



# “ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



**St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU**

**Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE**

**St. John the Baptist - HOREN**

**Holy Ascension - CALMAR**

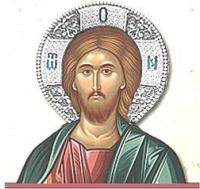
**St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)**

**Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY**

**Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)**

**St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE**

**Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)**



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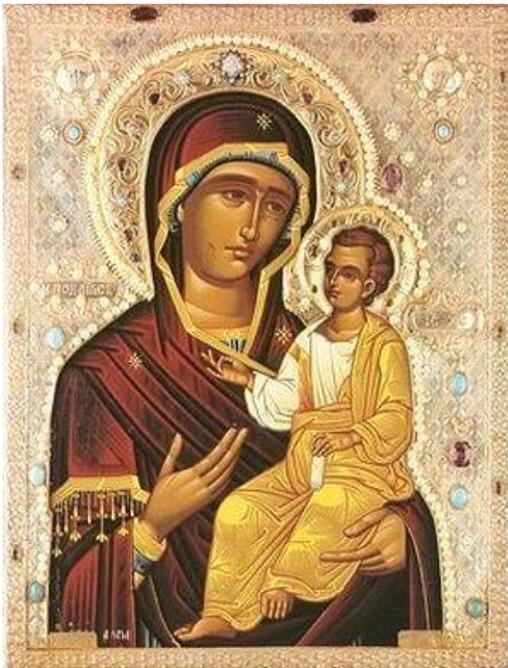


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**February 2025**

## Iveron Icon of the Mother of God – February 25

That appeared in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in the Georgian Iveron monastery on Athos



During the reign of Emperor Theophilus (829-842) the Byzantine Empire was in turmoil because of the heresy of iconoclasm. In accordance with the Emperor’s orders, thousands of soldiers scoured the Empire, searching in every corner, city, and village for any hidden icons.

A pious widow living near the city of Nicaea had concealed an Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos in her home. Before long, the soldiers found it, and one of them stabbed it with his spear. By God’s grace this terrible deed was overshadowed by a miracle: blood began to flow from the wounded face of the Mother of God. The frightened soldiers ran away after witnessing this.

The widow spent the entire night keeping vigil and praying before the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. In the morning, by God’s will, she took the Icon to the sea and cast it upon the water. The holy Icon stood upright on the waves and began to drift westward.

Time passed, and one evening, the monks of Ivéron Monastery on Mount Athos noticed a pillar of light, shining upon the sea like the sun. This miraculous sign lasted for several days, while the Fathers of the Holy Mountain gathered together and marveled. Finally they went down to the

edge of the sea, where they beheld the pillar of light standing over the Icon of the Theotokos. When they approached, however, the Icon moved farther out to sea.

At that time a Georgian monk named Gabriel was living at the Ivéron (Georgian) Monastery. The Theotokos appeared to the Athonite Fathers and told them that only Father Gabriel was worthy to retrieve the holy Icon from the sea. She also appeared to Father Gabriel and told him, “Go into the sea, and walk upon the waves with faith, and everyone shall witness my love and mercy for your Monastery.”

The monks found Father Gabriel and led him down to the sea, chanting hymns, and censuring with holy incense. Father Gabriel walked upon the water as if it were dry land, and taking the Icon in his hands, he carried it back to shore. This miracle occurred on Bright Tuesday.

(to be continued on the next page)

While the monks were celebrating a Service of thanksgiving, a cold, sweet spring miraculously gushed forth from the ground where the Icon was standing. Afterward, they took it into the church and placed it in the sanctuary with great reverence.

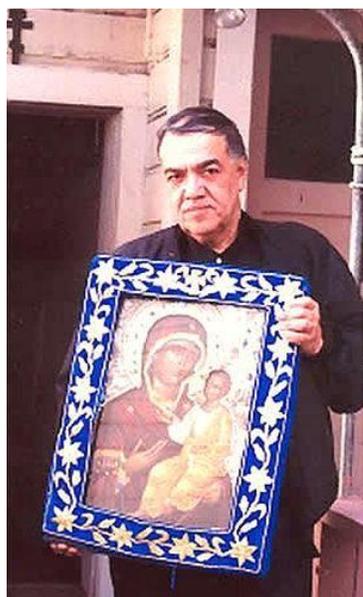
The next morning one of the monks went to light the lamps in church and discovered that the Icon was no longer where they had put it; now it was on the wall near the entry gate. The monks took it down and returned it to the sanctuary, but the next day the Icon was found once again at the Monastery gate. This miracle recurred several times, until the All-Holy Virgin appeared to Father Gabriel, saying, “Inform the brethren that from now on they must not carry me away. For what I desire is not to be protected by you; but instead, I shall protect you, both in this life, and in the age to come. As long as my Icon remains in the Monastery, the grace and mercy of my Son shall never be lacking!”

