

the Orthodox Way

February – April 2023
Quarterly Newsletter



*Jesus said to the crowds about John, "I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John the Baptist. Yet the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."
(Luke 7:28)*

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#OrthodoxSingac

For articles, sermons, schedule, latest news, announcements, and to join our emailing list, visit:

www.singac.com

If you are in **need** – be it financially, materially, emotionally, or spiritually please do not hesitate to talk to Father Aleksey or any of the Parish Council members. While our “*Needy Fund*” will not break the bank, we **can** offer financial help. We can also cook meals for each other in case of unforeseen events, and be present and supportive, even if for a simple conversation. Donations toward the “*Needy Fund*” are always welcomed.

Let us grow together in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Regular Schedule of Services

Saturdays

Great Vespers & confessions –
5PM

Sundays

Divine Liturgy & Sunday School,
followed by the fellowship & coffee hour – 9:30AM

Feast Days (on weekdays)

Eve of Feast Day, Festal Vespers – 7PM

Feast Day, Liturgy – 9AM

Tuesday

Evening Service - 7PM
*followed by the Bible Study**
every other Tuesday

every other Friday

*online Book Study** – 8PM

** See the schedule on the website for specific dates of the Bible and Book Studies*

To be a Christian means to live selflessly for the sake of others, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the ways we do this is by feeding the hungry, those who unlike us, *for whatever reason*, are unable to afford food.

Saint John the Baptist Church supports *Saint Agnes Food Pantry*, which is run by St Agnes Episcopal Church in Little Falls, and we rely on your donations.

To donate non-perishable foods, we have a collection basket in the narthex (vestibule), by the stairs to the choir loft. Every bit counts, and it *does* make a difference in people's lives.

Note: please make sure nothing's expired.



FEED THE HUNGRY



To give online, visit: www.singac.com/donate



TITHE.LY
Innovative church giving

This sermon was delivered by Fr Aleksey in September 2022, on the reading from Matthew 19:16-26 about an encounter between Jesus Christ and a young rich ruler.

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

There was this famous Teacher in town, there were a lot of rumors circulating about Him. Were any of them true? Was He really clairvoyant as some were saying? Was He the Messiah, as others claimed?

The young man had a desire to meet this Teacher because he had a burning question to ask Him. The young man had diligently tried to keep all the commandments. In his mind he was doing good. He was rich, he had many possessions – a clear sign of God’s favor toward him.

Yet, something kept nagging him; he felt like something was missing. So he put on his best robe, because the social status demanded it. And just in case the rumors were true, you don’t want to appear before the Messiah in something other than your best. And he went out in search of crowd that usually followed this Teacher.

And sure enough, he found the crowd and the Teacher. ‘Why do the people always flock around the next best guru?’ thought the young man, ‘They look like little lost sheep.’

The Teacher seemed to have a presence about Him. There was a small group of men that was always by His side. ‘Those must be His chosen disciples. All rabbis have students.’ Someone from the crowd always approached Him, and He always took His time to hear them out. You could see in His face all the attention he paid to the person in front of Him. When He talked with someone, it seemed like there was no one else that mattered.

With some He simply conversed, with others He touched them and prayed over them and they left in tears, yet others He chastised and even seemed angry with them. These last ones the young man recognized to be the Pharisees. If he thought that he was keeping the commandments, the Pharisees always took it to another level. They tried to outdo each other in how many commandments they could keep. Sometimes it seemed they invented new commandments to keep.

‘But why would the Teacher be angry with them? They are the religious authorities.’ The young man started doubting whether he should

approach Him with his question. But he kept advancing through the crowd and it was too late to turn around.

And he did not even notice how he made it all the way in and was now standing face to face with Him. ‘If He is the Messiah, He does not look that impressive,’ was the first thought in the young man’s mind, ‘Yet, there is something about His eyes, about His face that says He knows you and He loves you and He will listen to anything you want to say to Him.’

Without thinking, the young man said, “Good Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?”

‘Oh man, that came out a bit awkward,’ the young man thought. And the Teacher answered, “Why do you call Me good? There is only One Who is good, that is, God.”

‘Is He angry with me or is He just saying things that everyone knows? Of course God is good ... if you don’t anger Him.’

“But if you want to enter into life,” the Teacher continued, “keep the commandments.”

The young man felt relieved, he thought himself to be a good Jew, having kept the commandments prescribed by the Law of Moses. So he asked, “Which commandments should I keep to enter into life?”

“Do not murder. Do not commit adultery,” the Teacher replied, “Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. Also, love your neighbor as yourself.”

He felt even better about himself, this seemed easy. ‘Maybe this Man was telling people what they wanted to hear and that’s why He was so popular.’

