

ASSUMPTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
2101 South 28th St. (corner of 28<sup>th</sup> St. & Snyder Ave.)  
Philadelphia, PA 19145 \* Church Phone: (215) 468-3535  
Website: <https://www.holyassumptionphilly.org>



Mailing Address: PO Box 20083 \* Point Breeze Station | Philadelphia PA 19145-0383

\* Serving the Orthodox Community in South Philadelphia for 110 years! \*

**Sunday, May 21, 2023 | Sixth Sunday of Pascha**

Tone 5 – The Blind Man

Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine & his mother Helen (327)

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

**V. Rev. Mark W Koczak, Rector**

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Deacon – Michael McCartney

Choir Director – Nina Patterson

Subdeacon – Daniel (Ken) Kavalkovich

Reader – Mark Klus

Parish President - Matthew Andrews [Phone: 856.217.8075]

**Weekly Schedule**

TODAY: Readers Class meeting after Fellowship Coffee Hour in the church

Thursday: May 25 – Divine Liturgy at **10:00AM** for the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Thursday: May 25 – Blessed Mother Olga Book Club at **6:30PM** on the ZOOM media platform **ONLY!!!**

Saturday: May 27 – Great Vespers at **4:00PM**

Sunday: May 28 – 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha | Afterfeast of the Ascension

Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

Reading of Hours – 8:30am

Divine Liturgy – **9:00am** **[Summer Hours Begin!]**

*Fellowship Coffee Hour to follow the Divine Liturgy*

Saturday May 27 to 29 – Memorial Day Pilgrimage at Saint Tikhon's to Monday: Monastery in South Canaan, PA.

Sunday: June 4 – Holy Pentecost | Feast of the Holy Trinity

## **Texts for the Liturgical Service**

### **Troparion (Tone 5)**

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, / co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, / born for our salvation from the Virgin; / for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, / to endure death, / and to raise the dead // by His glorious Resurrection.

### **Troparion (Tone 8 - Saints Constantine and Helen)**

Thy servant Constantine, O Lord and only Lover of man, / beheld the figure of the Cross in the heavens. / Like Paul, not having received his call from men, / but as an apostle among rulers set by Thy hand over the royal city, // he preserved lasting peace through the prayers of the Theotokos.

### **Kontakion (Tone 3 – Saints Constantine and Helen)**

Today Constantine and his mother Helen reveal the precious Cross, / the weapon of Orthodox Christians against their enemies, // for it is manifest for us as a great and fearful sign in struggle.

### **Kontakion (Tone 4 – Pentecostarion)**

I come to Thee, O Christ, blind from birth in my spiritual eyes, / and call to Thee in repentance: // Thou art the most radiant Light of those in darkness.

### **Prokeimenon (Tone 8)**

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord our God!  
v. In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

### **Another Prokeimenon (Tone 8 – Saints Constantine and Helen)**

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, / and their words to the ends of the universe.

### **Epistle Reading: Acts 16:16-34**

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe. Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. Alleluia (3x's) (Tone 8)



