

UKRAINIAN DEVOTION TO THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Mother of God of Yelets - Chernihiv : A Miracle in a Tree. (Seventh in a series)

The Elets-Chernihiv (Chernihiv Spruce Tree) Icon of the Mother of God appeared on a spruce or fir tree near Chernihiv in the year 1060, in the time of Prince Svyatoslav Yaroslavich. How it managed to get there remains a mystery to this day. The discovery of the image was recorded in the Synodikon of Bishop Zosimus Prokopovich of Chernihiv (1655-1657). Once having been found there, it is obvious that the people of Chernihiv recognized it as miraculous and immediately plans for a shrine developed. Saint Anthony (July 10), while living an ascetical life on the Boldino Heights (1068-1069), had given his blessing to found a monastery at this place. The icon was placed in a church built in honor of the icon at the monastery. In 1238 the monastery was pillaged by the Tatars (Mongols), but the icon was hidden inside the monastery walls. In the year 1470, Prince Simeon Olelkovich of Kyiv restored the monastery, and the icon was placed there.

The ultimate fate of the icon is unclear. In 1687, Prince Daniel Baryatinsky was returning from a campaign in the Crimea. At Kharkiv he fell seriously ill, and before his death he bequeathed the Yelets Icon to the Kharkiv church of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

According to another tradition, the icon vanished from the monastery when it was sacked in the seventeenth century by the forces of the Polish king Sigismund III. In 1676, the great defender of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Prince Constantine Ostrozhsky presented the Yelets monastery a copy of the original Yelets-Chernihiv Icon of the Mother of God. It was at this time that Archimandrite Joannicius (Holyatovsky) was restoring the monastery and he described numerous miracles of this “new” icon in his book, “*Skorbnitsa*”, published in 1676.

Similar to the Okhtyrka icon of the Mother of God, the Yelets Chernihiv icon itself, is yet another model of a “western” depiction of the Blessed Virgin Mary not usually common among Orthodox imagery. The Mother of God is shown with uncovered head. She is shown looking directly at the observer and holds the Christ Child close to her cheek in a maternal embrace. This is yet one more example that early in Ukraine’s Christian history, there was western influence.



Announcements

- **PRAY FOR UKRAINE!** - 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 seventh Moleben service will be this Tuesday; 22 March at 6:30 PM in Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church 315 4th St. West Easton.** We urge everyone to attend and PRAY FOR UKRAINE!
- **The Annual General Parish Meeting will take place on Sunday; 27 March after Divine Liturgy.** **NEXT SUNDAY!!!!** 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.
- **Memorial Service Today:** Immediately following the veneration of the Cross, there will be a Memorial Litiya served today for Kent Bailey on the 15th anniversary of his repose at the request of grandson Hayden Aarp.
- **Condolences:** Our heartfelt condolences go out to the family of **Mary Radio**, our oldest parishioner, who passed into eternal life on Tuesday, March 8th at the age of 102. She was dedicated to St. Mary’s and spent much of her life in service to her beloved parish. We will all miss her terribly. Services were held yesterday here in our church. VICHNAYA PAMYAT!
- **Fasting before Holy Communion - Please note: anyone planning to receive Holy Communion at any of the Presanctified Liturgies should follow the rule of fasting and have only one full meal during the day, usually in the evening after having received Holy Communion. In addition, they should also not have anything to eat after 12 Noon.**
- **Medical and other supplies needed for Ukraine** - There is a list in today’s bulletin with items that are needed for Ukraine right now. We have been asked to stop collecting clothes and diapers (at least for the time being) since there is an overabundance. **In addition, we need volunteers to help collect and organize these donations.**
- **Administrator Assistance Needed:** Volunteers are needed to help with the extra office work that we have encountered as a result of the war in Ukraine. We are looking for a number of people who could commit to one or two sessions a week, either a morning or afternoon session. Duties would include answering phone calls, taking donations, etc. Please see Vera Muzychka to sign up.
- **Special Limited TV Raffle-** This is a special fundraising effort for our parish. One Grand Prize: a 70” Samsung HD Smart TV! Only 100 tickets will be sold. This increases your chances of winning! The price of the tickets are \$20 each. The drawing date will be 01 May 2022. For tickets see: Brian Borsevich, Robin Bodnar, or Vera Muzychka.
- **Coffee Social:** Today’s coffee hour will be hosted by Hayden Aarp in memory of his beloved grandfather Kent Bailey. Please consider sponsoring a coffee hour yourself in honor of someone or in memory of a loved one.

