



Mother of God Orthodox Church

904 Cherry Hill Road + Princeton, NJ 08540 + mogoca.org



Joy of all who sorrow art thou
and protectress of the oppressed,
feeder of the hungry, consolation of travelers,
haven for the tempest tossed,
visitation for the sick,
protection and aid for the infirm, staff of old age,
O, all pure Mother of the Most High God,
Hasten, we pray, to save thy servants.

We welcome
all who seek to know
Christ in His Word
and in His Church.

Message from Father Peter



Christ is Risen!

We have come through the season of Great Lent and are now in the Paschal Spring. This is a period filled with vibrant colors, lively energy and warmer weather. It is a time of rejoicing and taking time to reflect and thank our God for the many blessings we have, and the gift of life that He has given us. Christ's resurrection as we sing "has opened for us the door to paradise." We enter that paradise every time we gather in His name and celebrate the divine services of the Church. Christ is Risen is more than just a greeting. It is a proclamation that we too live in the new resurrected life that He has given us. We are risen out of the chains of death and fear that held us captive, the empty tomb is our new womb, our rebirth that is given to us in the sacrament of baptism. Christ is Risen and we are given life.

This year has been a year of change, growth and commitment for all of us as a community of faith. We started a project essential for supporting our expansion and enabling us to sustain that progress.

Parents have made a commitment and have volunteered in our Church School program. There is a growing interest in the adult education program of the parish. Several have made a commitment to attend choir rehearsals on Saturdays. Attendance at Saturday Vespers, and our Lenten and Holy Week services have increased, and I can say this is the first time in 10 years as your Rector that I saw this commitment to attend many of the Holy Week Services.

As we move closer to Pentecost in the month of May, let us all prepare to receive the Holy Spirit in our lives to further strengthen the spiritual growth and commitment to our God and His Church. A great deal of work remains to be done, and additional programs are set to launch. In October, we will host the Diocesan Council meeting providing an opportunity to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Tikhon, along with our Archbishop and the priests, deacons and laity of the Diocese. It will be a time to show our love for our community and the deep commitment we have in offering the gift of hospitality.

I will be looking for new leadership in our church school program as Kristina transitions into a new season in her life. Carrie has taken the lead in our garden and needs volunteers. Mathusha Judith needs volunteers to help with the outreach ministry at St. Basil's House. We all need to commit to attending rehearsals with our gifted and talented music director, Katya, to enhance our practice of congregational singing. Whenever two or three people gather, Christ is also there; by supporting the ministries at Mother of God, we help make Christ visible to everyone we encounter.



Services, Feasts & Special Events

~ May 2026 ~

Sunday liturgical services are at MOG @ 9:30 A.M. (All are welcome. Masks are optional.) **When services are held inside, capacity may be limited.** Saturday Vesper Services are at MOG @5:00 P.M.

We will continue to stream the services online for those of you who are unable to attend the live services. You can view the live stream and recast at <https://www.youtube.com/@mogprinceton>. **CONFESSION WILL BE HEARD ON SATURDAYS, BEFORE OR AFTER VESPERS, OR BY APPOINTMENT.**

Saturday, May 2nd

No Vespers (Fr Peter will be leading an adult retreat at St. Andrew's Camp May 1-3)

Sunday, May 3rd

9:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy followed by Church School

Saturday, May 9th

4:00 P.M. Choir Rehearsal/ 5:00 P.M. Vesper Service

Sunday, May 10th

9:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy followed by Church School

Saturday, May 16th

4:00 P.M. Choir Rehearsal/ 5:00 P.M. Vespers Service

Sunday, May 17th

9:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy/ followed by Church School

Thursday, May 21st

9:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy/ Holy Ascension

Saturday, May 23rd

No Choir Rehearsal. No Vespers

Sunday, May 24th

930 A.M. Divine Liturgy/ Last Day of Church School

Saturday, May 30th

4:00 P.M. Choir Rehearsal/ 5:00 P.M. Vespers Service

Sunday, May 31st

930 A.M. Divine Liturgy/ Holy Pentecost/ Church School Party



View the master MOG calendar at:



http://www.bit.ly/MOG_calendar





Church School

5/3/2025 Unit 3 Week 3: Restoration to Life

5/10/2025 Unit 3 Week 4: Trust with Patience

5/17/2025 Unit 3 Week 5: Wise and Innocent

5/24/2025 Unit 3 Week 6: Sacred Happiness **last day of church school**

5/31/2025 Holy Pentecost **Church School Party**

If you are interested in volunteering or have questions regarding the Church School, please contact Father Peter.



