

Receive Their Crowns Into Thy Kingdom



In God-glorifying and life-giving ceremonies, the servants of God (left to right) Scott & Sophia Parkhill, Anthony & Julie Cassar, and Micah & Tiffany Cattell were crowned in holy matrimony on Nov. 11/12, 2023. Many years!

The Church Cannot Bless Sin

Brothers and sisters in Christ, on December 19th of this past year, the offices of the Pope of Rome released a document called *Fiducia Supplicans* which permitted Roman Catholic clergy to perform “blessings for couples in irregular situations and for couples of the same sex” (III.32). This document takes great pains to indicate that these blessings should not be written or ritualized or done with “clothing, gestures, or words that are proper to a wedding” or “in concurrence [or connection] with the ceremonies of a civil union” (III.39) and that marriage is still uniquely the “exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the generation of children” (I.4).

However, in spite of all of the word-gaming about the meaning of different types of blessings and the words prohibiting these new blessings from too-

closely mirroring the sacrament of marriage, the document very clearly permits priests to bless “human relationships” that are “irregular” (III.31), meaning that they are based around sexual patterns that are considered to be sinful in classical Christian teaching, and surely might include not only same-sex relationships, but also extramarital, adulterous, or polygamous arrangements, among others.

The central problem with this document is that it conflates sinners and sinful patterns. Any Orthodox priest who has been a priest for very long has knowingly blessed *individuals* who are involved in same-sex and opposite-sex fornication, drug use and drunkenness, or who are bound in any number of shameful patterns of sin and addiction. We bless the *individuals*, the *humans*, the *sinners*, when they come to us and say something simple like, “Father, would you bless me?” But we never

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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
Jan 7	A. Stickle, M. Leathers, L. Georgiou	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	M. Fiori & M. Fedkin
Jan 14	H. Torbic, A.T. Pelikan, K. Oleynik	M. & T. Chambers	M. Stickle & B. Haupt
Jan 21	Russian Ladies Group B (Elena G.)	M. Leathers & Mka. K. Oleynik	K. Cattell & H. Torbic
Jan 28	C. Swisher, T. Chambers, C. Pellock	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	G. Cattell & M. Fedkin
Feb 4	Russian Ladies Group A (Katya F.)	J. Houser & A. Stickle	M. Fiori & M. Stickle
Feb 11	A. Stickle, M. Leathers, L. Georgiou	J. Torbic & N. Quinting	H. Torbic & B. Haupt

■ FROM THE RECTOR’S DESK

Blessings

bless the sinful pattern itself or any relationship that is based around a pattern of sin.

The publication of *Fiducia Supplicans* with all of its obfuscation is indeed a regrettable development and should likely be viewed as a harbinger of coming things within Roman Catholicism. This document will surely give cover to worldly-minded and man-pleasing priests and bishops who wish to replicate the patterns we have seen in all of the U.S. Protestant “mainline” churches of constant pushing and agitation and provocation by those who wish to further depart from classical Christian teaching. If the pattern holds, these ongoing provocations will be met with a near-total silence from leadership that eventually gives way to endorsement and then full-throated celebration.

As Orthodox Christians, we should greet this news with sorrow and not triumphalism, especially because if the giant domino of Roman Catholicism falls, then the “savage wolves” of modernity will redouble their efforts to attack and corrupt the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church with their perverse speech (Acts 20:29-30). But we must not and cannot waver on this

matter, for it is not a place where the Lord or the Fathers or the Church leave us any room for movement or conciliation. “Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor catamites, nor man-bedders... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9-10).

Brethren, we are called to love and bless sinners, but we cannot bless or condone ongoing patterns of sin. If we do, we shall surely hear the words of the Lord to the Prophet Malachi: “And now, O priests... I will curse your blessings: indeed, I have already cursed them.... For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant.... You have wearied the Lord with your words[,]... saying, “Every one who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them” (2:1-2,7,17).

