voices made joyful in the knowledge of the risen God, we proclaim the Gospel in as many tongues as we can, letting the news of this Pascha resound in our Church, in our lives, and in the whole world.

## CHURCH SCHEDULE for April 2023

Sat. 1—Vespers, 5pm  
 Sun. 2—Liturgy, 10am: Mary of Egypt  
 Wed. 5—Presanctified Liturgy, 7pm  
 Fri. 7—Paraklesis, 7pm  
 Sat. 8—Liturgy, 10am: Lazarus Saturday  
     —Vespers, 5pm  
 Sun. 9—Liturgy, 10am: Palm Sunday  
     —Pancake Breakfast  
 Mon. 10—Bridegroom Matins, 7pm  
 Tue. 11—Bridegroom Matins, 7pm  
 Wed. 12—Holy Unction, 7pm

Thur. 13—Liturgy, 10am: Last Supper  
     —Passion Gospels, 7pm  
 Fri. 14—Tomb Prayers, noon  
     —Lamentations, 7pm  
 Sat. 15—Liturgy, 10am: Harrowing of Hades  
     —**Great and Holy Pascha, 11:30pm**  
 Sun. 16—Paschal Vespers, noon  
 Sat. 22—Vespers is cancelled.  
 Sun. 23—Liturgy, 10am: Thomas Sunday  
 Sat. 29—Vespers, 5pm  
 Sun. 30—Liturgy, 10am: Myrrhbearers



**SAINTS AND FEAST DAYS OF THE MONTH****APRIL: ST. GEORGE, THE GREATMARTYR, VICTORY-BEARER AND WONDEWORKER****Commemorated on April 23rd.****Edited Reading and Icon courtesy of the OCA**

The Holy Great Martyr George the Victory-Bearer, grew up in a deeply believing Christian family. His father was martyred for Christ when George was still a child. His mother, owning lands in Palestine, moved there with her son and raised him in strict piety. When he became a man, Saint George entered into the service of the Roman army. He came to the notice of the emperor Diocletian and joined the imperial guard with the rank of military commander. The pagan emperor, who did much for the restoration of Roman might, was clearly concerned with the danger presented to pagan civilization by the triumph of the Crucified Savior, and intensified his persecution against the Christians in the final years of his reign, Diocletian gave all his governors full freedom in their court proceedings against Christians, and he promised

them his full support. Saint George, when he heard the decision of the emperor, distributed all his wealth to the poor, freed his servants, and then appeared in the Senate. The brave soldier of Christ spoke out openly against the emperor's designs. He confessed himself a Christian, and appealed to all to acknowledge Christ: "I am a servant of Christ, my God, and trusting in Him, I have come among you voluntarily, to bear witness concerning the Truth." "What is Truth?" one of the dignitaries asked, echoing the question of Pontius Pilate. The saint replied, "Christ Himself, Whom you persecuted, is Truth." Stunned by the bold speech of the valiant warrior, the emperor, who had loved and promoted George, attempted to persuade him not to throw away his youth and glory and honors, but rather to offer sacrifice to the gods as was the Roman custom. The confessor replied, "Nothing in this inconstant life can weaken my resolve to serve God." Then by order of the enraged emperor the armed guards began to push Saint George out of the assembly hall with their spears, and they then led him off to prison. But the deadly steel became soft and it bent, just as the spears touched the saint's body, and it caused him no harm. In prison they put the martyr's feet in stocks and placed a heavy stone on his chest. The next day at the interrogation, powerless but firm of spirit, Saint George again answered the emperor, "You will grow tired of tormenting me sooner than I will tire of being tormented by you." Then Diocletian gave orders to subject Saint George to some very intense tortures. They tied the Great Martyr to a wheel, beneath which were boards pierced with sharp pieces of iron. As the wheel turned, the sharp edges slashed the saint's naked body .

At first the sufferer loudly cried out to the Lord, but soon he quieted down, and did not utter even a single groan. Diocletian decided that he was already dead, and he gave orders to remove the battered body from the wheel, and then went to a pagan temple to offer thanks. At this very moment it got dark, thunder boomed, and a voice was heard: "Fear not, George, for I am with you." Then a wondrous light shone, and at the wheel an angel of the Lord appeared in the form of a radiant youth. He placed his hand upon the martyr, saying to him, "Rejoice!" Saint George stood up healed. When the soldiers led him to the pagan temple where the emperor was, the emperor could not believe his own eyes and he thought that he saw before him some other man or even a ghost. In confusion and in terror the pagans looked Saint George over carefully, and they became convinced that a miracle had occurred. Many then came to believe in the Life-Creating God of the Christians. The exploits and the miracles of the Great Martyr George had increased the number of the Christians, therefore Diocletian made a final attempt to compel the saint to offer sacrifice to the idols. They set up a court at the pagan temple of Apollo. On the final night the holy martyr prayed fervently, and as he slept, he saw the Lord, Who raised him up with His hand, and embraced him. The Savior placed a crown on Saint George's head and said, "Fear not, but have courage, and you will soon come to Me and receive what has been prepared for you." Of the many miracles worked by the holy Great Martyr George, the most famous are depicted in iconography. In the saint's native city of Beirut were many idol-worshippers. Outside the city, near Mount Lebanon, was a large lake, inhabited by an enormous dragon-like serpent. Coming out of the lake, it devoured people, and there was nothing anyone could do, since the breath from its nostrils poisoned the very air. The saint signed himself with the Sign of the Cross. He rushed at the serpent saying, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Saint George pierced the throat of the serpent with his spear and trampled it with his horse. Then he led it into the city like a dog on a leash. The people fled in terror, but the saint halted them with the words: "Don't be afraid, but trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him, since it is He Who sent me to save you." Then the saint killed the serpent with a sword, and the people burned it outside the city. Twenty-five thousand men, not counting women and children, were then baptized. Saint George went on to become a talented officer and to amaze the world by his military exploits. He died before he was thirty years old. He is known as Victory Bearer, not only for his military achievements, but for successfully enduring martyrdom. As we know, the martyrs are commemorated in the dismissal at the end of Church services as "the holy, right victorious martyr...."

