

St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral

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The Cathedral Messenger

Orthodox Church in America
Diocese of Western Pennsylvania

Archbishop Melchisedek
Archpriest John Mikita (Dean)
Protodeacon Michael Wusylko
Deacon Stephen Boyd

April 2024

An Uncomplicated Truth (By Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon)

It is reasonable, I suppose—or at least natural—for modern students of religion to wonder how the earliest Christians, all of them Jews, were able to reconcile their belief in the divinity of Christ with the monotheism enshrined in Israel’s Sh’ma’. Indeed, historians of Christian thought have devoted many studies to that inquiry.

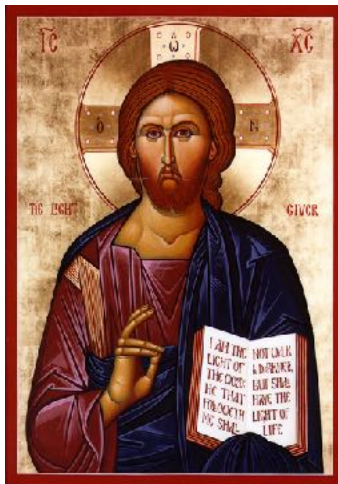
Looking at the apostolic writings through the lens of this inquiry, I gain an interesting impression of the earliest Christians: Their confession of the divinity of Jesus, while it was difficult, seems not to have been complicated.

First, the recorded difficulty of the apostles was not an impasse of reason (“How can this Jesus be both God and man?”) but a failure of perception (“They did not understand about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened”—Mark 6:52; Cf. 8:13-21).

Second, when they did arrive at this profession, in due course, the journey was not complicated. Their arrival did not result from a subtle mental process (“Well, let’s see, perhaps He is one person in two natures.”) but from an immediate

experience involving both Jesus’ identity and their own destiny: “You have the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe and to know that You are the Holy One of God (ho Hagios tou Theou)” (John 6:68-69).

It is most significant that the two verbs introducing Peter’s confession—“to believe and to know”—are expressed in the Greek perfect tense: pepistevkamen kai egnokamen. The nuance of the expression is subtle; the apostles, when they reflect on what they now confess, perceive that they already know the identity of Jesus. Even though they have not figured it out, they discover it is already an established conviction—a prior, implicit knowledge of Jesus’ identity. Peter, faced abruptly with the question of leaving Jesus (“Will you also depart?”), immediately discerns why he and the others cannot do it: They know who He is! Abandoning Him, they would forfeit eternal life.



We should go further in this reflection, I think. Why else would Jesus ask the apostles, “Will you also depart”? Jesus needs information on this score? Hardly. He poses the question, rather, and thus puts the apostles on the spot, precisely in order to bring their

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in loving memory of their loved ones.

minds to the realization of what, in fact, they have already come to know. His question to them raises to the conscious surface of the apostles' minds a conviction to which they already adhere. It is not proper to speak, in this case, of "doctrinal development." The apostles are not trying to find the right words to confess a complex and knotty idea.

The apostles are making, rather, a basic creedal statement. In its full form it runs like this: "I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ." He is one Lord, because—as all Jews know (and would lovingly die for)—"the Lord is one," 'Adonai 'ehad (Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 4:5). Jesus is identified in the terms of the Sh'ma'. In the Bible, monotheism is about identity.

The apostles make this step in response to Jesus' assertion, "I came forth from the Father," (exselthon para tou Patros) (16:28). They affirm this claim, not because of a religious theory that warrants it, but because, as they watch and listen to Jesus, they discern in Him the One who sent Him: "'He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me" (John 12:45). "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (4:49).

Modern students of religion, regarding the matter as an intellectual dilemma, try to imagine how the apostles, when they affirmed Jesus' divinity, were able—as a point of logic—to reconcile that affirmation with their monotheism. In the apostolic corpus, however, there is not the slightest indication that the apostles experienced Jesus' divinity as an intellectual dilemma. What, then, did the apostles suppose that modern students of religion do not suppose?

It is this: For modern students of religion—generally speaking—monotheism involves a fundamentally mathematical thesis There is one God, as distinct from

"more or fewer" than one God; start counting gods, and when you get to one, stop. Consequently, all those who believe in one God must logically believe in the same God.

This approach to monotheism is what allows our contemporaries to speak of "the monotheistic religions." Their thesis is simple: 'Since there is only one God, all those who believe in one God believe in the same God. Their differences are those of development and/or expression.'

This thesis is not only simple; it is simply absurd. Biblical monotheism is not about mathematics; it is about God's identity: Who is this one God? Who He is, is the essential question. I cite a noted authority on the point, 'im Adonai (IHWH) 'Elohim l-ku 'aharaiv; v-'im ha-Ba'al l-ku 'aharaiv— "If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Elijah knew, of course, that Baal belonged to a pantheon, but this consideration was not the point. Baal was not a false god because he had relatives. He was a false god because he was not "the Lord, our God." Elijah's monotheism was not a matter of counting but of identifying. The question was not, How many gods? but who is God?

