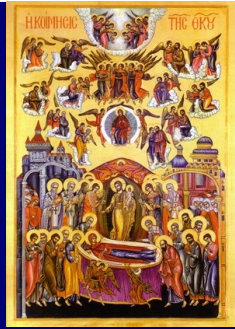


CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Jim (Demetrios) Katsitis
- Philoptochos President: Eleni Giakoumopoulos
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba & Peli Galiti
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros

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The Message

MAY 2022

THE GREATEST GREETING

"It is the day of the Resurrection, let us be glorious and splendor for the Festival and let us all embrace one another. Let us also speak, O Brethren, to those that hate us and in the Resurrection, let us forgive all things and so let us cry, Christ is risen from the dead, by death he has trampled down death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life!" (Doxastikon from the Resurrectional Service)

What a beautiful and awesome hymn! A true Orthodox Christian cannot help but experience triumph and joy on this day, which is characterized by the saints of the

Church as the "Feast of Feasts and the Celebration of Celebrations." This means that much more to us who have spiritually invested during the period of Great Lent and Holy Week. The Paschal Festival brings an inexpressible joy that no one can compare to anything else. Sorrow becomes joy. Grief turns into hope. The bright light of Christ now shines so bright over the shadow of death, and with His victory nothing overshadows His Glory.

We will be saying CHRIST IS RISEN! ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΘΗ! This is how we are to greet each other during the Pascha season. Not with the typical "Hello, how are you? How is everything? How is the family? Good to see you." We will say the words for every one to know "Who is so great a God, as our God" we will say the words CHRIST IS RISEN/ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΘΗ!

Our Lord's love and grace reaches each and every one of us through His Resurrection. As we were somber and reflected on our own faults and sins during the Lenten season, we will for 40 days greet each other with joy and a happiness that can never be taken away by saying, CHRIST IS RISEN! ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΘΗ! What greater greeting is there, none that comes to my mind.

During this Great Feast we will be reconciled with Christ. By His death, Christ has brought back man to God. We are called to embrace one another at the time of Pascha and to forgive all things.

Each ethnicity or culture has a way to say hello. In Greek, it is "Yasou." In Hawaii, you say "Aloha." In America, we say "What's up?" In the Church we have the best saying of all, and it will be said and heard by all: CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN! ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΘΗ! ΑΛΗΘΩΣ ΑΝΕΣΘΗ! 'Christ is Risen!' the proper greeting, the greatest greeting!

✠ Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos

May 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Sunday of Thomas 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School	2 Fr. Christodoulos At Metropolis	3 Clergy Retreat	4 Strict Fast	5 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class Via Zoom	6 Strict Fast	7 5:00 p.m. Great Vespers
8 Sunday of the Myrr Bearing Women 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School	9	10	11 Strict Fast 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	12 7:00 p.m. Women's Spiritual Meeting	13 Strict Fast	14 Russian Mission Service +Sacrament 5:00 p.m. Great Vespers
15 Sunday of the Paralytic 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School Spring General Assembly	16	17 7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	18 Fast Day (Fish Allowed) Mid-Pentecost 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy Following Liturgy Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	19 6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class Via Zoom	20 Strict Fast 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers for Saints Constantine & Helen At Saints Constantine & Helen, Wauwatosa	21 Saints Constantine & Helen, Equal to the Apostles 8:30 a.m. Orthros Followed by Divine Liturgy 5:00 p.m. Great Vespers
22 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School	23	24	25 Strict Fast Third Finding of the Precious Head of John the Baptist—Leave Taking of Mid- Pentecost 8:30 a.m. Orthros Followed by Divine Liturgy Immediately following Liturgy Adult Religious Education Class	26 6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class Via Zoom	27 Strict Fast	28 5:00 p.m. Great Vespers
29 Sunday of the Blind Man 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy	30 Memorial Day Office Closed	31				

The Parish Council Update April 2022

Officers: Jim Katsihtis, President; Maria Molzahn, Vice President; Bruce Hansen, Secretary; Scott Storck, Treasurer; Niko Papadopoulos, Assistant Treasurer

Members: Christy Chappell-Belkin, Conn Choles, Carol Griskavich, Nick Helser, Mike Smith, John Soloninka

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).” So let us “rejoice”, as our Lord said following His resurrection. For as we read in the Scriptures and hear in the Paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom, “O death, where is thy sting? O hades, where is thy victory?” And as St. Paul writes in his second epistle to the Corinthians, “behold, all things are become new”. Glory to our Lord, King, God and Savior Jesus Christ and His holy third-day resurrection!

