



# SS. PETER AND PAUL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

*"All Things Are Possible to Him Who Believes" (Mark 9:23)*

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH, 2025

## TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST & TENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

**AMBROSE, BISHOP OF MILAN; MARTYR  
ATHENODOROS OF MESOPOTAMIA;  
VENERABLE GREGORY, FOUNDER OF  
GREGORIOU MONASTERY ON ATHOS**

**\*\*Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom\*\***

Someone may say that there are people who are not bothered by their conscience. Do they lack a conscience? No. They have a conscience, but it has been debilitated. At one time, it yelled and cried out, but man paid no attention. Her voice gradually weakened and was finally extinguished. This is why sometimes people commit unimaginable crimes, or even murder their own parents. When we hear such atrocities, we ask ourselves, what happened to this person? Did he become a beast? Yes, he turned into a beast because he's strangled his conscience, and now it no longer protests.

*Elder Ephraim of Arizona †*

**Metropolitan SABA**  
Primate of the Antiochian  
Archdiocese

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#### CHURCH OFFICE MANAGER

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**Great Vespers:** Saturday 6:00 pm  
*Check the Calendar*

*for possible cancellation or changes*

**Matins:** Sundays 9:20am

**Divine Liturgy:** Sundays 10:30am

**Confessions:** By appointment

#### CHOIR DIRECTOR

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Mark Buchko

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Led by Amjad Khalil

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Sam Khalil  
Steve Simon

#### MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Sam Khalil

#### ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

Svitlana Sweat

#### CHURCH SCHOOL

##### Directors

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#### TEEN SOYO

#### & YOUNG ADULTS

##### Advisors:

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#### GIFT SHOP

Antiochian Women

Please note that we livestream our services on the Church's YouTube channel

@SaintsPeterPaulAntiochian

We welcome all our guests worshipping with us at the Divine Liturgy. Please let our ushers know that you are visiting with us today. We would love to stay in touch!  
Please know that we take Holy Communion very seriously and is offered to Orthodox Christians, **after** preparing themselves through prayers, fasting, & confession. **Non-Orthodox** visitors are welcome to receive blessed bread at the end of the Divine Liturgy & share food with us at coffee hour. The reason is simple following the advice of Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 27-31:

*"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning*

## THE SYNAXARION

On December 7 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate our father among the saints Ambrose, bishop of Milan.

### **Verses**

*Ambrose, having shed his corruptible body, hath fitly partaken of divine ambrosia. On the seventh Ambrose came upon immortal terrain.*

His father was the imperial governor of Gaul and Spain, and a pagan, while his mother was a Christian. On the death of his father, the Emperor made him governor of Liguria, of which province Milan was the chief city. When the bishop of Milan died, there was great dissention about the choice of a new bishop. Ambrose went into the church to keep order. Thereupon, a child at its mother's breast cried out: "Ambrose for bishop!" All the people took this to be the voice of God, and unanimously elected Ambrose as their bishop, although it was against his will. Ambrose was baptized, and passed through all the necessary ranks in one week. As bishop, he strengthened the faith of the Orthodox, restrained heretics, adorned churches, spread the Faith among the pagans, wrote many instructive books and was an example of a true Christian and a true shepherd. Ambrose died peacefully at daybreak on Pascha in 397.

On this day, we also commemorate the Martyr Athenodoros of Mesopotamia; and Venerable Gregory, founder of Gregoriou monastery on Athos. By the intercessions of Thy saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

### RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE ONE

While the stone was sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. For which cause the heavenly powers cried aloud unto Thee, O giver of life. Glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ, glory to Thy kingdom, glory to Thy providence, O Thou Who alone art the lover of mankind.

### APOLYTIKION OF SS. PETER AND PAUL IN TONE FOUR

O foremost in the ranks of Apostles, and teachers of the world, Peter and Paul, intercede with the Master of all to grant peace unto the world, and to our souls the Great Mercy.

