

St. George Orthodox Church

5191 Lennon Road • Flint, MI 48507 • (810) 732-0720

Web Site: saintgeorgeflint.org

Father Joseph M. Abud, Pastor

Father Michael Bassett, Assistant

August 6, 2023

BLESSINGS ON THE GREAT FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD ON MOUNT TABOR!

Welcome to St. George! Thank you for attending today's Divine Services. If you are a first-time visitor, please register your visit by completing the guest book located in the narthex. We would appreciate getting to meet you after liturgy, so feel free to join us during Coffee Fellowship! Every Sunday we remember the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The word "*Liturgy*" means *work of the people* that means everyone participates through singing, praying, hearing the teaching, and opening our hearts to allow God's grace to enter. Anyone interested in learning more about our faith are encouraged to speak with one of our clergy.

Guidelines for Receiving Holy Communion for Orthodox Christians: Orthodox Christians fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist by receiving Holy Communion in fulfillment of Christ's command *to eat His Body and drink His Blood*. In order to be properly prepare to receive Holy Communion, the faithful should fast (no food or drink from midnight the night before), the Sacrament of Confession (7 years and older) within the last 2 months, being at peace with others, and striving to always love God and their neighbor. Frequent communion and regular confession are recommended for all faithful Orthodox Christians.

For other Christians: We welcome you to this celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Unfortunately, we cannot extend to you a general invitation to receive Holy Communion. Orthodox Christians believe that the Eucharist is an action of the celebrating community signifying a oneness in faith, life, and worship of our community. Reception of the Eucharist by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, but for which we must all pray. All, however, are welcome to partake of the blessed bread (*antidoron*) which will be given when coming forward to venerate (kiss) the Holy Cross and receive the final blessing from the priest. Again, welcome!

Live Streaming of Divine Services

St. George is open for all parishioners and visitors. If you cannot attend, please pray with us through our livestream which can be seen on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SaintGeorgeOrthodoxChurchFlintMI>

If you have a smart TV, you actually have a web browser and YouTube app built in. All you have to do is start the browser app for YouTube and put the link in the address bar.

Holy Bread Offerings (*Oblations*)

- Elias Hanna, Najwa Joubran, Feryal Joubran, Wafaa Elias, and their families for the health of their families and in loving memory of mother **Badiah** Khoury (13 year) and brother-in-law **Tony** Al-Sakali (2 year).

BAPTISM/CHRISMATION DAYS

The Church School offers the Holy Bread for their teachers and students who are celebrating the day of their *New Birth* {Baptism and/or Chrismation} into the Church this coming week:

- **Mila** Mitri ~ August 10th **Zane** Farah ~ August 12th

May they be children of the Light and heirs of eternal good things. {Baptismal Service}

- We also pray for the servants of God who have fallen asleep in the Lord: **Elizabeth** [Farah] Shammas (+July 6th, former parishioner) and **Sunita** Nath (+July 13th, mother of Anirudh [Suha Abueita-Nath's husband]) ~ *may their memory be eternal!*
- Prayers are offered for our parishioners who are ill, recovering, or in need, especially His servants: our **Bishop Anthony**, **Sahar** Abdallah, **Reader Fouad** and **Soad** Abuaita, **Philip** and **Janett** Abuaita, **Rasha** Abuaita, **Shafiq**a Abuaitah, **Laila** Abud, **Georgette** Abueita, **Jane** Abueita, **Youssif** Abousamra, **William** Alsahouri, **Naila** Banna, **Vera** Daoud, **Said** Farah, **Elias** Gantos, **Subdeacon George** and **Suad** Gantous, **Phyllis** Good, **Ronald** Haddad, **Daisy** Isaac, **Karen** Mortensen, **Laura** Nassar, **Adam** Odeh, **Rahmeh** Rashmawi, **Deborah** Salim, **Elaine** Shaheen, **Michael** Silpoch, and **Christa** Whitehead; **Basheer**, **Aziza**, and newborn **Salma** Hawwash (July 10th); the **staff** and **summer campers** at our **Antiochian Village** especially our parishioner **Lana** Abuaita.
- We also pray for our expectant parents: **Rania** and **Raed** AbuAita, **Julia** and **Maroun** Alatrash, **Renea** and **Rakan** Bayouk, **Dania** and **Subdeacon Salim** Hanna, **Natania** and **Rene** Hanna, **Letizia** and **Branden** Jones, **Christine** and **Matthew** Krinock (daughter of Ayman and Wafaa Elias), **Dina** and **Laith** Maymoun, **Amanda** and **Mousa** Rishmawi, & **Jacqueline** (daughter of Anwar and Janet Abueita) and **John** Timm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BANQUET CENTER RENTAL Our Center is rented today. Please be respectful to our renters and their guests by not disturbing their event ~ Thank You!

