"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
Holy Ascension - CALMAR
Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY
St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE
St. John the Baptist - HOREN
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)
Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)
Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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August 28th – Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary



After the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, His most pure Mother lived for about fifteen years in Jerusalem, in the house of the holy Apostle John the Theologian, to whose care the Lord Himself had entrusted her from the Cross. The time then drew near for her to depart to the heavenly abode of her Son. As the Mother of God was praying on the Mount of Olives, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her, tradition tells us, bearing a palm branch, and announced that her repose would come in three days.

The Most Pure Virgin rejoiced greatly at this news and began to prepare herself. By the day of her repose, at the command of God, all the apostles — save Thomas — were miraculously gathered to Jerusalem from the ends of the earth, where they had been scattered in preaching the Gospel. They became witnesses of her peaceful, quiet, holy, and blessed passing. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in heavenly glory and surrounded by a multitude of angels and righteous spirits, appeared to receive the soul of His most pure Mother and bore it up to heaven with glory.

Thus did the Most Holy Virgin Mary end her earthly life. With lighted lamps and the singing of psalms, the apostles carried the body of the Mother of God to Gethsemane, where her parents and Joseph had been buried. The unbelieving chief priests and scribes, struck by the grandeur of the funeral procession and embittered by the honor shown to the Mother of God, sent servants and soldiers to disperse the mourners and burn her body. The incensed crowd and soldiers rushed at the Christians in fury, but were struck blind. At that moment a Jewish priest named Athonius happened by; he rushed at the bier, intending to overturn it, but no sooner had he laid his hands upon it than an angel cut off both his hands. The severed hands remained hanging from the bier, while Athonius himself fell to the ground, crying out.

The Apostle Peter stopped the procession and said to Athonius, "Be assured that Christ is the true God." Athonius at once confessed Christ as the true Messiah. The Apostle Peter bade him turn to the Mother of God with fervent prayer and press the severed parts to the hands still hanging from the bier. When he had done so, the hands were rejoined and healed, leaving only marks at the place where they had been severed. The blinded people and soldiers, in repentance, touched the bier and received their sight — not only of the body but of the soul — and all joined the procession with reverence.

On the third day after the burial of the Mother of God, the Apostle Thomas, who by God's will had been absent, arrived and desired to see her tomb. At his request the tomb was opened, but the body of the Mother of God was not found within it. That same evening, at their meal, the apostles beheld the Most Holy Virgin in the air above them, alive, in the heavens, surrounded by a multitude of angels. Standing and radiant with ineffable glory, the Mother of God said to the apostles, "Rejoice! I am with you always." And the apostles cried out, "Most Holy Theotokos, help us." This appearance of the Mother of God fully confirmed the apostles — and through them the whole Church — in the truth of her resurrection. In imitation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who often visited the places her Son and God had hallowed with His most pure footsteps, there arose among Christians the custom of visiting the holy places.

Saint Theophan the Recluse of
Vysha Monastery, Bishop of Tambov

From Dormition to Protection (Protecting Veil)



Between the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos (August 28) and the Feast of her Protection (October 14) lie fewer than seven weeks — yet together the two feasts tell a single story.

At the Dormition, we behold the Mother of God passing through death into life, her body taken up into glory as the first fruits of the resurrection to come. It might seem, at first, like a departure — an ending. But the Church has always understood it otherwise. **Her falling asleep did not remove her from us; it changed the manner of her nearness.**

This is what Protection reveals. When St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ beheld her at prayer in the Blachernae church, spreading her veil over the faithful, he saw made visible what her Dormition had already accomplished: the Mother who, freed from the limits of earthly life, now shelters the whole Church without ceasing.

Dormition, then, is not the end of her care for us, but its beginning in a new key. What we mourn as her passing, we come to know as her protection.