### KONTAKION OF PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY IN TONE THREE

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to \* God the Word ineffably, \* Who was before all the ages. \* Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing \* the gladsome tidings; \* with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him \* Who is willing to be gazed on \* as a young Child Who \* before the ages is God.



## Coming Up @ Ss. Peter & Paul

Sunday, Dec 7, **St. Nicholas Workshop**, after Divine Liturgy, in the Social Hall

Saturday, Dec 13, **The Relationship Project, Part Three**, (2-6pm)

Sunday, Dec 14, **Order of St. Ignatius Lunch**, after Divine Liturgy, in the Social Hall

Wednesday, Dec 24, **Royal Hours for the Nativity @ 10 AM**  
**Matins and divine liturgy @ 6 PM**

Wednesday, Dec 31, **Circumcision, St. Basil, and New Year Matins and Liturgy**  
**@ 6 PM**

## The 2026 Church Calendars Are Now Available

Pick Up Your Copy at the Narthex

### Sunday School OCMC Coin Boxes Drive

Pick Up Your Box at the Narthex  
And Return it on **December 21st**

### Sunday School Toy Drive

**NEW, UNWRAPPED TOYS FOR ALL AGES**  
*Toys will be going to the Olney Lions Club*  
**Deadline to Donate is December 14th**

### DONATIONS FOR THE POINSETTIAS

The **Ladies Ministry** will be collecting donations for the Poinsettias Project

**The Deadline Is Dec 14**

**Donations are offered for the health of or in memory of your family and/or friends.**

**Scan the QR Code** to fill out the form and make your donation.

#### For More Information

Please see Thomaseena Cox or Beth Davis

### ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN DONATION DRIVE FOR THE NEEDY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BETHESDA CARES

#### We Will Be Collecting Items For Twenty Households

- Please collect all items on the list and place them in a large bag (Reusable Grocery Bags will be supplied)
- Bring the items to church and place them in the Narthex

#### Monetary Donations Are Also Appreciated

Scan QR Code To Donate or  
Bring a Check (Memo: Bethesda Cares)



#### List of Items

1. Small Pots and Pans
2. Coffee Filters
3. Kitchen Size Trash Bags
4. Dawn or Any Liquid Dishwashing Detergent
5. Sponges
6. Shower Curtain (only)
7. Paper Towels
8. Package of Toilet Paper
9. Small Laundry Detergent

For More Information, Contact Rida Boulos  
C: (703) 887-4975 E: frital8@aol.com

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 14

## LITURGICAL TEXTS

Scan the QR Code To Follow  
Along the Service

Got a Question about  
**Orthodox Christianity**  
or Our Faith & Worship

Join Us every Sunday  
**in the social hall**  
*after the Divine Liturgy*  
*for a Catechism Class*

## Join the Order of St Ignatius

Scan the QR Code To Submit your  
interest in the Order

## Ss. Peter & Paul WhatsApp Community

Join a Variety of Chat Groups  
And Receive Parish Announcements

Scan the QR Code To Join

## St. Raphael's Table First Saturday of the Month

Preparing and distributing meals and  
toiletries to our neighbors in need.

Scan the QR Code To Participate

## Forever Young! First Friday of the Month

Scan the QR Code To Register

## Prayer Request

For Living and/or Departed

Scan the QR Code To Request a Prayer

## Pursuing Christ as a Community Bible Study (8:30 PM/ZOOM)

Dec 16

Jan 20

Feb 3, 17

Mar 3, 17

April 21

May 5, 19

June 2, 16

## December Charity Drive Orthodox Christian Mission Center

Dedicated to galvanizing Orthodox Christians in the United States to advance Orthodox missions around the world. We deploy both human and financial resources to establish Christ's Church through a uniquely Orthodox approach to missionary work.

Ultimately, we aspire to bring people into the fullness of life in Christ.

Scan the QR Code  
For Online Donations

## MULTILINK QR CODE

For your online donations, registration for events,  
and participation in activities

- 1- Use **your phone's camera** to scan the QR code
- 2- Click on the Appropriate Link



## **THE EPISTLE**

*Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous.*

### **The reading from the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (5:8-19)**

Brethren, walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

## **THE GOSPEL**

### **The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. (13:10-17)**

At that time, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrite! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As Jesus said this, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Him.

