



NEWSLETTER

"The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."

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www.stnicholassaratoga.org

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Orthopraxis: Pentecost

The custom of adorning the church with trees, branches, flowers, and grass on Pentecost (Trinity Sunday) goes back to ancient times. The Old Testament Pentecost was the feast of the first harvest (Ex. 23:16). People brought the first fruits of their harvest and flowers into the court of the Temple. In New Testament times, the trees and other plants in the church symbolize the renewal of people through the power of the Holy Spirit which descended in the form

Focus on the Faith: What is a Parish Feast Day?

By Archpriest Andrew Morbey, Edited by Archpriest Basil Rhodes

All Orthodox churches are dedicated to the worship of God, of course, and when Christians first became able to build churches they built them on holy sites associated with events in scripture, the life of Christ, or over the tombs of the martyrs. And if there was no holy site at hand, nonetheless a church would be dedicated in the name of Christ, the Mother of God, a Saint, or an event marked on the church calendar. We continue this tradition to this day. It is interesting to reflect how our church calendar is a sort of memory system, keeping the rich and growing history of God's self-revelation before our eyes. In short, our churches always have their own special feast day. This is sometimes called the altar feast, or the parish feast day, or the patronal feast. Churches specifically dedicated to the Holy Trinity, for example, have their feast day at Pentecost. A church dedicated to St. Nicholas (like ours!) might celebrate its feast on December 6 - or, since this date falls in the Nativity Fast, on the 'Spring Feast' of St. Nicholas on May 9th. Churches dedicated to the Resurrection do not celebrate their parish feast at Pascha, but on September 13th, the commemoration of the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. Some churches have double dedications. For example, the famous Russian Cathedral in London, the long-time home of the late Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), is dedicated to the Mother of God and has its altar feast on the Dormition, but it also has a further dedication to All Saints, and so, the Sunday of All Saints is also a special day for them. It is known as the Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints.

The celebration of a parish feast ought to be something special, full of prayer and good fellowship. It is kind of like a birthday party. It is something that every parishioner should participate in, giving thanks to God for our place of worship, for His innumerable mercies to us, for the intercession and protection of our Patron and Father Among Saints, Nicholas

of fiery tongues upon all of them.

Additionally, it is the custom of the Orthodox Church for the faithful to bring bouquets of flowers which they hold in their hands, especially during the Divine Liturgy.

Upcoming Events

(see the printed or online calendar for the full schedule)

Saturday, May 5

6:00pm Vespers (followed by Confessions)

Sunday, May 6

Fr Basil in HOLY LAND
9:00am Hours, Confessions,
LITURGY

Tuesday, May 8

7:00pm VIGIL (Readers)

Wednesday, May 9

PARISH FEAST
9:30am HIER. LITURGY

Saturday, May 12

6:00pm READER'S VESPERS

Sunday, May 13

9:00am Hours, Confessions,
LITURGY

Wednesday, May 16

Fr Basil Returns
7:00pm Great Vespers

the Wonder-worker, on our walk through life, for our parish family, and for our family and friends.

Our Parish of St. Nicholas was dedicated on the ‘Spring Feast’ May 9/22.

May 22nd corresponds with May 9th on the Old Julian calendar, and was the date of our parish’s founding. This year, due to Fr Basil being away in the Holy Land, we will postpone our celebration. Archbishop BENJAMIN will join us for May 22nd, the old Julian date, for a joyous Hierarchical Liturgy, Cross Procession, and festive Banquet. Please make every effort to attend. Invite your friends and neighbors too!

From the Fathers

An explanation of Pentecost by the late Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemman

In the Church’s annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is “the last and great day.” It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end—the achievement and fulfillment—of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason, however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the “birthday” of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.

This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fulness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fulness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fulness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the “day without evening” of God’s eternal Kingdom. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ’s

disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fulness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to “appropriate” these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.