Anastasi Dinner and Palm Sunday Meals

Thank you for joining us for the Palm Sunday and Anastasi Dinner. They were such beautiful events filled with wonderful fellowship. We again extend a big, special thanks to Kostas & Angela Kyriakopoulos and their family for the delicious meals and for their hard work, along with Nick Briamis and everyone who also helped serve and clean up!

GreekFest+ Update

We have tentatively scheduled GreekFest+ for September 24th and 25th. More information will be coming soon, including what we are able to offer this year and how you can help make it a success. Please see Father or a Council member if you can help with GreekFest+ in any way.

Spring General Assembly

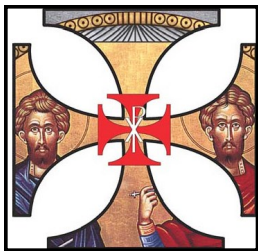
Due to a lack of quorum on May 1st, the Spring General Assembly was rescheduled to Sunday May 15th following the Divine Liturgy. A quorum is not necessary for the rescheduled meeting, but we urge everyone to attend.

Bucket Brigade/Cleaning Team

Our cleaning team needs help and could use the help of at least two more people. We recently hired an outside cleaning company to help clean twice per month, but we still rely on our parishioners to clean the other weeks as well as to clean the sanctuary every week. If you can help (just 1 hour per week, 2-3 weeks per month), please see a Council member or Jenny Glatch. Let's help this team who so wondrously kept our church clean and safe throughout the pandemic with all the extra cleaning and sanitization that was necessary. Thank you.

2022 Stewardship

If you haven't already, please return your 2022 Stewardship form and continue to pray for, and generously support, our parish. Your stewardship helps support our worship, ministries, youth programs and facility expenses. Our goal should be to have our operating expenses covered by stewardship and to not have to rely on fundraisers for operating expenses. Please help us reach that goal. And please consider joining the Stewardship Committee to provide input and help us grow and engage our stewards more.



FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

May 2022

Focus on PHILOPTOCHOS #PhiloCares

Christ is Risen! Xronia polla to our entire AGOC community. Thank you for your continuous support in the work we do.

From National Philoptochos President Arlene Siavelis Kehl in her message to all Philoptochos Sisters:

"The mission of Philoptochos has never rung truer in these deeply unsettling times. The work of our beloved Philoptochos offers hope to those in despair and the less fortunate among us. We fund social service cases to help with housing, food, utilities, medical care, transportation, and funerals. For years and for the love of our precious children, we have worked tirelessly on our biennial children's medical fund luncheons to fund innovative children's programs. We provide meals and basic supplies for those going hungry and looking for a place to rest. We offer critical assistance in the short and long term by providing humanitarian relief throughout the United States and the world."

LOOKING AHEAD

- **May collection tray:** We continue to be #PhiloStrong because of the support of this amazing community!! For May we are collecting for a local community organization: **River Food Pantry**
- **Next Chapter Meeting** will be held on **May 3** at 6 pm via Zoom.
- **June 2 – Philoptochos Spring Social** – Co-chairs, Sue S and Elene P - join us for a final gathering before we head into the summer months. We will be meeting in person at the home of Elene Patenaude. Look for the invite coming soon.

