

THE FORERUNNER
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
 420 Laura Street, Philipsburg, PA 16866
 V. Rev. Fr. C. Michael Simerick, Acting Rector
 Contact Fr. Michael directly at 814-375-1343
<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>



John Conkey-Council President; Tom Demchak-Vice-President; Judy Everly-Secretary; Mike Conkey-Treasurer
Members: Sonya Brennish, George Sura, Ivan Switala

JULY 2019

Service & Activity Schedule

Sat., July 6 – Vespers – 5:00 p.m.
 Sun., July 7
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – Ammerman & Thompson

Sat., July 13 - Vespers– 5:00 p.m.
 Sun., July 14 – Fathers of 1st six Ecumenical Councils
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – Foster and Conkey
 Parish Council Meeting

Sat., July 20 – Holy Prophet Elijah
 Vespers – 5:00 p.m.
 Sun., July 21 – Holy Prophet Ezekiel
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Blessing of vehicles
 Fellowship Hour – Everly and Donovan

Sat. July 27 – Vespers – 5:00 p.m.
 Sun., July 28
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – Fetcenko & Stine

Please contact Shirley Donovan (814-360-3615) or Mary Ann Conkey (814-867-2926) if there are changes with the Fellowship Hour. Cash donations go towards the purchase of coffee, cream, and sugar.

Readers:

Mark Ammerman, John Conkey,
 Mike Conkey, Tom Demchak,
 Doug Donovan, George Sura,
 Andrew Tocimak

Altar Servers:

Acolyte John Blake
 Ivan Switala

Reader's Schedule

	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Epistle</i>
7/7	John Conkey	John Conkey
7/14	Mark Ammerman	Mark Ammerman
7/21	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
7/28	Tom Demchak	Tom Demchak

Notable Feasts in July

7/10	Ven Anthony of the Kiev Caves
7/14	Fathers of the first six Ecumenical Councils
7/20	Holy Prophet Elijah
7/26	St. Jacob Netsvetov of Alaska

Birthdays

Joanne Whitehead	July 8
Christopher Conkey	July 9
Shirley Donovan	July 9
Alexandra Rocco (Stine)	July 12
Cynthia Posmoga	July 15
Andrew Conkey	July 18
Sarah Demchak	July 18
RoseMarie Fetcenko	July 21
Jan Brennish	July 28
V. Rev. Fr. Michael Simerick	July 28
Andrew Tocimak	July 30

Anniversaries

John & MaryAnn Conkey	July 3, 1987
John & Svetlana Blake	July 11, 1998
Christopher & Gabrielle Conkey	July 12, 2014

From the Desk of Father Michael

The following are two important points for our consideration and contemplation:

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MUST NOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

We are fortunate to have this opportunity to remain Orthodox in a world that is increasingly becoming more hostile to religion especially to those of the Christian faith. We must take full advantage of our religious freedom and attempt to use our gifts and talents for God's glory and the building up of His Holy Church.

What would Christians in other parts of the world who are being persecuted for their faith give for the opportunity afforded us? Are we to consider their circumstance simply unfortunate and ours lucky and continue "status quo?" We must realize that to those to whom much has been given much is expected.

A phrase made popular in the sixties by President Kennedy was "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." We need to adopt this slogan with regard to our church involvement and "Ask not what the Church can do for me but what might I do for God's glory by service in His Church."

Whenever we set our hearts and minds on service to the Lord and use our gifts and talents ungrudgingly for His purpose, the great miracle of salvation becomes apparent to us and we receive blessings from Him one hundred fold. May God strengthen our resolve in our commitment to service so that at the last judgement we might hear Him reply, "Well done, good and faithful servant, come and receive your reward." May God's blessing be with you now and always.

LIVING AN ILLUSION

We have come to believe that what we **reason** in our own minds about life is true. We have grown comfortable with the notion that our concept of reality is correct, and so we live our lives marching to the rhythm of what we perceive through our senses regarding the objective world around us. If we are at least honest with ourselves, after attempting this approach, we come to realize that our march through life is not a well-measured, orchestrated cadence at all. Instead, we find ourselves taking half steps, back steps, quick steps, and giant steps that resemble an uncoordinated stumbling rather than a real march through life's experiences.

What is the problem? Why can't we seem to understand things correctly and, therefore, get things straight? Our holy Church affords us the answer. We for the most part are living an illusion. Since the Fall, what was damaged and still remains damaged in us is the "nous," the eye of the soul. Because of this infirmity, we have come to rely on reason in an attempt to correct our spiritual vision. Reason is simply not up to the task. Our powers of reason were meant to be guided by the light of Christ through the illumination of the nous that permits us to truly perceive and, therefore, reason correctly.