Filled with great joy, the monks built a small church near the Monastery gate in honor of the Mother of God, and placed the wonderworking Icon inside. This holy Icon came to be known as the “Ivéron Mother of God” or Πορταϊτιστα in Greek.

Through the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos, many miracles have taken place and continue to take place throughout the world.

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There is one of the copies of the Iveron Mother of God Icon, called the **Montreal Iveron Icon**, a miraculously myrrh-streaming icon from which abundant grace poured forth to many Orthodox Christians. It is the great and sad story of the Lord’s grace and the saint’s martyrdom that started on Canadian soil.



As God’s Providence and the Mother of God would have it, the man who was found worthy to receive this icon from Mount Athos and become its custodian was in fact a convert to Orthodoxy from Catholicism—José Muñoz-Cortes from Chile. During a pilgrimage to Mount Athos, he was gifted the icon by the monks of a small skete, who unexpectedly decided that it should belong to him.

After returning to Canada in 1982, the icon miraculously exuded fragrant oil, which continued almost uninterruptedly, bringing consolation and strengthening the faith of many. The phenomenon became widely known, and the icon was taken to Orthodox churches and communities across North America and beyond. Wherever it traveled, people gathered in awe, some witnessing the miraculous flow of myrrh firsthand. Scientists who examined the icon were baffled, confirming that it was made of ordinary pinewood with no hidden source of oil.

The myrrh intensified at significant religious moments, such as during a bishop’s consecration in Montreal, when it streamed in such abundance that it soaked the altar cloth. At times, the myrrh would appear to rise from the hands of the Mother of God and the Christ Child, as if pressed from within. Though physical healings were reported, its greatest impact was spiritual, leading many to repentance and renewed faith.

The flow of myrrh would cease during Holy Week. It would cease on Holy Monday. After the Liturgy on the morning of Great Saturday, a light dew of myrrh would form on the Icon, its case and protecting glass. During Matins (the midnight service at which the glorious Resurrection of Our Lord is proclaimed), when the procession of clergy and faithful, holding icons and banners, would leave the church, the Icon would begin to exude myrrh in such quantities, that it would cover the hands of the person carrying it.

José Muñoz lived a monastic life, and some say he was secretly tonsured. He spent his entire life after the miraculous manifestation of the icon taking it to different parishes over the world for veneration by the faithful, and when he was at home he prayed continuously before it, commemorating names sent by people requesting prayers.

Tragically, in 1997, José was brutally murdered in Athens, having become a martyr, and the whereabouts of the miraculous icon remain unknown to this day. However, nearly a decade later, a printed paper copy of the Montreal Iveron Icon in Hawaii began streaming myrrh, continuing the legacy of grace and consolation for the faithful, a sign that the Mother of God has not abandoned her children.

# 75 years of the blessed repose of Saint Seraphim (Sobolev), Archbishop of Bogucharsk and Wonderworker of Sofia



The life of Saint Seraphim (Sobolev), Archbishop of Bogucharsk, was closely associated with two great saints – St Nicholas the Wonderworker and the Venerable Seraphim of Sarov. The saint was given the name Nicholas at birth and subsequently served in St Nicholas Church until his death. Inspired by the Sarov elder, Nicholas has renounced the world for monastic life in which he received the name Seraphim. St Seraphim has learnt much from both of his heavenly patrons and became famous for his holiness already in his earthly life.

Nikolai Sobolev was born in Ryazan (Russia) in 1881. His family's life was not easy. Seven of his twelve brothers and sisters died at a young age, while his father suffered from a serious long-term illness. Despite that, prayer and faith in God's Providence have always lived in their home.

After graduating from the theological school and seminary in his hometown, Nikolai entered the Academy in St Petersburg. While studying there, he repeatedly visited St John of Kronstadt and the elder of the Gethsemane skete Isidor (Kozin). In the 4th year of the academy, Nicholas was tonsured a monk with the name Seraphim. After completing his studies, he wrote his first spiritual work, earning a scientific degree in theology. Seeing this gift of God in him, the saint devoted his entire future life to theological work.

In 1912, Hieromonk Seraphim was elevated to the rank of archimandrite. He served in schools and seminaries, showing great love for his students, which helped raise these institutions to a higher level.

