

April 2016



# SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## April 2016 Newsletter

### **THE UNSEEN MARTYR**

**By Dr. Thomas Di Martino**

*This is the fiercest struggle, the struggle that resists a man unto blood. It is here that we manifest our patience, my beloved brethren....For this is the time of unseen martyrdom.*

*St. Isaac the Syrian, fourth century.*

It is no small thing, martyrdom: the voluntary laying down of this earthly life for the Faith. For Eastern Christians, the atrocities of ISIS are no novelty, but the continuance of an ancient pattern. The Orthodox Christians and their brethren have endured such horrors for most of the past 20 centuries. Beginning with the stoning of the deacon Stephen, and the casting of James, the brother of the Lord, from the pinnacle of the temple, the Orthodox have borne a bitter yoke under Jews, Romans, Arab Muslims, Tartars, Turks, Nazis, and Communists. As early as the fourth century, St. Gregory Nazianzus refers to the Faith as "suffering Orthodoxy."

Yet, what is it to lay down this life in the Christian sense? Is it something required only of those who face stoning and the sword? Archimandrite Zacharias (a disciple of St. Sophrony) speaks of the "spiritual



phenomenon, unknown to modern psychology, called 'mindfulness of death' in Orthodox ascetic terminology. It has nothing to do with the psychological awareness that we shall die some day; it is more like a deep knowledge, accompanied by a wondrous sensibility of the heart, which perceives clearly 'the futility of any and every acquisition on earth' and that 'all is vanity' (Eccles. 1:2)"

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The person who finds the full measure of mindfulness of death “suffers deeply with an intensity that cannot be borne within the limits of human strength....As he abides in remembrance of death, man perceives in spirit the hell of God’s absence. In his desperate desire to resolve this situation, he finds he must detach himself from every passionate involvement with the visible world, and he then single-mindedly casts himself upon God.”

The lover of God then undertakes a desperate war with the passions, seeking to uproot them, to extricate himself from their talons, to purify his heart, so that God may reclaim it as His dwelling place. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23). Archimandrite Zacharias notes that the acute experience of mindfulness of death often leads people to monastic life; “they feel the monastic life as an urgency in their spirit. It is not something that they consider carefully and then choose to do; they feel that either they do it, or they die.”

Paradoxically, but in a very real sense, the ascetical life – the Christian life to which all are called, monastics and lay persons alike – is a martyrdom. It is the dying to one’s own will, to the passions, to the fascinations of the false and illusory in which there is no life, but only the appearance of life.

How moved, how humbled I have been, over the years of my personal and professional life, to have witnessed so many lives of quiet heroism. So many lives of quiet selfless sacrifice. Of the deferring, the subduing of desires, the forgoing of deep needs, for the benefit of others. I remember the woman who deferred marriage for many years to care for her aged mother and her mentally retarded brother. The father who bore with his violent and bipolar wife until his children were old enough to be out of the house. The man who sought out the drunk driver who had killed his daughter, and forgave him. The cynic may invoke psychopathology in such cases; but

cynicism must be recognized for what it is; and the one who witnesses selfless sacrifice can discern the difference. Here is an unseen martyrdom; herein is a portal to the life of Christ, to the knowledge of the sacrifice of the cross.

So many times I have watched people struggle with addictions, fall and rise, and fall and rise again, and struggle against the demon whose talons grip and tear them. And again, here is an unseen martyrdom; to rise each day, in the face of discouragement and sorrow, and re-commit to the struggle.

One frequently encounters today a perverted inversion of Christianity that has been labeled the “Prosperity Gospel.” This false religion sometimes presents itself frankly and unashamedly; and sometimes it insinuates itself subtly and poisons more conventional forms of the Faith. In all cases, it dangles before the wounded, the alluring bait of an easy immunity, an effortless escape from the grief of Fallenness. But its essence is, in fact, the denial of the meaning and the power of the cross.

In the ancient Christian understanding, it is only by our own ascent of Golgotha, by a transformation of our own suffering into a salvific work, into a window onto the universal suffering of the Fallen cosmos, *an entering into the salvific suffering of Christ*, that we can become truly human, become genuine, and find the unalloyed joy of Christ’s Resurrection and our own.