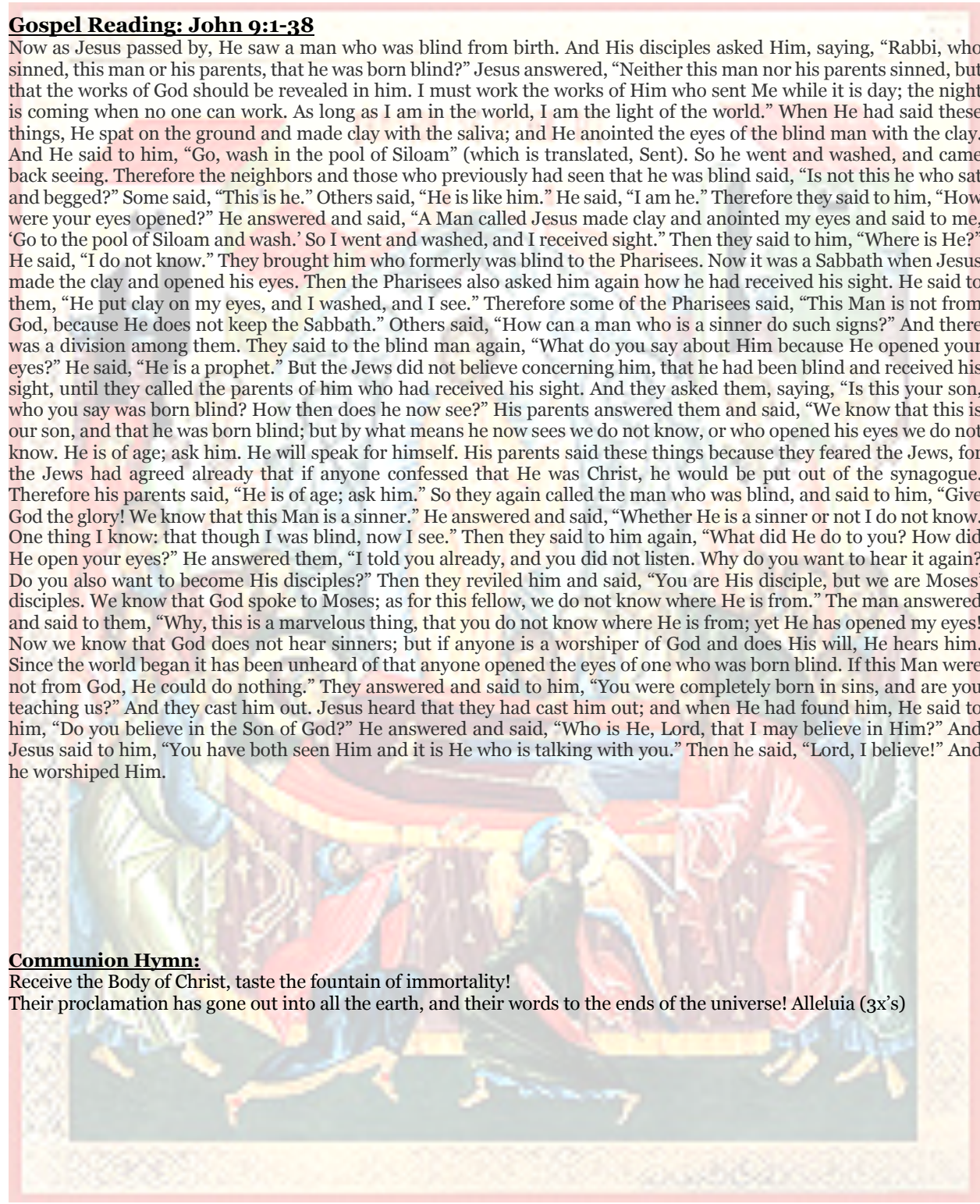
- v. Look upon me and have mercy on me! Alleluia (3x's)
- v. Guide my steps according to Thy word! Alleluia (3x's)
- v. I have exalted one chosen out of My people. Alleluia (3x's) [TONE 1]

**Gospel Reading: John 9:1-38**

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

**Communion Hymn:**

Receive the Body of Christ, taste the fountain of immortality!  
 Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe! Alleluia (3x's)



## Announcements

**A Warm Welcome to all of our visitors & guest** who worshiped with us today and who have joined us in celebrating the Divine Liturgy. Please join us in the church basement for our Fellowship and Coffee Hour.

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**The Spring Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, June 11, 2023 after Divine Liturgy in the church basement. This is Notice #1 of 3.**

According to Article IV, Section 2, Subsection A. of the Parish By-Laws, notice of all Annual and General Parish Meetings shall be announced in the Parish Bulletin and read by the Parish Rector from the amvon on three consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the Meeting. Updates since our last parish meeting in January will be discussed

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**The Quarterly Parish Council Meeting will be held via ZOOM on a date still to be determined but will be held before the Spring Parish Meeting!**

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### **First Aid / CPR Course offering at the parish – Saturday, June 17, 2023**

It has been some time since we held a First Aid/CPR course, and in the interest of helping our families and neighbors in need, the ECSI First Aid/CPR course will be offered at no charge for parishioners with the exception of the cost of the student manual of \$16.50 which includes shipping. The course will be held from **8:00 am-4:00 pm** on Saturday June 17, 2023 and taught by Matushka Janine McCartney. The **May 17, 2023 deadline** has passed to have the student manuals ordered and sent. Please see Matushka Janine to make payment for these student manuals ASAP!