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP is in our Lounge and not hosted today ☹️.

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP HOSTS Available dates: August 13th and 20th ~ sign-up poster and hosting information is in the Lounge. *Hosting includes bringing whatever you wish to serve, setting up, and cleaning up afterwards.* St. George provides coffee, cups, cream, and sugar at a charge to the host of \$30. **For more information**, contact Manal Abuaita. *During the Dormition of the Virgin Mary Fast (August 1st-14th) no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish, or their by-products are to be served.*

FEAST OF OUR LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION Today, August 6th, the church celebrates this gospel story! As part of our celebration, we bless the 1st fruits of the harvest (grapes and vegetables). Please bring what you would like blessed ~ a table will be setup for the blessing at the end of Divine Liturgy.

PARAKLESIS TO THE VIRGIN MARY This week on Tuesday and Thursday beginning at 6pm, we are celebrating this beautiful and melodic prayer service seeking the help of the Mother of God. It can be prayed anytime of the year, but especially during the Dormition Fast in preparation for the last great feast of the church's year (September 1st - August 31st). Everyone is encouraged to come and pray. Take an hour out of your week for prayer, fellowship, and love!

NEEDY FAMILIES OF ST. GEORGE For years, our Ladies Auxiliary and parishioners have been so generous at Christmas and Pascha donating for needy families in our parish which Fr. Joe distributes to them privately. Between those two feasts, the needy families still struggle to make ends meet and at this time, there are no more funds to help. If you would like to donate, you can send a check to St. George with "needy families" as a memo. If you give cash, please put it in an envelope with your name and "needy families". Thank you and may God always bless your generosity!

ST. GEORGE GOLF CLASSIC

September 23rd at Flushing Valley
Golf Club.

Mark your calendar, more info coming!



OUR STEWARDSHIP, OFFERINGS, & DONATIONS



Our stewardship, offerings, and donations are needed. PLEASE help your parish by continuing to offer your gifts! If you cannot come to church, you can simply go to our parish website (<https://saintgeorgeflint.org/>) and donate on-line (or use the QR code to the left) or you can bring or mail your offerings to St. George, 5191 Lennon Road, Flint, MI 48507. As always, THANK YOU for your generosity and love of our St. George!

OUT-OF-TOWN Fr. Joe is serving St. Nicholas-Grand Rapids, MI today and returns to the office on Tuesday, August 8th. **For emergencies** while Fr. Joe is away, please call first *Fr. Michael Bassett* (St. George, 989-627-9580), then *Fr. Peter Bistolarides* (Assumption, 810-771-4611), or *Fr. Matthew Butrie* (St. Nicholas, 810-744-0070). Please pray for Fr. Joe's safe travels.

COMING EVENTS

Fasting Discipline The **Dormition Fast** for the **Dormition** (*Falling Asleep*) of the **Virgin Mary** began on Tuesday, August 1st and lasts until the feast on August 15th. The traditional fasting discipline during this fourteen-day period is *no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish, wine, olive oil and their by-products*, except on Saturdays and Sundays when *wine and olive oil* are allowed. On the Feast of our **Lord's Transfiguration** (TODAY, August 6th), *fish, wine, and olive oil* are allowed.

Tuesday **Paraklesis to the Virgin Mary** 6pm

Thursday **Paraklesis to the Virgin Mary** 6pm

Saturday Combined, Pan-Orthodox **Vacation Church School (VCS)** at *St. George* 10am

Combined, Pan-Orthodox **Great Vespers** at *St. George* 5pm (note time!)

The Banquet of the Lord ~

The Importance of Preparing for the Divine Liturgy

by Abbot Tryphon, head of All-Merciful Savior Monastery

on Vashon Island, Washington

That the Church requires us to prepare to receive the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, by saying the Pre-Communion Prayers, is a given. The Church also requires us to fast from midnight on, abstaining from either food or drink, until after we have received the Body and Blood of our Savior. The only exception is when we must, because of health issues or taking medications, eat or drink something.

Although not required, if we read the appointed Epistle and Gospel readings prior to entering into the Liturgy, the Word can better enter the heart, for when hearing God's Word for the second time, we are more receptive, and the Word penetrates deeply.

