# From The Ambon

## St Michael Orthodox Church

## 512 Winter St., Old Forge, PA

Phone: 570-457-3703

Web: www.stmichaelof.org Facebook: stmichaelof1891PA

Priest Michael Shepherd (frmichael@stmichaelof.org)

Chair - Tammy Wytovich (chair@stmichaelof.org)

Vice Chair - Danny Pregmon (vicechair@stmichaelof.org)

Secretary - Vitaliy Rakovsky (office@stmichaelof.org)

Treasurer - Joseph Hart (treasurer@stmichaelof.org)

Christ Has Ascended! From Earth To Heaven!

**May 24th, 2026 7th SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone 6. Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.** Afterfeast of Ascension. Ven. Simeon the Stylite (the Younger) of the Wonderful Mountain (596). Ven. Niketas the Stylite, Wonderworker of Pereyaslavl'—Zalesskii (1186). Martyrs Meletius Stratelates, Stephen, John, and 1,218 soldiers, with women and children, including Serapion the Egyptian, Callinicus the Magician, Theodore, Faustus, the women: Marciana, Susanna, and Palladia, two children: Cyriacus and Christian, and twelve Tribunes—Faustus, Festus, Marcellus, Theodore, Meletius, Sergius, Marcellinus, Felix, Photinus, Theodoriscus, Mercurius, and Didymus, all of whom suffered in Galatia (138-161). St. Vincent of Lérins.

## Birthdays, Anniversaries, & Service Schedule for May

**Birthdays:** Uriel Vo (5/30); Daniel Jones (5/30)
**Nameday:** Helen Wytovich (5/21); Emily Krenitsky (5/30)
**Baptism:** Uriel Vo (5/4); Fr Michael and Matushka Emilia Shepherd (5/8); Maximus Shepherd (5/16); Rodion Shepherd (5/18)
**Anniversary:** Fr Michael Shepherd - 8th Priest Ordination (5/26/18)
**Travelers:**

**Prosphora Schedule:** PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE HELP! We need families to start baking prosphora at home. Please sign up. *The Church has a prosphora kit if you would like to borrow it. THE CHURCH NEEDS YOUR HELP. THIS IS AN OFFERING FOR THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE. Thank you to Vitaliy and Maria for the offering this morning.*

| | |
|---|---|
| May 31 - Polzella | June 7 - Shepherd |
| June 14 | June 21 |
| June 28 | |

**Counting: HELP!** Please sign up and count our donations. Please stay and help. Thank you David for assisting today.

| | |
|---|---|
| May 31 | June 7 |
| June 14 | June 21 |
| June 28 | |

**Reader's Schedule**

May 24 - V: Joseph / L: Emilia H.

May 31 - V: Uriel / L: Blaise
June 7 - V:Michael / L: Uriel

***PLEASE SING ALONG!*** *Singing the hymns and responses to the litanies throughout the services is encouraged!*

**AGAPE Meal Plan - Please sign up downstairs**

| | |
|---|---|
| May 31 - Baked Potato Bar | June 7 |
| June 14 | June 21 |
| June 28 | |

***Coffee Hour/Agape Meal:*** *Please stay and join us for a cup of coffee so we may break bread with each other. This will allow us to get to know each other and see how we can help each other.*

**(Church work day)** SAT, May 30th:
4:00 PM Panikhida 5:00 PM Great Vespers w/Litya
SUN, May 31st: 9: 10 AM - Hours & DL **8th SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone 7. Holy Pentecost: Feast of the Holy Trinity**
**Kneeling Vespers immediately following Liturgy**

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves by prayer, fasting, and a recent (monthly) confession. If you have questions please ask Fr Michael! Visitors, if you did not introduce yourself to Fr Michael at Vespers, please refrain from Holy Communion.*

---

**Parish Prayer List**

**NEWLY DEPARTED:**

**DEPARTED:** *Evelyn* Flynn (5/5); *Jean* Staviski Mori (5/6); *Volodymyr* Danylets (5/9); *Marie* Raskausakas (5/12); *Paul* Bezuhly (5/15); *Harry* Krevko (5/16); *Alexander* Pritchyk (5/18); *Walter* Pregmon (5/19); *Dennis* Pregmon (5/25); Rose Macheska (5/26)

**Please remember in your prayers LIVING:**

Ill-afflicted *Archpriest(s) John Nightingale,* & *Theodore* Orzolek

**All those caring for the sick and suffering at this time throughout the world, especially our families and friends:** *Edward* Sevensky, *Margaret* Pregmon, *Daniel* Jones, *Michae*l Sokol, *Michael* Krenitsky, *Bernie* Elko, *Nadia* Macheska, *The child of God Abigail, Helen* Wytovich, *Marie* Pasternak, *Eli & Paula* Stavisky, *Marie* Pozella, *Walter* Prichyk