***"The knowledge of the Cross is concealed in the sufferings of the Cross" (St. Isaac the Syrian; fourth century).***

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## Announcements

- The last two classes for Church Readers will be on Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> at 4pm in the church. All are welcome to come and learn.
- Fr. Theophan will be wrapping up the Lenten series on Self-knowledge on Sunday April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm in the church. All are welcome to come and learn.
- On Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> we will serve Vigil at 6pm for the feast of the Precious Cross.
- On Wednesday April 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm we will celebrate the service of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. The Great Canon is a wonderful and poetic contemplation of the Scriptures. We also read the life of St. Mary of Egypt at this service.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.
- See Holy Week and Pascha Schedule below.
- We have an iTunes podcast "Sparks among the Stubble" and a YouTube channel where our homilies and other classes are posted.

## Many Years!

Birthdays	1	Diana Gratigny
	2	Mili Haynes
	3	Ruxanda Malcoci
	6	Elijah Lee
	9	Peter Uchakin
	12	A'нна Wilcox
	20	Steven Davis
	27	Jeremy Plummer
	28	Daniela Gaidau
	29	Gheorge Codreanu
Anniversaries	23	Igor and Olha Osobov

*"Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened,  
and I will give you rest" (Matthew 28:10)*

*"Therefore confess you sins to one another, and  
pray for one another, that you might be healed"  
(James 5:16)*



## Great Lent and Confession

The sacrament of Holy Confession is an important and vital part of the Christian life. Confession is about healing. The Lord urges us to flee sin and gives us His commandments not to burden us with "rules", but to free us from that which truly burdens us; sin. Our Lord loves us and knows that sin causes things to break in our lives and causes us needless suffering. We break relationships with others when we sin against them, we separate ourselves from God when we sin and do not repent. Sin leads to a constant burden of shame, guilt and a troubled conscience. Sin builds upon itself, and can lead us into isolation and despair. The enemy always seeks to break those good things in our lives, Our Lord always seeks to heal and restore. In Holy Confession we have the opportunity to honestly and fully tell God our troubles, to cast our burdens on Him, and to bring our spiritual wounds and illnesses to the Great Physician, Who is willing and able to heal us.

In Confession we stand in front of the icon of Christ, signifying His invisible, but very real presence among us. The priest stands as witness, on behalf of the Church, fulfilling a role to which he is ordained. Confession and absolution are not magic, and are only effectual when approached in faith, honesty, and a real desire to be healed.

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At St. Innocent Confessions are heard on Saturday's an hour before Vespers or Vigil, on Sunday mornings before the Liturgy (9:15-9:50am), after the Liturgy if need be, and by appointment during the week. Participation in the Sacrament of Confession is expected for those who desire to be anointed with Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday. Receiving the Eucharist on Pascha assumes that one has confessed their sins recently, that is, during Lent. Please take the time to schedule your confession this Lenten season.

*"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our*

*sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:8)

### ***Lenten Retreat / Parish Workshop Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup> 10:30am -2:30pm***

The Very Reverend Steven Voytovich, Dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary will be giving a Lenten retreat/parish workshop at our parish on Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup>. The focus of this retreat/workshop is "Community Life" in our parish.

## ***Lenten Retreat with Fr. Steven Voytovich***

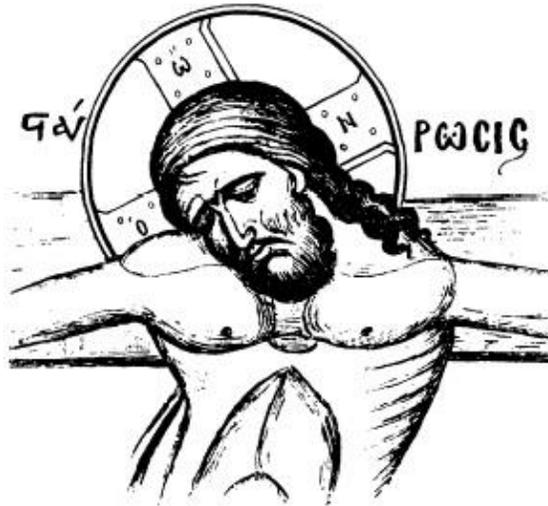
*Dean of St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary*

On Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup> Fr. Steven Voytovich the Dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary will be leading a two part Lenten retreat/parish workshop at St. Innocent Orthodox Church. Fr. Steven's talk and the workshop portion of this retreat will be focused on the theme of "The Parish Community – Our Life in Christ."

