

## Announcements

- **Special Parish Board Meeting:** There will be a special Parish Board Meeting next Monday evening; 07 February at 6:30 PM to review the draft of the new draft of the Parish By-Laws proposed by the By-Laws Committee. All Parish Board members are urged to attend.
- **PRAY FOR UKRAINE!** - Hardly anyone can say they are not aware of the situation in our ancestral motherland Ukraine these days. Clearly Ukraine is in need of our prayers. The Brotherhood of Ukrainian Clergy in the Lehigh Valley will be sponsoring weekly Moleben services for the peace and well-being of Ukraine. ***The first Moleben service will be this Wednesday; 09 February at 6:30 PM*** at our own ***St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral***. Next week, we will hold the service at Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church in West Easton. We urge everyone to attend and PRAY FOR UKRAINE!
- **“Sorokousty” - Memorial Saturdays** - In today’s bulletin, you will find an envelope for commemoration of your deceased loved ones on the upcoming Memorial Saturdays. (February 26, March 19,26, April 2 and June 11) Traditionally we remember beloved departed on the Saturday before Cheesefare, the three middle Saturdays of Great Lent, and also the Saturday before Pentecost. Please write the ***first names only*** of your loved ones on the outside of the envelope and ***submit it before 26 February*** with your gift. If you need more room for names, please write them on a small piece of papered insert it in the envelope..
- **Sunday of Orthodoxy:** St. Mary’s is very happy to be the site this year of the annual Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood. This service is an annual tradition here in the Lehigh Valley (which was interrupted because of COVID). Our own Archbishop Daniel will be the guest speaker. In addition, His Eminence will be the principal celebrant at Divine Liturgy that morning. Please mark your calendar and make every effort to attend. Don’t forget - 13 MARCH! - 4 PM
- **New Bulletin Format:** Please take note of the new manner of presentation of the weekly schedule in our bulletin. Each day of the week is listed with the assigned scriptural readings and the saint commemorated on that day. Any Divine Services scheduled are found under each day. In addition, days of fasting and abstinence are marked with a “fish” symbol. We hope this will serve as an aid in information, as well as devotion, for our parishioners.
- **Thursday Work Group:** The “Thursday Work Group” is hard at work again! This group has been meeting on a regular basis cleaning and making order in our beautiful church. Anyone and everyone is welcome. ***Please come and help! Don’t wait to be asked! Just come!*** For more information, see Vera Muzychka.
- **Coffee Social:** Coffee social will be held as usual in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome! Please come and share a cup of coffee with your fellow parishioners. **More importantly, please consider “sponsoring” a coffee hour on a particular Sunday. You can do so in memory of a loved one.**
- **Pyrohy Sale:** The next Pyrohy sale will be in February. All orders must be received by Friday; 18 February. Pick up will be Sunday; 27 February.

- **Mark the Date:** The Annual General Parish Meeting will take place on Sunday; 27 March after Divine Liturgy. We urge all our parishioners to mark their calendars and make every effort to attend. Please make sure your obligations to the Parish are fulfilled by that date.
- **Bad Weather Alert:** Please note that in case of inclement weather, should we need to adjust the church schedule or even cancel Divine Services, announcement will be made on Facebook, our website and WFMZ - channel 69.
- **House Blessing Schedule:** Please contact Father Richard or Dan Petrovich ([petrovichdan@gmail.com](mailto:petrovichdan@gmail.com) or 610.462.4174) to sign up.

## **Ukrainian Devotion to the Mother of God The Virgin of the Immovable Wall (First in a series)**

Since our conversion to the Christian faith by St. Volodymyr the Great in 988AD, the



Ukrainian people have always had a strong devotion to the Mother of God. After Christ Himself, our people have always turned to the Virgin Mary with prayerful love as a sure hope in all their needs. Moreover, the people of Ukraine have always regarded the Immaculate Mother of God as the special patroness and protector of the nation of Ukraine and have always turned to her in times of national struggle, counting in her heavenly intercession to keep Ukraine safe. One may ask from where did this devotion originate, and what is the history of such devotion. This series will attempt to answer those questions and show how important a place the Mother of God maintains in our cultural heritage.