NOTES FROM APRIL

- Koulourakia, tsourekia and egg orders - Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make, assemble, bake, pick up and package Easter items for the community. Thanks to all who purchased the items to support our philanthropic work.
- Funds distributed in April: \$2,000 was sent to National Philoptochos for aid to Greece/Cyprus and more than \$1,100 was sent to 28.Jun, a humanitarian organization for aid to the Western Balkans/Eastern Europe.
- Membership 2022 – We have submitted our commitments to National and the Metropolis for our 2022 Membership with 66 members from the AGOC chapter. If you still want to join the chapter, please contact Lena G (lenagiak@gmail.com) or Beth F (bfatsis1215@gmail.com).

Metropolis dates to note:

- Philoptochos President's Meeting, June 4, 2022 at SS. Constantine & Helen, Palos Hills, IL
- National Clergy Laity Convention and Philoptochos Assembly – July 3-7, 2022, New York, NY (Celebrating 90 years of Philanthropy)
- September 24: Metropolis of Chicago September Luncheon, The Empress Banquets



The Ladies' Philoptochos Society Assumption Greek Orthodox Church 2022 Membership Drive

We invite you to join us and share in our philanthropic mission. Through your stewardships and our various fundraisers, we are able to donate to many worthy causes helping people in need locally, nationally, and internationally. Locally we donate our resources and Philoptochos power to several organizations on a regular basis, and also to special hardship situations as needs are presented to us. Nationally and internationally we support the philanthropic programs of our Metropolis Philoptochos and our National Philoptochos.

We hope that you will join us as a member and also as a volunteer. Whether you attend regular meetings, volunteer to help with our activities, or would like to support our work with your stewardship, you will be a valued Philoptochos member. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please complete the form below and submit it with your 2022 stewardship payment, by **February 28, 2022**. Checks should be made payable to "Philoptochos" and please write *membership* in the memo section. The mailing address is below. Thank you!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

I am interested in helping with the following project(s) and please include me!

Vasilopita Dinner (January) (n/a 2022)		Baklava Plus Sale (Sept. – Nov.)	
Mid – Winter Luncheon (February)		Maintaining the Church Hall/Kitchen	
Greek Independence Day Dinner		Cooking for Grace Episcopal -Porchlight Homeless Shelter	
Koulourakia baking (Holy Week)		Baking Breads for Special Dinners	
Spring/Easter bake sale (drive by pick up)		Coffee Hour Host	
Greek Fest Bake Sale (drive by pick up or onsite)		Prosforon (Holy Bread) baking	
Reception for Assumption Feast Aug 14		Bucket Brigade (church cleaning)	
Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, and/or Memorial Services (if requested)			

My Stewardship payment of \$_____ is enclosed (check #_____ or cash).

Please note: \$15.00 goes to National Philoptochos, \$5.00 to the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos, and \$2.00 to the Bishop's Fund. We ask for a minimum pledge of \$22.00. Dues paid above the amount will be used for our philanthropic activities and other chapter obligations.

*Please return to Beth Fatsis (1215 E Johnson St, Madison, WI 53703)
or drop it in the Philoptochos mailbox at Church.*

Thank you for your generous time and support!

YOUTH CORNER

Spring

BUDS
DAFFODILS
FLOWERS
GRASS
RAIN

RAINBOW
SEEDS
SPRING
TULIPS
UMBRELLA

G F S Q O I I S L S U R
E D U R Y G N D M B K V
B T A P T I Q E K D I F
S K N F A G H E H P B C
P T D R F B W S Q P R J
I S R E W O L F D T L S
L F H Z F G D S A N U M
U X U U F R R I D J T Z
T H C U Z A J A L U T V
U M B R E L L A S S B M
B N S M G N I R P S M K
R A I N B O W D J A C P

COMMUNITY NEWS

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Will be held on Tuesday, May 17th at 7:00 p.m.

GRADUATE SUNDAY: Will be held on Sunday, June 5th. On this day our parish honors the academic accomplishments of our youth. A gift will be presented to our graduates from high school, college or university who have had their names submitted to the church office by Tuesday, May 31st.