“Teacher, I have kept all of them from my youth,” the young man replied, and then added, “What do I still lack?” He was hoping to get a good pat on the back. After all, he was rich and you had to respect the rich.

The Teacher’s gaze at him differently, He became sterner. He looked intently at the young man, and he felt like his whole life was being scrutinized right now. The young man did not feel comfortable under that gaze.

Finally, the Teacher said, “If you want to be perfect,” (‘perfect? Who said anything about being perfect?’), “go, sell your possessions, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” (‘slow down, man. I asked You a simple question and now I have to sell everything? And worst of all, give it to the poor? They have nothing because they have found no favor with God. How is that my problem?’) “Then come, follow Me.”

The Teacher stopped speaking and looked at the young man again with those eyes that seem to see right through you.

The young man was lost, confused even. He looked down and thought, 'Maybe I misjudged this Man. He is either a charlatan who makes people sell their possessions and give the money away to the poor ... and not to Him? No, frauds usually pocket the money. Then, is He serious?'

The young man just shook his head, and without looking up at the Teacher, turned around and went away grieving. 'I have too much. How am I to even try selling everything? That would take months, if not years.'

As he was slowly walking away from them, he kept thinking about what the Teacher told him, "If you want to be perfect." 'But I do not want to be perfect, I just want to make sure I have eternal life in the presence of God!'

And then he remembered from his studies that the word *perfect* does not necessarily mean performing everything correctly; it can also mean *purpose*. 'So,' he continued thinking, 'to be perfect is to fulfill your purpose in life, the purpose for which you were created.'

'Huh, that's interesting. Then, from the Teacher's words it follows that my purpose (or is it the purpose of all the faithful?) is to sell all I have, give it to the poor, and follow Him? If that's the case, then all the blessings God has bestowed on me are not my privileges for good behavior, but my responsibilities? Don't I deserve what God gave me? ... If He wants me to sell everything, then maybe I do not deserve it.'

... 'It was so strange standing before the Teacher. As He was looking at me, it felt like He was seeing me, all of me; it felt like He loved me and judged me at the same time; like He wanted me and was calling me to repentance.' ...

'My possessions. What will I do with them in the eternal life? I can satisfy any of my desires right now...but what was it He said about eternal treasure? "Sell it, give it to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven." How? I won't be able to take my best robe and my favorite wine with me once I die, but how can I have treasure in heaven?'

'No, no, that can't be right. What if something goes wrong? The religious authorities are already displeased with the methods of this Teacher. And there are rumors that they are collaborating with the Romans (with the hated Romans!) to take Him down. I can't, I just can't sell everything and trust Him.'

And the young man walked away sad. Strangely satisfied, however, because his burning question was answered. Yet sad because he could not do what was necessary. He knew that the purpose of our life is eternal life. And now he also knew how to achieve that purpose, how to become perfect. Yet...he had many possessions.

It's as if he were a 21st century American – he had many, way too many, way too many unnecessary possessions. If we were to approach Christ today and ask Him the same question, “Good Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?” He would answer the same, “If you want to be perfect, if you want to have purpose in your life, go, sell your possessions, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.”

Who wants to be perfect? Who wants to fulfill their purpose in life?

Hard, isn't it? Impossible even. “For people, this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

As we try to fulfill the purpose of our life, let us give glory, honor, and worship to the One Who gave us this purpose and Who guides us and gives us strength to achieve it: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in Three Persons, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Amen.



Birthdays

February:

- Nicholas, Christopher, Raymond, Sophia, John, Abigail, Martha, Judy, Anatoli, Alexander, Walter, Michael, Victoria, Judy, Matthew, Maria

March:

- Nicholas, Tomas, Patrick, Violet, Eric, Stephen, Justine, Alex, Eileen, Ruth, Anastasia, Anna, Pamela, Amelia, Ann, Jean, Sophia, Zinovia, Susan, Irene, Jack, Michael, Fr Aleksey, James

April:

- Peter, Olga, Anna, Geneva, Elena, Zachary, Harry, Tina, Samuel, Laurie, Christine, Joan

Happy birthday! Many and blessed years!

House Blessings 2023: will begin after the Feast of Theophany. The details about how to sign up for a house blessing and what days are open will be announced in church, as well as posted on our website and social media.

In deciding whether to bless your house this year, ask yourself a simple question – did I or anyone else who lives with me sin (sin is something that pollutes and contaminates us and things around us) in the last year? If the answer is no, then you're good. If the answer is yes, then make sure to schedule your house blessing.

Here's a helpful hint: we all sin, basically all the time. No need to lie to ourselves. While sin is not ok, it is part of the human condition. For this reason, the Loving Lord has provided us with various ways of dealing with sin. It begins, of course, with our faithful life in the Church, God's Ark of Salvation, and the Sacraments; and it continues with such blessings like the House Blessing.

