

So truly we see death here but the discerning eye, the eye of faith, will also see something greater. For now we cry but the tears will not have the best of us. For now we will mourn but we will not be forever in despair. On this day we will place the mortal remains of the one we love in the earth not as a permanent fact but rather as a place of rest until the angels call out "Arise!"

Comfort each other with the pleasant memories. Call to mind the good deeds she did while she was with us in this life and better yet emulate them. Be together as family and friends and keep the bonds strong. Knowing that life, even the longest one, is short in the greater flow of history resolve not to live in fear but to live well, cherishing and doing those things that truly matter. Remember her and each other in your prayers.

But more than that direct your hearts, your mind, your souls, and your lives to God in this time and always. Seek refuge in Him. Find rest in His presence. The world is often uncertain, but God remains sure and steady. All things and every one of us will pass away, but God remains. A life lived in God endures beyond time, a hope in God reaches out and grasps eternity, and those who truly journey with God, will always find their way home. <http://travelingpriest.blogspot.com/2008/12/funeral-homily.html>

The Holy Martyresses Vera (Faith), Nadezhda (Hope) and Liubov' (Love) were born in Italy. Their mother, Saint Sophia (Wisdom), was a pious Christian widow. Having named her daughters with the names of the three Christian virtues, Saint Sophia raised them up in love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Sophia and her daughters did not hide their faith in Christ and they openly confessed it before everyone. The official Antiochus made denunciation about them to the emperor Adrian (117-138), who ordered that they be brought to Rome. Realising that they would be taken before the emperor, the holy virgins prayed fervently to the Lord Jesus Christ, asking that He should send them the strength not to fear impending torture and death. When the holy virgins with their mother came before the emperor, everyone present was amazed at their composure: it seemed that they had been called out to some happy festivity, rather than to torture. Summoning the sisters in turn, Adrian urged them to offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis. The young girls (Vera was 12, Nadezhda was 10 and Liubov' was 9) remained unyielding. Then the emperor gave orders to fiercely torture them: they burned at the holy virgins over an iron grating, they threw them into a red-hot oven and then into a cauldron with boiling tar, but the Lord by His Unseen Power preserved them. The youngest one, Liubov', they tied to a wheel and beat at her with canes, until her body was covered all over with bloody welts. And undergoing unreported torments, the holy virgins glorified their Heavenly Bridegroom and remained steadfast in the faith. They subjected Saint Sophia to another and grievous torture: the mother was forced to look upon the suffering of her daughters. But she displayed adamant courage and during this whole while she urged the girls to endure the torments in the Name of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens with joy met their martyr's end. They were beheaded.

In order to intensify the inner suffering of Saint Sophia, the emperor decided to let her take up the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and reverently conveyed them on a wagon beyond the city and buried them on an high place. Saint Sophia sat there for three days not leaving the graves of her daughters, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord.

St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Christian Church

108 East Main Street

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Scripture Readings

2 Corinthians 4:6-15

Matthew 22:35-46

Commemorations

Afterfeast of the Elevation of the Cross. Sunday after Elevation. Martyr Sophia, and her three daughters: Faith (Vera), Hope (Nadézhdá), and Love (Liubóv', Charity), at Rome (ca. 137). Martyrs Theodota at Nicæa (ca. 230). Martyr Agathocleia (ca. 230). 156 Martyrs of Palestine, including Bishop Peleus and Nilus, the Presbyter, Zeno, the Noblemen Paternuthius and Elias, and others (ca. 310).

Information

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Welcome to our Guests

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Please sign our guest card and join us for refreshments and fellowship after the services.

Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Any member of our Council or Congregation are glad to assist you. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found in the narthex (back of the Church).

Our Parish Council Representatives are:

President - Susan Hayes
 Vice President - Deborah Bray (Memory Eternal)
 Secretary - SubDeacon Joseph Brubaker
 Treasurer - Susan Egan
 Member at Large - James Pepitone
 Member at Large - Demetra Tolis



Please continue to pray for...

