



# St. Michael's Orthodox Christian Church

1182 Ashland St., Greensburg, PA 15601

*Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.*

- His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America
- His Grace Bishop THOMAS, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Middle Atlantic
- Archpriest John Nosal, Pastor

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## Sunday, September 8, 2019

*To all who are present with us this morning,*

**Glory to Jesus Christ! Thank you for being here.**

***Please join us for our annual Mediterranean Buffet  
in the Fellowship Hall following Divine Liturgy.***

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**A Video of the Epistle and Gospel Readings and the Sermon is recorded on most Sundays for posting to our website, [stmgbg.org](http://stmgbg.org).**

**You May Find the Text of the Divine Liturgy** beginning on the bottom of page 91 of the Service Book (gold embossed cross on the reddish brown cover) or in the green-spiral-bound book; sheet music can be found in the 8.5" x 11" large, spiral-bound booklet.

**At the Kiss of Peace** our practice is for each of us to greet the person to our right and left with the bowing of our head, hands held in a prayerful clasp or crossed on the chest, while offering each other the seasonal Christian greeting, "Christ is in our midst!" and responding, "He is and shall be!"

**Please remember that Holy Communion is reserved** for those Chrismated Orthodox Christians who have appropriately prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and Confession to receive the Holy Mysteries of the Church. The bread (*anti'doron*, which means 'in place' of the gifts) which we share after Communion and at the end of the Liturgy is for all.

**Being mindful we are in church, let us always remember to...**

...**be quiet and attentive.** Let us sing, pray, stand, sit, kneel and respond where responses are indicated. Let us not talk, look around, text message, play games, etc. Especially let us work at this in the Communion line and when in line to venerate the Cross and depart. If we cannot hear the post-Communion prayers being chanted during our church departure, we are way too noisy.

...**refrain from eating, drinking or chewing gum.** (most obviously and especially if you will be receiving Holy Communion).

...**stay put.** Except in rare cases, there are few of us who cannot stay in one location for two hours (actually less, for most of us).



## ***The mission of the members of St. Michael's Orthodox Church is to become completely loving people.***

*(see Lk 10:27) This will occur by the Grace of God as we strive to live holy lives, using the tools He has given us for this endeavor: prayer, fasting, charitable works, and the constant remembrance of death.*

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### TONE 3

Arr: Basil Kazan.

Let the hea - vens re-joice and the earth be glad;  
For the Lord hath done a migh-ty act with His own arm;  
He hath tram-pled down death by death, and be - came the first  
born from the dead; He hath de - liv - ered us from the  
depths of Ha - des, gran - ting the world the great mer - cy.

## **I.O.C.C. SYRIAN CHRISTIAN RELIEF**

As the Syrian crisis continues, we continue to accept *donations* to do what we can to help ease the suffering there. Checks may be written to "St. Michael's" with the note "Syrian Relief." The following is a link to International Orthodox Christian Charities ((IOCC) "Response to the Crisis in Syria" page with more information on what you can do to help:

[http://www.iocc.org/countries/countries\\_syria.aspx](http://www.iocc.org/countries/countries_syria.aspx)

# Sunday, September 8, 2019

**Tone:** 3      **Eothinon:** 1

*Sunday before the Elevation of the Holy Cross and the Great Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos*

**Greeting:** Blessed Feast!      **Response:** Thank you. Same to you!

*As the Great Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos is being celebrated, we are also welcoming our friends and neighbors to our annual food event, **St. Michael's Mediterranean Buffet**. With so many things happening and much work to be done, please forgive us for any movement of people and things that may create a disturbance in you.*

***Buffet Workers**, know that your presence in church today and your need to leave to begin your service somewhere else in the building is part of today's worship. God bless our buffet!*

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## **THE EPISTLE READING**

*St. Paul to the Galatians (6:11-18)*

**B**RETHREN, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For, neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all, who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

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## **THE HOLY GOSPEL**

*According to St. John (3:13-17)*

**T**HE LORD SAID, "No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For, God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

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# Thank You to All Buffet Workers!

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## **THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS**

A Sermon by +Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

The Church's veneration of Mary has always been rooted in her obedience to God, her willing choice to accept a humanly impossible calling. The Orthodox Church has always emphasized Mary's connection to humanity and delighted in her as the best, purest, most sublime fruition of human history and of man's quest for God, for ultimate meaning, for ultimate content of human life.

If in Western Christianity veneration of Mary was centered upon her perpetual virginity, the heart of Orthodox Christian East's devotion, contemplation, and joyful delight has always been her Motherhood, her flesh and blood connection to Jesus Christ. The East rejoices that the human role in the divine plan is pivotal. The Son of God comes to earth, appears in order to redeem the world, He becomes human to incorporate man into His divine vocation, but humanity takes part in this. If it is understood that Christ's "co-nature" with us is as a human being and not some phantom or bodiless apparition, that He is one of us and forever united to us through His humanity, then devotion to Mary also becomes understandable, for she is the one who gave Him His human nature, His flesh and blood. She is the one through whom Christ can always call Himself "The Son of Man."

