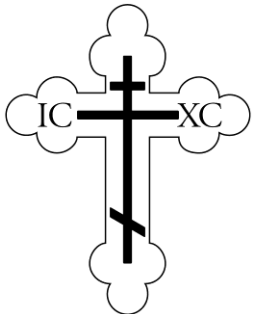


# Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church



A Parish of the  
Diocese of Chicago  
and the Midwest  
Orthodox Church  
in America



8600 Grand Blvd.  
Merrillville, IN 46410  
(219)947-4748  
Hall: (219)730-4698  
[www.ptvm.com](http://www.ptvm.com)

Rev. Dr. Jacob Van Sickle  
(219)384-6826 • [frjacobvansickle@gmail.com](mailto:frjacobvansickle@gmail.com)

Great Vespers: 6pm Saturdays

Divine Liturgy: 10am Sundays

Confession is available before or  
after Vespers or by appointment

**Welcome visitors!**  
**Please join us in the**  
**parish hall after Divine**  
**Liturgy for coffee hour.**

## November 28, 2021

### Holy Monk-Martyr Stephen the New

The Monk Martyr and Confessor Stephen the New was born in 715 at Constantinople into a pious Christian family. His parents, having two daughters, prayed the Lord for a son. The mother of the new-born Stephen took him to the Blachernae church of the Most Holy Theotokos and dedicated him to God.

During the reign of the emperor Leo the Isaurian (716-741) there was a persecution against the holy icons and against those venerating them. With the support of the emperor, the adherents of the Iconoclast heresy seized control of the supreme positions of authority in the Empire and in the Church. Persecuted by the powers of this world, Orthodoxy was preserved in monasteries far from the capital, in solitary cells, and in the brave and faithful hearts of its followers.

St Stephen's parents, grieved by the prevailing impiety, fled from Constantinople to Bithynia, and they gave over their sixteen-year-old son in obedience to the monk John, who labored in asceticism in a solitary place. St Stephen dwelt with the venerable monk John for more than fifteen years, devoting himself totally to this spirit-bearing Elder, and learning monastic activity from him. Here Stephen received the news that his father was dead, and his mother and sisters had been tonsured as nuns. After a certain time, his teacher John also died. St Stephen buried his venerable body and continued with monastic effort in his cave by himself. Soon monks began to come to the ascetic, desiring to learn from him the virtuous and salvific life, and a monastery was established.

The Emperor Leo was succeeded by Constantine Copronymos (741-775), an even more zealous iconoclast. The emperor convened an Iconoclast Council. However, except for Constantine, the Archbishop of Constantinople illegitimately raised to the patriarchal throne by Copronymos, not one of the other patriarchs participated in the wicked doings of this Council. This council of heretics, at the instigation of the emperor and the archbishop, described icons as idols and icon veneration as heresy.

Meanwhile, St Stephen and the monastery he established became known in the capital. They told the emperor about the ascetic life of the monks, about their Orthodox piety, about Stephen's gift of wonderworking, and of how St Stephen's fame had spread far beyond the region of the monastery. The saint's encouragement of icon veneration and the implied rebuff to the persecutors of Orthodoxy within the monastery especially angered the emperor. Archbishop Constantine realized that in the person of St Stephen he had a strong and implacable opponent of his iconoclastic intentions.

They tried to lure St Stephen into the Iconoclast camp, at first with flattery and bribery, then by threats, but in vain. Then they slandered the saint, accusing him of falling into sin with the nun Anna. But his guilt was not proven, since the nun courageously denied any guilt and died under torture and beatings. Finally, the emperor gave orders to lock the saint in prison and to destroy his monastery. Iconoclast bishops were sent to St Stephen in prison, trying to persuade him of the Iconoclast teaching. But the saint easily refuted all the arguments of the heretics and remained true to Orthodoxy. Then the emperor ordered that the saint be exiled on one of the islands in the Sea of Marmora. St Stephen settled into a

cave, and there also his disciples soon gathered. After a certain while the saint left the brethren and took upon himself the exploit of living atop a pillar. News of the stylite Stephen, and the miracles worked by his prayers, spread throughout all the Empire and strengthened the faith and spirit of Orthodoxy in the people.