What is the solution? How can we correct our powers of reason? Again, our holy Church affords us the answer. We must be healed spiritually, and our Church's prescription is not only mere words. To know that we are ill is the first step in our approach to healing. Then we must seek a spiritual physician. God has provided clergy (priests/ascetics) to be the agents of His healing ministry that He makes possible through His Church.

Those entrusted by Christ to effect spiritual healing implore the full arsenal of powers of the Holy Spirit via the contemplative, sacramental, and liturgical life of the Church. Fasting, vigil, and prayers are applied as the medicines of healing. Once our healing begins, correct vision is a direct fruit, and we begin to realize our own sinfulness is what clouds our ability to be illumined. The goal is to see things, as God would have them seen in spirit and in truth.

What a joy to begin to live one's life guided by the drumbeat of God, led by the Spirit through the life-saving experiences afforded us in this world as we prepare for the new world to come. Let our prayer be that the Holy Spirit heals us, that we might perceive and live in truthful reality the salvation plan of God.

The following is information on a select number of notable commemorations during the month of July. Check your wall calendar for additional notable feasts for the month of July.

SAINT ANTHONY, THE FATHER OF MONASTICISM IN RUSSIA

Although from the very beginning the Lord God ordained that it was not good for man that he should be alone and therefore created woman, throughout the salvation plan of God, men and women have found blessed states of existence by living unmarried and dedicating their whole lives to the service of God. Ever since the fall of man a monastic/ascetic mode of existence was found to be comparable to marriage. St. Paul advocates the blessed state of non-marriage, since to be a Christian in this world takes great sacrifice, especially for those with family responsibilities.

Monasticism is seen to be a viable option to marriage as witnessed in the Scriptures and the holy tradition of our Church. However, to refrain from marriage is not for everyone. According to Christ, St. Paul, and the saints of the Church, those who would live a monastic/celebate life have been given gifts and talents to do so. The secret to a viable monasticism is not that one simply refrains from marriage and the responsibility of married life but rather that a monk or nun belongs to a community of monastics with a rule of life for the community that governs each member. To be alone is not good even for those who would practice monasticism. God's intent for us from the very beginning was that we would exist in community, some in the community of marriage, some in monastic communities, but all in the community of the Church. It is ultimately as married members or monastic members through the community of our life experience in the Church that we are strengthened and nurtured that we might inherit eternal life—a communal life with God and those saved for all eternity.

On July 10 the life of Holy Father Anthony of the Kiev Caves of Russia is celebrated. He is hailed as the father of monasticism of all of Russia. The lives of the monastics throughout the centuries in Russia are legendary, and it was St. Antony who laid the foundation for Russia's glorious monastic movement. The following is taken from "The Prologue of Ochrid" written by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic:

"Our Holy Father Anthony of the Kiev Caves—The renewer and father of monasticism in Russia, he was born in a little place called Lubetch, near Chernigov. He left his home while still a boy and went to the Holy Mountain, where he became a monk and lived in asceticism at Esphignienou. In response to a vision, the abbot sent him to Russia, to found the monastic life there. He chose a cave near Kiev. When a group of men desiring the monastic life settled round him, he installed Theodosius as their abbot and himself remained in his cave in silence. By the grace of God, the monastery grew and became the mother of Russian monasticism. Anthony endured much evil from men and from demons, but he overcame all by his meekness. He had a great gift of discernment, and was able to heal the sick. He went to the Lord in 1073 at the age of ninety, leaving his spiritual nursery, which would, through the ages, yield good fruit for the Orthodox peoples of Russia."

THE FIRST SIX ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Frequently the holy Church is seen as a haven of peace. The notion that we flee to the Church for help, that we run to the Church to escape the painful reality of this world has become a popular one. Yet although the Lord calls us to share in His peace, He does not suggest that His peace will prevent us from experiencing the storms of this world. In fact, sometimes the storms of life are more violent in the Church than outside Her. Our Lord said that He has not come to bring peace to the world but actually a sword.

The reality of the Lord's statement is most evident in the commemoration of the Ecumenical Councils. We celebrate today the holy Fathers of the first six councils.