Perhaps the most important preparation we must make before attending the Divine Liturgy, is to be sure we are at peace with all our brothers and sisters. We dare not approach the chalice with malice or hatred towards anyone, nor can we receive the Holy Gifts with a heart that has refused to forgive those who have hurt or offended us. An important part of forgiving others, is for us to seek forgiveness. Thus, frequent confession is an imperative.

Participating in the Divine Liturgy is a great privilege, for in this service we are entering into a place where there is neither time nor space, and where we are worshipping the Holy Trinity, together with the hosts of heaven in the kingdom to come!

In the Liturgy, we encounter God in a way that is beyond human comprehension, for we are invited to commune with our Creator in the most intimate way. To approach the Holy Mysteries (Communion) without thought, as though we were simply going to a movie, is beyond foolishness. To receive the "hot coals" that is meant to transform us and make us whole, without proper preparation, is a very dangerous thing to do.

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Get out your bibles, find the New Testament, and then flip to St. John's Gospel. Find chapter 6, and start reading. We first hear how Jesus fed 5,000 people from just 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish! Our Master then walks on water (*It is I, do not be afraid!*). The rest of the chapter tells us how Jesus is the **Bread of Life**. Here, our Lord says *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh* (verse 51). After they question Him, he says, *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day ... He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.*

Do you want to be raised (resurrected)? Do you want to get into heaven after you fall asleep in this world? Taking His Body and Blood puts us on the journey to eternal life in His Kingdom! If you have questions or need help, speak with Fr. Joe or Fr. Mike.

The Tradition of Blessing Fruit (and vegetables) on the Transfiguration of Christ

PROTOPRESBYTER GEORGE D. KONSTANTOPOULOS | 19 AUGUST 2019

On the Holy Feast-Day of Transfiguration (*Metamorphosis*) on August 6th our tradition calls that the Orthodox Christian faithful bring fruits and even vegetables to be blessed on this day. The most common fruit to be blessed are grapes.

The blessing of fruits i.e., grapes, apples, etc., as well as vegetables on this day, is one very beautiful custom of our Holy Church. The practice signifies the final transfiguration of all things in Christ our Savior. *“It signifies the ultimate flowering and fruitfulness of all creation in the Paradise of God’s Kingdom of Life where all will be transformed by the Glory of the Lord”*.

This is an early Christian tradition. The first week of August, on the sixth of August, the farmers used to gather the first fruits of their summer harvest (grapes, figs, etc.) and to offer thanks to God and offer them to the Church to be blessed and then to give them to the faithful present at the Divine Liturgy as a blessing to them. These fruits are called the “beginnings”.

In a text from the 7th century (“The laws of the kingdom”) by Emperor Constantine VII, this tradition is clearly described: *“The Emperor of Constantinople gathers the “beginnings” in Chalcedon, where there are many vines. He then waits for the Patriarch of Constantinople to come on the Holy Day of the Transfiguration of Christ, to bless the fruits and to personally hand out the grapes to the faithful.”*

This tradition is observed to in various parts of Greece where they grow grapes.

Saint John Chrysostom wrote: *“Plowman receives fruit from the earth not so much for his labor and diligence, as out of the goodness of God Who grows this fruit, because neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters, but God that gives the increase.”*

Grapes are brought to church because they are directly connected to the Holy Eucharistic Mystery (Sacraments); that is why in the prayer for the blessing of grapes the priest says, *“Bless, O Lord, this new fruit of the vine, which Thou hast graciously been pleased to permit to come to maturity, through calm seasons and gentle rains and favorable weather; and let it be unto joy for those of us who shall partake of this offspring of the vine; and may we offer it as a gift to Thee unto the purification of our sins, through the sacred and holy Body and Blood of Thy Christ...”*

In the first centuries of Christianity, the faithful brought forth to the church the fruit and crops of the new harvest: bread, wine, olive oil, incense, wax, honey, etc. Of all these offerings, only bread, wine, incense, olive oil, and wax were taken to the altar, while the rest was used for the needs of the clergy and the poor whom the church was caring for. These offerings were to express gratitude to God for all goods, but at the same time help servants of God and people in need. Until today, the consecration of bread and wine, eggs and milk and other food has been kept in the consecration of *artos* (bread) in the church and meals at home on Pascha. Consecration of flowers and tree branches is performed now on Palm Sunday, the days of the Holy Trinity and Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and on Sunday of the week of the Veneration of the Cross. Rice with raisins and honey are used as offering in services for the dead and remembrance meal. *Prospophora* (holy bread) is brought to church with Wine for the priest to prepare, it before the Divine Liturgy, where it becomes the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I ask all of you to learn and appreciate the Orthodox Christian tradition and to practice them.

With sincere *agape* (God’s love),

+Father George