Let us continue to speak the truth plainly, compassionately, and with love. In doing so, by God’s mercy, we will save both our own sinful selves and our hearers (1 Tim 4:16). Glory to Jesus Christ! ■

— Fr. Ignatius

■ DOCTRINE

OCA Statement on Human Sexuality

20th All-American Council, July 2022

The Orthodox Church teaches that the union between a man and a woman in marriage reflects the union between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5). As such, marriage is by this reflection monogamous and heterosexual. Within this marriage, sexual relations between a husband and wife are an expression of their love that has been blessed by God. Such is God’s plan for male and female, created in his image and likeness, from the beginning, and such remains his plan for all time. Any other form of sexual expression is by its nature disordered, and cannot be blessed by the Church in any way, whether directly or indirectly.

That said, the Holy Synod of Bishops expresses its pastoral concern and paternal love for all who desire to come to Christ and who struggle with their passions, temptations, and besetting sins, whatever those might be. The Church is a hospital for the sick; Our Lord has come as a physician to heal those who are ailing. Imitating our Savior, who stretched his arms wide on the Cross, we welcome with open arms all who desire the life of repentance in Christ.

Over the course of recent years, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America have made numerous

(continued, see STATEMENT, facing page)

■ NEWS & NOTES

Thank you Mr. Ed!

After many, many years and much work, and at the ripe young age of 81 years old, Ed Miranda will be retiring from his janitorial duties at Holy Trinity beginning this month. Thank you, Mr. Ed! Taking his place as the new janitor will be Cameron Johnson. Congratulations on your new position, Cam!

Hunter Family on Vacation

Fr. Ignatius and his family will be on vacation from Tuesday, January 16th-Tuesday, January 30th. For pastoral emergencies or other needs, please contact Pdn. Mark Oleynik at (814) 380-6031 or dnmark@holyltrinity-oca.org.

Many Years!

Many years to the newly baptized Silas, his parents Cameron and Josie Johnson, and his godparents Evan and Amber Ashmore.

House Blessings

It’s house blessing time! Sign-ups with time slotting are available in the narthex and online. For any questions, coordination matters, or to schedule a blessing for a day and time that is not listed, please contact Anna Stickles at annastickles4@gmail.com. College students – you are more than welcome to sign up to get your dorm room/apartment blessed! If you don’t know what you need or how to set things up, don’t worry; Father will come with everything he needs and show you!

A Homily by St. Paisius the Athonite – On Faith and Indifference

Today they’re trying to destroy faith, and for the edifice of faith to fall they quietly pull out one stone, then another. But we’re all responsible for the destruction; not just those who destroy but we who see how faith is being undermined and make no effort to strengthen it. As a result the seducers are emboldened to create even greater difficulties for us, and their rage against the Church and the monastic life increases.

Today’s situation can be resisted only spiritually, not by worldly means. The storm will continue to rage a bit, will throw all the flotsam, everything unnecessary, onto the shore, and then the situation will become clearer. Some will receive their reward, while others will have to pay their debts.

Today there are many who strive to corrupt everything: the family, the youth, the Church. In our day it’s a true witness to speak up for one’s people, for the state is waging war against divine law. Its laws are directed against the Law of God.

But we are responsible for not letting the enemies of the Church corrupt everything. Though I’ve heard even priests say: “Don’t get involved in that. It’s none of your business!” If they had reached such a non-striving condition through prayer I would kiss their feet. But no! They’re indifferent because they want to please everyone and live in comfort.

Indifference is unacceptable even for laymen, and all the more so for the clergy. An honest, spiritual man doesn’t do anything with indifference. “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully”, says the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 48:10). There’s a war on today, a holy war. I must be on the front lines. There are so many Marxists, so many Masons, so many Satanists and assorted others! So many possessed, anarchists and seduced ones! I see what awaits us, and it’s painful for me. The bitter taste of human pain is in my mouth.

A lukewarm clergy lulls the people to sleep, leaves them in their former condition so they won’t be upset. “Look”, they say. “By all means don’t say that there’ll be a war, or the Second Coming, that one must prepare oneself for death. We must not make people alarmed!”