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### **Votive Vigil Cross Candles Scheduling**

We are scheduling to have the votive vigil cross candles lit for the major feast day services and federal designated government holidays during the spring/summer season. There will be a sign-up sheet located at the candle desk in the Vestibule. Either 1 Large or 2 Small candles per each votive vigil cross candles can be reserved. As of this morning, the following dates and cross sizes are available:

- \* Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ (Thursday, May 25) = Both crosses are available
- \* Memorial Day (Sunday, May 28) = Both crosses are available
- \* Pentecost (Sunday, June 4) = 1 Large (or 2 small) cross(es) is/are still available
- \* Father's Day (Sunday, June 18) = Both crosses are available
- \* Independence Day (Sunday, July 2 Liturgy) = Both crosses are available
- \* Transfiguration of our Lord (Sunday, August 6) = Both crosses are available
- \* Dormition of the Holy Theotokos (Tuesday, August 15) = Both crosses are available



**Announcements** (cont.)

**Candles and Prayers for the Faithful and Departed**

**Health for the Living:**

Family and Friends offered by M/M Rick and Daria LeRoy

**May God Grant Them Many Blessed Years!**

**Memory for the Departed:**

Grandmothers, Mothers, and Godmothers offered by David Pellack

Irene, Mary, Grace, Julia offered by Nina Patterson

Emily Albrecht offered by Melanie Albrecht

Mary Spack offered by Melanie Albrecht

Emma Albrecht offered by Melanie Albrecht

Irene Kavcsak offered by M/M Rick and Daria LeRoy

**May Their Memories Be Eternal!**

**Vigil Cross Candles – 5/14/23**

One Large Vigil Cross – Health of Brett McKenna and Tanya Krawchuk on their 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary offered by Sub-deacon Daniel (Kenny) and Debbie Kavalkovich

One Large Vigil Cross – Memory of Beloving Mothers Julia, Jean, Anna, Maria, and Margie offered by Sandra Hourahan

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**Please remember in your prayers:**

Christopher Andrews; Elton Andrews; Catherine Kavalkovich; Jane Kelly; Anne (Homa) Killoran; Justine & John McCann; Nina Patterson; Sheba Patton; Dr. Gale Rutan; Joseph Rabik; Peter Witiak; and all those who are serving in our Armed Forces!

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**Note:** Today's readings for Saints Constantine and Helen are as follows:  
Epistle – Acts 26:1-5, 12-20 and Gospel - John 10:1-9]

## Announcements (cont.)

**Please ensure that your Mobile Phone is set to Silent (or at least set on vibrate) during the Divine Liturgy! Thank You!!!**

**\*\*\*\*\*Special weekly collections taken after Gospel or Sermon\*\*\*\*\***

In addition to our general collection, the parish takes a special collection each week to fund certain parish projects. By the action taken at the Fall General Parish Meeting held back on Sunday, October 10, 2021, the parish body approved that the special collection for the first three Sundays of the month be earmarked towards the repairing/fixing/replacing of the roofs of both houses that the parish owns (now known as the Row House Fund).

The fourth Sunday (and fifth, when it occurs) the special collection will be earmarked towards Charity.

This new collection schedule began back on Sunday, October 17, 2021.  
Please be generous with your offering. Every little bit counts. Thank You!

### **Cash Flow Activity (May)**

<u>Week of Sun May 7 to Sat May 13</u>	<u>May Month to Date</u>
Attendance: 36	36 (average)
Funds In: \$ 3,040.00	\$ 3,077.52
Funds Out: \$ 1,110.97	\$ 3,790.31
Net Surplus/(Deficit): \$ 1,929.03	(\$ 712.79)

Thank you all for your continuous offerings to maintain the parish!

**Shop Rite Gift Cards:** If you need to purchase Shop Rite Gift Cards, please see either David Pellack or Ken Kavalkovich to secure them. Your purchase of a Shop Rite Gift Card is an additional fundraising project that helps support the church at no additional expense to the purchaser.