- **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 posted to our website (www.pokrova-allentown.org), our Facebook page, and WFMZ - channel 69.

A Word Regarding Fasting and Abstinence from Foods during Great Lent

The Orthodox Church approaches the rules of fasting a little different than the Catholic Church in that there are rules which “applied to each individually,” as opposed to “making and enforcing” a general rule for all. We find the “standard” or “full” form of fasting in the *Typicon*, the book of liturgical directives and prescriptions. However, this what is followed in *monasteries*, where life is centered around prayer and lived communally. The circumstances of life of Orthodox Christians living outside monasteries is quite different, therefore, the Church is understanding and merciful and does not expect the same for non-monastics. Therefore, while encouraging all to strive for perfection and as strict an observance of fasting for parishioners as possible, the Church, instead allows mitigations of the “general rule,” and encourages individuals to work out a “personal practice” with one’s Father Confessor. In short, one should fast and abstain as strictly as one is able.

That being said, there are some general standards that in our parish we can all adopt. First, we need to address some terminology: *Abstinence* - means abstaining from certain foods, e.g. meat (including poultry), dairy products (including eggs), fish, shellfish, and even olive oil. Abstinence from ALL these foods, is what is prescribed in the *Typicon* and this is what would be followed in monasteries. No one expects that in the outside world. *Fasting* - means eating only one meal during the day, usually in the evening. In the monasteries, this would be the practice every day during Great Lent except Saturdays and Sundays. The term “*fasting*,” for those of us outside the monastery, can be interpreted as meaning *one full meal*, usually taken in the evening, and no “in between” snacking.

To be sure, there are those who fall into certain categories who are excused from fasting, and sometimes, even from abstinence. These would include:

- very young children (But even children should be taught by their parents gradually the importance of fasting and abstinence.)
- the elderly (However, even the elderly who are in good health can fast and abstain to a certain degree.)
- those who are gravely ill
- pregnant women
- post-partum mothers
- breast-feeding mothers
- travelers (if travel time exceeds 8 hours)
- those engaged in heavy labour
- those who eat from the table of others
- the poor who live from charity

In short. The general standard can be summed up as: If you can fast and abstain more strictly, then you should; if you cannot, then you shouldn’t. The best way to figure out your personal rule of fasting is through discussion with your spiritual father in confession.

This all being said, there are some general standards that we can adopt here in our own parish for Great Lent to be used as guidelines. In this we can use the practice used at St. Sophia Seminary can serve as a model.

All Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast – Abstention from meat and foods that contain these ingredients should be followed. Abstention from dairy and foods that contain these ingredients should also be followed. (N.B. Abstention from meat and dairy and foods that contain these ingredients is encouraged on Mondays during Lent as well.)

Saturdays and Sundays of the Great Fast - Fasting and Abstinence are always mitigated on Saturdays because this is the day of rest when God rested from His work of creation, the “first Sabbath,” and also the day that Christ “rested in the tomb,” from His work of salvation,” thus, observing the Sabbath. The same holds true on Sunday because of the Resurrection.

Great and Holy Week

This week is not considered a part of the Great Fast but is rather a separate period of prayer, fasting and abstinence in preparation for Pascha (Easter). Abstention from meat and dairy and foods that contain these ingredients should be followed for the entire week. Wednesday and Great Friday, and even Saturday, should be followed as days of fasting.

A further word about fasting and abstinence: Whenever we deny ourselves certain foods, we do so in order to “feed our soul.” Fasting and abstinence should be accompanied by an increase in prayer. If we do this, we fortify our soul and the increase in prayer actually makes our physical fasting and abstinence easier. In addition to our abstinence from certain foods, we should “fast” from sinful deeds and words. Our fasting is of no profit to us if we continue in gossip, hateful words of others and other sinful actions. If we approach fasting with a serious attempt and heartfelt conviction, we can find it to be quite rewarding and our celebration of Pascha all the more fulfilling. example that early in Ukraine’s Christian history, there was western influence.

Among your daily prayers, please remember: Fr. Yakiw Norton, Fr. Oleh Hucut, Fr. Vasyl Dovgan, Tanya Antoniewicz, Richard Antoniuk, Bohdan Baranczyk, John Chorney, Gloria Dunski, Joan Hepner, Peter Holowiak Eva Lazor, Mary Maksymiak, Daniel Milinichuk, Michael Onushko, Rosalie Onushko Mary Ellen Mackiewicz, William Radio, Kathryn Solan, Michael and Elsie Moroz, Myroslav Kmet, Andriy Kmet, Dan Gulack. Rodney Townes, Karina Strashinsky; Katherine Cox