And this is the reason the confession of Jesus never became, in the eyes of the Church, a challenge to biblical monotheism. In the Orthodox faith Jesus is divine because He pertains to—is included in—the identity of God. Gradually this truth became perfectly clear to a certain fisherman, an improbable tax collector, and some women of their company. Their conviction on the point was a big and difficult step, but it wasn't complicated.



Schedule of Divine Services

April 2024

(Note: Calendar is subject to change. Please consult calendar at sanocpgh.org/calendar)

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Mar. 31 St. Gregory Palamas (St. Innocent of Alaska) Church School 9:00 am Hours 9:40 am Liturgy 10:00 am Catechism 12:00 pm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 Veneration of the Precious Cross Church School 9:00 am Hours 9:40 am Liturgy 10:00 am Catechism 12:00 pm Diocesan Lenten Vespers 6:00 pm | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 St. John Climacus Hours 9:40 am Liturgy 10:00 am St. Tikhon's Choir Catechism 12:00 pm | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 St. Mary of Egypt Church School 9:00 am Hours 9:40 am Liturgy 10:00 am Catechism 12:00 pm | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 Palm Sunday Church School 9:00 am Hours 9:40 am Liturgy 10:00 am Catechism 12:00 pm Bridegroom Matins 7:00 pm | 29 | 30 | May 1 | May 2 | May 3 | May 4 |
| | Bridegroom Matins 7:00 pm | Bridegroom Matins 7:00 pm | Presanctified Liturgy 9:00 am Holy Supper Matins 7:00 pm | Vesperal Liturgy 9:00 am Matins with Passion Gospels 7:00 pm | Royal Hours 8:00 am Vespers 3:00 pm Matins with Praises 7:00 pm | Lazarus Saturday Hours 8:40 am Liturgy 9:00 am Confessions 4 pm Great Vespers & Confessions 5:00 pm |



SANWA ANNOUNCEMENT

1. Pirogie updated schedule:

- a. Thursday, April 4th – workshop for 150 dozen – 10 AM
- b. Saturday, June 8th – workshop for 300 dozen – 9 AM

2. Thank you to all who helped by providing excellent hospitality to our fellow North Hills Orthodox Christians at our combined Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, March 27th. The Balogs cut all the beautiful daffodils from around the church property and they were placed as centerpieces on the tables. Thanks to all who brought delicious Lenten food – our tables were laden! Thanks to all who served and cleaned up. It was a joy to witness our entire team working in harmony, unity and love!

Special thanks to Eileen Glisan for continually purchasing and donating the dining hall tablecloths. They are always color coordinated for the seasons and feasts and fasts. Looking forward to seeing especially beautiful ones for our Pascha agape meal !

3. Upcoming events that will need to have helpers:

- a. Diocesan Vespers – Sunday, April 7th
- b. St. Tikhon's Seminary choir – Sunday, April 14th
- c. Paschal Agape meal



Clip and insert in prayer book to pray for those in the prayer list

Prayer List

(All names should be submitted to one of the Cathedral Clergy for commemoration at the divine services.)

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| For Health and Salvation: Matushka Eugenia Erika with child Patricia with child Alexander Georgette | Marilyn Adriane George Sam Nathaniel Gwendolyn Lindsay Marie | Stephanie Marilyn Monk Joseph Waltor Vasily Phyllis Sylvia | For the Newly Departed: Archpriest Anthony Janice |
|---|--|--|--|

| Assignments (Liturgy) | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Date | 3rd Hour | 6th Hour | Epistle | Thanksgiving |
| April 7 | Reader Roman | Reader Timothy | David G | Reader John H |
| April 14 | Reader Gregory | Reader John H | Reader Gregory | Reader Alexander |
| April 21 | Reader John B | Reader Timothy | Reader Alexander | Reader John B |
| April 28 | Reader Alexander | Frank N | Reader Timothy | Reader Gregory |
| May 5 | --- | --- | Reader Roman | Reader Timothy |
| May 12 | Reader John H | George P | Reader John H | Reader Roman |
| May 19 | Nicholas | Reader Roman | Reader John B | Nicholas |
| May 26 | Reader Timothy | Reader Gregory | Fran B | Reader John H |

| Assignments | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Date | Greeters | Candle Room | Collection Counters | Bell Ringers | Brunch |
| April 7 | A Ribar | S Romanchik | N Waryanka, R Glisan | Brayden & Julianna | V |
| April 14 | C Steeb | Rinaldo | J Dille, G Ribar | Brayden & Allie | VI |
| April 21 | C Namisnak | G Ribar | N Tesone, K Zallow | Julliana & Jules | II |
| April 28 | E Glisan | B Savchik | R Steeb, R Horodnic | Aleks & Allie | I |
| May 5 | L Papakirk | S Romanchik | N Waryanka, R Glisan | Brayden & Julianna | III |
| May 12 | B Daskivich | Rinaldo | J Dille, G Ribar | Brayden & Allie | IV |
| May 19 | J Resovich | G Ribar | N Tesone, K Zallow | Julliana & Jules | V |
| May 26 | A Ribar | B Savchik | R Steeb, R Horodnic | Aleks & Allie | VI |

PARISH COUNCIL CORNER

We are working on a new structure for Council and Council Meetings. It is currently a work in progress that will hopefully result in a more impactful meeting. Some of the handouts provided to council members are posted on the council bulletin board in the church hall.

