

## THE HOLY MARTYRS SAINT SOPHIA AND HER DAUGHTERS FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

Saint Sophia was a pious Christian widow in Italy who named her daughters for the three Christian virtues. Faith was twelve, Hope was ten, and Love was nine. They did not hide their faith in Christ but openly confessed it before everyone.

An official named Antiochus denounced them to the emperor Hadrian (117-138), who ordered that they be brought to Rome. Realizing they would be taken before the emperor, the holy virgins prayed fervently to the Lord, asking that He give them the strength not to fear torture and death. When the holy virgins and their mother came before the emperor, all present were amazed at their composure. Summoning each of the sisters in turn, Hadrian urged them to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. The young girls remained unyielding.

The emperor ordered them to be tortured. They burned the holy virgins over an iron grating, then threw them into a red-hot oven, and finally into a cauldron with boiling tar, but the Lord preserved them.

The youngest child, Love, was tied to a wheel and they beat her with rods until her body was covered all over with blood welts. After undergoing unspeakable torments, the holy virgins glorified their Heavenly Bridegroom and remained steadfast in the Faith.

They subjected St. Sophia to another grievous torture: the mother was forced to watch the suffering of her daughters. She displayed adamant courage and urged her daughters to endure their torments for the sake of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens were beheaded and joyfully bent their necks beneath the sword.

In order to intensify the inner suffering of St. Sophia, the emperor permitted her to take the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and loaded them on a wagon. She drove beyond the city limits and reverently buried them on a high hill. St. Sophia sat there by the graves of her daughters for three days, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord. Even though she did not suffer for Christ in the flesh, she was not deprived of a martyr's crown. Instead, she suffered in her heart. Believers buried her body there beside her daughters.

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*MARTYR SOPHIA AND HER THREE DAUGHTERS  
FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE*

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# THE TRINITARIAN

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Divine Liturgy on Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Vespers on Saturdays at 5:00 p.m.

BULLETIN 46 - VOLUME LX

TONE 6

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

## **FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

*Afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross*

*Martyr Sophia, and her three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love*

*Martyr Theodota at Nicæa; Martyr Agathocleia;*

*156 Martyrs of Palestine, including Bishops Peleus and Nilus,*

*Zeno the Presbyter, the Noblemen Patermuthius and Elias, and others*

O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries. And by virtue of Your Cross, preserve Your habitation.

Troparion, Tone I

The Church celebrates and rejoices in the feast of the three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love and their mother Sophia, named for her wisdom: For in them she gave birth to the three godly virtues. Now they eternally behold their bridegroom, God the Word. Let us rejoice spiritually in their memory and cry: O our three Heavenly Protectors, establish, confirm and strengthen us in Faith, Hope and Love.

Troparion, Tone IV

TODAY'S EPISTLE: GALATIANS 2:16-20  
II CORINTHIANS 4:6-15

TODAY'S GOSPEL: MARK 8:34-9:1  
MATTHEW 22:35-46

### **HOLY WORSHIP THIS WEEK:**

Saturday, September 23                      5:00 p.m. Great Vespers

### **WELCOME GUESTS!**

We are very glad you have come to worship the Holy Trinity with us this morning! Please participate in the services at your comfort level. Our greeters will kindly assist you with whatever questions or needs you may have. During each Sunday service we offer Holy Communion. If you are a practicing Orthodox Christian and have come prepared to receive Christ's Body and Blood through fasting and prayer, please come forward to partake. All guests are invited to come forward at the end of the service to greet Fr. Christopher and receive the blessed bread. Please stay after the Divine Liturgy for coffee hour in the Fellowship Hall so we can get to know you better!

Families with children: we encourage children of all ages to be present and participate as they are able during worship. We know sometimes kids need a break, so please take good advantage of our Rest and Refocus Room located on the south side of the lobby/narthex when coming in the main entrance. If you have pre-school and school age children, we invite you to send them to Church School directly after the Divine Liturgy throughout the academic year. May God bless you!

**Daily Scripture Readings** can be found in the St. Tikhon's Wall Calendar or at [www.oca.org/readings](http://www.oca.org/readings).

**COMING EVENTS**

**SEPTEMBER:**

17, TODAY	Parish Council meeting
19, Tuesday	6:30 p.m. Fr. Prislopsky Memorial Dinner/Lecture at Woodside Party Center
24, Sunday	First Day of Church School
25, Monday	Cooking for St. Herman's House
27, Wednesday	Serving dinner at St. Herman's House
28, Thursday	7:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal

**2023-2024 FELLOWSHIP GROUPS:**

If you have not already done so, please sign up in the parish hall today for a Fellowship Group. Groups of 4-ish single/couple/family units will be created from the sign-up list. By joining, you're committing to meeting with your group once a quarter for a year. Let's keep deepening our ties as a community and getting to know each other better! See Matushka Jen with any questions.

**PARISH COUNCIL:**

The Parish Council will meet today after the Divine Liturgy.

**CHOIR REHEARSALS:**

Monthly Choir rehearsals will resume in September, on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

**EOWG:**

The Eastern Orthodox Women's Guild is currently holding their annual Membership Drive. Please see Joanne Stoyka if you are interested in becoming a member, or for further information.

The EOWG will be having a Pan-Orthodox dinner on Thursday, October 12, here at HTOC Fellowship Hall. Further details will be posted in coming weeks.

**BASKET AUCTION:**

In conjunction with the Meatloaf Luncheon, we will hold a basket auction on Sunday, October 8 to help offset costs of our monthly meals to St. Herman's. If you can, create a basket or donate items to add to another one; gift cards are requested to Giant Eagle, Heinen's, Aldi, and any restaurants - in any amounts. Contact Dianna Kall at 216-741-2888; or dkall@ameritech.net ("Baskets" in subject line). Basket deadline is Sunday, September 24.