It is up to us whether we want to receive the help provided by God, or not.

In order to facilitate the scheduling of the house blessings, please go to www.singac.com or fill out and return this form:

Your name: _____

Best way to reach you (phone/email): _____

Address: _____

Date	Time
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Please note: Fr Aleksey is only available on the following days:
Mondays: after 6pm; ***Wednesdays:*** 10am-3pm; ***Fridays:*** 9am-12pm or after 4pm; ***Saturdays:*** 10am-3pm; ***Sundays:*** after 2pm

Schedule for February - April

* * * The schedule is subject to change * * *

Check regularly on:

www.singac.com & www.facebook.com/StJohnSingac/

February 3	Friday	8pm	online Book Study
2.4	Saturday	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
2.5	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
2.7	Tuesday	7pm	Akathist to Jesus Christ followed by the Bible Study
2.11	Saturday	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
2.12	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship and a few other events, see p. 12

Meeting of Christ in the Temple

2.14	Tuesday	7pm	Festal Vespers with Litia
2.15	Wednesday	9am	Divine Liturgy & blessing of candles

2.17	Friday	8pm	online Book Study
2.18	Saturday	9am	Memorial Saturday Liturgy
		5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
2.19	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & Maslenitsa
2.21	Tuesday	7pm	Akathist "Glory to God for All Things" followed by the Bible Study
2.25	Saturday	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
2.26	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
		12pm	Forgiveness Vespers

Great Lent: February 27 – April 7

1st Week of Lent (a bit intense)

2.27	Monday		
2.28	Tuesday		
March 1	Wednesday	7pm	Great Compline with the Canon of Saint Andrew
3.2	Thursday		
3.3	Friday	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy
3.4	Saturday	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
3.5	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy with the pro- cession with icons & fellow- ship

Schedule for February - April

3.7	Tuesday	7pm	Lenten Small Compline <i>followed by the Bible Study</i>
3.8	Wednesday	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy
3.11	Saturday	9am 5pm	Memorial Saturday Liturgy Great Vespers & confessions
3.12	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
3.14	Tuesday	7pm	Lenten Small Compline
3.15	Wednesday	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy
3.17	Friday	8pm	online Book Study
3.18	Saturday	10am 5pm	Panikhida (Parastas) Great Vespers & confessions
3.19	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
3.21	Tuesday	7pm	Lenten Small Compline <i>followed by the Bible Study</i>
3.22	Wednesday	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy
3.25	Saturday	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
3.26	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
3.28	Tuesday	7pm	Lenten Small Compline
3.29	Wednesday	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy
3.30	Thursday	6pm	Unction – Соборование
3.31	Friday	8pm	online Book Study
April 1	Saturday	10am 5pm	Akathist to the Theotokos Great Vespers & confessions
4.2	Sunday	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
4.4	Tuesday	7pm	Lenten Small Compline <i>followed by the Bible Study</i>
4.5	Wednesday	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy

Annunciation of the Theotokos

4.6	Thursday	7pm	Annunciation Matins
4.7	Friday	9am	Vespertal Divine Liturgy

Lazarus Saturday – Palm Sunday

4.8	Lazarus Saturday	9am	Lazarus Saturday Liturgy
		12pm	Parish Spring cleanup for Pascha
		5pm	Great Vespers & confessions

Schedule for February - April

4.9	<i>Palm Sunday</i>	9:30am	Divine Liturgy, blessing of palms and willow branches and Procession & fellowship
<i>Holy Week: April 10-15 (as intense as it'll get)</i>			
4.12	<i>Great & Holy Wednesday</i>	7pm	Presanctified Liturgy
4.13	<i>Great & Holy Thursday</i>	9am	Vesperal Divine Liturgy (<i>Last Supper</i>)
		7pm	Matins with 12 Passion Gospels (<i>Betrayal and Crucifixion of Christ</i>)
4.14	<i>Great & Holy Friday</i>	3pm	Vespers with the Rite of Entombment (<i>Burial of Christ</i>)
		7pm	Matins with the Lamentations at the Tomb of Christ
4.15	<i>Great & Holy Saturday</i>	9am	Vesperal Divine Liturgy (<i>first news of an empty tomb</i>)
		5pm	Blessing of Paschal Baskets
<i>PASCHA (Passover) – Christ's RESURRECTION</i> <i>Christ is risen! Христос воскрес!</i>			
4.16	<i>Paschal Sunday</i>	11:30p	Midnight Office (Nocturns)
		12am	Paschal Matins & Procession
		10am	Paschal Divine Liturgy <i>followed by</i> Paschal potluck fellowship and Egg Hunt
4.17	<i>Sunday</i>	9am	Bright Monday Paschal Liturgy
4.22	<i>Saturday</i>	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
4.23	<i>Sunday</i>	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship
4.25	<i>Tuesday</i>	7pm	Akathist to the Resurrection
4.28	<i>Friday</i>	8pm	<i>online</i> Book Study
4.29	<i>Saturday</i>	5pm	Great Vespers & confessions
4.30	<i>Sunday</i>	9:30am	Divine Liturgy & fellowship