In 1920, in Crimea, Archimandrite Seraphim was ordained a bishop and was forced to leave for Bulgaria almost immediately after that, due to the Bolsheviks' entry into the Crimean lands. Upon his arrival there, vладыka was appointed to two positions, which turned out to be life-long – rector of St Nicholas Church in Sofia and administrator of Russian Orthodox parishes in Bulgaria.

St Seraphim organized a brotherhood to take care of the poor parishioners, and a committee to financially support Russian monks in Athos.

Suffering severely from tuberculosis for many years, the venerable never allowed the disease to interfere with his service to God and neighbor.

For his spiritual purity, St Seraphim received from God the gift of clairvoyance. Often, he reminded the people who came to confession their forgotten sins and consoled the grieving, predicting good changes in their future life.

In 1934, Bishop Seraphim was elevated to the rank of archbishop. However, this did not change his modest lifestyle in any way. He continued to live in his Veliko Tirново Street apartment with no amenities. It was there that he spent nights writing his multiple and precious theological works, fed and accommodated the needy and received his spiritual children. It was also there that he ended his earthly journey on February 26, 1950. Symbolically, the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, to which St Seraphim devoted his life, was celebrated on that day.

In 2016, Archbishop Seraphim of Bogucharsk was glorified as a saint by the unanimous decision of the Holy Council.

*from The Catalogue of Good Deeds  
catalog.obitel-minsk.com*

# A few facts about Forefeasts and Afterfeasts of the Greatest Feasts

There is a lot to say about forefeasts and afterfeasts (as well as the specifics of leave-taking/apodosis). So, let's have a quick introduction to the concept and some facts.

First of all, **what is a forefeast/afterfeast?**

The Twelve Great Feasts are important events in the liturgical year. Unlike most other feasts and saints' days, which are celebrated only on one day, they each have a *period of preparation called a Forefeast*, in which the

liturgical services contain hymns for the coming feast, and certain elements of the services are different than on a "normal" day. There is generally a tropar sung specifically for the forefeast as well.

*The period of the feast also extends beyond the day itself, and is called **Afterfeast**.* The classic length of an afterfeast is eight days,

with the leave-taking occurring on the eighth day. *But there are many exceptions* to this rule, for various reasons, if another feast occurs shortly thereafter, or if it is during a fast, etc. And most Feasts that are on the moveable Paschal Cycle do not have Forefeasts. Some of the Great Feasts of the Lord have a special canon composed of only three odes, called a Triodion, which is usually chanted at Compline on each day of the Forefeast.

For most feasts, the forefeast is celebrated the day before the feast. For both Nativity and Theophany, it is several days long, and hymns preparing for the feast are sung at each service. During the afterfeast, special festal hymns are sung as well. Usually some of them are from the actual service of the feast, while some of them are specific to the day (sometimes Lord I have cried, almost always the Aposticha, both at Vespers and Matins) and are found in the book of Menaion, together with the service for the saint of the day. Usually in a parish, these services are not served unless they fall on a Sunday, in which case the serve incorporates elements of the resurrectional service, and isn't quite the same.

*The last day of an Afterfeast is called the **Apodosis*** (Ancient Greek for "leave-taking", lit. "giving-back") of the Feast. On the Apodosis, most of the hymns that were chanted on the first day of the Feast are repeated. On the Apodosis of Feasts of the Theotokos, the Epistle and Gospel from the day of the Feast are repeated again at the Divine Liturgy. For the Annunciation, Meeting, and Palm Sunday, the Apodosis may be celebrated for part/half of a day, at Vespers, the remaining services of the day in question falling outside the festal period.

## Differences between regular weekday services and a forefeast/afterfeast

Regular weekday services use material from the liturgical book, the Octoechos. This book contains liturgical text in the 8 Tones (sets of melodies in which church hymns are sung). It is comprised of materials for each day of the week, with a separate section for each Tone. Every week has a tone (the cycle begins after Pascha and Bright Week each year, and repeats throughout the year).

From the 2025 Orthodox Calendar, [orthochristian.com/calendar](http://orthochristian.com/calendar)



Old Style  
February 1



Friday



New Style  
February 14

**Fast-free Week.** *Tone 8.*

☞ Forefeast of the Meeting of Our Lord. Martyr [Tryphon](#) of Campsada, near Apamea in Syria (250).

Martyrs [Perpetua](#), and the catechumens [Saturus](#), [Revocatus](#), [Saturninus](#), [Secundulus](#), and [Felicitas](#), St. [Peter](#) of Galatia, hermit near Antioch in Syria (429). St. [Vendemianus](#), hermit of Bithynia (ca. 512).

New Hieromartyr Nicholas Mezentsev, archpriest, of Simferopol (1938).