**MEATLOAF LUNCHEON:**

Tickets are now available in the Fellowship Hall. Adult - \$16; Students 6-14 years - \$8; Children 5 and under - no charge.

**DONATING FLOWERS:**

The sign-up sheet for donating flowers is now in the Fellowship Hall.

**CHURCH SCHOOL:**

Church School begins on Sunday, Sept. 24. Registration forms are available in the Fellowship Hall. Please see Stephanie McNeely with any questions or to offer your help.

**IOCC:**

The annual Winetasting event for the IOCC is Monday, October 16. Buy tickets now from Diane Hastings at the special price of \$60; after October 1, the ticket price will be \$70.

Donations are being requested—bottles of wine to be used as gifts/prizes, as well as items that can be used for a HTOC basket to be auctioned.

**RIDES TO CHURCH:**

We are initiating a ministry of providing rides to church for those who wish to come for services and other events but often find it difficult to travel on their own. If you have a need for rides or if you can provide transportation, contact Stephanie McNeely at: srmcneely@gmail.com or 216-225-3018.

**MEMORIAL DINNER / LECTURE:**

The annual event in memory of Fr. Prislopsky will be Tuesday, Sept. 19, at Woodside Party Center. A chicken paprikash dinner will be served at 6:30, followed by speaker Fr. Memorich on the topic of "Feasting and Fasting in the Orthodox Church."

**WREATH OF FLOWERS:**

The flowers for Exaltation of the Cross were offered by Olga Lobas.

**COFFEE HOUR:**

The refreshments today are donated by the Svilar and Griebel Families.

**TRINITARIAN COVERS:**

The covers today are offered by William and Becky Spak.

**DATES TO REMEMBER:**

On October 1, we will be blessing the re-opening of our Prayer Walk.  
Our annual Parish Meeting is Sunday, October 29.

**TOWARD A FULLER SACRAMENTAL LIFE**

Fifty-one years ago Alexander Schmemmann, priest, theologian, and visionary of Orthodox Christian presence and vitality in the world, put forward a document called “Confession and Communion”, addressing the challenging state of Orthodox Christian parish life in America and elsewhere. His desire? To see Orthodox Christians participate in the full beauty of the life in Christ by receiving Christ’s Body and Blood regularly and by participating in the Sacrament of Confession in order to help the faithful “realize the self-evident need for purifying their conscience, for repentance, for...spiritual concentration and attention”.

**What had happened?**

A piety of not wanting to profane the Mystery of the Eucharist and not wanting to approach unworthily led to infrequent communion among many groups of the faithful. And according to our Church’s teaching and practice this pious practice of infrequent Communion is essentially a choice to separate oneself from the life of the Church, which requires confession and reconciliation before again receiving Eucharist. Therefore it became common practice to have a need for the reception of Communion to be preceded by the Sacrament of Confession. Two sacraments that are vital to the life of the Christian and that have their own interrelated rhythms began to be tied together in such a close way that often the faithful felt like the step of Confession was their way to be made worthy to receive Eucharist. At times, priests would have long lines of parishioners coming to offer a short Confession so that they could receive the Eucharist the following morning. Nothing can make us worthy of receiving the gift of Christ’s Body and Blood. We come regularly with humility as sinners and again show our union and membership with the Lord’s Body.

**How do we grow?**

In order to allow the Sacrament of Confession to stand on its own, not to let it slide into a one year obligation that parishioners must fulfill to maintain membership, and to encourage a more frequent life of introspection, confession, and true repentance, Fr Alexander Schmemmann, given the present conditions of the state of the Orthodox Church in which he was writing, put forward the practice of General Confession to come alongside the indispensable individual Sacrament of Confession. General Confession was put forward to be a school for us to learn how to identify the ever present aspects of sin in our life and to learn how to more fully repent. Our Cleveland Deanery was one place in North America that took Fr Alexander’s words to heart, and for the greater part of the last five decades our parish has offered the rite of General Confession.

In many ways and in many places I believe our Orthodox Church in America has grown into a much more healthy position regarding the relationship of Communion and Confession and the most common teaching I hear and which I received in seminary was encouragement of frequent Communion and also regular times of Confession throughout the church year. This is something, I believe, for which to give thanks to God because it is an encouragement to participate in a fuller sacramental life. General Confession has been a step on the way of helping us grow into this. And it has taught us how to repent more fully. Obviously, each of us can always grow more fully into what it means to offer a “good” confession: a time of introspection and thinking through our sins (not our problems), stating our sins as clear as we are able before our spiritual father in the sacrament, and considering real ways in which we plan to change (developing an “image of repentance” in our mind as we move from the sacrament in blessed freedom and newness of life).

**Where do we go from here?**

Given this better state of our OCA and our parish, I am deciding not to continue the rite of General Confession here at Holy Trinity. It has been a good and helpful educational tool for us for so many years. In not continuing General Confession, of course our participation in the individual Sacrament of Repentance must remain strong and regular throughout the year. Individual Confession four times a year during the four major fasting seasons of the church is a good rule to live by. By doing so, we learn to grow more deeply in our understanding of who we are, who God is calling us to be, and by God’s grace and forgiveness we learn to make steps toward the high calling in Christ. My prayer for each of you is that you grow more and more into the full human being God has created you and called you to be. May the Lord ever guide us on this most excellent journey of humility and love.

Yours in Christ,

***Fr Christopher***