Taste of North Jersey

TO BENEFIT IOCC

Saturday, February 11, 2023

Vespers: 6:00 pm | Wine & Hors d'oeuvres: 7:00 pm

SS Nicholas, Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church
80 Laurel Ave, Roseland, NJ 07068-1461

Come and learn about how your support is helping families in places like Ukraine, Greece, Lebanon, and right here in the US. Enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts from some of North Jersey's finest food stores, restaurants, bakeries, plus beer and wine from Stew Leonard's.

Register online until January 29:

adults	\$75
adults age 65+	\$50
students age 21-25	\$25
After January 29, all tickets at the door	\$100



For tickets, visit: www.iocc.org/newjersey

Support Saint John's while shopping for grocery! Buy the **ShopRite shopping cards** from us. They are as good as cash. They do not cost you anything extra, while ShopRite donates back to the parish 5% from the amount we sell. These shopping cards are also accepted at Foodtown!

Please call Vickie Duin at (973) 684-5844, or see her or Julie Riker any Sunday after the Liturgy. The cards come in the denominations of \$25-50-100.

Art Class: a new class for the kids! Vlad Guzner, a parishioner and a professional artist, plans to focus his lessons on the basics of visual arts and encourage a child's creativity. Classes will enable kids to draw what they see and what they imagine. Composition, proportions, colors, shading techniques, etc. will be learned in a fun atmosphere. Children will work in black & white and colors using pencils, crayons, watercolor and more. Weekly one-hour classes will be held on Sundays, after a short meal break in the gym. All the necessary materials will be provided, but children are encouraged to bring their favorite art supplies.



Pysanki Workshop: if you enjoyed learning how to make pysanki last year, come and hone your skill this year! More information on the workshop is forthcoming.



Sunday, February 12, after the Liturgy

Farm & Victory Garden talk: Many people are now seeking to start their own vegetable gardens to safely provide themselves and their families with fresh, naturally grown vegetable. Most are new to this endeavor and don't know where to begin. To help those interested in some level of self-sufficiency via gardening, Anthony Bracco of Bracco Farms has developed a program that can show how this can be achieved. He will share his experience and answer any of your questions during the talk that he will give after the coffee hour.

Super Football game watching party: starting around 5:30pm. Invite anyone you like, bring a snack or drink (*this will be a potluck event*), and enjoy the game in the company of your parish family.



Malenitsa: Sunday, February 19. As has been our tradition, we will finish off our preparation for the Great Lent Maslenitsa – Pancake Sunday. This will be a potluck event, so be on a lookout for a signup sheet with recommendation of what you can bring to share with your parish family.

Confessions: Father Aleksey is available to hear your confessions every Saturday after Vespers. You can also schedule a confession during a weekday. Confessions are generally not heard on Sunday morning before the Liturgy, but it is possible to have a confession after the Liturgy.

To every rule there are exceptions, however. If Sunday morning is *the only* time that you can come to confession, then Father Aleksey will gladly hear your confession, as long as you call *in advance* (as in, before Sunday).

And a note on **H**oly **C**ommunion: In the Orthodox Christian Church, reception of the Communion (also called the Eucharist) is reserved for the baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christians, who have prepared themselves by regular prayer (*both at home and in church: Vespers, Liturgy*), fasting (*not eating or drinking after midnight, as well as regular fasting days and periods*), regular confession (*once a month*), and continual almsgiving. If on Sunday you come late, missing the Gospel reading, please do not approach the chalice. If we don't hear the Word of God, we can't receive His Body and Blood.* For the Orthodox Christians, our entire life is a preparation for Communion with God. We put a tremendous amount of effort into receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in a worthy manner (not as worthy people).

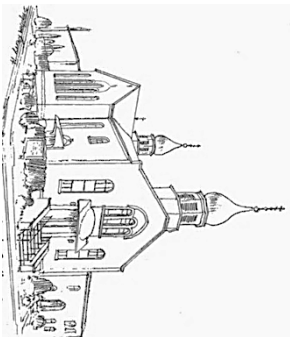
** this general rule does not apply to those with young children and to the elderly.*



If you are a regular parishioner, meaning, you actively participate in the divine services and other events of the parish life, but are not yet a registered member, would you consider becoming one?

See Father Aleksey with questions about what registered membership means to the parish and to you.

If you are a registered member, but do not actively participate in the divine services and the various events of the parish life, consider stepping up your participation! See Father Aleksey for ways you can do it.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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