### **Retreat Schedule**

- 10:30am – The Parish Community
- 12:00pm – Lenten Potluck Meal
- 1:00pm – Group Session





## ***Holy Week 2016***

<b><i>Friday</i></b>	<b><i>April 22</i></b>	<b><i>6:30 pm Matins for Lazarus Saturday</i></b>
<b><i>Saturday</i></b>	<b><i>April 23</i></b>	<b><i>10am Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday</i></b> <b><i>6pm Vigil – Our Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem</i></b>
<b><i>Sunday</i></b>	<b><i>April 24</i></b>	<b><i>10am Festal Divine Liturgy – Palm Sunday</i></b>
<b><i>Monday</i></b>	<b><i>April 25</i></b>	<b><i>6:30pm Bridegroom Matins</i></b>
<b><i>Tuesday</i></b>	<b><i>April 26</i></b>	<b><i>6:30pm Bridegroom Matins</i></b>
<b><i>Wed</i></b>	<b><i>April 27</i></b>	<b><i>6:30pm Holy Unction (those receiving to have been to Confession sometime during Great Lent)</i></b>
<b><i>Thursday</i></b>	<b><i>April 28</i></b>	<b><i>10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil – The Mystical Supper</i></b> <b><i>6:30pm Matins with 12 Passion Gospels</i></b>
<b><i>Friday</i></b>	<b><i>April 29</i></b>	<b><i>10am Royal Hours</i></b> <b><i>1:30pm decoration of the tomb of our Lord</i></b> <b><i>3pm Vespers with the placing of the shroud</i></b> <b><i>6:30pm Matins with the Lamentations</i></b>
<b><i>Saturday</i></b>	<b><i>April 30</i></b>	<b><i>10am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil – Decent into Hades</i></b>
<b><i>Holy Pascha</i></b>		<b><i>11:30pm Midnight Office</i></b> <b><i>12am Paschal Matins &amp; Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom followed by the blessing of Paschal baskets</i></b>
<b><i>Sunday</i></b>	<b><i>May 1</i></b>	<b><i>1pm Agape Vespers</i></b>

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2  4pm Readers Class 5pm Confession <b>6pm Vigil for the Feast of the Cross</b>
3 The Cross  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class	4	5  7pm Bolingbroke Community Club	6  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	7  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	8  Fr. Steven Arrives	9  10-2pm Lenten Retreat 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
10 St. John Climacus  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	11	12	13  6:30pm Matins with the Great Canon of St. Andrew	14  8am MCMA 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Parish Council	15	16  4pm Readers Class 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
17 St. Mary of Egypt  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Lenten Class	18	19	20  6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy	21  1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	22  6:30pm Matins for Lazarus Saturday	23  10am Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday 5pm Confession 6pm Vigil for Palm
24 Palm Sunday  9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	25  6:30 Bridegroom Matins	26  6:30 Bridegroom Matins	27  6:30pm Holy Unction	28  <b>10am</b> Vespereal Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry <b>6:30pm</b> Matins with the 12 Passion Gospels	29  <b>10am</b> Royal Hours <b>3pm</b> Vespers w/ the placing of the Shroud. <b>4:30</b> decor the tomb <b>6:30pm</b> Matins w/ the Lamentations	30  <b>10am</b> Vespereal Divine Liturgy <b>11:30pm</b> Midnight Office, Paschal Matins & Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

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*Tentative May 2016*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Great and Holy Pascha! <b>1pm Agape Vespers</b> <i>followed by the Pascha Party!</i>	2	3 7pm Bolingbroke Community Club	4 No Fast 6pm Paschal Vespers	5 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	6 No Fast	7 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
8 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Radonitza Panikhida 12:45Agape	9	10	11 6pm Daily Vespers	12 8am MCMA 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Parish Council	13	14 10am Church Cleanup 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
15 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	16	17	18 6pm Daily Vespers	19 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	20	21 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
22 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	23	24	25 6pm Daily Vespers	26 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	27	28 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
29 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	30 Memorial Day	31				