And others speak with a false kindness, saying: “We mustn’t expose heretics and their delusions, so as to show our love for them.” Today’s people are water-soluble. There’s no leaven in them.

If I avoid upsetting myself to protect my fleshly comfort then I’m indifferent to holiness! Spiritual meekness is one thing, and softness and indifference are quite another. Some say: “I’m a Christian and therefore I have to be joyful and calm.” But they’re not Christian. They’re simply indifferent. And their joy is only a worldly joy.

■ CATECHESIS

The Church Calendar

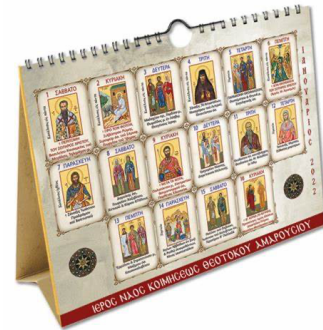
The Church’s liturgical worship is spread throughout the year, finding expression in the use of a calendar to regulate the observances of the Church’s feasts. This is because Christian worship is corporate as well as private, and so if Christians will celebrate (for example) Christ’s birth, they must first agree upon which date that celebration will take place. If Christian worship were merely individual, then different individual Christians might choose to celebrate Christ’s birth on differing days, with no loss. But since our worship is corporate, a calendar becomes necessary if feast days and other special occasions are to be kept.

At first there was no such thing as a liturgical year, and no specifically Christian calendar, so that no calendar can claim apostolic provenance or authority. The apostles simply mandated the gathering together of all the baptized in a weekly *qahal* or *ekklesia*. It was on this day that all the Christians within a given locale (be it small hamlet or larger town) would meet (ideally in one place) to hear the Word and offer the Eucharist. This gathering anticipated the age to come and was the Christians’ weekly experience of the power that would flood the world in that age to come. There was, in other words, an eschatological dimension to the Christians’ sacramental gathering. This eschatological gathering was the sole “Christian calendar” known to the apostles.

Very soon, however, martyrdoms began to multiply. The local church would treasure and celebrate their local martyrs, meeting on the anniversary of his or her martyrdom to rehearse those glorious events and celebrate the Eucharist (ideally, over the grave of the martyr). These annual celebrations of the martyred saints became the next layer of celebrations added to the apostolic gatherings on Sunday. As the stories of the martyrs became more widely known, the feast of the martyr might be celebrated not just by the community in which the martyr had lived and died, but by other church communities as well. Around this time, in the second century, the Church began to also celebrate annually the death and resurrection of Christ. Some churches (like those in Asia Minor) celebrated this feast on the 14th day of the month of Nisan, the day when

Christ was crucified, regardless of whether or not that day fell on a Sunday. Many other churches, such as those of Rome, celebrated this feast always on a Sunday, regardless of whether that day was the 14th of Nisan.

Such diversity of calendar and practice was not considered problematic by those such as St. Irenaeus, who urged the bishop of Rome to relax and not break communion with those who celebrated it on the 14th of Nisan as he was tempted to do. But after the Council of Nicaea in 325, such diversity was becoming pastorally problematic to the perception of the Church’s unity in the eyes of the world, and a formula was agreed upon: the feast of Pascha would be celebrated by all churches on the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Those insisting on the date of the 14th of Nisan (the so-called “Quartodecimans” or “fourteeners”) now had to conform or leave.



Soon other feasts were added, such as the feast of Theophany —i.e., the “manifestation” of Christ’s glory, seen at his birth, at his revelation to the Magi, at his baptism, and at his miracle of turning water into wine. This feast was held on January 6. Eventually the West decided to commemorate Christ’s birth on December 25, drawing the events of his birth and the visit of the Magi away from its original feast in January to the new one in December. Feasts were added at different times and in different places. Eventually certain calendars came into wide-spread use, so that today all the Orthodox world uses the same Church calendar for feasts. This calendar contains a number of saints’ days, commemorating various saints (usually one or more per day), and a number of feasts celebrating events in the life of Christ and the life of Mary the Theotokos. ■

■ DOCTRINE

Statement (con’t)

pronouncements affirming the Orthodox Christian teaching on marriage and sexuality. Metropolitan Tikhon, at the 18th All-American Council in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 20, 2015, in his opening address, stated that:

“... the Orthodox Church must continue to proclaim what she has always taught: that marriage is the union between one man and one woman and the Orthodox Church in America can in no way deviate from this teaching...”