### **COFFEE LIST FOR THE MONTHS MAY AND JUNE**

- May 7 Special Event-  
We will celebrate Fr. Niko's Life and Work at  
St. Nicholas Church
- May 14 Happy Mother's Day
- May 21 Ermenita Aleko
- May 28 Linda Foundous

- June 4 Open
- June 11 Open
- June 18 Kirka family
- June 25 Open

Please be advised that any family can have the pleasure  
of sponsoring the coffee hour

***Contact the office at 718 380 5684***

Thank you so much to all the families for your support

## **Fr. Nikodhim's Journey at St. Nicholas**

When Fr. Nikodhim first came to St. Nicholas in 2006, he was introduced to us as Nate Preston. In fact, to this day, that is how he is listed in my cell phone. He was doing social work at Covenant House in Newark, New Jersey which was a refuge for teenagers and young adults that were basically homeless and/or addicted. After minimum sleep on Saturday nights, for about 3 years Fr. Nikodhim would take public transportation every Sunday to join us at St. Nicholas as a cantor and Sunday school teacher. He graduated St. Vladimir's Seminary in 2007, was ordained as a Deacon in 2009, and was then ordained a priest in 2010.

Fr. David Fox was serving as our priest at the time Fr. Nathan was ordained. It was at that time Fr. David decided to relocate with his family back to New Jersey and was assigned a parish there. Thus began our search for a new priest. After meeting with several priests, St. Nicholas decided to offer the position to Nate Preston after he was ordained as Fr. Nathan. I am sure Fr. Nathan was concerned about his new responsibilities as a parish priest, and the St. Nicholas community adjusted to a new priest with his first parish. His first several years were a time of learning and understanding for both of us. Ultimately, he was elevated to the title of Igumen which is equal to being the abbot of a Monastery, and last year was elevated to Archimandrite, the highest position for a single priest.

Fr. Nathan was a quick learner and started to learn more about the community and the individuals within the St. Nicholas community. He realized quickly that a part of the community, especially many elders that were new arrivals, struggled with English, and thus, he decided to learn Albanian. Under the tutelage of Peter Panajoti and some private tutoring, he was able to better serve the community as his Albania language skills improved. He took two trips to Albania, one in 2006 and one in 2013. Fr. Nathan was the first truly full-time priest that St. Nicholas had in quite a while. He had additional services during the week, bible study classes and other adult education groups. He also took more time counseling people planning to get married, baptized and whose children were to be baptized.

Fr. Nikodhim had a special love and concern for the children of St. Nicholas. He guided the Sunday school for the children and assisted with its organization. He dedicated the first Sunday of every month to a special children's sermon, having the children participate with questions and responses. Nothing was better than listening to some of the questions from the children that were sometimes entertaining and other times very thoughtful. With his kind and gentle way and easy smile, children feel very comfortable with him.

His elevation to Bishop is bittersweet for the St. Nicholas community. While we look forward to his leadership as the Bishop of the Albanian Archdiocese in America, we are sad to see him leave St. Nicholas. He has been our parish priest for more than 12 years, and he will surely be missed. I am sure we all have our own personal stories of interacting with Fr. Nikodhim; but on behalf of the community, I would like to express our sincere thanks for his service to our community and wish him well on his future endeavors. We will look forward to having him come to visit with us as our Bishop.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

This year began with hopes for a better year, and it seems our wish has been granted. It is a joy to see how our community is coming back to life a little more each week.

We were very happy to see baby Gwen at church. Parents Ediona & Logan Kreglow and grandparents Oneda & Edi Sera are enjoying this new bundle of joy very much.

On March 11, Angie Koroveshi, Sheena and Blendi Koroveshi's daughter, was baptized. May God bless, Angeline Grace and the entire family. Congratulations to grandparents Elena and Jimmy Solomos.

Another wonderful surprise was a visit from Nasi Pavllo in town from Albania to share a special event with his daughter, Thea, her engagement! Wedding plans are in the works for this fall. We wish the happy couple all the best.

