

# WEEKLY BULLETIN

May 7, 2023 • Vol. 40, No. 17

Fourth Sunday of Pascha

Repose of St. Alexis Toth, Confessor  
and Defender of Orthodoxy  
in America



*St. Alexis Toth*

## SAINT ELIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America

64 W. Wilbeth Rd., Akron, Ohio 44301

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Office: 330-724-7009

[www.saintelia.com](http://www.saintelia.com)

[www.facebook.com/sainteliakron](https://www.facebook.com/sainteliakron)

*His Eminence Alexander, Archbishop of Toledo, Bulgarian Diocese, OCA  
Very Rev. Mitred Archpriest Father Don Anthony Freude, Parish Rector  
Rev. Protodeacon James M. Gresh, Attached*

# SAINT ELIA THE PROPHET PARISH

## 2023 Parish Council

President: Veronica Bilas  
V. President: Sandy Graham  
Secretary: Subdeacon Aaron Gray  
Treasurer: Reader Joshua Wherley  
Members: Subdeacon Terrence Bilas,  
Bud Graham, Sarah Kostadinova,  
COCA Representative: Mary Marcin

**Choir Director:** Subdeacon Terrence A. Bilas  
Assistant Directors: Anastasia Bohush  
Deaconisa Heidi Gresh, Reader Michael Luc

**Church School:** Anastasia Bohush

## **Sisterhood of St. Juliana:**

President: Anastasia Bohush,  
V. President: Sandy Graham  
Secretary: Katherine Hodge  
Treasurer: Mary Magensky

## **Workers of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr:**

Coordinators: Subdeacon Aaron Gray, Veronica Bilas

## **Scheduled Readers - 2023**

**Sunday, May 7** Deaconisa Heidi Gresh  
**Sunday, May 14** Hours: Subdeacon Terrence Bilas  
Epistle: Anastasia Bohush  
**Sunday, May 21** Sue Ellen Turscak  
**Sunday, May 28** Hours: Mary Beth Gray  
Epistle: Subdeacon Aaron Gray

## SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

**4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF PASCHA – Tone 3- Paralytic  
Repose of St. Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender  
of Orthodoxy in America**

**Saturday, May 6**

**5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions**

**Sunday, May 7**

**9:10 am 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Hours: Deaconisa Heidi Gresh**

**9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom**

**Epistle Reader: Deaconisa Heidi Gresh**

**Epistle: Acts: 9:32-42    Gospel: John 5:1-15**

### **MIDFEAST OF PENTECOST**

**Tuesday, May 9**

**6:00 pm Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. John  
Chrysostom**

**5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF PASCHA – Tone 4**

**Samaritan Woman    *Mother's Day***

**Saturday, May 13**

**5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions**

**Sunday, May 14**

**9:10 am 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Hours: Subdeacon Terrence Bilas**

**9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom**

**Epistle Reader: Anastasia Bohush**

**Epistle: Acts: 6:1-7    Gospel: Mark 15:43-16:8**

**Christos Voskrese! Kriste Aghsdga!**

**Al Masseh Qam! Hristos a Inviat! Hristos vaskrse!**

**Krishti U Ngjail! Christus ist auferstanden!**

**Cristo e' risorto! Krisztus feltamadt! Le Christ est  
ressucite! Christus resurrexit! Christ is Risen!**

# ***TODAY'S SCRIPTURAL READINGS***

## **Epistle: Acts: 9:32-42**

### **Aeneas Healed**

<sup>32</sup> Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup> And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. <sup>35</sup> So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

### **Dorcas Restored to Life**

<sup>36</sup> At Joppa there was a certain disciple named <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Tabitha, which is translated <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. <sup>37</sup> But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. <sup>38</sup> And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them. <sup>39</sup> Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought *him* to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup> But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented

her alive. <sup>42</sup> And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