The attacks against the truth of Orthodoxy over the centuries led to violent struggles, often culminating in the persecution unto death of the Apologists (defenders of the Orthodox faith). Our holy fathers in every generation remained steadfast in defending the truth against the heretics. Because of their great faith and being led by the Holy Spirit, they were willing and able to fight the good fight, that the truth of our Holy Orthodox Catholic faith might be handed down to us. It is in coming to the knowledge of this truth that the peace of God that passes all understanding can be experienced.

The following for consideration regarding the Ecumenical Councils is an excerpt from the Prologue from Ochrid by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic:

The Ecumenical Councils are the greatest duels between Orthodoxy and the heretics. Today, the Church commemorates the first six Councils together:

The First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 325, at which 318 fathers were present. It is commemorated on May 29th and on the 7th Sunday after Easter. This Council refuted the Arian heresy against God the Son.

The Second Council in Constantinople in 381, was attended by 150 fathers. It is commemorated on May 22nd. This Council refuted the heresy of Macedonius against God the Holy Spirit.

The Third Council was in Ephesus in 431, with 200 fathers. It is commemorated on September 9th. This Council refuted the Nestorian heresy against the Mother of God.

The Fourth Council was in Chalcedon in 451, with 630 fathers present. It is commemorated on July 16th. This Council refuted the Monophysite heresy.

The Fifth Council was in Constantinople in 553, with 160 fathers, and is commemorated on July 25th. This Council refuted the heresy of Origen.

The Sixth Council was in Constantinople in 681, with 170 fathers. It is commemorated on January 23rd. This Council refuted the Monothelite heresy.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council, held in 787 with 367 fathers present, is not commemorated on this occasion, but on its own on October 11th. This Council refuted the iconoclast heresy.

At these Councils, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all heresies were condemned and the Orthodox faith defined and confirmed for all time.

May the prayers of our Holy Fathers, the defenders of the true Orthodox Catholic faith, enable us to grow in the knowledge and to ultimately defend the truth that we and those earnestly seeking the truth might be saved.

SAINT JACOB NETSVETOV OF ALASKA

It is our fundamental responsibility to lift up the holy ones, the saints of North America. They have been given to us by God as gifts of light illuminating the way to salvation. Commemorating their holy lives is meant to inspire us that we might emulate their faith and Christian zeal for evangelism. On July 26 we celebrate the memory of Saint Jacob. The following is an account of his holy life of witness. May God grant we be saved through the holy prayers of intercession of St. Jacob.

Jacob Netsvetov was born on the island of Atka, Alaska, in 1802. His father was a Russian, an employee of the Russian-American Trading Company, and his mother was a Native American. Raised in Irkutsk, Siberia, Jacob received a theological education. At age 23, he married a Russian woman from Siberia, named Anna. Three years later, he was ordained priest and assigned to St. Nicholas parish on Atka, his birthplace. He was the first Native American Orthodox Christian to be ordained to the priesthood.

Father Jacob's parish territory consisted of a number of islands, spanning a total distance of 2,000 miles. He visited the islands regularly, ministering to the faithful and dispensing medicine. He established

a school, and, with the help of St. Innocent, Fr. Jacob developed a written form of the local Unangan language. He then translated the Scriptures and other writings into it. Most of the Islanders had already been introduced to the basics of Christianity and been baptized by lay missionaries. It was Fr. Jacob's task to chrismate the people and to continue their Christian education. In his first year, he recorded that he had baptized 16, chrismated 442, married 53 couples and buried 8.

Father Jacob kept a most interesting and valuable journal of his activities. For example, an excerpt of his entry for November 26, 1842 reads: "On the occasion of the feast of St. Innocent of Irkutsk, I held the vigil. In the morning, prior to Liturgy, I baptized an infant born to a local Aleut a week ago. Then, all the children, boys and girls, were gathered in the chapel, and I spoke to them about God's love for people, especially for children. . . Afterwards, I celebrated the Divine Liturgy, at which 50 adults who had come to confession were joined to the Holy Mysteries. Later on, I visited the cemetery and sang the requiem for all those who had died there since my last visit. The rest of my time was spent performing (eight) weddings . . . After the services, I instructed the newlyweds on the meaning of marriage and the duties of husband and wife, respectively. Thus I concluded my activities there."

In 1844, St. Innocent appointed Father Jacob (now a widower) to the Kuskokwim/Yukon Delta region as a missionary priest. He spent the next twenty years ministering to and learning the languages of the Yup'ik Eskimos and Athabaskan Indians of this vast region of the southwest Alaska tundra.

Father Jacob fell asleep in the Lord on July 26, 1864, at the age of 62. He was glorified as "Enlightener of the Peoples of Alaska" in 1994.