Therefore, in accord with the timeless plan of God our Creator, the unchanging teaching of Christ the Savior announced through his holy apostles and their successors, and the consistent witness of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, the Holy Synod affirms what the Scriptures clearly and plainly proclaim and the holy fathers unerringly confess, namely: that God made human beings in two sexes, male and female, in his own image, and that chaste and pure sexual relationships are reserved to one man and one woman in the bond of marriage.

As such, we affirm that sexual relationships are blessed only within the context of a marriage between one man and one woman. Motivated by love and out of sincere care for souls, we call those who suffer from the passion of same-sex attraction to a life of steadfast chastity and repentance, the same life of chastity and repentance to which all mankind is called in Christ.

We call upon all clergy, theologians, teachers, and lay persons within the Orthodox Church in America never to contradict these teachings by preaching or teaching against the Church’s clear moral position; by publishing books, magazines, and articles which do the same; or producing or publishing similar content online. We reject any attempt to create a theological framework which would normalize same-sex erotic relationships or distort humanity’s God-given sexual

identity. The holy apostle Paul writes that such teachings will “increase to more ungodliness,” and that such a “message will spread like gangrene” (2 Tim 2:16-17), misleading the faithful and inquirers seeking the truth.








Any clergy, theologian, teacher, or lay person who contravenes our directive thus undermines the authority of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America by disregarding the Holy Synod’s consistent and unwavering teaching on these matters. We call on any such persons to cease their disruptive activities, which threaten the peace and tranquility of the Orthodox Church in America, cause scandal and uncertainty, and tempt those who struggle against their disordered passions to stumble. Consequently, those who teach these errors become participants in the sin of those whom they have tempted or whom they have failed to correct, and thus should seek remission of this sin in the mystery of holy confession. Those who refuse correction open themselves to ecclesiastical discipline. Thus, we, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, conclude by once again affirming that all clergy, theologians, teachers, and lay persons of the Orthodox Church in America should teach nothing other than the fullness of the Orthodox faith, which is the fullness of the saving truth.

We remind our faithful and clergy that every person of goodwill is welcome to visit our parishes. However, reception into the Church, and continued communion in Christ at the sacred Chalice, is reserved for those who strive to live a life of repentance and humility in light of these God-given truths, conforming themselves to the commandments of God as the only path of salvation in Christ. All of us are sinners, but it is for precisely this reason that Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to “Repent and believe in the Gospel, for the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15). ■

Holy Trinity Calendar

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, unless where noted.
Events listed at **Trinity House** take place at 123 South Sparks Street, in State College.

All services at Holy Trinity are currently being live-streamed. To watch them online, please visit [holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube](https://www.holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube)

January 2024	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	31 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Great Vespers, 6pm	January 1, 2024 St. Basil the Great Divine Liturgy, 10am	2	3 Vespers, 6pm	4	 Eve of Theophany Vesperal Divine Liturgy, 9am Vigil of Theophany, 6pm	5 Theophany of Christ Divine Liturgy, 9am Great Blessing of the Waters, following Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	7 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Installation of New Parish Council Officers, 11:30am	8	9	 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	10	11	12 Choir rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	14 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	15	16	 Vespers, 6pm	17	18	19 Great Vespers, 6pm
	21 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	22	23	 Vespers, 6pm	24	25	26 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm
	28 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	29	30	 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm	31 Confessions, 4pm Vigil for Meeting of the Lord, 6pm	February 1  Meeting of Our Lord Divine Liturgy, 8am	2 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, 6pm
	4 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	5	6	 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	7	8	9 Choir rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm
						10	