**Gospel: John 5:1-15**

## **A Man Healed at the Pool of Bethesda**

**5** After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **2** Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, <sup>[a]</sup>Bethesda, having five porches. **3** In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, <sup>[b]</sup>paralyzed, <sup>[c]</sup>waiting for the moving of the water. **4** For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. **5** Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. **6** When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

**7** The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

**8** Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." **9** And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

And that day was the Sabbath. **10** The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

<sup>11</sup> He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.' "

<sup>12</sup> Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" <sup>13</sup> But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place. <sup>14</sup> Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." <sup>15</sup> The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

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**Tone 1**      *Idiomela*      (from the *Pentecostarion*)

With Your pure hand, You created man, and You came to heal the sick, O compassionate Christ. By Your word You raised the paralytic at the Sheep's Pool and cured the pain of the woman with the issue of blood. You had mercy on the daughter of the Canaanite woman and did not reject the request of the centurion. Therefore, we cry to You:  
"Glory to You, O almighty Lord!"

The Paralytic was like an unburied corpse saw You and shouted: "Lord, have mercy on me! My bed has become my grave! Why should I live? What use is the Sheep's Pool to me? I have no one to put me into the pool when the waters are stirred, but I come to You, O Fountain of healing. Raise me up, that with all I may cry to You: 'Glory to You, O almighty Lord!'"

# PARISH NEWS

SISTERHOOD OF ST. JULIANA MEETING  
TODAY, May 7, following the Divine Liturgy

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
May 23, 2023, at 7:00 pm

TEMPLE FEAST OF ST. ELIA THE PROPHET  
The Feast Day of St. Elia is on July 20 and will be celebrated with a Vespers Divine Liturgy on **Wednesday, July 19 at 6:00 pm**

Continuing our Feast Day celebration, we will welcome His Eminence, our Father, and Archbishop Alexander, on the following **Sunday, July 23**, to celebrate the Pontifical Divine Liturgy followed by a picnic style luncheon. **Please mark your calendars.**

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## OUR STEWARDHIP – April 30, 2023

Candles:	\$ 53.00
Bookstore:	53.00
Sisterhood:	25.00
<u>Sunday Offering:</u>	<u>539.00</u>
TOTAL:	\$ 670.00

Tithely Donations: \$ 168.35

TOTAL OFFERINGS: \$ 838.35

## WISH LIST

With the rising costs in almost everything, our Parish of St. Elia, along with everybody else, is also facing financial difficulties in the present and more in the future to meet the daily bills on time. Thank you to all who faithfully donate and are willing to help the Treasurer meet these responsibilities on our behalf. If you are able, please consider increasing your offerings by monetary donations and/or by special donations of the Parish needs of items listed on the WISH LIST:

Paper towels

Bathroom Tissues

Kleenex

Dishwasher Soap

Incense (\$20.00 for a half pound)

Censor Charcoal (\$30.00)

4 hour votive candles (\$36.50 a gross)

7 Day Votive Candles (\$52.00 for a case of 12)

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### Visit the St. Elia Shop

If you haven't visited the little St. Elia "shop" downstairs in the parish hall lately, we are carrying several new items including coffee mugs with quotes from the saints, and St. Elia T-shirts and baseball caps. If you are interested in a piece of St. Elia "spirit wear" in a certain size or style that's not currently available, please see Aaron Gray about a special order. All proceeds go toward the life and ministry of our parish. Thank you for your support.