PARISH OUTING TO FORWARD MADISON FC SOCCER GAME: On Saturday, June 11th, 2022 we will have a Parish Outing to the Forward Madison FC Soccer Game vs the Greenville Triumph SC with a 7:00 p.m. Kick-Off.

We have tickets available in the Pre-Game Party which begins 90 minutes prior to Kick off this includes for the 90 minutes prior all you can eat food & drink and then also a ticket for the Game. The cost is \$31 if you want pop or \$36 for food and alcohol.

<https://offer.fevo.com/greenville-triumph-sc-2qyoe2a-0f09fda?fevoUri=greenville-triumph-sc-2qyoe2a-0f09fda%2Fgreenville-triumph-sc-2qyoe2a-0f09fda>

Everyone is responsible for buying their own tickets with the link provided above. Join us for what is sure to be a great night of fun & fellowship.

CARPET FUNDRAISER: To help offset the cost of the new carpet for the church we have put together an option to help pay for it. The new carpet comes in tiles and each of those tiles will cost \$20. So we are interested in seeing if people would consider donating tiles as many as you like, but we are hoping to get everyone to donate the tiles they are using each services. You can also donate an entire row which is 10 tiles for \$200. Please consider giving if you are able. Thank you for being a part of our community.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: A.R.E. are continuing in May. We will have in person classes on Wednesday's at 11:00 a.m. here at the church. We will also have a virtual zoom class on Thursday's beginning at 6:30 p.m. The classes are the same and interchangeable. We look forward to continuing our journey together.

FROM THE GREEK SCHOOL: Classes are every Sunday following Sunday School.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL MEETING: Women's spiritual zoom meetings will be on Thursday, May 12th at 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating and you haven't signed in yet please contact Peli Galiti at pegaliti@gmail.com You will get the zoom link in your email.

All women from Assumption parish, St. Ignatius Parish and other parishes are welcome.

J & M HOME HELPERS: AGOC's handymen, John and Mike, will do minor home repairs and maintenance for \$25/hour, with the money for their work being donated to the church. Call Mike at (608) 516-9188 and John at (608) 575-1014 today!

HOLY CONFESSION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR LIVES: Each of us should go to the priest for Holy Confession preferably 3 times a year, but at the very least once a year. Our very salvation can be threatened when we ignore this most beautiful sacrament of our Church. This year make the effort to call your Father Confessor for an appointment.

RIVER FOOD PANTRY: You can raise money for The River Food Pantry by volunteering at the World's Largest Brat Fest this Memorial Day Weekend at Willow Island at the Alliant Energy Center!

When you sign up to volunteer and select 'The River Food Pantry' as your charity to support, \$8 for every hour you volunteer will be donated to The River—South Central Wisconsin's busiest food pantry! As a volunteer, you also receive a Brat Fest t-shirt, brat, and ice cream. Plus, you get to enjoy the festival before or after your shift(s)!

What do Brat Fest volunteers do? Grill, cashier, count attendees, drive shuttles, stock condiments, make sure the event grounds are clean, etc. Shifts are available May 22–31 to help before, during, and after the event. The festival runs May 27–29. Shifts range from 2.5–4.5 hours. Sign up is first come first serve. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old. Visit bit.ly/brat-fest-volunteer.

2022 Parish outing to the Forward Madison FC



**On Saturday. June 11th, 2022 we will have a Parish Out-
ing to the Forward Madison FC Soccer Game vs the
Greenville Triumph SC with a 7:00 p.m. Kick-Off.**

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**Everyone is responsible for buying their own tickets with
the link provided above.**

**Join us for what is sure to be a great night of fun &
fellowship.**



Commemoration of the Apparition of the Sign of the Precious Cross Over Jerusalem, in 351 AD:

The Precious Cross appeared in the sky over Jerusalem on the morning of May 7, 351 during the reign of the emperor Constantius, the son of Saint Constantine (May 21).

At that time the heresy of Arianism, which taught that Christ was merely a creature and not God, was causing great turmoil and division throughout the Empire. Even after the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325, many people were drawn to

this false teaching, and the Orthodox found themselves in the minority in many places.