## Calendar of Events

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month** – Monthly Panikhida immediately after Divine Liturgy.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month** – Bible Study at 6:30pm on ZOOM media platform.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month** – Property Committee Meeting after Divine Liturgy.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month** – Currently no permanent event is scheduled.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month** – Currently no permanent event is scheduled.
- Last Thursday of each month** – Book Club at 6:30pm on ZOOM media platform.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each quarter** – Quarterly Parish Council Meeting after Liturgy.

### Readers Schedule:

	<u>Today (May 21)</u>	<u>Next Week (May 28)</u>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Hour:	Subdeacon Daniel Kavalkovich	Reader Mark Klus
6 <sup>th</sup> Hour:	David Albrecht	Michael Wanenchak Sr
Epistle:	Subdeacon Daniel Kavalkovich and David Albrecht	Reader Mark Klus

### Fellowship Coffee Hour & Cleaning Teams:

If you have volunteered to host coffee hour, please check which Team you are on and when your Team is hosting coffee hour on the calendar printout which is located in the white/clear 3-ring binder located on the display case outside of the office room.

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Please continue to check our parish website, social media pages, and your emails regularly for updated information on the parish regarding parish services & events in May/June 2023.

**Thursday, May 25** – Divine Liturgy at **10:00AM** for the Feast Day of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Thursday, May 25** – Blessed Mother Olga Book Club at 6:30PM on ZOOM media platform **ONLY!**

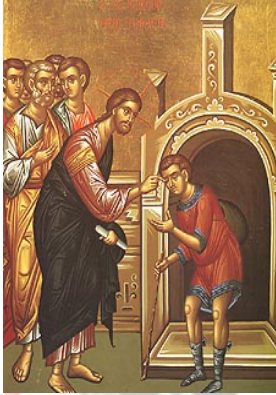
**Sunday, May 28** – Summer Hours begin with Sunday Divine Liturgy starting at 9:00AM!

**Sunday, June 4** – Annual Pentecost (Pascha) Dinner after Vespers in the church basement! If you wish to bring or donate Pascha food, beverages, or kitchen supplies, please sign up on the sign sheet located in the church basement.

**Sunday, June 11** – Spring General Parish Meeting after Divine Liturgy

**Tuesday, June 13** – Bible Study at 6:30PM on ZOOM media platform **ONLY!**

**Saturday, June 17** – First Aid/CPR course beginning at **8:00AM!**



## Sunday of the Blind Man

[May 21<sup>st</sup>]

