

# St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church

February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

35<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord

Ven. Isidore of Pelusium

## Activities and Events this Week

- Wednesday February 7      Choir Rehearsal      4:30pm  
   *Mere Christianity*      6:00pm
- Saturday February 10      Myrrhbearers Breakfast      10:00am  
   No Services and Classes Scheduled
- Sunday February 11      Baptism of Corey (Blaze) Russel-Curry      9:00am

## **In the Bookstore**

We have a few 2024 church calendars left – a must to following along with the Church’s liturgical cycle - \$10.00.

Book- The Screwtape Letters – These are intended for those who ordered one for the Adult Education class affectionately known as *Mere Christianity* - \$12.00

An assortment of icon, incense, charcoal, burners, candles – everything one needs for a home prayer altar.

## **Annual Statements 2023**

Available in the Narthex of the Church

## **Myrrhbearers Breakfast**

All ladies of the church are encouraged to participate

## Church Music

I am so edified to see our participation in the last two weeks outside our church – last week the Monastery of St. Catherine and yesterday the choral workshop in Concord at St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church. So in honor of our choir I offer these comments. Some are from yesterday's catechism class – so catechumens – please excuse the repeat!

Choral music in the Orthodox Church becomes more structured and “official” in the 4<sup>th</sup> century – primarily following the council of Laodicea (363-364) where official books and the institution of official church choirs replaced the sort of ad hoc singing of the faithful. Justinian the Great in the 6<sup>th</sup> century only wanted 25 singers in the choir of Haghi Sophia in Constantinople – a church that held 10,000 or more worshippers! The primary purpose of church singing is the instilment of the faith to the people. Music is a powerful means to that end. In fact even the great heretics of the Church such as Arius knew the power of music and chose it as his medium by which to spread his poison. In connection to the singing by the faithful prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century – St. John Chrysostom said their voices were replaced by that of the deacon – who went back and forth between the people and the altar. When you see a deacon in a full hierarchal liturgy – one will observed that back and forth motion.

One immediately notices upon entering the church that the Orthodox employ no instrumentation as the human voice is the ultimate instrument used to praise God. Our music is also meant to compliment the worship, so instrumentation represents more of a challenge in that regard. Although we know that certain musical instruments accompanied the reciting of the Psalms in ancient Jewish Temple Worship. Some expert church musician's say we can never rule out what types of musical developments may occur in the Church – but presently, musical instruments and how they are used in society today, do not fit within the context of Orthodox worship.

Most of the church's music is ancient, however today we see more and more contemporary composers within the church producing music that is more in line with American tastes. Personally I want to avoid much of this music – it's simply hard to do better than what the ancients complied. The oldest known hymn in the Church is believed to be “O Gladsome Light” sung at every Vespers service – it dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century!

Something that is important for all people is good music! Our choir is the single most important aspect of our worship. People who come to visit us will be more inclined to return if our music is well done and beautiful. While our music is very different from other church experiences out there – ours seeks to teach and inspire and is not focused on entrainment or as “interludes” in the worship. Because we are a small congregation and our choir is small, I emphasize the choir as the clear leader of our music. I want to encourage the people of God to sing, but please keep in mind the dynamics of our situation. A not so talented, loud, or off key singer in our small setting can present a difficulty for the choir. *Fr. Lawrence*