

## Feb. 23 – Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was “fruitful in every good work” (Col. 1:10), was born in the first century, and lived in Smyrna in Asia Minor. He was orphaned at an early age, but at the direction of an angel, he was raised by the pious widow Kallista. After the death of his adoptive mother, Polycarp gave away his possessions and began to lead a chaste life, caring for the sick and the infirm. He was very fond of and close to Saint Bucolus, Bishop of Smyrna (February 6). He ordained Polycarp as deacon, entrusting to him to preach the Word of God in church. He also ordained him to the holy priesthood.

The holy Apostle John the Theologian was still alive at this time. Saint Polycarp was especially close to Saint John, and sometimes accompanied him on his apostolic journeys.

Shortly before his death, Saint Bucolus expressed his wish that Polycarp be made Bishop of Smyrna. When Saint Polycarp was consecrated as a bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him. Saint Polycarp guided his flock with apostolic zeal, and he was also greatly loved by the clergy. Saint Ignatius the God-Bearer of Antioch (December 20) also had a high regard for him. Setting out for Rome where execution awaited him, he wrote to Saint Polycarp, “This age is in need of you if it is to reach God, just as pilots need winds, and as a storm-tossed sailor needs a port.”

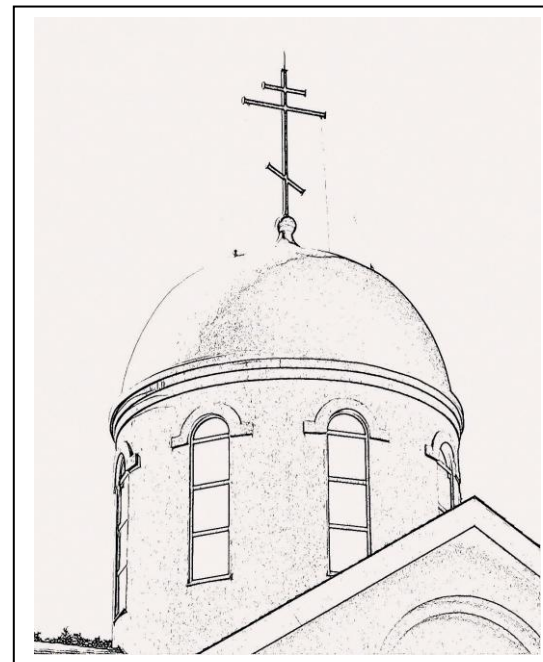
The emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180) came to the Roman throne and started up a most fierce persecution against Christians. The pagans demanded that the judge search for Saint Polycarp, “the father of all the Christians” and “the seducer of all Asia.”

During this time Saint Polycarp, at the persistent urging of his flock, stayed in a small village not far from Smyrna. When the soldiers came for him, he went out to them and invited them in to eat. He asked for time to pray, in order to prepare himself for martyrdom. His suffering and death are recorded in the “Epistle of the Christians of the Church of Smyrna to the Other Churches,” one of the most ancient memorials of Christian literature.

Having been brought to trial, Saint Polycarp firmly confessed his faith in Christ, and was condemned to be burned alive. The executioners wanted to nail him to a post, but he declared that God would give him the strength to endure the flames, so they could merely tie him with ropes. The flames encircled the saint but did not touch him, coming together over his head in the shape of a vault. Seeing that the fire did him no harm, the pagans stabbed him with a dagger. So much blood flowed from this wound that it extinguished the flames. The body of the hieromartyr Polycarp was then cremated. The Christians of Smyrna reverently gathered up what remained of his holy relics, and each year they celebrated the day of his martyrdom.

During his life the holy bishop wrote several Epistles to the flock and letters to various individuals. The only one that has survived to the present day is his Epistle to the Philippians which, Saint Jerome testifies, was read in the churches of Asia Minor at divine services. It was written by the saint in response to the request of the Philippians to send them some letters of the hieromartyr Ignatius (December 20) which Saint Polycarp had in his possession.