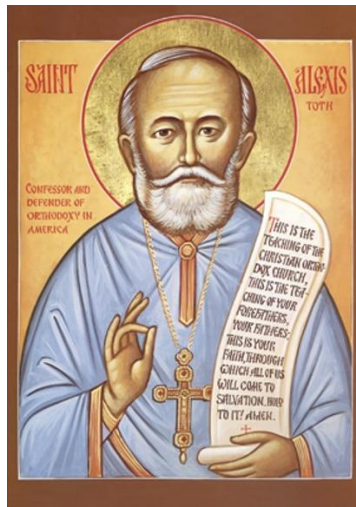
**REMEMBERING THOSE SERVING IN THE  
ARMED FORCES**

Subdeacon Anthony Freude, son of Fr Don and  
Popadia Donna Freude  
Egor Cravcenco, son of Serghei and Ludmila  
Cravcenco

**REMEMBERING OUR SICK AND SHUTINS**

Archbishop Benjamin  
Archbishop Nathaniel  
Joseph Boyle (brother of Kathy Gray)  
Phyllis (sister of Rose Marie Vronick)  
Florence Lambo  
Martin Vronick  
Nicoletta (Nikki) Bober  
Pani Dolores Zuder  
Matushka Myra Kovalak  
Mitered Archpriest Daniel Kovalak  
Matushka Christine Zebren  
Matushka Laryssa Hutnyan  
Subdeacon Martin Paluch  
Barbara Harp (sister of Veronica Bilas)  
Ted Theodore  
Sarah Costadinova  
Melissa Trace  
Gerald Gray (father of Subdeacon Aaron Gray)  
Kalie Obeng Fiorg  
Louis Hakim

# Rest of St. Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in America



Our holy Father Alexis, the defender of the Orthodox Faith and zealous worker in the Lord’s vineyard, was born in Austro-Hungary on March 18, 1854, into a poor Carpatho-Russian family. Like many others in the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Toths were Eastern Rite Catholics. Alexis’ father and brother were priests and his uncle was a bishop in the Uniate church. He received an excellent education and knew several languages (Carpatho-Russian, Hungarian, Russian, German, Latin, and a reading knowledge of Greek). He married Rosalie Mihalich, a priest’s daughter, and was ordained on April 18, 1878 to serve as second priest in a Uniate parish. His wife died soon afterwards, followed by their only child—losses which the saint endured with the patience of Job.

In May, 1879, Father Alexis was appointed secretary to the Bishop of Presov and also Administrator of the Diocesan Administration. He was also entrusted with the directorship of an orphanage. At Presov Seminary, Father Toth taught Church History and Canon Law, which served him well in his later life in America. Saint Alexis did not serve long as a professor or an administrator, for the Lord had a different future planned for him. In October, 1889 he was appointed to serve as pastor of a Uniate parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Like another Abraham, he left his country and his relatives to fulfill the will of God (Gen 12:1).

Upon his arrival in America, Father Alexis presented himself to the local Roman Catholic diocesan authority, Archbishop John Ireland, since there was no Uniate bishop in America at that time. Archbishop Ireland belonged to the party of American Catholics who favored the “Americanization” of all Roman Catholics. His vision for the future was founded on a common faith, customs, and the use of the English language for everything except liturgical celebrations. Naturally, ethnic parishes and non-Latin rite clergy did not fit into this vision. Thus, when Father Toth came to present his credentials, Archbishop Ireland greeted him with open hostility. He refused to recognize him as a legitimate Catholic priest or to grant permission for him to serve in his diocese.

As a historian and professor of Canon Law, Father Toth knew his rights under the terms of the Unia and would not accept Archbishop Ireland’s unjust decisions. In October of 1890, there was a meeting of eight of the ten Uniate priests in America at

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania under the chairmanship of Father Toth. By this time the American bishops had written to Rome demanding the recall to Europe of all Uniate priests in America, fearing that Uniate priests and parishes would hinder the assimilation of immigrants into American culture. Uniate bishops in Europe refused to listen to the priests' pleas for help.

Archbishop Ireland sent a letter to his parishes ordering their members not to attend Father Toth's parish nor to accept any priestly ministrations from him. Expecting imminent deportation, Father Toth explained the situation to his parishioners and suggested it might be best for him to leave and return to Europe.