Approaching the Church New Year (September 1/14)
Evolution and the Fall: A Theological Reflection — Part I

The Church New Year approaches on September 1/14 — the day on which the Church liturgically commemorates the creation of the world. In connection with this feast, we begin here a reflection on a question that sooner or later confronts every thinking Christian: how are we to understand the biblical teaching on creation and the Fall alongside what science tells us about billions of years of cosmic history? Part I appears below; the conclusion will follow in the September issue, timed to the feast of the Church New Year itself.

A Brief Preface from the Author



fossil imprint of a prehistoric shell

These reflections arose as an attempt to offer a response to the problem that every thinking Orthodox Christian sooner or later encounters. I offer it to the reader with caution and humility — fully aware that I am proceeding here partly at my own risk. I am not an experienced theologian, and the last thing I would want is for these thoughts to result in heresy.

I should note that reflection on time as something not absolute but created and relative is not only a theological intuition. Modern science and philosophy are also moving away from the Newtonian concept of absolute time. This theme has penetrated even popular culture — one need only recall a number of well-known films of recent decades in which the nature of time is called into question. Perhaps here an unexpected point of contact opens up between contemporary scientific thinking and Christian theological inquiry.

Finally, I must caution the reader: the language of this text is at times more categorical and polemical than strict theological reasoning would require. This is intentional — for the sake of clarity, so that the devout reader might more easily grasp the point. Where I speak in affirmative terms, please read: "so it seems to me," "this is how I am inclined to think." This is an invitation to reflection, not a pronouncement of judgment.

I ask you, as much as possible, to read carefully — and if needed, to re-read — as I may not have managed to express everything with sufficient clarity… and please do not judge me too harshly.

* * *

There is a question that every thinking person in the Church eventually asks — and rarely receives a satisfying answer to. On one hand, he hears that the world was created "very good," that death entered through sin, that *all creation groans and awaits deliverance from corruption*. On the other hand, he knows that the earth is billions of years old, that long before man, creatures lived and died, that dinosaurs hunted and went extinct tens of millions of years before the first human being. These two bodies of knowledge collide within him. It seems one must cancel the other.

I want to suggest that this collision is an illusion — not because we will "reconcile" faith and science with a cheap concession, but because the question itself is usually wrongly framed.

Three Positions — One Shared Problem

While the Church dogmatically confesses God as the Creator of all things, she has never issued a dogmatic definition concerning the precise process by which the world came into being. Different positions therefore exist within her, and this is legitimate. Let me name the main ones.

Strict creationists insist on a literal reading of the Six Days: six days of creation, a historical Adam, no death before the Fall. Behind this position stands something precious — a firm confession that death is an enemy, not a norm, that corruption was never part of God's design. This is not naïveté; it is theological faithfulness. The weakness is that sustaining this position requires engaging in scientific debate on someone else's ground — and that is not always easy terrain for theology.

Evolutionary creationists accept the scientific account of the origin of species, seeing in evolution the action of God creating through process. They are honest before the created world, unafraid of science, and preserve the greatness of a Creator who works through time. Their weakness: it becomes difficult to maintain a historical Adam and to explain how death can be "the last enemy" (1 Cor. 15:26) if it has always existed, long before any sin.

There is a third path, closely tied to the first — so-called "scientific creationism," the attempt to demonstrate creation by scientific means. The intention is noble, but here too the pieces do not always fit: the scientific arguments of this camp often fail to withstand scrutiny.

What do all three positions share? Each of them, in its own way, measures the Fall by linear chronology. They argue only about where on the timeline to place the flag marked "Adam's sin." But what if that very timeline is already on this side of the Fall?

Where We Go Wrong in Framing the Question

The Fall is not an event inside time. More precisely: it is the event that left creation in time — without God.

Before the Fall, the world existed in God and through God. Time existed — but it was filled with the Source of life, held in fullness. Sin did not insert death into an already existing order of things. It left creation alone with time, without the One who filled that time with life. And time, left to itself, became corruption.