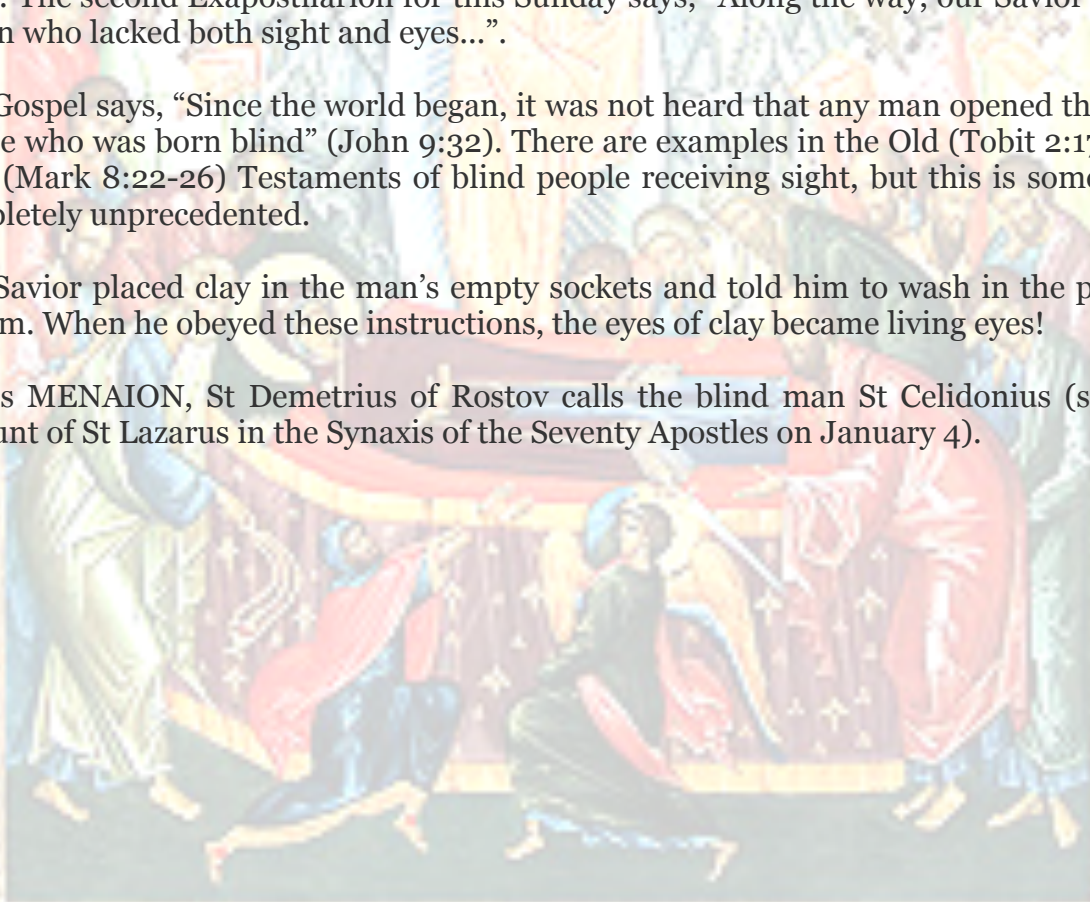
After the Midfeast (John 7:14), the Lord Jesus Christ came to the Temple again and taught the people who came to Him (John 8:2). After leaving the Temple, He opened the eyes of a man “who was blind from his birth (John 9:1).

The miracle described in today’s Gospel (John 9:1-38) is even more remarkable than it might seem at first. St Basil and other Fathers tell us that this was not just a case of giving sight to a blind man born with eyes that did not function, but to someone who had no eyes at all! The second Exapostilarion for this Sunday says, “Along the way, our Savior found a man who lacked both sight and eyes...”.

The Gospel says, “Since the world began, it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one who was born blind” (John 9:32). There are examples in the Old (Tobit 2:17) and New (Mark 8:22-26) Testaments of blind people receiving sight, but this is something completely unprecedented.

The Savior placed clay in the man’s empty sockets and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. When he obeyed these instructions, the eyes of clay became living eyes!

In his MENAION, St Demetrius of Rostov calls the blind man St Celidonius (see his account of St Lazarus in the Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles on January 4).





## **Equal of the Apostles and Emperor Constantine with his Mother Helen** **(May 21)**

The Church calls Saint Constantine (306-337) “the Equal of the Apostles,” and historians call him “the Great.” He was the son of the Caesar Constantius Chlorus (305-306), who governed the lands of Gaul and Britain. His mother was Saint Helen, a Christian of humble birth.

At this time the immense Roman Empire was divided into Western and Eastern halves, governed by two independent emperors and their co-rulers called “Caesars.” Constantius Chlorus was Caesar in the Western Roman Empire. Saint Constantine was born in 274, possibly at Nish in Serbia. In 294, Constantius divorced Helen in order to further his political ambition by marrying a woman of noble rank. After he became emperor, Constantine showed his mother great honor and respect, granting her the imperial title “Augusta.”

Constantine, the future ruler of all the whole Roman Empire, was raised to respect Christianity. His father did not persecute Christians in the lands he governed. This was at a time when Christians were persecuted throughout the Roman Empire by the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and his co-rulers Maximian Galerius (305-311) in the East, and the emperor Maximian Hercules (284-305) in the West.

After the death of Constantius Chlorus in 306, Constantine was acclaimed by the army at York as emperor of Gaul and Britain. The first act of the new emperor was to grant the freedom to practice Christianity in the lands subject to him. The pagan Maximian Galerius in the East and the fierce tyrant Maxentius in the West hated Constantine and they plotted to overthrow and kill him, but Constantine bested them in a series of battles, defeating his opponents with the help of God. He prayed to God to give him a sign which would inspire his army to fight valiantly, and the Lord showed him a radiant Sign of the Cross in the heavens with the inscription “In this Sign, conquer.”