The emperor gave orders to transfer St Stephen to prison on the island of Pharos, and then to bring him to trial. At the trial, the saint refuted the arguments of the heretics sitting in judgment upon him. He explained the dogmatic essence of icon veneration, and he denounced the Iconoclasts because in blaspheming icons, they blasphemed Christ and the Mother of God. As proof, the saint pointed to a golden coin inscribed with the image of the emperor. He asked the judges what would happen to a man who threw the coin to the ground and trampled the emperor's image under his feet. They replied that such a man would certainly be punished for dishonoring the image of the emperor. The saint said that an even greater punishment awaited anyone who would dishonor the image of the King of Heaven and His Saints, and with that he spat on the coin, threw it to the ground, and began to trample it underfoot.

The emperor gave orders to take the saint to prison, where already there were languishing 342 Elders, condemned for the veneration of icons. In this prison Saint Stephen spent eleven months, consoling the imprisoned. The prison became like a monastery, where the usual prayers and hymns were chanted by all together from memory. The people came to the prison in crowds and asked St Stephen to pray for them.

When the emperor learned that the saint had organized a monastery in prison, where they prayed and venerated holy icons, he sent two of his own servants, twin-brothers, to beat the saint to death. When these brothers went to the prison and beheld the face of the monk shining with a divine light, they fell down on their knees before him, asking his forgiveness and prayers, then they told the emperor that his command had been carried out. But the emperor learned the truth and he resorted to yet another lie. Informing his soldiers that the saint was plotting to remove him from the throne, he sent them to the prison. The holy confessor himself came out to the furious soldiers, who seized him and dragged him through the streets of the city. They then threw the lacerated body of the martyr into a pit, where they were wont to bury criminals.

# HYMNS OF THE DAY

## **Tone 6 – Resurrectional Troparion**

The angelic powers were at Your tomb;  
the guards became as dead men.

Mary stood by Your grave,  
seeking Your most pure body.

You captured hell,  
not being tempted by it.

You came to the Virgin granting life.//

O Lord, Who rose from the dead, glory to You!

## **Tone 4 – Patronal Troparion**

Today the faithful celebrate the feast with joy,  
illuminated by your coming, O Mother of God.

Beholding your pure image we fervently cry to you:

Encompass us beneath the precious veil of your protection.

Deliver us from every form of evil

by entreating Christ, your Son and our God//

that He may save our souls.

## **Tone 4 – Troparion for St Stephen the New**

Trained in asceticism on the mountain,

with the weapon of the Cross you destroyed the spiritual assaults of  
the hostile powers, O all-blessed one.

Again you bravely prepared for combat

and slew Coprónymus with the sword of faith;//

for both struggles you have been crowned by God, monk-martyr

Stephen of eternal memory.

## **Tone 6 – Resurrectional Kontakion**

When Christ God the Giver of Life,

raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand,

He bestowed resurrection on the human race.//

He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

## **Tone 8 – Kontakion for St Stephen the New**

Lovers of the feasts, from the heart with hymns let us praise in faith

God-like Stephen, the lover of the Trinity,

for he honored the fair icon of the Master and of His Mother.

Now let us rejoice together and cry out to him with love://

“Rejoice, ever-glorious Father!”

### **Tone 3 – Patronal Kontakion**

Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church,  
And with choirs of saints she invisibly prays to God for us.  
Angels and bishops worship.  
Apostles and prophets rejoice together, //  
Since for our sake she prays to the eternal God.

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

### **Tone 6 – Sunday Prokeimenon (Psalm 27)**

O Lord, save Your people, / and bless Your inheritance!