"No," they said. "Let's go to the Russian bishop. Why should we always submit ourselves to foreigners?" It was decided to write to the Russian consul in San Francisco in order to ask for the name and address of the Russian bishop. Ivan Mlinar went to San Francisco to make initial contact with Bishop Vladimir; then in February, 1891 Father Toth and his church warden, Paul Podany, also made the journey. Subsequently, Bishop Vladimir came to Minneapolis and on March 25, 1891 received Father Toth and 361 parishioners into the Orthodox Church of their ancestors. The parishioners regarded this event as a new Triumph of Orthodoxy, crying out with joy: "Glory to God for His great mercy!"

This initiative came from the people themselves and was not the result of any coercion from outsiders. The Russian Orthodox Church was unaware of the existence of these Slavic Uniate

immigrants to America but responded positively to their petition to be reunited to the Orthodox Church.

The example of Saint Alexis and his parish in returning to Orthodoxy was an encouragement to hundreds of other Uniates. The ever memorable one was like a candle upon a candlestick giving light to others (Mt.5:15), and his flock may be likened to the leaven mixed with meal which leavened the whole (Mt.13:33). Through his fearless preaching he uprooted the tares which had sprung up in the wheat of true doctrine and exposed the false teachings which had led his people astray. Although he did not hesitate to point out errors in the doctrines of other denominations, he was careful to warn his flock against intolerance. His writings and sermons are filled with admonitions to respect other people and to refrain from attacking their faith.

While it is true that he made some strong comments, especially in his private correspondence with the church administration, it must be remembered that this was done while defending the Orthodox Church and the American Mission from unfounded accusations by people who used much harsher language than Father Toth. His opponents may be characterized by intolerance, rude behavior, unethical methods and threats against him and his parishioners. Yet, when Father Alexis was offended or deceived by other people he forgave them, and he would often ask his bishop to forgive his omissions and mistakes.

In the midst of great hardships, this herald of godly theology and sound doctrine poured forth an inexhaustible stream of Orthodox writings for new converts and gave practical advice on how to live in an Orthodox manner. For example, his article “How We should Live in America” stresses the importance of education, cleanliness, sobriety, and the presence of children in church on Sundays and Holy Days.

Although the Minneapolis parish was received into the Orthodox Church in March, 1891, it was not until July, 1892 that the Holy Synod of Russia recognized and accepted the parish into the Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutians. This resolution reached America only in October 1892. During that time there was a climate of religious and ethnic hostility against the new converts. Father Alexis was accused of selling out his own Carpatho-Russian people and his religion to the “Muscovites” for financial gain.

In reality he did not receive any financial support for a long time, for his parish was very poor. Until his priestly salary began to arrive from Russia, the righteous one was obliged to work in a bakery in order to support himself. Even though his funds were meager, he did not neglect to give alms to the poor and needy. He shared his money with other clergy worse off than himself and contributed to the building of churches and to the education of seminarians in Minneapolis. He was not anxious about his life (Mt.6:25), what he would eat or drink or wear. Trusting in God to take care of him, Saint Alexis followed the admonition of Our Savior to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to

you” (Mt.6:33). So, he bore the tribulation, slander, and physical attacks with patience and spiritual joy, reminding us that “godliness is stronger than all” (Wisdom of Solomon 10:12).

Bishops Vladimir, Nicholas, Saint Tikhon, and Platon recognized the special gifts of Father Toth, so they often sent him forth to preach and teach wherever there were people of Slavic background. Even though he was aware of his shortcomings and inadequacies, yet he was obedient to the instructions of the bishops. He did not hesitate or make excuses but went immediately to fulfill his mission. Saint Alexis visited many Uniate parishes, explaining the differences between Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Uniatism, stressing that the true way to salvation is in Orthodoxy.

Like Josiah, “he behaved himself uprightly in the conversion of his people” (Sir 49:2). He was instrumental in the formation or return of seventeen parishes, planting a vineyard of Christ in America, and increasing its fruitful yield many times over. By 1909, the time of his blessed repose, many thousands of Carpatho-Russian and Galician Uniates had returned to Orthodoxy. This was a major event in the history of the North American Mission, which would continue to shape the future of Orthodoxy in this country for many generations to come. Any future growth or success may truly be regarded as the result of Father Toth’s apostolic labors.