- Financial reports are posted on the council bulletin board in the church hall.
- Discussions on the future of Fundability and the application of the funds.
- Church Book Store – Gratitude was expressed to Sylvia Hanna for handling the book store for so many years. Beth Benton agreed to step in to fill the gap, handling the bookstore in the interim. However, we are looking for a Book Store Manager, so if you are interested, please let Fr. John or Mat. Mary Wusylko know.
- Church Service/Prayer Books and Bibles – We are checking on the condition of the prayer books and bibles that are in the church pews to determine if we need new and/or additional books. If you are interested in donating books, please let Fr. John know.
- There will be opportunities to participate in various committees/ministries related to council, including but not limited to Finance, Evacuation Planning, Grounds & Maintenance, and others. Please watch for details on these opportunities in the Newsletter and weekly bulletins.
- Please know that while Fr. John spends time with potential new members at coffee hour/brunch, he is always available to meet with anyone at any time. Please contact Fr. John if you would like to meet with him.
- Panikhida – Consideration is being given to having one service per month (potentially on a Saturday) to remember and pray for all who passed during that month. This would replace the short services that have often been held at the end of Sunday Liturgy when someone passes.
- Choros – The final lighting is in place! Thanks to Fr. John and the team for working through many options to find a great solution.

If you are interested in participating on a council ministry/committee, please let Larissa Lindquist or Claudia Steeb know.



**ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANS FOR LIFE
ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY**

UPCOMING NEVSKY OCLIFE ACTIVITIES

Prayer: Upcoming Moleben services for victims of abortion:

- Saturday, Apr. 20, 4:15 p.m.
- Sunday, May 19, following coffee hour
- Thursday, June 20, 7 p.m.

Education:

- There will be a short talk following the Moleben on June 20 (details forthcoming)
- **Mark your calendars!!** Frederica Mathewes-Green (a well-known author and speaker on topics related to Orthodox belief and practice, including pro-life issues) will lead a retreat at the Cathedral on Saturday, Sept. 7.

Service:

- Annunciation Gift Bag Project for new moms and their newborns, to benefit Women's Choice Network: March 24-April 21. See next page for details.

Special Notes:

- Did you know that Women's Choice Network is now Network of Life? Their new website can be found at <https://www.networkoflife.org>
- 'Fact Check Friday': Stop by our OCLife table and take a look at the Network of Life fact checks on what we often hear from the media about abortion and pregnancy resource centers. Compare what you hear to the facts!
- Prayer Road Crew: Would you like to be on the email list to receive prayer requests from Network of Life? If so, go to 'Join the Road Crew' on the home page of Network of Life.

Next meeting of our OCLife parish ministry: Sunday, June 2, following coffee hour.

Please join us! All are welcome and encouraged to participate!



ORTHODOX
CHRISTIANS FOR LIFE
ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY

ANNUNCIATION GIFT BAG PROJECT FOR NEW MOMS & BABIES

TO BENEFIT WOMEN'S CHOICE NETWORK
Where 'Choice' is "Choice for Life"

We will once again put together gift bags for moms who choose life and for their newborns. Gift bags will be available on **Sunday, March 24**, with the tags below on each bag to indicate the 5 items to purchase and place in each bag.

Please use the sheets in the hall to sign out the bags that you take and to sign them back in when you return them. **Deadline for returning filled bags is Sunday, April 21.**

Questions?: See Beth Benton or Carol Namisnak.



St. Tikhon's Seminary Choir is coming to our Cathedral !

Please mark your calendars for **Sunday April 14th**. St. Tikhon's Mission Choir will be singing the responses to the Divine Liturgy. Please come to hear the "divine" singing of this octet.

The future of our church in America depends on priestly formation that occurs in our seminaries; to be able to preach the word of God to all those hungry to hear it and serve the Lord in the altar. That is exactly what St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary is doing! They just received a 10- year accreditation from the ATS (Association of Theological Schools), which is a remarkable achievement.

Please help support the seminary with your donations and prayers. A special collection for the seminary will be taken. If you are unable to come on the 14th, please leave your donation for the seminary at the candle desk. Thank you for your generosity!



Special Church Events

Sunday of Orthodoxy



**Meal after Presanctified Liturgy with Holy Trinity GOC and
St. John the Baptist Church**