Son of God, Son of Man...God descending and becoming man so that man could become divine, could become partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), or as the teachers of Church expressed it, "deified." Precisely here, in this extraordinary revelation of man's authentic nature and calling, is the source that gratitude and tenderness which cherishes Mary as our link to Christ and, in Him, to God. And nowhere is this reflected more clearly than in the Nativity of the Mother of God.

Nothing about this event is mentioned anywhere in the Holy Scriptures. But why should there be? Is there anything remarkable, anything especially unique about the normal birth of a child, a birth like any other? The Church began to commemorate the event with a special feast...because, on the

## ***REGARDING “THE WORD” Magazine...***

In order to update their subscription database, the Archdiocese Registrar has asked that we notify all parishioners that...

**...YOU MUST RESUBSCRIBE by submitting a new application to “The Word,” if you want to continue receiving it.**

The Archdiocesan Registrar has provided a link to the new subscription form for THE WORD publication, so that you can complete it online (This task was successfully accomplished yesterday): <https://forms.gle/Kt7MRGZKH2CmNbAWA>

Please note that if you are unable to complete the form online, there are (green) copies at the entrance to the church for you to complete, return to the office and we can submit them for you.

Any questions, please call the office. Thank you for your cooperation with this Archdiocesan request.

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contrary, the very fact that it is routine discloses something fresh and radiant about everything we call routine and ordinary, it gives new depth to the unremarkable details of human life...And with each birth the world is itself in some sense created anew and given as a gift to this new human being to be his life, his path, his creation.

This feast therefore is first a general celebration of Man's birth, and we no longer remember the anguish, as the Gospel says, “for joy that a human being is born into the world” (Jn. 16:21). Secondly, we now know whose particular birth, whose coming we celebrate: Mary's. We know the uniqueness, the beauty, the grace of precisely this child, her destiny, her meaning for us and for the whole world. And thirdly, we celebrate all who prepared the way for Mary, who contributed to her inheritance of grace and beauty...And therefore the Feast of her Nativity is also a celebration of human history, a celebration of faith in man, a celebration of man.

Sadly, the inheritance of evil is far more visible and better known. There is so much evil around us that this faith in man, in his freedom, in the possibility of handing down a radiant inheritance of goodness has almost evaporated and been replaced by cynicism and suspicion. This hostile cynicism and discouraging suspicion are precisely what seduce us to distance ourselves from the Church when it celebrates with such joy and faith this birth of a little girl in whom are concentrated all the goodness, spiritual beauty, harmony and perfection that are elements of genuine human nature. Thus, in celebrating Mary's birth we find ourselves already on the road to Bethlehem, moving toward the joyful mystery of Mary as the Mother to God.

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His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH  
The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS



This letter was in last week's  
Bulletin. It is worth reading  
again and reflecting on.  
**READ IT AGAIN & OFTEN.**  
(*Bold italics* are added.)

September 1, 2019

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ!

*"You crown the year with Your goodness,  
And Your paths drip with abundance."* Psalm 65:11

I greet each of you in the name of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ as we embark upon a new church year. ***The Lord grants us to see the dawn of another new year for our repentance, nothing else.*** It is not given carelessly or frivolously, and because it is God's gift to us, we will have to give an account of how we spend this gift freely given to us.

***"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"*** (Ephesians 5:15-16). Yes, the days are evil and we must be vigilant lest we be led along by their logic, the logic of this world. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons says that ***the time falling between Christ's becoming man and His second coming at the end is the time in which God causes the fruits of history - that is, the saints - to ripen.*** How can we turn our coming evil days into a year acceptable to the Lord?

As Orthodox Christians ***we have an obligation to redeem the time, each and every day, by living a life permeated by prayer and repentance. Our secular responsibilities must be influenced and seasoned by our spiritual life, not the other way around.*** All too often this is precisely the stuff we should bring to confession.

In one of her talks to her nuns, Gerondissa Macrina counsels them:

*Take advantage of every minute of your life with more prostrations, more prayer ropes, and more spiritual reading. Avoid idle talk because with idle talk a person becomes spiritually empty and the grandeur is erased from his soul. If we do even one extra knot on our prayer rope, our guardian angel will record it; a few prayers or good thoughts will be stored up for later. Christ saves up all these things, and when the time comes for us to depart for the next life, we will take them and go to Christ. (Words from the Heart, Homily 39)*

As the new year dawns, let us renew our efforts to work out our salvation through the tools the holy Orthodox Church provides to us. May the Most holy Theotokos protect you and may the thrice holy God bless you and give you strength.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Thomas".

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)  
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

## WHAT DOES HOLY WORK TEACH US?

(Here's the conclusion from a bulletin of a few weeks back — "If we strive to see God working in absolutely everything, then we will discover the opportunity for spiritual growth — going to God, loving with all our heart — most profoundly in the aspects of life that we would rather avoid. Our growth can be described in many ways, but for Bulletin purposes we will consider these five different ways of anticipating that God will work in our lives through the unfolding of Life. Each of these five will be considered in particular with a few words in upcoming Bulletins.