Wisdom of Our Church Fathers

Orthodox Church Fathers and liturgical texts teach that the Ascension of Christ is the glorification of human nature, which is raised to the Father's throne, bridging heaven and earth. It marks the reconciliation of God and humanity, securing a place for humanity in heaven while promising the Holy Spirit.

Orthodox Church in America (OCA)

Key Themes and Sayings

- **Human Nature Exalted:** Saint John Chrysostom teaches, "We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven... the same nature from which the angels guarded Paradise, stopped not until it ascended to the throne of the Lord".
- **Reconciliation:** Chrysostom highlights that the Ascension marks the end of the long "war" between God and humanity, noting that the Master was not ill-disposed, but the servant was negligent.
- **The Liturgical View:** The Church proclaims in the Feast's troparion, "Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, having gladdened Thy disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit".
- **Present but Absent:** St. Leo the Great explains that Christ's Ascension was necessary to strengthen the faith of the disciples, who were initially shaken by His death, moving them from a bodily presence to spiritual awareness.
- **Our Potential in Christ:** The Ascension serves as a call for Christians to "press toward perfection" and set their minds on heavenly things, not merely earthly cares.
- **The Promise of Return:** The Church Fathers emphasize that the same Lord who ascended will come again in glory, a promise that empowers the church's mission and faith.



Ancient Faith Blogs

Orthodox Perspective on the Event

The Orthodox Church views the Ascension not as a separation of Christ from the world, but as the inauguration of His heavenly reign, where He sits at the right hand of the Father while remaining present on earth through the Holy Spirit. It is considered the final act of the earthly "dispensation" of salvation.



Orthodox Road





The Sisterhood of Saints Mary and Martha

On Good Friday, we gathered to decorate the tomb of Christ for His burial. Thank you to all—men, women and children—who generously shared their time and talents to create such a beautiful tribute to our Lord.



The Sisterhood of Saints Mary and Martha wishes all mothers, grandmothers, and godmothers a very happy Mother's Day!

As we honor the mothers in our lives, we remember that motherhood is not only biological. Many women reflect true motherly love through compassion, faith, care and encouragement. We are blessed to have many such women in our parish family.

We also look to the Blessed Theotokos, the perfect model of motherhood. Her faith, love and selflessness extend to all people, as she continues to intercede for us and reflect the beauty of a mother's heart.

- Matushka Jeanne



Thank you to all who serve in this ministry.

***“The bee is more honored than other animals not because she labors,
but because she labors for others.” ~St. John Chrysostom***



MOG Blessings: Pascha Day







Church Hospitality

Please contact Matushka Jeanne at jbaktis@hotmail.com or (915) 255-9896 if you are able to sponsor a coffee hour after Sunday Liturgies.



“Work is a blessing, a gift from God. Work gives vigor to the body and refreshes the mind. If God had not given us work, man would have become moldy. Those who are diligent continue to work into their old age.” ~ Saint Paisios of Mount Athos





ANNOUNCEMENTS

Donations for St. Basil's House

Mother of God continues to support St. Basil's House with food donations, placed in the collection bin at the side entrance of the Church.

Please, when you shop, think of those in our community who are in need and bring your offerings to the Church.

Church School

For information or to volunteer, contact Kristina Baktis, kbaktis@gmail.com.

Donations for a Garden Fund

MOG is seeking donations for a garden fund to finance more plantings to beautify the outdoors around the church.

A donation basket for this purpose is on the table in the side-door entry room.

Please write "beautification fund" somewhere on your check or just donate cash.

Thank you!