Constantius, the ruler of the eastern part of the Empire, was a fervent supporter of Arianism. His brothers Constantine II and Constans, who were pious Orthodox Christians, ruled in the west. They were both killed in separate battles around 350, leaving Constantius as sole ruler. Also in 350, Saint Cyril (March 18) became Patriarch of Jerusalem and began his zealous struggle against Arianism.

In May of 351 a luminous Cross appeared over Jerusalem, stretching from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives, a distance of about five and a half miles. The Cross was wide as it was long, and shone more brightly than the sun. Many people left their homes and workplaces to gather in the church and glorify Christ. The historian Sozomen says that this wondrous sign led to the conversion of multitudes of pagans and Jews to Christianity.

A letter from Saint Cyril to the emperor describing this phenomenon, and admonishing him to become Orthodox, has been preserved. The apparition of the Cross remained over the city for a whole week.

The vision of the Cross over Jerusalem strengthened the Orthodox faithful and contributed to the return of many Arians to the Church. It is also a reminder of the awesome Second Coming of Christ, when “the sign of the Son of man shall appear in heaven” (Matthew 24:30).



Virginmartyr Pelagia of Tarsus, in Asia Minor: Saint Pelagia of Tarsus in Cilicia (southeastern Asia Minor) lived in the third century, during the reign of Diocletian (284-305), and was the daughter of illustrious pagans. When she heard about Jesus Christ from her Christian friends, she believed in Him and desired to preserve her virginity, dedicating her whole life to the Lord.

Emperor Diocletian’s heir (a boy he adopted), saw the maiden Pelagia, was captivated by her beauty and wanted her to be his wife. The holy virgin told the youth that she was betrothed to Christ the Immortal Bridegroom, and had renounced earthly marriage.

Pelagia’s reply greatly angered the young man, but he decided to leave her in peace for awhile, hoping that she would change her mind. At the same time, Pelagia convinced her mother to let her visit the nurse who had raised her in childhood. She secretly hoped to find Bishop Linus of Tarsus, who had fled to a mountain during a persecution against Christians, and to be baptized by him. She had seen the face of Bishop Linus in a dream, which made a profound impression upon her. The holy bishop told her to be baptized. Saint Pelagia traveled in a chariot to visit her nurse, dressed in rich clothes and accompanied by a whole retinue of servants, as her mother wished.

Along the way Saint Pelagia, by the grace of God, met Bishop Linus. Pelagia immediately recognized the bishop who had appeared to her in the dream. She fell at his feet, requesting Baptism. At the bishop’s prayer a

spring of water flowed from the ground.

Bishop Linus made the Sign of the Cross over Saint Pelagia, and during the Mystery of Baptism, angels appeared and covered the chosen one of God with a bright mantle. After giving the pious virgin Holy Communion, Bishop Linus offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord with her, and then sent her to continue her journey. She then exchanged her expensive clothing for a simple white garment, and distributed her possessions to the poor. Returning to her servants, Saint Pelagia told them about Christ, and many of them were converted and believed.

She tried to convert her own mother to Christ, but the obdurate woman sent a message to Diocletian's son that Pelagia was a Christian and did not wish to be his wife. The youth realized that Pelagia was lost to him, and he fell upon his sword in his despair. Pelagia's mother feared the emperor's wrath, so she tied her daughter up and led her to Diocletian's court as a Christian who was also responsible for the death of the heir to the throne. The emperor was captivated by the unusual beauty of the virgin and tried to turn her from her faith in Christ, promising her every earthly blessing if she would become his wife.

The holy virgin refused the emperor's offer with contempt and said, "You are insane, Emperor, saying such things to me. I will not do your bidding, and I loathe your vile marriage, since I have Christ, the King of Heaven, as my Bridegroom. I do not desire your worldly crowns which last only a short while. The Lord in His heavenly Kingdom has prepared three imperishable crowns for me. The first is for faith, since I have believed in the true God with all my heart; the second is for purity, because I have dedicated my virginity to Him; the third is for martyrdom, since I want to accept every suffering for Him and offer up my soul because of my love for Him."