WEEKLY



BULLETIN

*Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery. The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you!*

*Troparion of the Annunciation to the Theotokos*

## ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

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Very Rev. Fr. Gary Joseph Breton, *Rector*

Very Rev. Fr. Paul Kucynda, *Retired Attached Priest*

Rev. Fr. Michael Pejovic, *Attached Priest*

Matthew Petrides, *Senior Warden*

Christian Gamboa, *Choir Director*

February 23, 2025

## SUNDAY OF MEATFARE – The Last Judgment

*Tone 2. Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (167). Ven. Polycarp of Briansk (1620-1621). Ven. John, Antiochus, Antoninus, Moses, Zebinas, Polychronius, Moses, and Damian, Ascetics, of the Syrian deserts (5th c.). Ven. Alexander, founder of the Monastery of the “Unsleeping Ones” (ca. 430). Ven. Damian of Esphigmenou (Mt. Athos—1280). Monastic Martyr Damian of Philotheou (1568). St. Gorgonia, Sister of St. Gregory the Theologian (370).*

### Today’s Readings:

*Epistle:* 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2

*Gospel:* Matthew 25:31-46

### Upcoming Service Schedule:

Today – **9:00am Divine Liturgy**

Saturday – **6:00pm Great Vespers**

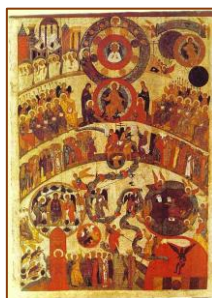
Sunday – **9:00am Divine Liturgy**

Sunday – **10:30am Forgiveness Vespers**

### Next Sunday’s Readings:

*Epistle:* Romans 13:11-14:4

*Gospel:* Matthew 6:14-21



*The Last Judgment*

Keep up on OCA news by visiting [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org), diocesan news by visiting [www.nynjoca.org](http://www.nynjoca.org), and parish news by visiting [www.occa-brick.org](http://www.occa-brick.org).

## Special Prayers

We pray for **all** our parish family members, but we pray especially for those who are ill and afflicted.

Among them are **Fr. Paul Kucynda, Brian Price, Victorianne Vessio, Mary Herelick, Betty James, Manya Shark, Deryl Tczap, Mary Tczap, George Stavrou, Margaret Makara, Dennis & Ann Marie Gahr, Michael Getmanov, Alan Diaz, Ellen Norman, Maryann Sivilic, Lia Eickhorn, Jack Rinderer, and Lori Ratushnuk.**

We are happy that you have joined us for worship today and hope that you will join us for Coffee Hour after Divine Liturgy.

**The reception of the Holy Eucharist is only for baptized members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared with prayer, fasting, and periodic confession. You are encouraged to receive the blessed bread that is offered at the end of the service and which may also be offered to you by one of your neighbors during Communion.**

## Annunciations

**TODAY** – We welcome all our guests visiting us today. Please join us for the **COFFEE HOUR** in the Parish Hall after we venerate the Cross. **Team #1** is in charge of today’s Coffee Hour.

**TODAY** – According to the **Church’s fasting guidelines**, today (Meatfare Sunday) is the last day for Orthodox Christians to consume **meat or meat products**. Please speak with Father Gary if you need clarification on this matter.

**THIS WEEK** – According to those same fasting guidelines, this is the time when we should be consuming the **dairy products** in our home so that beginning on Sunday (Cheesefare Sunday), we may begin refraining from these products throughout Great Lent.

**NEXT SUNDAY** – After Divine Liturgy, the Vespers of Forgiveness will be served. At the end of this service, all present are encouraged to ask for and grant forgiveness to one another. This is how the Orthodox Church calls its members to begin the season of Great Lent.

**SUNDAY, March 9** is the **Sunday of Orthodoxy**. We will celebrate this day during the Divine Liturgy, but also at the **Diocesan Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers** that will be served at **4:00pm** at **Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne, NJ**. Everyone is invited to attend this service that will be led by Archbishop Michael, and the meal afterwards provided by the parish. Please speak with Father Gary if you need a ride.

Please continue to use the **clothing bin** located in the church parking lot. A list of items that can be donated is located on the whiteboard in the Parish Hall. Each donation helps the parish financially. Many thanks for your participation.

***Please pray for vocations to the Holy Priesthood!***

## ***MANY YEARS***

### ***Birthdays this week:***

*Monday* – June Farkouh

*Tuesday* – Alan Diaz

### ***Wedding Anniversaries this week:***

*Thursday* – Robert & Nana Langworthy

*Friday* – John & Lia Eickhorn

*The Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors program is an essential vehicle for funding the activities and programs of our diocese. 2024 turned out to be a very strong year during which \$252,167 was donated to the program. Please consider participating in the program. More information is available at the diocesan website at [www.nynjoca.org](http://www.nynjoca.org).*