**Servants of God:** *Mark* Bezhuly, *David & Kathy* Barsigian, *Alexa* Barsigian & *Bobby* Wolfel, *Patricia* Jones, *Anne* Buday, *Emily* Krenitsky, *Gregory* Krenitsky, *Barbara* Sevensky, *Beverly* Elko, *Nicole* Earl, *Anna* Tyrpak, *Sandy & Danny* Pregmon, *Marie* Pritchyk, *Michael & Euphemia* Keklak, *Justin & Elisabeth* Kane, *Maria & Vitaliy* Rakovsky, *Ekaterina & Anna*, *George, Natasha, Rosa, & Lucia* Coyoy, *Mat. Emilia, Reader Blaise, Maximus, Rodion, Savina* Shepherd, *Joseph, Emilia, Judah, Nadezda, & Silas* Hart, *Tammy* Wytovich, *Paulette* Ezbiansky, *Uriel* Vo *& Maura* Elko, *Mary* Krevko, *Elisabeth, Jacob, & Juliette* Halford, *Tammy, Justin, Niko, & Katya* Williams, *Paul* Dunay, *Anastasia, Sophia, & Luke, Darlene* Shaffer, *Sophia, & Anastasia* Polzella, *David* Jadick, *Sandra* Condone, *Timothy* & *Holly* Granville, *Maxim* Granville, *Christopher* Yeisley, and *Gabrie*l, Mother *Katherine*, *Diane, Mitch, Christina, & James*

**Catechumens:** *Marley, Tulia, & Magnolia* Connolly, *Neva* Yeisely, *Zachary* Nikl,

**Seekers:** *Vincent* Bonello, *Rebecca* Burns, *Ken* Nikl

*Treasury* "... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." Jesus Christ

## How Much is my tithe

| Weekly | 2% | 4% | 5% | 10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **$200** | $4 | $8 | $10 | $20 |
| **$500** | $10 | $20 | $25 | $50 |
| **$750** | $15 | $30 | $37 | $75 |
| **$1000** | $20 | $40 | $50 | $100 |
| **$1500** | $30 | $60 | $75 | $150 |

**WEEKLY GIVING UPDATE:** We thank you for your continued giving in gratitude for all that our loving God does for each of us, for His Holy Church, **and** all the blessings we receive through her.

**MAY Income:** $18,567.00

**MAY Expenses:** $9,426.53

**Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open**: $3,740.85

**Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open**: $14,963.58

## Words of Wisdom
## From the Saints & Teachers

## Today Readings

**Epistle:** (44) Acts 20:16-18,28-36
**Gospel:** (56) John 17:1-13

**EPISTLE**
Deacon: Let us attend!
Priest: Peace be unto all!
Reader: And to thy spirit.
Deacon: Wisdom!
Reader: The Prokeimenon in the 4th Tone, the Song of the Fathers: Blessed art Thou O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!
Choir: Blessed art Thou O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!
Reader: For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us!
Choir: Blessed art Thou O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!
Reader: Blessed art Thou O Lord God of our Fathers
Choir: and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!
Deacon: Wisdom!
Reader: The reading from the Acts of the Holy Apostles.
Deacon: Let us attend!

[(44) Acts 20:16-18, 28-36] In those days, Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. * And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. * And when they came to him, he said to them: * "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which He obtained with the blood of His own Son. * I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; * and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. * Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. * And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. * I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. * You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. * In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" * And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

Priest: Peace be unto thee, Reader.
Reader: And to thy spirit.
ALLELUIA
Deacon: Wisdom!
Reader: In the 1st Tone: AL-LE-LU-IA!
Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!
Reader: The Lord, the God of gods, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!
Reader: Gather to Me, My venerable ones, who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.
Choir: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**
[(56) John 17:1-13] At that time, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee, * since Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. * And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. * I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou gavest me to do; * and now, Father, glorify Thou Me in Thine own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. * "I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. * Now they know that everything that Thou hast given Me is from Thee; * for I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from Thee; and they have

believed that Thou didst send me. * I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine; * all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. * And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are One. * While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. * But now I am coming to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

**Acts 21:38** ***Are You Not the Egyptian?*** **THE TRUTH SHINES EVEN THROUGH THE DEVIL'S EFFORTS**. ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: This Egyptian was a deceiving sorcerer, and the devil expected to triumph through him and implicate Christ and his apostles in charges leveled at these sorcerers. But he did not succeed. The truth became still more brilliant, having suffered no harm through the devil's machinations but shining all the brighter.… Therefore let us not grieve that heresies exist where false Christs wished to attack Christ, both before and after this, to throw him into obscurity. For we find the truth shining through on every occasion. This is also what happened with the prophets. There were false prophets, by contrast with whom the true prophets shone all the more. For sickness shows off health clearly, darkness light, and stormy weather calm. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 46. Martin, F., & Smith, E., eds. (2006). *Acts* (p. 266). InterVarsity Press.