Diocletian sentenced Pelagia to be burned in a red-hot bronze bull. Not permitting the executioners to touch her body, the holy martyr signed herself with the Sign of the Cross, and went into the brazen bull and her flesh melted like myrrh, filling the whole city with fragrance. Saint Pelagia's bones remained unharmed and were removed by the pagans to a place outside the city. Four lions then came out of the wilderness and sat around the bones letting neither bird nor wild beast get at them. The lions protected the relics of the saint until Bishop Linus came to that place. He gathered them up and buried them with honor. Later, a church was built over her holy relics.

The Service to the holy Virgin Martyr Pelagia of Tarsus says that she was "deemed worthy of most strange and divine visions." She is also commemorated on October 7.

During the reign of Emperor Constantine (306-337), when the persecutions against Christians had stopped, a church was built at Saint Pelagia's burial place.



Venerable Pachomius the Great, Founder of Coenobitic Monasticism:

Saint Pachomius the Great was both a model of desert dwelling, and with Saints Anthony the Great (January 17), Macarius the Great (January 19), and Euthymius the Great (January 20), a founder of the cenobitic monastic life in Egypt.

Saint Pachomius was born in the third century in the Thebaid (Upper Egypt). His parents were pagans who gave him an excellent secular education. From his youth he had a good character, and he was prudent and sensible.

When Pachomius reached the age of twenty, he was called up to serve in the army of the emperor Constantine (apparently, in the year 315). They put the new conscripts in a city prison guarded by soldiers. The local Christians fed the soldiers and took care of them.

When the young man learned that these people acted this way because of their love for God, fulfilling His

commandment to love their neighbor, this made a deep impression upon his pure soul. Pachomius vowed to become a Christian. Pachomius returned from the army after the victory, received holy Baptism, moved to the lonely settlement of Shenedit, and began to lead a strict ascetic life. Realizing the need for spiritual guidance, he turned to the desert-dweller Palamon. He was accepted by the Elder, and he began to follow the example of his instructor in monastic struggles.

Once, after ten years of asceticism, Saint Pachomius made his way through the desert, and halted at the ruins of the former village of Tabennisi. Here he heard a Voice ordering him to start a monastery at this place. Pachomius told the Elder Palamon of this, and they both regarded the words as a command from God.

They went to Tabennisi and built a small monastic cell. The holy Elder Palamon blessed the foundations of the monastery and predicted its future glory. But soon Palamon departed to the Lord. An angel of God then appeared to Saint Pachomius in the form of a schemamonk and gave him a Rule of monastic life. Soon his older brother John came and settled there with him.

Saint Pachomius endured many temptations and assaults from the Enemy of the race of man, but he resisted all temptations by his prayer and endurance.

Gradually, followers began to gather around Saint Pachomius. Their teacher impressed everyone by his love for work, which enabled him to accomplish all kinds of monastic tasks. He cultivated a garden, he conversed with those seeking guidance, and he tended to the sick.

Saint Pachomius introduced a monastic Rule of cenobitic life, giving everyone the same food and attire. The monks of the monastery fulfilled the obediences assigned them for the common good of the monastery. Among the various obediences was copying books. The monks were not allowed to possess their own money nor to accept anything from their relatives. Saint Pachomius considered that an obedience fulfilled with zeal was greater than fasting or prayer. He also demanded from the monks an exact observance of the monastic Rule, and he chastized slackers.

His sister Maria came to see Saint Pachomius, but the strict ascetic refused to see her. Through the gate keeper, he blessed her to enter upon the path of monastic life, promising his help with this. Maria wept, but did as her brother had ordered. The Tabennisi monks built her a hut on the opposite side of the River Nile. Nuns also began to gather around Maria. Soon a women's monastery was formed with a strict monastic Rule provided by Saint Pachomius.