After Constantine became the sole ruler of the Western Roman Empire, he issued the Edict of Milan in 313 which guaranteed religious tolerance for Christians. Saint Helen, who was a Christian, may have influenced him in this decision. In 323, when he became the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire, he extended the provisions of the Edict of Milan to the Eastern half of the Empire. After three hundred years of persecution, Christians could finally practice their faith without fear.

Renouncing paganism, the Emperor did not let his capital remain in ancient Rome, the former center of the pagan realm. He transferred his capital to the East, to the city of Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople, the city of Constantine (May 11). Constantine was deeply convinced that only Christianity could unify the immense Roman Empire with its diverse peoples. He supported the Church in every way. He recalled Christian confessors from banishment, he built churches, and he showed concern for the clergy.

The emperor deeply revered the victory-bearing Sign of the Cross of the Lord, and also wanted to find the actual Cross upon which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. For this purpose he sent his own mother, the holy Empress Helen, to Jerusalem, granting her both power and money. Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem and Saint Helen began the search, and through the will of God, the Life-Creating Cross was miraculously discovered in 326. (The account of the finding of the Cross of the Lord is found under the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14). The Orthodox Church commemorates the Uncovering of the Precious Cross and the Precious Nails by the Holy Empress Helen on March 6.

While in Palestine, the holy empress did much of benefit for the Church. She ordered that all places connected with the earthly life of the Lord and His All-Pure Mother, should be freed of all traces of paganism, and she commanded that churches should be built at these places.

The emperor Constantine ordered a magnificent church in honor of Christ’s Resurrection to be built over His tomb. Saint Helen gave the Life-Creating Cross to the Patriarch for safe-keeping, and took part of the Cross with her for the emperor. After distributing generous alms at Jerusalem and feeding the needy (at times she even served them herself), the holy Empress Helen returned to Constantinople, where she died in the year 327.

Because of her great services to the Church and her efforts in finding the Life-Creating Cross, the empress Helen is called “the Equal of the Apostles.”



The peaceful state of the Christian Church was disturbed by quarrels, dissensions and heresies which had appeared within the Church. Already at the beginning of Saint Constantine's reign the heresies of the Donatists and the Novatians had arisen in the West. They demanded a second baptism for those who lapsed during the persecutions against Christians. These heresies, repudiated by two local Church councils, were finally condemned at the Council of Milan in 316.

Particularly ruinous for the Church was the rise of the Arian heresy in the East, which denied the Divine Nature of the Son of God, and taught that Jesus Christ was a mere creature. By order of the emperor, the First Ecumenical Council was convened in the city of Nicea in 325.

318 bishops attended this Council. Among its participants were confessor-bishops from the period of the persecutions and many other luminaries of the Church, among whom was Saint Nicholas of Myra in Lycia. (The account about the Council is found under May 29). The emperor was present at the sessions of the Council. The heresy of Arius was condemned and a Symbol of Faith (Creed) composed, in which was included the term "consubstantial with the Father," at the insistence of the Emperor, confirming the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ, Who assumed human nature for the redemption of all the human race.

After the Council of Nicea, Saint Constantine continued with his active role in the welfare of the Church. He accepted holy Baptism on his deathbed, having prepared for it all his whole life. Saint Constantine died on the day of Pentecost in the year 337 and was buried in the church of the Holy Apostles, in a crypt he had prepared for himself.

## **Historic concelebration at St. Tikhon's Monastery on Memorial Day**

During the Annual Memorial Day Pilgrimage at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, on Monday, May 29, 2023, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) will welcome His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) for a joint celebration of the Divine Liturgy. This will mark only the second time in the hundred years of ROCOR's existence that the Primate of the OCA or the Russian Metropolia - as the OCA was popularly called before being granted autocephaly in 1970 - and the First Hierarch of ROCOR will have concelebrated Liturgy at a church of the OCA or Metropolia. This will be the first concelebration of Metropolitan Tikhon with Metropolitan Nicholas since the latter's election as First Hierarch of ROCOR last year.