- ❖ Catechetical Class has begun. Anyone interested in joining, please contact Fr. Peter at pabaktis@gmail.com
- ❖ Inquirers class via Zoom:
Contact FP for information
- ❖ Confessions by appointment, please contact FP
- ❖ Thanks to all who donated to the Fellowship Space fundraiser. Please make your 2026 pledges!





May 2026
stbasilshousenj@gmail.com

THANK YOU for donating canned goods, toiletries, clothing, toys, books and re-usable shopping bags in the bin in the vestibule at MOG; your gifts are greatly appreciated. We are privileged to receive the lovely gifts and to pass them along to our neighbors.

The April and May first-Saturday open houses at St. Basil's House had to be canceled because of an illness in the hosts' family. Please consider volunteering to host on Saturday mornings — once a month, or even less frequently.

Fr. Peter, Mat. Jeanne and Joe hosted the Wednesday morning breakfast and Bible study on April 8; neighbors were pleased to receive Easter baskets. Dn. John and Judith needed to cancel on April 1 and 15 due to illness. With the help of Joe and Mina, we met on April 22; attendance was low, but the conversation was lively. On April 29, we expect to be helped by Joe and by students from the OCF at TCNJ.

Please continue to pray for us, and for our neighbors. Please pray that God would send people to help so that the work may continue; many of our present volunteers are aging; our neighbors are increasingly helpful, but dependable, younger, stronger volunteers are really needed.

Please pray that we would have wisdom in discerning whether or not to continue this outreach. Help is badly needed.

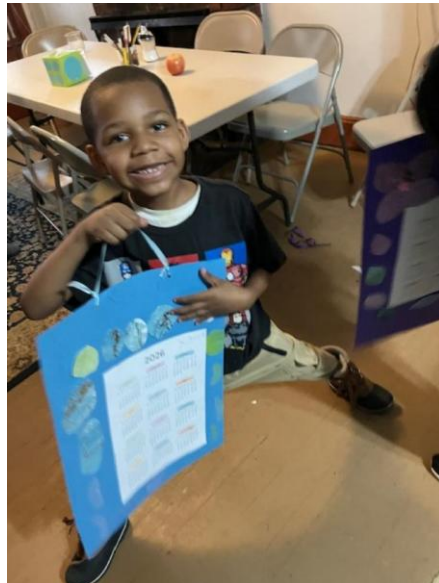




Hats, scarves, and gloves distributed in January — many hand-made by a parishioner at St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Union, NJ



Some Saturday morning offerings



A Saturday Morning Guest and his Calendar



<https://www.facebook.com/stbasilshousenj/>



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Saint Nikolai Velimirovic – Sermon on the Ascension of the Lord

Commemorated May 21, 2026



Thus did the One ascend to Heaven Who held heaven within Himself. He who carries hell within himself will end up in hell, but he who bears heaven within his soul will ascend to heaven. And truly, no one can ascend to heaven other than those who have heaven within; and no one can end up in hell besides those who have hell within. The familiar is drawn to what is familiar and unites with the familiar; but it rejects what is not familiar. Matter submits to the spirit to the extent that the human soul is filled with the Divine Spirit; and the laws of nature are obedient to moral laws, which govern the world. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the perfection of moral law, to Him is subject all matter—the entire physical world, with all the laws of nature.

Any person, as a spirit, can be victorious in his life over a certain law of nature, with the help of another law of nature—that is, he can overcome it with his own spirit. Christ, as the God-Man, could subject the laws of nature to Himself through the law of the Spirit, which is the supreme law of the created world. However, this concept, just as any other spiritual concept, can be but partially explained by ordinary earthly conceptualizations and reasoning—and that only by examples and comparisons.

Spiritual things only become clear beyond a doubt when the spirit sees them and perceives them. In order to see and feel the manifestations of the spiritual world, long and exhausting spiritual practice is needed, after which, by God's grace, spiritual vision may be opened in a person; this vision allows him to see what seems unbelievable and impossible to ordinary

mortals. Nevertheless, a person must first believe those who have seen the unbelievable, and strengthen their faith from day to day, striving to see what is inaccessible to the common gaze.