We begin with the image known as the “ORANTA.”

After having converted his people to the Christian faith, St. Volodymyr the Great immediately set a tenth of his income aside for the building of a church, at the very gates of Kyiv, dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. Thus, was the first act of devotion completed at the very beginning of Ukrainian Christian history. His son, St. Yaroslav the Wise, having inherited the Kyivan throne desired to build a church that would be in imitation of the great Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople, the Hagia Sophia. He envisioned this cathedral to be the “mother church” of the nation. The Cathedral of St. Sophia of Kyiv was completed and dedicated in 1015. In this cathedral, Yaroslav made sure that a mosaic of the Mother of God would be placed over the altar in the apse of the church. At the dedication of the church, the saintly monarch prayed a prayer placing his nation under the protection the Mother of God and pleading for her constant intercession to keep his people safe. In this prayer, he formally placed the nation under her protection, making her the official patroness of the country and declaring her to be its Queen and Mother.

The name **Orans**, or **Oranta** is a Greek word which means, “the one who is praying.” It is a well-known Orthodox Christian depiction of the Virgin Mary in prayer with extended arms.. The 6-meter-high mosaic is located in the vault of the chancel over the main altar. It dominates all the murals within the cathedral's interior. The Virgin stands with raised hands on a broad platform ornamented with precious stones. Mary wears a dark blue robe and a crimson mantle whose folds are edged with gold. Her shoes are red. A startling white fringed kerchief is draped over the red girdle round her waist. This mosaic of the Virgin Orans is full of grandeur, of unique monumental form and rich colouring. The Virgin's solemn and static posture, the characteristic folds of her garments, and her pensive expression indicate the design was strongly influenced by Byzantine art. Around the image of the Holy Virgin, there is an inscription written in ancient Greek, a quote taken from the Psalms stating: God is in the midst of it; it shall not waver, neither shall it falter, for God is it's foundation. This inscription was a prayer of the great prince, that being under the protection of His Holy Mother, God would never let the nation fall. Thus, the image is called;

the “Virgin of the Immovable Wall.” The title also refers to the virginal motherhood of Mary. In giving birth to her Divine Son, she remained a virgin. Her womb was preserved inviolate. Thus, the image has a double meaning; one theological truth and the other national devotion. The image is considered one of the greatest sacred symbols in Ukraine, a palladion defending the people of the country. The Virgin stands with arms held upheld high in prayer. The belief is that as long as the Birth-giver of God Mary is extending her arms over Kyiv, the nation will stand indestructible. Ukraine may come under attack, and may even suffer incredible difficulties, but with the Mother of God praying on her behalf, Ukraine will still exist.

The embroidered handkerchief on the belt of the Mother of God is popularly thought to be for wiping away the tears of the people of Ukraine in their trials and national tribulations, and of all those who come before her with their problems and concerns.

In the early 1930's, after having occupied Ukraine, the Russian Communist Bolsheviks marked the Cathedral of St. Sophia for destruction, as they had already destroyed many churches and shrines in their anti-religious, godless campaign. They determined to use dynamite to explode the cathedral and the place to plant the dynamite was picked to be under the wall behind the altar - the “Immovable Wall.” The Soviets proceeded to place the dynamite and to ignite it, but the fuse self-extinguished. They investigated and made another attempt. Again, the dynamite did not go off. A third attempt was made, and a third time the dynamite did not explode. By this time UNESCO stepped in and declared St. Sophia Cathedral a world heritage cultural site, and put pressure on the Soviet government to not destroy the cathedral because of its historical and cultural significance. The Soviets relented and allowed the cathedral to stand as a museum. It was not used again for religious purposes until the independence of Ukraine in 1991. **THE WALL REMAINED IMMOVABLE!** The Mother of God saved the church as well as the Ukrainian people. The cathedral is now the central church of the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the seat of the Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine His Beatitude Epifaniy.

In 1997, the National Bank of Ukraine issued commemorative coins “Oranta” within the "Spiritual Treasures of Ukraine" series.

During these difficult times for Ukraine, we should all go the Mother of God with prayers for the safety of our ancestral motherland