Many people are familiar with the material for Sundays which is sung or read in the tone of the week (Troparion, Kontakion, Stichery, Canon, etc). These texts are combined with services from the Menaion, which contains the services to the saints, and both are inserted into the fixed parts of the various services (such as Vespers and Matins) found in the Horologion.

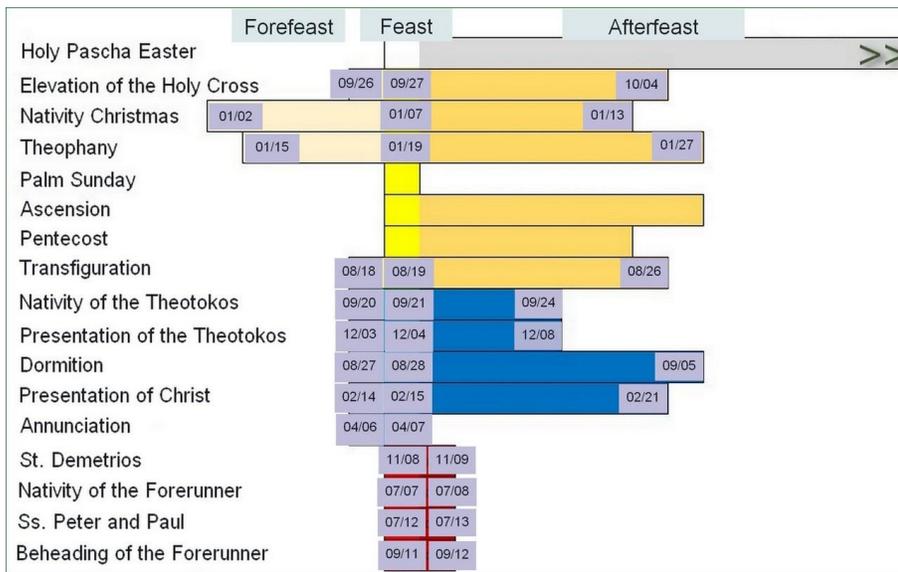
During both forefeasts and afterfeasts, **the litany for the departed**, usually served at Liturgy on weekdays, **is not served**. On a similar note, at a simple weekday Liturgy, (if a saint has a higher “rank” of commemoration, the service isn’t considered a “simple” service), “With the saints give rest”, the Kontakion for the departed, is sung (after Glory to the Father, during the singing of troparia and kontakia before the Epistle), and it is **not sung during a forefeast or afterfeast**.

“It Is Truly Meet” is not sung at Matins, where it is sung on normal weekdays at the end of the Canon. During the afterfeast, “It is Truly Meet” is not sung at Liturgy either, but is replaced with a specific hymn to the Theotokos for the feast (in Russian, this is called a Zadostoinik, that is, a hymn in place of “It Is Truly Meet”). This hymn comes from the 9th ode of the canon for the feast.

The effect of these differences is to make the services more festal, in honor of the approaching or current feast. Of course, having more festal hymns in the service helps to accomplish this, but also differences such as the omission of “It is Truly Meet” at Matins or of “With the saints give rest” at Liturgy resemble the rubrics for services with higher festal rank.

### Nativity and Theophany afterfeasts

Certain feasts, such as Nativity and Theophany, have a special commemoration the day afterward, called a Sobor or Synaxis, commemorating a major participant in the feast. The day after Nativity is the Synaxis of the Mother of God (who gave birth to Christ), and the day after Theophany is the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist (who baptized Him). These feasts repeat large parts of the festal services, while containing special hymns for



the person honored. The services of other saints during the afterfeast are less closely connected to the feast.

Here is chart of the Fore- and Afterfeasts, and, as you can see, they break down as follows: Nativity of the Theotokos – 1 and 5 days; Exaltation of the Cross – 1 and 8; Entry of the Theotokos – 1 and 5; Nativity of our Lord – 5 and 7; Theophany of our Lord – 4 and 9; Meeting of our Lord – 1 and from 1 to 8; Palm Sunday does not have a full day for any; Annunciation of the Theotokos –

from 1 to 2; Pascha has 39 afterfeast days; Mid-Pentecost – 8 afterfeast days; Ascension of our Lord – 1 and 9; Pentecost (Trinity Sunday) has 7 afterfeast days; Transfiguration of our Lord – 1 and 8; and Holy Dormition of the Theotokos – 1 and 9.

Many parishes do not have the opportunity to celebrate these services often, but having at least a general knowledge of the concepts involved can deeply enrich our understanding of the liturgical year.