To fully appreciate the significance of the concelebration, some historical reflection is necessary. Both the OCA and ROCOR have their roots in the Russian Orthodox Church. The OCA is the direct descendant of the Orthodox Mission in Alaska established by the Russian Church in 1794. By the early 20th century, the Mission had spread throughout North America and in the 1920s, it became informally known as the Russian Orthodox Metropolia, as its head by that time had the high episcopal rank of Metropolitan. Meanwhile, ROCOR was organized in the early 1920s by hierarchs who had fled Russia in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution as a provisional ecclesiastical governing body to tend to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the nascent Russian diaspora. Initially, ROCOR established its headquarters in Serbia. Complex historical circumstances throughout the 20th century that are beyond this article, often caused difficulties in the relations between the OCA (formerly, Metropolia) and ROCOR. Metropolitans Platon (Rozhdestvensky) and Theophilus (Pashkovsky) visited the ROCOR hierarchy in Serbia, but concelebration of the First Hierarchs did not then take place. In spite of the strain in inter-jurisdictional relationship precipitated by events surrounding the 7th All-American Sobor in 1946, when the First Hierarch of ROCOR relocated to America in 1950 to set up his residence and Synodal chancery in New York, he was warmly welcomed by Metropolitan Leonty (Turkevich), Primate of the Metropolia, with the hope for fraternal collaboration. Over the next decades, the relationship of the Metropolia and ROCOR was often problematic, and at times, acrimonious. This was most acutely evident when the Metropolia was granted autocephaly by the Church of Russia in 1970, an action that was viewed with wariness and suspicion by ROCOR due to state control of the Church in the Soviet Union. Concelebration of hierarchs and clergy of the two Churches was unknown, although the Metropolia/OCA never took a formal decision to suspend communion with ROCOR.



Relations began to warm in the new millennium with a decisive breakthrough in the ROCOR-OCA relationship after the Act of Canonical Communion reuniting ROCOR with the Church of Russia was signed in 2007. Almost immediately, concelebrations among ROCOR and OCA hierarchs and clergy began to take place with regularity. In order to clearly define a joint perspective on the past, present and future of the relations between ROCOR and the OCA, ROCOR suggested that dialogue should take place. For this purpose, each side established a Commission chaired by a bishop, consisting of four priests and a consultant. The Commissions held two days of joint meetings in October 2010, producing a statement issued jointly by the Synods of Bishops of the OCA and ROCOR in December 2010. As a visible sign of the unity expressed in the statement, two concelebrations of then OCA Primate, Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen), and the late ROCOR First Hierarch, Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral) took place in 2011. This statement and concelebrations were the felicitous culmination of years of rapprochement following what had at one time been a trying coexistence. On May 24, they served the Divine Liturgy together at the historic Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York, at the invitation of Archbishop Justinian, Administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA. A second concelebration took place at ROCOR's Cathedral of the Sign in New York on December 10, with the participation of most members of the Synods of both Churches. Since then, in 2013, the late Metropolitan Hilarion of ROCOR concelebrated with Metropolitan Tikhon and other hierarchs on Memorial Day at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, and on June 3, 2018 His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon was invited to concelebrate the Divine Liturgy with Metropolitan Hilarion at ROCOR's Novo-Diveevo Stavropegial Convent of the Holy Dormition in Nanuet, NY and to participate in the blessing of a new monument there dedicated to Saint Seraphim of Sarov.

It is especially fitting that the first concelebrated Liturgy of Metropolitan Tikhon and Metropolitan Nicholas as First Hierarch will take place at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, which was founded by Saint Tikhon, Enlightener of North America, Patriarch and Confessor of Moscow, whose holy life and witness to the Gospel continues to shine as an illuminating beacon for both the OCA and ROCOR, whose archpastoral ministry was instrumental for the founding of both Churches and who is fervently venerated by the hierarchs, clergy and faithful in both ecclesial bodies. May the intercessions of Saint Tikhon and all the Saints of North America bring increased prayerful communion between the OCA and ROCOR with more frequent concelebrations and greater collaboration in ministry for the Glory of God and the growth of His Holy Church in North America.