### **Epistle: Ephesians 2.4-10**

Brethren: God who is rich in mercy, through His great love with which He loved us, made us who were dead in trespasses alive with Christ: You were saved by grace. And He lifted us up and established us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For you have been saved by grace through faith. And this is not from yourselves: it is the gift of God, not from works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

### **Gospel: Luke 13.10-17**

At that time, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore, come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”

The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”

And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

## WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

**New Dep.** Penny Hall

Petre Ristevski

Paul Sikora

**Ev.Mem.** Platon Yurchak ('38)

Barbara Kurth (2020)

Mary Ann Behnke (2020)

**Health & Salv.**

Archpr. Peter

Archpr. Moses

Mat. Margaret

Mat. Anne

Mat. Trudi

Michal

Annika

Sarah

Archpr. Michael

Pr. Christopher

Mat. Jennifer

Andrew

Gideon

Dn. Nicholas

Sophia

Kevin

Jon

Tanya

Jovan

Julia

Tom

Tina

Jennifer

Gail

Stacy

Jeramie

Olivia

Parker

Christine

Larry

Rollie

Joseph

Nadia

Brendan

Tanya

Christopher

Nina

Renee

Carissa

Cynthia

John

Olga

Janie

Michael

David

Sharon

Mark

Jerry

Michael

Anthony

Daryl

Diane

Carla

Susan

Timothy

William

Paul

Joseph

Linda

Claudia

Elizabeth

Carol

Snezana

Ryan

Nathan

Kara

Christine

Jon

Zoey

Dominic

Declan

Hudson

Ayden

Hyland

Jason

Ted

James

Pamela

Erin

Alexander

Ronald

Theodore

Robert

Craig

Chuck

Scott

Mark

Christine

Dale

Pauline

Mary

Timothy

Lisa

Lois

Michael

Janice	Mary	Jack
Ken	Linda	Joyce
Debbie	Ivanka	Junia
Jacqueline	Susan	Anna
Cindy	Denise	Sandra
Daniel	Valerie	Linda
Laura	Jeffrey	Stephen
Dorothy	Aaron	Megan
Vasiliy	William	William
William	Jamie	Jim
Wanda	Karen	Camille
Cindy	Dale	

\*If you know someone who needs prayer, please give their name to Fr Jacob

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

After venerating the cross, we will serve the **1-year memorial for Mary Ann Behnke and Barbara Kurth.**

Thank you to everyone who provided gifts for needy families through our **Angel Tree** this year! Gifts will be delivered from the Church to the Salvation Army this Friday.

For **Bible Study** this week, read **Susanna and Daniel 1-2.**

Today during coffee hour will be the first monthly **Traveling Bookstore.** There is a table set up with featured bookstore items to peruse. This month we have Advent/Nativity items including cards, devotionals, children's books, and St. Nicholas, St. Lucia, and Alaskan Saint items/gifts.

### Mark your calendars:

Dec 1: **Bible Study @ 7pm**

Dec 2: **Faith Enrichment @ 10am**

Dec 4: **St. Nicholas kids' celebration and church decorating @ 9am**

Dec 5: **Great Vespers for the Feast of St. Nicholas @ 1pm**

Dec 6: **Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Nicholas @ 10am**

**Last week's gifts to the Lord: \$2,351**

# Thanksgiving Message of His Beatitude, our Metropolitan Tikhon

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Your name,  
O Most High" (Ps 91/92:1).*

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in  
America,

Dear Beloved Children in the Lord,

On the civil holiday of Thanksgiving Day, celebrated in the United States today and last month (October 11) in Canada, we are reminded that a Christian is characterized by gratitude. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine a pious heart without thanksgiving to our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Gratitude is so deeply rooted in our life in Christ that the central act of our worship of the Holy Trinity bears its name—Eucharist, thanksgiving.

Each week the Holy Spirit gathers us to offer this humble appreciation to God for our salvation. We do this in the Holy Anaphora not only by elevating bread and wine to receive as our Lord's most-pure Body and precious Blood, but also by elevating our hearts with grateful hands and saying "we lift them up unto the Lord." This vision of gratitude is not just for the Sunday Divine Liturgy, but for every day which God may give us. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, we are able to perpetually offer "a mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise" as we walk in His commandments.

On this national day of Thanksgiving, as you come together with friends and family to celebrate, I pray that you do so remembering first and foremost the immeasurable gifts our Lord has bestowed on us. First amongst these gifts is the gift of salvation in Christ. In recognition of the mercies of God towards you, I ask you to be merciful to others. Most especially, open your table to the poor, outcast, lonely, and afflicted. In so doing, you will have Christ Himself as your guest (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

May you all have a blessed Thanksgiving Day.

Yours in Christ,

+Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada