



St. Vladimir Orthodox Church

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Monastic Martyr and Confessor Stephen the New November 28, 2021

Troparion – Tone 6

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men. Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body. Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it. Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, // glory to Thee.

Troparion – Tone 4

Trained in asceticism on the mountain, with the weapon of the Cross thou didst destroy the spiritual assaults of the hostile powers, O all-blessed one. Again thou didst bravely prepare for combat and didst slay Copronymus with the sword of faith; // for both struggles thou hast been crowned by God, monk-martyr Stephen of eternal memory.

Kontakion – Tone 6

When Christ God, the Giver of Life, raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand, He bestowed resurrection on the human race. // He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

Kontakion – Tone 8

Lovers of the feasts, from the heart with hymns let us praise in faith God-like Stephen, the lover of the Trinity, for he honored the fair icon of the Master and of His Mother. Now let us rejoice together and cry out to him with love: // “Rejoice, ever-glorious Father!”

Prokeimenon – Tone 6

O Lord, save Thy people, / and bless Thine inheritance!

V. To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!

Monastic Martyr and Confessor Stephen the New

The Monk Martyr and Confessor Stephen the New was born in 715 at Constantinople into a pious Christian family. His parents, having two daughters, prayed the Lord for a son. The mother of the new-born Stephen took him to the Blachernae church of the Most Holy Theotokos and dedicated him to God.

During the reign of the emperor Leo the Isaurian (716-741) there was a persecution against the holy icons and against those venerating them. With the support of the emperor, the adherents of the Iconoclast heresy seized control of the supreme positions of authority in the Empire and in the Church. Persecuted by the powers of this world, Orthodoxy was preserved in monasteries far from the capital, in solitary cells, and in the brave and faithful hearts of its followers.

The Orthodox parents of Saint Stephen, grieved by the prevailing impiety, fled from Constantinople to Bithynia, and they gave over their sixteen-year-old son in obedience to the monk John, who labored in asceticism in a solitary place on the Mount of Saint Auxentius. Saint Stephen dwelt with the venerable monk John for more than fifteen years, devoting himself totally to this spirit-bearing Elder, and learning monastic activity from him. Here Stephen received the news that his father was dead, and his mother and sisters had been tonsured as nuns.

After a certain time his teacher John also died. With deep sorrow Saint Stephen buried his venerable body, and continued with monastic effort in his cave by himself. Soon monks began to come to the ascetic, desiring to learn from him the virtuous and salvific life, and a monastery was established, with Saint Stephen as the igumen. At forty-two years of age Stephen left the monastery he founded, and he went to another mountain, on whose summit he dwelt in deep seclusion in a solitary cell. But here also a community of monks soon gathered, seeking the spiritual guidance of Saint Stephen.

Leo the Isaurian was succeeded by Constantine Copronymos (741-775), a fiercer persecutor of the Orthodox, and an even more zealous iconoclast. The emperor convened an Iconoclast Council, attended by 358 bishops from the Eastern provinces. However, except for Constantine, the Archbishop of Constantinople, illegitimately raised to the patriarchal throne by the power of Copronymos, not one of the other patriarchs participated in the wicked doings of this Council, thus making it less likely to style itself as "ecumenical." This council of heretics, at the instigation of the emperor and the archbishop, described icons as idols, and pronounced an anathema on all who venerated icons in the Orthodox manner, and it described icon veneration as heresy.

Meanwhile, the monastery of Mount Auxentius and its igumen became known in the capital. They told the emperor about the ascetic life of the monks, about their Orthodox piety, about the igumen Stephen's gift of wonderworking, and of how Saint Stephen's fame had spread far beyond the region of the monastery, and that the name of its head was accorded universal respect and love. The saint's open encouragement of icon veneration and the implied rebuff to the persecutors of Orthodoxy within the monastery of Mount Auxentius especially angered the emperor. Archbishop Constantine realized that in the person of Saint Stephen he had a strong and implacable opponent of his iconoclastic intentions, and he plotted how he might draw him over to his side or else destroy him.

They tried to lure Saint Stephen into the Iconoclast camp, at first with flattery and bribery, then by threats, but in vain. Then they slandered the saint, accusing him of falling into sin with the nun Anna. But his guilt was not proven, since the nun courageously denied any guilt and died under torture and beatings. Finally, the emperor gave orders to lock up the saint in prison, and to destroy his monastery. Iconoclast bishops were sent to Saint Stephen in prison, trying to persuade him of the dogmatic correctness of the Iconoclast position. But the saint easily refuted all the arguments of the heretics and he remained true to Orthodoxy.

Then the emperor ordered that the saint be exiled on one of the islands in the Sea of Marmora. Saint Stephen settled into a cave, and there also his disciples soon gathered. After a certain while the saint left the brethren and took upon himself the exploit of living atop a pillar. News of the stylite Stephen, and the miracles worked by his prayers, spread throughout all the Empire and strengthened the faith and spirit of Orthodoxy in the people.

The emperor gave orders to transfer Saint Stephen to prison on the island of Pharos, and then to bring him to trial. At the trial, the saint refuted the arguments of the heretics sitting in judgment upon him. He explained the dogmatic essence of icon veneration, and he denounced the Iconoclasts because in blaspheming icons, they blasphemed Christ and the Mother of God. As proof, the saint pointed to a golden coin inscribed with the image of the emperor. He asked the judges what would happen to a man who threw the coin to the ground, and then trampled the emperor's image under his feet. They replied that such a man would certainly be punished for dishonoring the image of the emperor. The saint said that an even greater punishment awaited anyone who would dishonor the image of the King of Heaven and His Saints, and with that he spat on the coin, threw it to the ground, and began to trample it underfoot.

The emperor gave orders to take the saint to prison, where already there were languishing 342 Elders, condemned for the veneration of icons. In this prison Saint Stephen spent eleven months, consoling the imprisoned. The prison became like a monastery, where the usual prayers and hymns were chanted according to the Typikon. The people came to the prison in crowds and asked Saint Stephen to pray for them.

When the emperor learned that the saint had organized a monastery in prison, where they prayed and venerated holy icons, he sent two of his own servants, twin-brothers, to beat the saint to death. When these brothers went to the prison and beheld the face of the monk shining with a divine light, they fell down on their knees before him, asking his forgiveness and

prayers, then they told the emperor that his command had been carried out. But the emperor learned the truth and he resorted to yet another lie. Informing his soldiers that the saint was plotting to remove him from the throne, he sent them to the prison. The holy confessor himself came out to the furious soldiers, who seized him and dragged him through the streets of the city. They then threw the lacerated body of the martyr into a pit, where they were wont to bury criminals.

On the following morning a fiery cloud appeared over Mount Auxentius, and then a heavy darkness descended upon the capital, accompanied by hail, which killed many people.

Epistle: Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

Service Schedule for the week of November 28

Today – 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

Saturday December 4 – 5:00 PM Vespers followed by Confession

Sunday December 5 – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Coffee Hour in Daria Hall

Weekly Giving

November 21 – 48 adults, 16 youth, \$4,874 (includes \$1,216 from Bingo!)

Parish Announcements

There are many beautiful Christmas items for sale in Daria Hall. Please stop by and take a few minutes to shop!

There will be a FOCA Meeting next Sunday, December 5, to elect Officers for 2022.

Please remember to bring the requested items for the food donation bags to Daria Hall. If you can help assemble bags the morning of Saturday December 4, please see Father Volodymyr or Herman Meyer. Thank you for your help and generosity!

It is important to partake of the sacraments of Confession and Communion before December 25. Please contact Father Volodymyr if you need to set up a time for Confession other than after Vespers on Saturday evenings.

Upcoming events:

1. After Coffee Hour on Sunday, December 12, Mr. Constantine Zallas will give a lecture on Confession and Communion. Please plan on staying for this informative lecture.
2. On Sunday, December 19, the Sunday School and parish children will be sponsoring and hosting a Russian Tea in Daria Hall in lieu of Coffee Hour. Bring your own favorite teacup! There will also be a special visitor during the Tea! A sign-up sheet is in the back of the church for foods needed for the Tea. Parents and parishioners may help out the children.

The Ladies Altar Society is in need of bud vases for an upcoming fundraising project. If you have any of these vases at home and no longer want them, please bring them in for the ladies. Thank you!

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 30, 2022 after Divine Liturgy. There are five (5) Parish Council openings. Anyone interested in joining the Parish Council, please see Father Volodymyr by December 31. Elected members must have been a member of the parish for at least one year.

If anyone in the parish has any keys for the church buildings that they no longer use or need, please turn them in to Father Volodymyr.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK:

Nahom Tsegay – November 28

Alexis Medina – December 1

Germain Ortiz – December 2

Have a blessed birthday and God grant you many years!

FOCA ST. NICHOLAS GIFT WISH PROJECT: Today is the last day the FOCA Club will be collecting gift cards for a Seminarian Family. We can accept **Target, Kohls, Walmart, Barnes & Noble, Old Navy, Amazon, Shop Rite, Wegmans – or cash.** Please put your donation in the basket behind the last pew in church. Thank you for your generosity!

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE – Coffee Hour Preparation Instructions are available in the Daria Hall kitchen

Nov. 28 **FAST DAY** Darice Keyes
Dec. 5 **FAST DAY** Lynne Sheedy
Dec. 12 **FAST DAY** Matthew & Kris Bohush - **NEW**
Dec. 19 **FAST DAY** Sunday School Children
Dec. 26 Phyllis Eck
Jan. 2 Sophie & Melissa Dumas - **REVISED**
Jan. 9 Aftan Chowansky
Jan. 16 Dottie Kish & Philip Moldovan
Jan. 23 Blake & Jessica Kilgore - **REVISED**
Jan. 30 Francine Brady & Herman Meyer
Feb. 6 Anna & Leon Brasowski
Feb. 13 Guy Radcliffe
Feb. 20 Alex & Rebeca Medina – **NEW**
Feb. 27 Valeria & Timothy Srock
Mar. 6 Walter & Tanya Tribbey
Mar. 13 **FAST DAY** Betty Kavchok
Mar. 20 **FAST DAY** Awet Tesfa
Mar. 27 **FAST DAY** Madeleine Sekulich & Mark McDevitt