To ask, therefore, "did dinosaurs appear before or after the Fall" is to measure a cause by the very yardstick that the cause itself creates. It is like asking where in space the cause of space is located. The question is grammatically correct — but meaningless. To put it very simply — even crudely — one might say: the dinosaurs appeared with the Fall. Not before it in time, but through it.

Here it is worth recalling St. Maximus the Confessor. He distinguished in every created thing its logos — God's eternal design for it, unchanging and indestructible — and its tropos, its manner of existence, the way that design actually subsists in reality. Sin did not damage the logoi of creation — God's design for the world remained whole and holy. But it corrupted the tropos, the mode of being. Corruption, disintegration, the one-way flow of time toward death— these are features not of the original design, but of a damaged mode of existence.

The universe was refashioned to the measure of fallen Adam. God, in His condescension, fitted the cosmos to the man who could no longer be contained within the primordial world.

And time, I think, is no hindrance to God here.

To be continued in the September issue, for the feast of the Church New Year

Very Rev. Evheniy Protsenko, 2026



Heartfelt gratitude, many thanks, and many years to our Parish Council and everyone who labored and were catering for the summer picnic of 2026, especially to David and Beverly Borys, Kevin and Ann Wasiluk, Daniel and Anita Borys, Marianne Lecapoy, and all our helpers, especially to those who prepared everything while we were having a service in the church.

Our beautiful and friendly church hall was a shelter for us from rain and mosquitoes this year, though the rain stopped to give us an opportunity to also enjoy some time outside, to pick up some mushrooms and berries.

This year we were especially blessed with having many young people at the service and at the picnic: our parishioners who had been baptized at St. Mary's Church, those who often visit us, and even those who came here for the first time, either as guest or, we believe, as future parishioners. At the same time, we were glad to see our guests from different churches.

Exceptionally many delicious (and nicely decorated) dishes there were here this year: several kinds of barbecue, a lot of salads, coleslaw, multiple pies and sweets, cold drinks.

We had a very good time communicating informally and discussing both vital and important, and informal and funny things, getting to know each other better, sharing our plans and experiences, and giving and receiving some timely help, at the very good meal in our clean and cozy church hall.

May God keep our parishioner and guests and bless them with good health and peace from Above!

Thank you so much!

Marriage — the Last Corner of Paradise on Earth

From a conversation with a priest about Christian marriage

— How should a proper family life begin? What is the most important rule of family life?



— The main rule of Christian family life is very simple: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," says the Lord, "and all these things shall be added unto you." The family life of a Christian is a "particular" derived from the "general"; our family duties are part of our Christian duty. Life in the family is the path by which we strive to draw nearer to God — it is a path to salvation. Even family problems teach us the inner spiritual life rather than hindering it, because they are resolved only when we try to change ourselves and not those close to us.

— Father, is it right to say that spouses should, first and foremost, approach family life with a readiness to sacrifice on their own part?

— I am very cautious about calls to make sacrifices. Sacrifice is certainly present in the Christian life. Someone even said that in the life of every conscious Christian there are elements of martyrdom. But if we make too many sacrifices within the family — and all the more if, before entering into marriage, we set ourselves on the idea that we must sacrifice, sacrifice, and sacrifice again — this can be harmful both for the other spouse and for the family as a whole.

— So there should not be an initial mindset that marriage is martyrdom?

— No, the mindset should be a different one. Marriage is above all a joy. Someone said that marriage is the last corner of paradise on earth. At the very least, that is how it ought to be, and that is precisely what we should prepare ourselves for.

— Father, what do you see as the main problem of the modern family?

— The main problem of the Christian family is probably our selfishness. Because there are terrible cases: people readily seek affairs on the side while having several children and being churchgoing (!) Christians — and all the while they discourse about Christian love, about spiritual love…

We have become more spoiled than we were before. In all my memory there has never been either an ideal life or ideal people. But still, over the last twenty or thirty years we have become more pampered and self-enamored. Today we have a weaker sense of what duty is, and we indulge ourselves with greater relish and enthusiasm, even those of us who are churchly people. Many understand church life itself precisely as a way of giving themselves pleasure — not a crude, material pleasure, perhaps, but something subtle and spiritual, and yet still a pleasure. And not infrequently we go to church, approach the sacraments, make confession, and speak with our spiritual fathers not at all in order to become closer to God or to part with our sins, but in order to indulge ourselves.