**Based on “Forefeasts and Afterfeasts” by typicaliza (Liza ‘N’), and Wikipedia’s “Afterfeast” (typikondays.../forefeasts-and-afterfeasts;/wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterfeast)**

# Baptismal Houses Blessing Thank You!



Keeping this good and righteous tradition, we once again were travelling with and within the grace of the Holy Theophany on January the 19<sup>th</sup> from town to town and from house to house.

The event we celebrate on the Baptism Day is the salvation of the mankind, our sanctification and recreation!

*O Christ, our God, You have revealed Yourself, and have enlightened the world, glory to You!* – we sing in the troparion.

And the verses we read are calling for the *house of God* which at that time was the Old Testament people – now the Holy Church – *to confess that the Lord is good; for His mercy endures forever.*

So, right after the Baptismal Liturgy and the Great Water Blessing we departed in our joyous travel – now a bit more extended for the sake of our young families – to visit the houses of our parishioners, and have our short traditional service, singing the Troparion, sprinkling the dwellings with the Holy Water, reading the prayer, and finally singing ‘Many Years’!

Thank you to all who invited us, and the trustworthy guidance of our President David Borys through the country and township roads, the resources for that, and the prayers.

We were again blessed by the people’s smiles and prayers, and pleased greatly by what you have achieved with God’s help!

**Thank you also so much for all your Christmas and New Year cards and gifts! May God vouchsafe us all the wishes we addressed each other during these festive days, and save us!**

## *In Memoriam*

***The parishioners of Orthodox IX Churches extend condolences to the Holy Trinity Whitsuntide Church of Thorsby, and to the relatives of the newly departed Elizabeth Gwozd. May God comfort you with His compassion, and may God settle His servant, where the light of His countenance shall visit!***

**Elizabeth Gwozd (Betty)**

April 25, 1943 - December 29, 2024



Our world has changed forever as we announce the passing of Elizabeth (Betty) Gwozd peacefully in her home, with family present.

Predeceased by her husband, Ted, she is survived by her daughter, Karen (Anthony) and son, Todd (Wendy), grandchildren, Brendan, Brylar, Taitum, Matthew and his son, great-grandchild, Mortimer along with numerous other extended family members and friends.

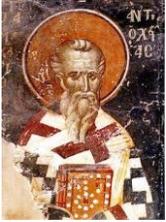
The Whitsuntide Holy Trinity Church at Thorsby will always remember the kindness and generosity of the servant of God Elizabeth, her love for the services, the church building and the cemetery, and to the people.

The memories of our last lunch at Thorsby when she kindly made that lunch a gift to our community is still very much alive in our hearts! May the Lord God accept His servant at the Heavenly Feast!

***Memory Eternal! The mercy of God, the Kingdom of Heaven!***



# February 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>2</u></p> <p>10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara</p>	<p><u>3</u></p> <p>St. Maximus the Confessor (662)</p> 	<p><u>4</u></p>	<p><u>5</u></p> <p>Hieromartyr Clement, of Ancyra</p> 	<p><u>6</u></p>	<p><u>7</u></p> <p>Icon of the Theotokos 'Unexpected Joy'</p> 	<p><u>8</u></p>
<p><u>9</u> : <u>Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at St. Mary's Church at Nisku</p>	<p><u>10</u></p>	<p><u>11</u></p> <p>Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, bishop of Antioch (107)</p> 	<p><u>12</u></p>	<p><u>13</u></p> <p>Wonder- workers and Unmercenaries Cyrus and John</p> 	<p><u>14</u></p>	<p><u>15</u></p> <p style="color: red;">The Meeting of the Lord</p> 
<p><u>16</u> : <u>Sunday of the Prodigal Son</u>  10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary's, Nisku (<i>Blessing of candles</i>)</p>	<p><u>17</u></p> <p>New Martyr Joseph of Aleppo in Syria (1686)</p> 	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u></p> <p>St. Arsenius of Iqalto, Georgia (1127)</p> 	<p><u>20</u></p>	<p><u>21</u></p> <p>Prophet Zachariah (ca. 520 b.c.)</p> 	<p><u>22</u></p>
<p><u>23</u> : <u>Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare)</u>  10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara</p>	<p><u>24</u></p>	<p><u>25</u></p> <p>St. Meletius, archbishop of Antioch (381)</p> 	<p><u>26</u></p>	<p><u>27</u></p> <p>St. Cyril, Equal- to-the- Apostles, (869)</p> 	<p><u>28</u></p>	

**The dates and time of the upcoming church annual meetings in March:**

**March 1.** Saturday – 10:00 am – The Annual “Orthodox IX” Parishes meeting will be held at St. Mary Parish Hall, Nisku.

**April 5.** Saturday – 1:00 pm – The Annual St. Mary’s Parish meeting will be held at Parish Hall, Nisku.