Who can tell of the saint’s spiritual struggles? Who can speak of the prayers which his pious soul poured forth unto God? He did

not make a public display of his piety, but prayed to God in secret with all modesty, with contrition and inward tears. God, Who sees everything done in secret, openly rewarded the saint (Mt.6:6). It is inconceivable that Saint Alexis could have accomplished his apostolic labors unless God had blessed and strengthened him for such work. Today the Church continues to reap the fruits of his teaching and preaching.

Father Toth's efforts did not go unrecognized in his own lifetime. He received a jeweled miter from the Holy Synod, as well as the Order of Saint Vladimir and the Order of Saint Anna from Czar Nicholas II for distinguished service and devotion to God and country. In 1907, he was considered as a candidate for the episcopal office. He declined this honor, however, humbly pointing out that this responsibility should be given to a younger, healthier man. At the end of 1908, Saint Alexis' health began to decline due to a complication of illnesses. He went to the seashore in southern New Jersey in an attempt to regain his health, but soon returned to Wilkes-Barre, where he was confined to bed for two months. The righteous one reposed on Friday, May 7, 1909 (April 24 on the Old Calendar), the feast of Saints Savva and Alexius the Hermit of the Kiev Caves. Saint Alexis' love and concern for his spiritual children did not cease with his death. Before closing the account of his life, it would be most appropriate to reveal but one example of his heavenly intercession:

In January, 1993 a certain man prayed to Saint Alexis to help him obtain information about his son from whom he had been separated for twenty-eight years. Placing his confidence in the



saint's boldness before God, he awaited an answer to his prayer. The very next day the man's son telephoned him. It seems the young man was in church when he was suddenly filled with an overwhelming desire to contact his father. He had been taken to another state by his mother, and she changed his name when he was a child. This is why his father was unable to locate him. Having learned from his mother that his father was an Orthodox Christian, he was able with the help of an Orthodox priest to obtain his father's phone number in a distant city. As a result of that telephone call, the young man later visited his father, who rejoiced to see what sort of man his son had become. The father gave thanks to God and to Saint Alexis for reuniting him with his son.

Saint Alexis was a true man of God who guided many Carpatho-Russian and Galician immigrants through the dark confusion of religious challenges in the New World and back to the unity of the Orthodox Church through his grace-filled words and by his holy example. In his last will and testament Saint Alexis commended his soul to God's mercy, asking forgiveness from everyone and forgiving everybody. His holy relics now rest at Saint Tikhon Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania where the faithful may come to venerate them and to entreat Saint Alexis' intercessions on their behalf.

***O righteous Father Alexis, our heavenly intercessor and teacher, divine adornment of the Church of Christ, entreat the Master of All to strengthen the Orthodox Faith in America, to grant peace to the world and to our souls great mercy!***

# Midfeast of Pentecost

Commemorated on May 10

This Feast's celebration is the midpoint of the fifty days between the Feasts of Pascha and Pentecost. Saint John tells us (John 7:14) that "in the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the Temple and taught." The Feast in question is the Feast of Tabernacles (celebrated in September), not Pentecost



The Church has appointed John 7:14-30 to be read for the Midfeast, thereby linking Pascha and Pentecost. In Chapter 8 of Saint John's Gospel, the Lord came to the Temple again and taught the people who came to Him. After leaving the Temple, he encounters the man born blind. We will hear about him on the Sunday of the Blind Man.

The Troparion of the Midfeast ("In the middle of the Feast, O Savior, fill my thirsting soul with the waters of godliness, as Thou didst cry to all: If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink [John 7:37]. O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee!") hints at the encounter of Christ and the Samaritan Woman in just a few days.