**JOHN 17:3 ETERNITY WILL BE OURS WHEN FAITH SEES.** ST AUGUSTINE: We are distanced from eternity to the extent that we are changeable. But eternal life is promised to us through the truth. Our faith, however, stands as far apart from the clear knowledge of the truth as mortality does from eternity. At the present we put faith in things done in time on our account, and by that faith itself we are cleansed. In this way, when we have come to sight, as truth follows faith, so eternity may follow on mortality. Our faith will become truth, then, when we have attained to that which is promised to us who believe. And that which is promised to us is eternal life. And the Truth—not that which shall come to be according to how our faith shall be, but that truth that always exists because eternity is in it—the Truth then has said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." When our faith sees and comes to be truth, then eternity shall possess our now changed mortality. ON THE TRINITY 4.18.24. Elowsky, J. C., ed. (2007). *John 11–21* (pp. 231–232). InterVarsity Press.

---

## Announcements - Upcoming Parish & Diocesan Events Church Attendance

**Silent Prayers and Confession:** Every Wednesday 11:00AM - 1:30PM or you can make an appt for confession.

**Remember** that at the Great Entrance after each petition the priest will say "may the Lord God remember thee in His Kingdom……," the people should respond with "Amen." And at the end of the petitions, the priest will raise the chalice and say "You and all Orthodox Christians, may the Lord God remember thee in His Kingdom…… the people respond with "And to thy Holy Priesthood (Episcopacy), may the Lord God remember thee in His Kingdom always now and ever unto ages of ages." This is dialogue, a prayer if you will, between the concelebrant and the people.

**Choir practice:** June 6th 4:00PM

**WISH LIST!** Please consider purchasing from our wish list as this will reduce our cost of expenses and will allow us to increase and focus our giving in other vital areas needed. Currently we are looking for small wooden boxes that we can dedicate at reliquaries. https://www.myregistry.com/giftlist/stmichaelsorthodoxchurcholdforgewishlist

**St. Michael's Greeters Ministry** *"I was a stranger, and you welcomed me."* Matthew 25:35 Our objective is to welcome visitors to the Parish, help them "feel at home" during the worship service, provide them with information about Orthodoxy and the Parish, invite them to Parish activities, introduce them to people of like interests, invite them back, follow-up to thank them for visiting us, and identifying whether we can help them in the future. Most people leave a church once they enter because no one greeted them. Please sign up to greet people.

**Please sign up for coffee hour!** There are sign up sheets downstairs by the offering basket. Also, please donate at coffee hour. Donate what you would spend on a cup of coffee. This is to replenish our plastic wear and supplies for coffee hour.

**SPONSORS -** An appeal for sponsors for our relics. We need wooden boxes donated, reliquaries purchased and donations to pay for the cost to put the icon of the saint in the lid of the box. We are estimating $300 to complete one reliquary/box. If you would like to sponsor your saint and we have that relic; please let us know. There is a sign up sheet in the Narthex. We have one donor already.

---

## Ascension - and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father ...

After His resurrection from the dead Jesus appeared to men for a period of forty days after which He "was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mk 16.19; see also Lk 24.50 and Acts 1.9–11).

The ascension of Jesus Christ is the final act of His earthly mission of salvation. The Son of God comes "down from heaven" to do the work which the Father gives Him to do; and having accomplished all things, He returns to the Father bearing for all eternity the wounded and glorified humanity which He has assumed (see e.g. Jn 17). The doctrinal meaning of the ascension is the glorification of human nature, the reunion of man with God. It is indeed, the very penetration of man into the inexhaustible depths of divinity.

We have seen already that "the heavens" is the symbolical expression in the Bible for the uncreated, immaterial, divine "realm of God" as one saint of the Church has called it. To say that Jesus is "exalted at the right hand of God" as Saint Peter preached in the first Christian sermon (Acts 2.33) means exactly this: that man has been restored to communion with God, to a union which is, according to Orthodox doctrine, far greater and more perfect than that given to man in his original creation (see Eph 1–2).