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Subdeacon Joseph, Sophia, Robert, Ann, Daria, Dori, John, Evelyn, June, Nina, Joan, John, Alex, Alan, Luke, Kathryn, Anastasia, Glenn, Veronica, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Dionysian, Elena, Jevon, Ivan and Joscean. And for...John, Jennifer, Nicholas, Isabel, Elizabeth, John, Jordan, Michael, Lee, Eva, Neil, Gina, Joey, Michael, Madelyn, Sofie, Katrina, Olena, Valeriy, Olga, Tatiana, Dimitri, Alexander and Maxim.

Deborah Bray, may her memory be eternal!

This week we celebrate:

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Mary Ella and Lee Luft on the occasion of their anniversary.

This week's services and events

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

8:30a - Daily Matins

Wednesday, September 20, 2017

4:30p - Open Doors

6:00p - Daily Vespers (New Time!)

Thursday, September 21, 2017

8:30a - Daily Matins

6:00p - Parish Council Meeting

Saturday, September 23, 2017

9:00a - Liturgy at St Nicholas, Norwich

5:30p - Great Vespers

Sunday, September 24, 2017

9:30a - Divine Liturgy

Building and Grounds Ministry

Announcements

For the month of September, we will be sponsoring a school supplies collection. Please see the electronic-bulletin for more details.

We also continue to offer support to the victims of the hurricanes through contributions to IOCC.

We are in need to replacing three positions on the Parish Council for next year. Demetra Tolis' and Deborah Bray's terms each conclude, and we will need to fill the remainder of Bill Brubaker's term (1 year) as he will not be able to complete the work he started.

A funeral homily...

When we Orthodox come to a funeral we understand two things at once.

First we see in vivid detail the fleeting nature of life and the sin with its mortality that touches us all. Even the best of us, the most sainted, must die and every work of our hands is slated to pass away. We all, as our funeral prayers say, will be one day "bereft of form, disfigured...lying in a tomb." We discover again in moments like these that truly "All things are but feeble shadows; all things are most deluding dreams; yet in one moment only, and Death shall supplant them all."

For the Orthodox Christian death is not a natural thing, it was not something we were designed to experience but rather something we chose when we rejected the life God had for us. Death is the separation of the soul from the body and comes to us in trauma or sickness, by stealth or after long struggle but none of us would prefer it if we had the choice and always within us, no matter how hard we rationalize it, is the nagging sense that this mortality in our bodies, this aging, sickness, struggle and the end of our life is not how we were meant to be and none of the formidable skills of our morticians can change it. An Orthodox monk once said that all of us should keep a jar of dirt with us in our home or office so we remember what we will one day be.

And so we mourn for the passing of life, for the loss we feel, for the presence of one we loved that is taken from us. Our hearts are broken for the good things lost, and the emptiness of a future absent from the ones who shared this short journey we call life. Our love reaches out to the object of our affection and because it is gone our heart feels empty and our feelings become tears. This has been the lot of every human from the mists of time and in this moment we experience it again.

Yet it is not, for we who are Orthodox, the completion of the story. Death is real and we feel its sting but even as the pain flows through us so do the still small voices of hope. We have no life in ourselves but we understand that the God who gave us life came to us in our Lord Jesus Christ and took on every bit of pain and darkness there is in the world, including the greatest of them all, death, and in doing so broke their ultimate power.

This, for Orthodox Christians, is also real, and even more real because at a day of God's choosing it will have the last word. We do not put those we love to rest in the ground merely for sentiment and a place to visit in the days to come but rather we commit them to their grave with an intense and real hope. We believe, always have, in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come. We believe that when God is ready our graves will be emptied, our mortal remains transformed into immortality, and the fullness of who we are, body and soul, will enjoy the presence of God forever. We believe that the faithful enjoy a taste of this glorious reality already. We believe this not out of wishful thinking or our own fears but rather because we have the fact of Our Lord's own resurrection as the pledge of ours and the validity of all that He is as the proof of his promise. *(continued on back...)*