Not in vain does the Lord say, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” [John 20:29]. The Lord God rejoices in their faith just as a father on earth rejoices that his children believe his every word. All the apostles were present at the Ascension of the Lord, gathered on the hill. This was their last collective meeting. However, this was not the last appearance of Christ. Later He appeared in a vision to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, to the Apostle John on the island of Patmos, and to other apostles, as well as to martyrs, holy hierarchs, and confessors, over the course of the entire history of the Christian Church.

But the day will come—and that day is not far off—when all the righteous men and women who firmly believed in Him throughout their lives will see Him. And around Him in the heaven will gather all those who were baptized on earth in His name—not only with water, but also with the Spirit and Fire. And they will enter into His joy, which the Heavenly Father has prepared for all His chosen, and will inherit a joy that they have never known before.

Reprinted from the OCA website: www.oca.org





Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow



Contribute to Mother of God online!

- ✓ We now offer the ability to send your contributions online!
- ✓ Our members and friends have even more ways to access current and past contribution's activity – choose the way that suits your lifestyle best!

Visit mogoca.org
for more information
and to sign up.

Sign up for e-contributions today! It's free, easy, and secure.

Save time and money, while helping the environment!

- **View your current and past contributions:** Access previous contributions online, with the option to print or save to your computer.
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- **Help us honor our obligations:** Set up a recurring contribution and automatically deduct the payment from your bank account or credit card on the same day of every month.
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- **Earn rewards:** Use your credit card to make your contribution and earn points or rewards for every dollar you contribute.
- **Help the environment:** Reduce the impact you have on the environment by choosing to view and make your contributions online.

Prayer Requests



“...and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

~James 5:16, NKJV

Commemoration of the Living Servants of God:

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who for the sake of Your eternal mercy and loving kindness became man, and suffered crucifixion and death for the salvation of all; Who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, where You hear the prayers of all who call upon You humbly and with their whole heart: incline Your ear to us, and hearken to the prayer which your unworthy servants offer as a spiritual sacrifice for all Your people.

Have mercy, O Lord, upon: 

- We pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy. We pray for peace in the Middle East. We pray the same for all war-torn nations.
- Please pray for an end to gun violence, particularly in the United States. Please pray for unity, love, peace and joy.
- Please pray for **Daria Pettus' husband Mark who is undergoing chemotherapy.**
- **Debbie Baktis**, Matushka Jeanne's sister-in-law who is awaiting a kidney transplant.
- Praise for Matushka Jeanne's niece's husband, **David**. His last brain scan was clear of all cancer. He is doing his chemo rounds and is handling the treatment well.
- **Jan Perkins**, who continues to suffer from mobility and digestive issues.
- **The Delarato Family. Nick DeLarato**, who has health issues, and Nick's sister, **Kathy**.
- **Olga Mezina**, friend of Lana.
- **Carson & Addison**, Joe Elchak's granddaughters.
- Nina Robinson's friend, **Stella Goudard**, who has heart issues, and Stella's husband, **Rick**.
- Lauren Ugorji's: husband, **Richmond**, who has health issues, adult children **Jade & Mike Edwards**, who continue to suffer setbacks in quest to rebuild home; **Jordan & Eric Mosurick**, who need jobs, and teenage **Anastasia Ugorji**. Lauren's: dad, **Don Robinson**, as he battles blood cancer; aunt & uncle **Kirra (undergoing chemo treatments for pancreatic cancer) & Jesse Filkins**, aunts **Scott Brown Pempeit** and **Laverne Tisdale**; friend **Missy Gillespie** and Missy's husband, **Kurt**, who may soon be added to the kidney transplant list; and **Lydia**, family friend diagnosed with cancer (she is 17).

May we join you in prayer for all of those on your minds, all of those in your prayers, and all of those in your hearts. Lord Have Mercy.

Please send prayer requests and status updates to: ladyofleasure@yahoo.com

COMMEMORATION OF THE DEPARTED Memory Eternal

Daily Bible Readings - For a listing and links to the daily scripture readings go to <http://oca.org/readings>.





**Please Pray for the Mother of God Joy of All Who Sorrow
Orthodox Church
as we move forward.**

God's Will Be Done In All Things!!!

