

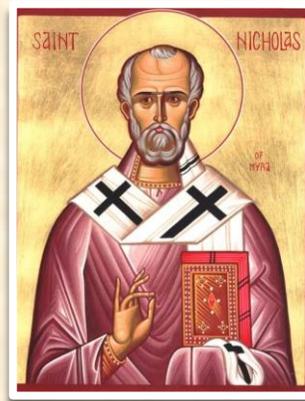
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Upcoming Events

September 9

Religious Education Program begins

September 9

Blessing of the children for the beginning of the New School Year (at the end of the Divine Liturgy)

Important Announcement

The Divine Liturgy on Sunday and week days begins at **10:00 am.**

The classes for the Religious Education start after the Divine Liturgy at **11:30 am.**

Dear Families and Friends,

We hope everyone enjoyed a blessed summer filled with sunshine, warmth and love!

There are still few more weeks till summer ends, but certainly we have closed another Ecclesiastical (Church) Year yesterday on August 31st and today **September 1st** marks the beginning of a **New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year**. So, this occasion calls for a good wish for all of us: **May this new year be a blessed one, filled with joy and peace in the Lord! May it be a year of spiritual growth and of a deeper and more intimate relationship with God! May it bring us closer to God and each other!**

Certainly the above are good wishes, but since we do not live in a fairytale life, where every wish comes true by waving a magic wand, there are certain steps that each of us need to take and an honest review of our priorities, to make the good wishes come true in our life by the grace of God. A first good step would be asking ourselves some very important questions: **Who is God for me? What place does God have in my life? What kind of relationship do I have with the Lord?** These may sound like very simple and obvious questions but if we would dedicate some prayerful time to answer them honestly, we'll see it will make a world of difference and will show to each of us the reality of our spiritual life and not what we vaguely imagine that it is. I'll give you some hints on what I mean by "vaguely imagine that our spiritual life consists of".

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Religious Education Program

Our program has been developed with the purpose of enabling us not only to teach the basics of our Orthodox Christian Faith to our children but also to make the time spent in the class a continuous experience of faith and of the loving presence of God. The program that we offer is appropriate for children of age between 3 years (Preschool) up to 14 years (8th grade). This program includes the basic curriculum books that has been carefully designated by qualified people working in the field of Religious Education, systematically progressing based on the children's age. The children will enjoy as well other activities that will keep them engaged and interested like learning and singing hymns of the Church, storytelling time from lives of the saints, coloring, building and puzzle projects, and so much more!

Important Reminder

Attendance at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday

The parents together with their children are expected to be in Church at **10:00 am** for the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. The regular participation and worship in the Sunday Divine Liturgy is the basis for and essential to spiritual formation and growth of every Orthodox Christian. It is in the Liturgy that we encounter Christ from the heart. In the Liturgy the Word of God in hymns, prayers and movement is communicated to the soul. Regular participation in the Holy Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist (Communion) is essential. It is in the Holy Sacraments that we directly experience God and are filled with His grace. **Nothing can substitute this experience. In the Sacraments we know God, in the religious school we learn about God.** These are complementary to each other and not exclusive. We ask the parents to make every possible effort to enable the regular participation in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays.

Registration

In case you might have any questions or concerns regarding registration please feel free to contact us. **We kindly remind you that you need to fill out the registration form regardless of the fact that your child is a returning student.**



In the Community

“New Year” Celebration!

We are happy to welcome our children and to get together for a new school year.

For this occasion we shall have a modest celebration with some light refreshments and snacks in the ambiances of the classrooms. I would like to invite all the parents and children to participate in this joyful get together. It is a wonderful way to start the new school year and an opportunity to know the staff of the Religious Education and to get an overview of the program for this year.

If you choose to bring something, fruits and desserts are appreciated!

Thank you for your support and God bless you!

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I often hear Christians (even among those baptized in the Orthodox Church) say – I believe in God – but if you dig a little bit deeper and ask questions like: Who is God for you? Who is this God that you believe in? The majority will answer vaguely by saying – Well, God is God or God is some mystical force out there or God is some kind of powerful energy, and so on. Well, for us Orthodox Christians, God first and foremost is revealed in the Incarnation of His Only Begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, **our God is an Incarnational God, a Personal God**, Who for our sake became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. And secondly (but not less important) our **God is a “community of Divine Persons”** - as Bishop Kallistos Ware has said in his wonderful book “The Orthodox Way” – **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in three Divine Persons**. Thus we believe in the Holy Trinity; our God is the Holy Trinity.

What place does God have in my life? To answer this question honestly, each of us might want to write down in a piece of paper all the activities of a random day/week. Does God appear in this list at all? Do we pray in the morning and thank God for the new day, and ask His blessing and guidance to spend the day in a way pleasing to Him. Do we squeeze at least a few minutes to read a verse from the Holy Scriptures to strengthen and inspire us throughout the coming day, or do we fill our minds with news and other information from TV and our phones as soon as we get up? Do we carry God in our mind and heart and converse with Him prayerfully in our hearts during the day and especially in difficult situations so we'll be filled with His grace and thus becoming His witness in our workplaces and families? In the evening, do we thank God for the blessings (“seen and unseen, known and unknown to us”) that He so graciously poured on us on that given day, especially through the difficulties and hardships that we may have faced? Do we give priority to our relationship with God or do we get “choked by the thorns” – i.e. the cares and pleasures of this life? Do we prefer the services of the Church and our common worship on Sundays, or do we plan (or even get caught in the net) of secular activities? Our schedules and those of our children are bursting with countless of activities, which though not bad in and of themselves, can become an obstacle to our relationship with God, if left unchecked or out of balance.

What kind of relationship do I have with God? As we said, our God is a Personal God, three Divine Persons. Consequently, we relate to Him as we would to a living person. We spent time with God in prayer - we pour out our souls to Him in the most intimate way - we know Him as He reveals Himself to us in the Holy Scripture and through the sacramental life of the Church. The more often we participate in the Sacraments of the Church (especially Holy Communion and Confession) the more we encounter Christ and His life-giving grace and forgiveness fills our spirit with peace and joy. Do we relate to God as to our Loving Father or do we consider Him as an “insurance policy” – addressing Him only when we need to ask Him a “favor”?

Let us take an honest look into our lives and re-orient them toward God. Let us “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” and everything else we need will be added to us.

With Love in Christ,

Religious Education Program Staff