## **St Ignatius Ministry**

The Ribbon & The Cross Is An Invitation To Become Part Of A Ministry

**Scan the Multilink QR Code to learn more**

## ***Male and Female He Created Them, in Complementarity*** ***By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)***

It has long been repeated in popular Christian and secular discourse that Christianity is a “feminine religion,” evidenced by the predominance of women over men in Orthodox worship gatherings. This is not true everywhere. Now, some accuse Orthodoxy of being “masculine” simply because they have observed an increase in young men joining the Church. Yet this phenomenon does not apply to all parishes, and therefore this claim is not accurate.

Both assumptions rely on local realities that differ from one country to another, and from one historical circumstance to the next. In countries ruled by totalitarian (communist) regimes, for example, the elderly dominated the attendance of the few churches that remained open. Is it reasonable to rely on that observation alone to claim that Christianity is a religion “for the old”?

Priests in our Archdiocese report that the influx into Orthodox Christianity is not limited to young men, as some media reports have suggested, nor is it accurate to portray this phenomenon as “masculine.” Today’s pastoral reality clearly shows that families are coming to the faith at a rate equal to, if not greater than, that of single men. These families include fathers, mothers, and children of all ages, all of whom find in Orthodoxy a deep spiritual environment, an integrated way of life, and a peace they desire to offer to their children.

These families also exhibit a mature awareness of complementarity between man and woman — not conflict, not competition. There are men who love their wives to the point of self-sacrifice and work together with them in managing their family, financial, spiritual, and social life with joy and gratitude. In turn, women find in the Orthodox Church a place where they can fulfill their spiritual and human femininity in peace, for they are treated with love, respect, and honor — and because the husband is commanded to love his wife “as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her” (Eph. 5:25).

And if some young men today seem to find in the Church a space to fulfill their authentic masculinity, women likewise find in it a space to fulfill their authentic femininity. The Church does not view man and woman in terms of dominance or control, but in terms of complementarity: “There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Thus, interpreting the phenomenon solely through the lenses of masculine or feminine lacks accuracy and does not reflect the pastoral reality we observe in our ministry. For all these reasons, this phenomenon must be studied with true professional depth rather than addressed through superficial journalistic impressions or even cultural presuppositions.

The Orthodox Church’s teaching, rooted in Scripture, says: “You know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3), and, “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church.” (Eph. 5:23) Orthodox teaching has always insisted on reading these passages in their fullness, not in isolation. For the same text continues: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her... He who loves his wife loves himself” (Eph. 5:25, 28). Orthodox Christians have long joked that “the man may be the head, but the woman is the neck—and she turns him however she wishes!”

Truly, many newly converted men and women find a peaceful life in the embrace of the Orthodox Church because Orthodox tradition preserves the dignity of both roles and offers a faithful interpretation of these texts. The man serves his wife and children with devotion, sensing that his masculinity demands this of him, while respecting his responsibility as the head of the household and his place as father and husband. The woman, in turn, finds inner peace knowing she is loved, respected, and supported by her husband. This is what we observe as pastors among our spiritual children in general.

Young people who have grown up amid comfort, softness, and an inability to face life's hardships find in the Orthodox Church a spiritual fullness unlike what they experience in society. Thus, they are drawn to frequent fasting, long prayers, prostrations, confession, and living the Gospel commandments as they are — without humanistic reinterpretation. Most importantly, both men and women find in the Church a spiritual fatherhood that society has come to lack. Some statistics even say that since the 1980s more than 30% of children grow up without a father.

There is a masculine psychology and a feminine psychology that many ignore today. Our pastoral experience teaches that a man seeks in his wife the tenderness of the mother he misses, and a woman seeks in her husband the reassurance of the father she misses. Does not the man find comfort laying his head in his wife's lap so she may stroke his hair when he is tired and anxious? And does not the woman find comfort laying her head on her husband's chest, stroking her when she is weary and troubled? I am not a psychologist, nor a psychiatrist, but a pastor of souls, and I share what I have witnessed among many married couples, and in my long experience as a spiritual father.