The number of monks at the monastery grew quickly, and it became necessary to build seven more monasteries in the vicinity. The number of monks reached 7,000, all under the guidance of Saint Pachomius, who visited all the monasteries and administered them. At the same time Saint Pachomius remained a deeply humble monk, who was always ready to comply with and accept the words of each brother.

Severe and strict towards himself, Saint Pachomius had great kindness and condescension toward the deficiencies of spiritually immature monks. One of the monks was eager for martyrdom, but Saint Pachomius turned him from this desire and instructed him to fulfill his monastic obedience, taming his pride, and training him in humility.

Once, a monk did not heed his advice and left the monastery. He was set upon by brigands, who threatened him with death and forced him to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Filled with despair, the monk returned to the monastery. Saint Pachomius ordered him to pray intensely night and day, keep a strict fast and live in complete solitude. The monk followed his advice, and this saved his soul from despair.

The saint taught his spiritual children to avoid judging others, and he himself feared to judge anyone even in thought.

Saint Pachomius cared for the sick monks with special love. He visited them, he cheered the disheartened, he urged them to be thankful to God, and put their hope in His holy will. He relaxed the fasting rule for the sick, if this would help them recover their health. Once, in the saint's absence, the cook did not prepare any cooked food for the monks, assuming that the brethren loved to fast. Instead of fulfilling his obedience, the cook plaited 500 mats, something which Saint Pachomius had not told him to do. In punishment for his disobedience, all the mats prepared by the cook were burned.

Saint Pachomius always taught the monks to rely only upon God's help and mercy. It happened that there was a shortage of grain at the monastery. The saint spent the whole night in prayer, and in the morning a large quantity of bread was sent to the monastery from the city, at no charge. The Lord granted Saint Pachomius the gift of wonderworking and healing the sick.

The Lord revealed to him the future of monasticism. The saint learned that future monks would not have such zeal in their struggles as the first generation had, and they would not have experienced guides. Prostrating himself upon the ground, Saint Pachomius wept bitterly, calling out to the Lord and imploring mercy for them. He heard a Voice answer, "Pachomius, be mindful of the mercy of God. The monks of the future shall receive a reward, since they too shall have occasion to suffer the life burdensome for the monk."

Toward the end of his life Saint Pachomius fell ill from a pestilence that afflicted the region. His closest disciple, Saint Theodore (May 17), tended to him with filial love. Saint Pachomius died around the year 348 at the age of fifty-three, and was buried on a hill near the monastery.



Equal of the Apostles and Emperor Constantine with his Mother Helen:

The Church calls Saint Constantine (306-337) "the Equal of the Apostles," and historians call him "the Great." He was the son of the Caesar Constantius Chlorus (305-306), who governed the lands of Gaul and Britain. His mother was Saint Helen, a Christian of humble birth.

At this time the immense Roman Empire was divided into Western and Eastern halves, governed by two independent emperors and their corulers called "Caesars." Constantius Chlorus was Caesar in the Western Roman Empire. Saint Constantine was born in 274, possibly at Nish in Serbia. In 294, Constantius divorced Helen in order to further his political ambition by marrying a woman of noble rank. After he became emperor, Constantine showed his mother great honor and respect, granting her the imperial title "Augusta."

Constantine, the future ruler of all the whole Roman Empire, was raised to respect Christianity. His father did not persecute Christians in the lands he governed. This was at a time when Christians were persecuted throughout the Roman Empire by the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and his corulers Maximian Galerius (305-311) in the East, and the emperor Maximian Hercules (284-305) in the West.

After the death of Constantius Chlorus in 306, Constantine was acclaimed by the army at York as emperor of Gaul and Britain. The first act of the new emperor was to grant the freedom to practice Christianity in the lands subject to him. The pagan Maximian Galerius in the East and the fierce tyrant Maxentius in the West hated Constantine and they plotted to overthrow and kill him, but Constantine bested them in a series of battles, defeating his opponents with the help of God. He prayed to God to give him a sign which would inspire his army to fight valiantly, and the Lord showed him a radiant Sign of the Cross in the heavens with the inscription "In this Sign, conquer."