- 1) *Steadfastness*
- 2) **Clear seeing**
- 3) *Experiencing emotional distress*
- 4) *Attending to this very moment*
- 5) *No big deal*

"The holy work we do in church, worshipping God in the Divine Liturgy, is to be like a fire that spreads through every corner of our life, meaningful and menial (it's all meaningful), devouring that which stands between us and Him and lifting us like sweet-smelling incense into the heavenly realms."

**Clear seeing** — "Truly, all things are vanity and life is but a shadow and a dream..." (Orthodox Funeral Service; Kathisma in Tone 6).

Reality or shadows and dreams? Would you rather see things *as they are* or *as you would like them to be*? Yes, it is a bit of a trick question. Take Hurricane Dorian, for example. While we may wish that it would not have been as devastating an event as it is, we cannot very successfully pretend that the destruction is not real. We know we have to deal with it. The outer world is like that.

Our inner world, the psyche, our minds and hearts, operates in the same fashion but in a more subtle, easy to miss sort of way. It is no wonder that St. John Chrysostom has said "Knowing yourself is a greater miracle than raising the dead." He means that it's really, really hard to know ourselves — to *see* ourselves *clearly*, or at least as other people see us. Yet if we claim to be on a spiritual path and concerned with the truth about everything, one of the first facts we must face and the only place to begin, is that we do not see things as they are. We see things as we are. And that includes ourselves.

Holy Work has tools for its accomplishment. The best tool God has given us for improving our vision, our *seeing clearly*, is Confession. To be changing my vision from shadowy dream to crystal clarity is Divine Work.

May we all be granted improved vision — *clear seeing*.

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## ***HIGHLIGHTS of UPCOMING EVENTS***

***SAT., SEPT. 14*** — 9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy for the Elevation of the Cross  
10:30 AM - Post-Buffer Restoration Day

***SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15*** — Church School begins.  
— Shop with Scrip Order due.

***SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21*** - Hike #5; RSVP Petros Papas;  
meet in parking lot at 8:00AM.

***TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24*** — 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm - Food on the Hill

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***On Sunday, September 8,  
Fr. Meletios Zafaran will  
be with us today*** to celebrate  
the Feast, enjoy the Buffet, and  
talk with people about the  
Sunday Evening (Monday)  
**Divine Liturgies** that will be  
**celebrated in Arabic** here at  
St. Michael's beginning Sunday,  
**September 22 at 6:00 PM.**

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Please sign up for **Fellowship  
Hour** for this new Church  
Year. A 2019-2020 schedule has  
recently been mailed to everyone.

**Contact Debbie** in the Church  
Office if you have any questions.

**Subscription forms for "The  
Word"** magazine have also been  
mailed out for those who will  
choose not to subscribe on line.

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**Sec'y Debbie will be in the office  
Mon., Wed., and Fri. 9-3.**

**ALWAYS USE THE MOST  
CURRENT BULLETIN!**

*Sun, Sept. 8 - Nativity of the Theotokos*

- 8:45 - FESTAL ORTHROS
- 10:00 AM - FESTAL DIVINE LITURGY

- 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM —  
St. Michael's Mediterranean Buffet

*Monday, September 9*

- 9:00 AM - DIVINE LITURGY  
Joachim and Anna

*Wednesday, September 11*

- 9:00 AM - DIVINE LITURGY  
Ephrosynos the Cook
- 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

*Thursday, September 12*

- 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

*Friday, September 13*

- 6:00 PM - GREAT VESPERS  
Elevation of the Life Giving Cross

*Saturday, September 14*

- 8:00 AM - FESTAL ORTHROS  
Elevation of the Life Giving Cross
- 9:00 AM - FEST'L DIV LIT'GY
- 10:00 AM - Post-Bufferet  
Restoration Day
- 6:00 PM - GREAT VESPERS

*Our first Church School  
Session will be held on  
Sunday, September 15.*

*Sunday, September 15*

- 8:45 - ORTHROS
- 9:30 - Choir Rehearsal
- 10:00 AM - DIVINE LITURGY  
- 1st Day of Church School  
- Antiochian Women's Mtg

*Tuesday, September 17*

- 9:00 AM - DIVINE LITURGY  
Sophia and her three daughters:  
Faith, Hope and Love
- 7:00 PM - Parish Council Meeting

*Thursday, September 19*

- 7:00 PM - Choir Rehearsal

*Saturday, September 21*

- 8:00 AM - the Last Hike; gather in  
the church parking lot
- 6:00 PM - GREAT VESPERS

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**Hike Finale  
Saturday, September 21**

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*'Monday' Divine Liturgy  
in Arabic will be celebrated  
at 6:00 PM, Sunday,  
September 22. Fr. Meletios  
Zafaran will preside.*

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