There is a complementarity between man and woman that the Orthodox Church proclaims. And it teaches that this complementarity requires a life of spiritual struggle and ascetic discipline, so that both may overcome the passions that push men to dominate women, and women to flatter or deceive men in self-protection. One does not gain his or her rights by imitating the other or by suppressing his or her own personality, but by realizing his or her own true self. A man does not gain his freedom by dominating a woman, nor by feminizing himself, nor by abandoning his masculinity. A woman does not gain her freedom by becoming a second man, nor by abandoning her femininity. Without the struggle to purify and elevate the self, through the cooperation of both man and woman, the world will continue to witness injustice here and confusion of roles there.

Even if the majority of our newcomers were, in fact, men, this should not cause us dismay; rather, we should remember that the Holy Spirit bloweth where it will (John 3:8). Perhaps He brings more women to this parish, more men to another, more elderly to yet another still. What concern is this of ours? Should not we rather choose to welcome them warmly, rejoicing with our Father in Heaven for them? Should not we work diligently to care for those He has entrusted to us in every community?

When we understand this complementarity in souls striving for spiritual perfection, we understand why young people today in particular are coming to the Orthodox Church. For in Orthodoxy there is neither masculinity nor femininity, but a striving for complementarity, through the purification of the self from its passions.

I hope some qualified social scientists will undertake a serious, professional, and in-depth study of this phenomenon. Their research would benefit current and future generations—as well as the entire Church.

# Church History

## Eighth Century

### Iconoclasm

#### The Seventh Ecumenical Council

In 787, during the reign of the Empress Irene (r. 780–802), who favored icon veneration, a major council was held in Nicea which defined the legitimate and proper use of icons in the Church. This council, the true Seventh Ecumenical Council, followed the theology of Saint John of Damascus in affirming the propriety of the icons. It proclaimed that icons “should be set forth” in the churches and in private homes and in public places.

In the 22 canons promulgated by this council, relics are stipulated to be in every church (Canon 7); all monasteries are to be restored (Canon 13); mixed monasteries (with a men’s part and a women’s part on the same property) are allowed to continue to exist, but no new ones may be established (Canon 20); and the buying of church office (simony) is condemned (Canon 5).

In celebrating the decisions of this council, Father Alexander Schmemmann declares:

*Everything in the world and the world itself has taken on a new meaning in the Incarnation of God. Everything has become open to sanctification; matter itself has become a channel of the grace of the Holy Spirit.*

#### **From the proclamation of the Seventh Ecumenical Council**

To make our confession short, we keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, in conformity with the history of the preaching of the Gospel, a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that the Incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely illusory. . . .

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit dwells in her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, in painting and mosaics, as well as in other appropriate materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels, and on the vestments and on hangings, and in pictures both in houses and in public places. These holy images should depict the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, and of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, and of the honorable Angels and of all Saints, and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them. And to these should be given due salutation and honorable reverence (aspasmon kai timetiken proskynesis), but not indeed that true worship of faith (latreia) which pertains alone to the divine nature. . . . For the honor which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject [hypostasis] represented. . . . Anathema to those who do not venerate the holy and venerable images. Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols.

*This Christological definition of icons and their veneration forms the substance of the dogma promulgated by the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The whole Christological dispute, in fact, comes to a climax with this council, which gave it its final ‘cosmic’ meaning.*

With rejoicing, the Church acclaimed Empress Irene and her son Constantine as “a new Constantine and a new Helen.” However, Irene did not prove to be a praiseworthy empress for the rest of her rule, for in the year 797 she had her son Constantine blinded so that she might continue to rule by herself. After ruling five more years, she was ousted in a coup d’etat and exiled.

As we will see, the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 did not bring Iconoclasm to a permanent end. Tragically, it will arise again in the next century.