After Constantine became the sole ruler of the Western Roman Empire, he issued the Edict of Milan in 313 which guaranteed religious tolerance for Christians. Saint Helen, who was a Christian, may have influenced him in this decision. In 323, when he became the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire, he extended the provisions of the Edict of Milan to the Eastern half of the Empire. After three hundred years of persecution, Christians could finally practice their faith without fear.

Renouncing paganism, the Emperor did not let his capital remain in ancient Rome, the former center of the pagan realm. He transferred his capital to the East, to the city of Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople, the city of Constantine (May 11). Constantine was deeply convinced that only Christianity could unify the immense Roman Empire with its diverse peoples. He supported the Church in every way. He recalled Christian confessors from banishment, he built churches, and he showed concern for the clergy.

The emperor deeply revered the victory-bearing Sign of the Cross of the Lord, and also wanted to find the actual Cross upon which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. For this purpose he sent his own mother, the holy Empress Helen, to Jerusalem, granting her both power and money. Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem and Saint Helen began the search, and through the will of God, the Life-Creating Cross was miraculously discovered in 326. (The account of the finding of the Cross of the Lord is found under the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14). The Orthodox Church commemorates the Uncovering of the Precious Cross and the Precious Nails by the Holy Empress Helen on March 6.

While in Palestine, the holy empress did much of benefit for the Church. She ordered that all places connected with the earthly life of the Lord and His All-Pure Mother, should be freed of all traces of paganism, and she commanded that churches should be built at these places.

The emperor Constantine ordered a magnificent church in honor of Christ's Resurrection to be built over His tomb. Saint Helen gave the Life-Creating Cross to the Patriarch for safe-keeping, and took part of the Cross with her for the emperor. After distributing generous alms at Jerusalem and feeding the needy (at times she even served them herself), the holy Empress Helen returned to Constantinople, where she died in the year 327.

Because of her great services to the Church and her efforts in finding the Life-Creating Cross, the empress Helen is called "the Equal of the Apostles."

The peaceful state of the Christian Church was disturbed by quarrels, dissensions and heresies which had appeared within the Church. Already at the beginning of Saint Constantine's reign the heresies of the Donatists and the Novatians had arisen in the West. They demanded a second baptism for those who lapsed during the persecutions against Christians. These heresies, repudiated by two local Church councils, were finally condemned at the Council of Milan in 316.

Particularly ruinous for the Church was the rise of the Arian heresy in the East, which denied the Divine Nature of the Son of God, and taught that Jesus Christ was a mere creature. By order of the emperor, the First Ecumenical Council was convened in the city of Nicea in 325.

318 bishops attended this Council. Among its participants were confessor-bishops from the period of the persecutions and many other luminaries of the Church, among whom was Saint Nicholas of Myra in Lycia. (The account about the Council is found under May 29). The emperor was present at the sessions of the Council. The heresy of Arius was condemned and a Symbol of Faith (Creed) composed, in which was included the term "consubstantial with the Father," at the insistence of the Emperor, confirming the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ, Who assumed human nature for the redemption of all the human race.

After the Council of Nicea, Saint Constantine continued with his active role in the welfare of the Church. He accepted holy Baptism on his deathbed, having prepared for it all his whole life. Saint Constantine died on the day of Pentecost in the year 337 and was buried in the church of the Holy Apostles, in a crypt he had prepared for himself.

Equal of the Apostles Helen, the Mother of the Emperor Constantine: Saint Hel-

en was the mother of Saint Constantine the Great, and was probably born at Drepanum (Helenopolis) in Asia Minor to parents of humble means. She married Constantius Chlorus, and their son Constantine was born in 274. Constantius divorced her in 294 in order to further his political ambition by marrying a woman of noble rank. After he became emperor, Constantine showed his mother great honor and respect, granting her the imperial title “Augusta.”



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PICTURES FROM APRIL



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Next Parish Council Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 17th at 7:00PM. Parish Council meetings will typically be scheduled on the third Tuesday of the month.

On behalf of the Parish Council,

Jim
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