Man was created with the potential to be a "partaker of the divine nature," to refer to the Apostle Peter once more (2 Pet 1.4). It is this participation in divinity, called theosis (which literally means deification or divinization) in Orthodox theology, that the ascension of Christ has fulfilled for humanity. The symbolical expression of the "sitting at the right hand" of God means nothing other than this. It does not mean that somewhere in the created universe the physical Jesus is sitting in a material throne.

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of Christ's ascension in terms of the Jerusalem Temple. Just as the high priests of Israel entered the "holy of holies" to offer sacrifice to God on behalf of themselves and the people, so Christ the one, eternal and perfect High Priest offers Himself on the cross to God as the one eternal, and perfect, Sacrifice, not for Himself but for all sinful men. As a man, Christ enters (once and for all) into the one eternal and perfect Holy of Holies: the very "Presence of God in the heavens.". . . we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God . . . (Heb 4.14)

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. . . . He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifice daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once and for all when he offered up himself.
Now, the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which is set up not by man but by the Lord (Heb 7.26; 8.2).

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb 9.24).. . . when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet (Heb 10.12–13; Ps 110.1).

Thus, the ascension of Christ is seen as man's first entry into that divine glorification for which He was originally created. The entry is made possible by the exaltation of the divine Son who emptied Himself in human flesh in perfect self-offering to God.

# Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

The First Ecumenical Council is commemorated on May 24 and is also commemorated on May 29.

On the seventh Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the holy God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council has been celebrated by the Church of Christ from ancient times. The Lord Jesus Christ left the Church a great promise, "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Although the Church of Christ on earth will pass through difficult struggles with the Enemy of salvation, it will emerge victorious. The holy martyrs bore witness to the truth of the Savior's words, enduring suffering and death for confessing Christ, but the persecutor's sword is shattered by the Cross of Christ.

Persecution of Christians ceased during the fourth century, but heresies arose within the Church itself. One of the most pernicious of these heresies was Arianism. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, was a man of immense pride and ambition. In denying the divine nature of Jesus Christ and His equality with God the Father, Arius falsely taught that the Savior is not consubstantial with the Father, but is only a created being.

A local Council, convened with Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria presiding, condemned the false teachings of Arius. However, Arius would not submit to the authority of the Church. He wrote to many bishops, denouncing the decrees of the local Council. He spread his false teaching throughout the East, receiving support from certain Eastern bishops. Investigating these dissentions, the holy emperor Constantine (May 21) consulted Bishop Hosius of Cordova (Aug. 27), who assured him that the heresy of Arius was directed against the most fundamental dogma of Christ's Church, and so he decided to convene an Ecumenical Council. In the year 325, 318 bishops representing Christian Churches from various lands gathered together at Nicea.

Among the assembled bishops were many confessors who had suffered during the persecutions, and who bore the marks of torture upon their bodies. Also participating in the Council were several great luminaries of the Church: Saint Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (December 6 and May 9), Saint Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithos (December 12), and others venerated by the Church as holy Fathers.

With Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria came his deacon, Athanasius [who later became Patriarch of Alexandria (May 2 and January 18)]. He is called "the Great," for he was a zealous champion for the purity of Orthodoxy. In the Sixth Ode of the Canon for today's Feast, he is referred to as "the thirteenth Apostle."

The emperor Constantine presided over the sessions of the Council. In his speech, responding to the welcome by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, he said, "God has helped me cast down the impious might of the persecutors, but more distressful for me than any blood spilled in battle is for a soldier, is the internal strife in the Church of God, for it is more ruinous." Arius, with seventeen bishops among his supporters, remained arrogant, but his teaching was repudiated and he was excommunicated from the Church. In his speech, the holy deacon Athanasius conclusively refuted the blasphemous opinions of Arius. The heresiarch Arius is depicted in iconography sitting on Satan's knees, or in the mouth of the Beast of the Deep (Rev. 13).

The Fathers of the Council declined to accept a Symbol of Faith (Creed) proposed by the Arians. Instead, they affirmed the Orthodox Symbol of Faith. Saint Constantine asked the Council to insert into the text of the Symbol of Faith the word "consubstantial," which he had heard in the speeches of the bishops. The Fathers of the Council unanimously accepted this suggestion.

In the Nicean Creed, the holy Fathers set forth and confirmed the Apostolic teachings about Christ's divine nature. The heresy of Arius was exposed and repudiated as an error of haughty reason. After resolving this chief dogmatic question, the Council also issued Twelve Canons on questions of churchly administration and discipline. Also decided was the date for the celebration of Holy Pascha. By decision of the Council, Holy Pascha should not be celebrated by Christians on the same day with the Jewish Passover, but on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (which occured on March 22 in 325).