We always remember and honor our loved ones. A memorial service was held for Fan Noli as we do each year on March 11<sup>th</sup>. We also honored Livia Shkurti and Ljazar Pano on the anniversary of their mother's passing. May their memories be eternal.

We held two parties last month. People feel good to be back and party. We should organize more gatherings and celebrations in the future.

Before we celebrate Easter, we will have a **Pancake Breakfast on Palm Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>**. Please come and join us. It is always an enjoyable event.

**On May 7<sup>th</sup> we will have a Farewell Luncheon to honor Fr. Niko** who will be leaving us soon to fulfill a new role as Bishop of the Albanian Archdiocese in America. Everyone is invited to come and thank him & wish him well. It has been a joy and an honor having him as our priest. We certainly will miss Fr. Niko with his kind & gentle manner and easy smile.

Our City Harvest food drive is going strong. Thank you for all the generous donations. Each time we fill our container, the food is delivered, and we begin again to help keep the shelves stocked for the needy.

We always end our Sunday service with a beautiful and enjoyable coffee hour. And as always, we need sponsors. Below is the coffee list for the upcoming months. If you would like to sponsor any Sunday that we are OPEN, please email Adriana Topore at [adrianatopore60@gmail.com](mailto:adrianatopore60@gmail.com) or Christina Liolin at [cliolin@comcast.net](mailto:cliolin@comcast.net).

**COFFEE LIST** for May: May 7 Farewell Luncheon, May 14 Mother's Day, May 21 Ermenita Aleko, May 28 Linda Foundous, **Sundays in June are OPEN: June 4, June 11, June 18 Kirka family, and June 25. Feel free to email or call 718-380-5684 and leave a message. Your help & cooperation is appreciated. Thank you!!!**





## Fan Noli's Memorial



### APRIL NAME DAYS

- 8—St. Lazarus  
Llazaraq Pano
- 15—St. Leonidas  
Leonard Ndreu, Blendi Kororeshi
- 23—St. George  
George Beno, Jorgo Celo, Jorgji Coka, Gjergj Klimi, Orges Llupa, Gjergji Terova, George Vangel, Gjergji Jano, Ermir Alla
- 23—St. Thomas  
Tomi Beno, Thomaq Fundo, Thomas Fundo, Tommy Ligor, Thomas DiTullio, Thomas Mitre, Tom Mone, Livia Shkurti
- 23—St. Alexandra  
Alexandra Kehoe, Alyssa Aleko, Alexandra Ladd
- 25—St. Mark  
Mark Papalexis, Mark Chenoweth, Marc Ladd

### MAY NAME DAYS

- 4—St. Monica  
Monica Adhin
- 5—St. Irene  
Renee Jones, Ira Gjoka, Rea Nune
- 9—St. Christopher  
Christopher Bode, Christopher Pulaha
- 13—St. Glykeria  
Gliqeri Mizaku
- 14—St. Isidore  
Isidoros Tsamblakos
- 21—Sts. Constantine and Helen  
Cleo Filis, Helen Panajoti, Lenore Apostolu, Eleni Coka, Koco Grazhdani, Lina Kondili, Helena Mertiri, Iliana Rehova, Leonora Vozhilla, Elona Zekthi, Eli Troja, Sonja Troja, Lina Kondili

## Breaking the Fast

Did you know that the tradition of our Church and our Orthodox faith is to break the fast together? After Great Lent and after Holy Week and at the very close of the Paschal service, the priest concludes all the prayers by blessing meat and cheese and eggs and other good things that the faithful people have brought to enjoy. This is where the tradition of Easter Baskets comes from—baskets full of things that we have looked forward to tasting and will enjoy even more by sharing

At St. Nicholas Church, we still keep this custom, and Father Niko will bless all the food sometime around 1:30 in the morning very early on Easter day. Plan to bring something that day; plan to share something that day as we experience the joy of the feast and taste the tastes of the feast with others.



***Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>***

***Palm Sunday***

*Pancakes . . . \$5*

*Bagel . . . \$5*

*Children 12 & under . . . Free*

*Includes juice, coffee, cream cheese, butter & syrup.*

**Fr. Nikodhim Farewell Luncheon**  
**Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup> - Following Liturgy - Fellowship Hall**

We have been blessed to have had Fr. Nikodhim with us for 15 years. This September, he is to be elevated to Bishop of the Albanian Archdiocese in America. We are so proud of him and wish him all the best as he moves on to fulfill another role. On **Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup>**, we will have a Farewell Luncheon to honor him. If you would like to join us for this special occasion to show our love & appreciation, please make your reservation now as space is limited and arrangements need to be made.

Please reserve by Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> by calling, texting, or emailing:

Adriana Topore – 516.417.6637 – [adrianatopore60@gmail.com](mailto:adrianatopore60@gmail.com)

Linda Foundos – 516.671.8071 – [ggsutter@aol.com](mailto:ggsutter@aol.com)

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For new ads please contact Lou Foundos

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