It is from this that the family suffers. The main problem is precisely that we see even those closest to us through the prism of our own selfishness. On the one hand this is natural — man is made this way. Some psychologists maintain that a person is "normally" ninety percent egoist. We all want to be warm, to be well fed, to be treated well, to be spoken to gently and with love. By nature, we are such that we feel our own need for all this more keenly than the needs of others; we demand that others do everything for us, leaving ourselves the role of consumers. But the Lord calls us to do for others the very thing we desire for ourselves.

Archpriest Mikhail Nemnonov
Interview conducted by Anna Danilova
pravmir.ru

St. Tikhon's Children's Camp at Pigeon Lake Is Coming to a Close

A brief look back at the camp



There were many of us this year. That means a special responsibility for the counsellors and a great deal of work in the kitchen — thank you so very much!

We prayed in the morning (after exercises) and in the evening (after the campfire); as always, the children read the prayers in both languages. And we had two Liturgies.

We pitched our tents — and then had to take them down in a hurry, since there was a chance, small though it was, of a tornado.

The petting zoo paid us a visit once again.

We tried our hand at various kinds of art, studied the Sacraments of the Church, took part in quests, learned the lives of the saints of our groups, and staged skits based on those lives and on the instructive moments in them.

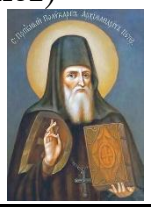
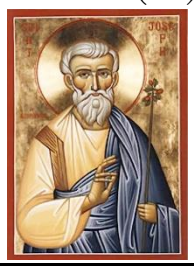
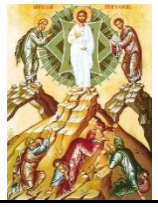
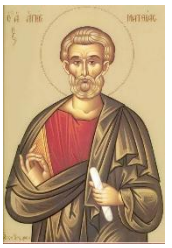
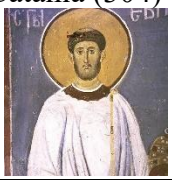
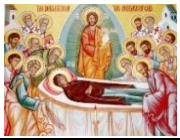
We also learned to keep to a schedule and worked at that difficult art of getting along with one another.



(For the full report on St. Tikhon's Children's Camp, see the next issue of our bulletin.)



August 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at **St. Tikhon's Children Camp** 10:00 am – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara's Cathedral	3	4 Virgin-martyr Markella of Chios (14th c.) 	5	6 St. Polycarp, of the Kiev Caves (1182) 	7	8 St. Moses the Hungarian, of the Kiev Caves 
9 Holy Great-martyr and Healer Panteleimon 	10	11 Virgin-martyr Seraphima (Serapia) of Antioch (138) 	12	13 Righteous Joseph of Arimathea (1 c.) 	14 **Holy Dormition Fast Starts**	15 Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen (428) 
16 10:00 am – Liturgy – St. Mary's Church at NISKU – Blessing of fruit	17 Martyr Eudocia of Anatolia in Persia (362-364) 	18	19 ***Transfiguration of the Lord*** 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – at St. Barbara's 	20 New Hierom. Alexander Khotovitsky, protopresbyter, of New York 	21	22 Holy Apostle Matthias (ca. 63) 
23 10:00 am – Liturgy – St. Barbara's Cathedral	24 Holy Hieromartyr Archdeacon Euplus of Catania (304) 	25	26 Icons of the Most Holy "Of the Seven Arrows" 	27	28 ***Dormition of the Mother of God*** 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – St. Barbara's 	29
30 10:00 am – Liturgy – St. Barbara's Cathedral	31 Martyrs Florus and Laurus 					