



TRANSFIGURATION  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
PARISH NEWSLETTER  
"THE NARROW WAY"  
FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018

*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. . . . Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*  
(St. Luke 4:13-14)

---

Rev. Father Sava Leida, Presiding Priest  
1936 S. Summit Avenue, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57105  
Church office: 605-334-5301 Father Sava's mobile: 605-321-0582  
Our church website: [transfigurationoc.org](http://transfigurationoc.org)  
email: [frsava@gmail.com](mailto:frsava@gmail.com)

---

### FROM FATHER SAVA

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Sometimes I'm asked, "Father, why did you convert to the Orthodox Christian Faith?"

Believe it or not, this is a tough question to answer! It's kind of like being asked, "When did you become a Packers fan?", or "When did pizza become your favorite food?", or "When did you know that she was the only one for you?"

Why is it hard? Well, for one thing, since our family converted to Orthodoxy over thirty years ago, it's difficult to recall details. It was a lifetime ago. Glory to God, I've now been an Orthodox Christian for more than half my life. The "why" of my conversion no longer interests me, because most of the things that tortured my soul in those days are no longer burning issues for me after three decades of Orthodox Christian living. Orthodoxy turned out to be exactly what I'd always longed for, though I didn't fully realize this until I came to a kind of crisis.

Having been educated in Church history, ancient languages, and the writings of many ancient Church fathers, I knew what Church life looked like in the first millennium. I'd become painfully aware that what I'd experienced in the tradition in which I'd been raised,

though it preserved a few good things, only remotely resembled the authentic catholic and apostolic Church of the time of the holy martyrs and holy fathers.

I came to understand that that the Orthodox Church, for all its warts and bruises, has preserved faithfully the fullness of the original Christian Faith, the Faith that was imparted by our Lord Jesus Christ to His Holy Apostles through the Holy Spirit. It is this complete and unaltered faith that, when practiced faithfully and consistently, creates the ethos (way of living) that conquers death, restores the true human image, and bestows salvation and eternal life. *No other faith is capable of this.*

Realizing this was important, but we would never have "made the jump" on that basis alone.

The main factor in our conversion was the *faithful witness of individual Orthodox Christians* whose paths, by God's providence, crossed ours.

I remember, first of all, a kind, wise priest, himself a convert, who became a mentor and spiritual father to us. He prayed for us, encouraged us with countless phone calls and letters, helped us find the way ahead, and assured us that it was possible, with God's help, to find the home of our heart's desire in the Orthodox Church.

I also recall with gratitude a dear family friend, a devout Orthodox Christian. She never proselytized us, but, when she saw our desire for Orthodoxy, she encouraged us at every turn. And then there were the simple, faithful Orthodox believers of the Orthodox churches we attended as catechumens, who welcomed us and taught us through their "way of being" how to embrace the Orthodox Way ourselves.

At one point not long after our conversion, I reached another kind of crisis. I'd been dismayed to discover that some men in our Orthodox parish were members of a secret society whose teachings are incompatible with the Orthodox Christian Faith. Being young and naive, I was scandalized.

I'll never forget our spiritual father's calm reply to my frantic letter (this was before email existed). He wrote: **"The Church is what She is. Within the Church as She is, we have the opportunity to work out our salvation."**

Father was teaching me an important lesson: There is only one Church, established by our Lord Jesus Christ and existing on earth. Christ did not establish many churches—only one. We can be saved if we are in communion with that one and only Church, but we cannot be saved within a false "church," or some ideal Church of our imagination. This was the main thing I had to realize.

Along the way, we learned that, in this age, the one Church is composed of three categories of people:

1. Saints;

2. Those who are striving to become saints;
3. Baptized—but essentially dead—souls, who care little for Christian Faith and life in Christ but who show up occasionally for souvlaki/sarma/burek/borscht/pierog/kibbee, and to tell the others what to do.

The Lord showed me that, especially as a recent convert, it was not my job to teach the Church, or—God forbid—to try to separate the weeds from the wheat. It was God’s job, not mine, in His own way to change a weed into wheat, and to weed His own garden, the Church.

My only job was to weed my own heart and to make sure that I was living my (one and only) life in communion with the (one and only) Church and in harmony with Her teachings, to the best of my ability. Only then might I possibly, some day, be of use to our Lord and His Church in some way.

**“The Church is what She is, and therein we have the opportunity to work out our salvation.”**

*Grant eternal rest, O Lord, to the souls of your faithful servants of blessed memory, Boniface the Priest and Magdalini, and number them with the righteous who shine like the stars of the heavens.*

A blessed and spiritually-profitable Great Lent to everyone!

With abundant love in Christ our God,

Father Sava

## SAVE THE DATE!

Planning for our parish’s **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** is well underway. We’ll be celebrating all year, but the main events will take place during the **first weekend in October** (October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Our father in Christ and ruling hierarch, His Eminence **Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver**, has indicated that he intends to join us for the weekend. It has been many years since His Eminence has been able to visit Sioux Falls, so we eagerly await his presence in our midst.



The planning committee is working on the schedule, which will include Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon, followed by a Grand Banquet Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, we’ll serve Orthros and Hierarchical Liturgy, followed by a special catered fellowship hour with our Bishop.

We’d like to invite former members and friends of the church who now live elsewhere. If you think of someone who should receive an invitation, please give their name and address to Kathy Theodosopoulos so that we can include them in our mailings.

Photos of church life, especially from the earliest years, are a treasure to be shared. If you have prints or

negatives of such photos, you may loan them to Father Sava, who will scan them and promptly return them to you safely. We’ll have a slide show made with historic photos at the Grand Banquet.

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church’s founding is a wonderful opportunity to give thanks to God for those who have “gone before us to their rest,” and to rededicate ourselves to the happy work of sharing our Holy Orthodoxy with our friends and neighbors, as God gives us opportunities, to the glory of His holy Name.

## GREAT LENT

The season of repentance is rapidly approaching. Great and Holy Lent begins on Pure Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup>.

Right now, we are passing through the Sundays leading up to the Great Fast—Zacchaeos, Publican and Pharisee, Prodigal Son, Last Judgment, and the Sunday of Forgiveness. The services of each of these five Sundays are designed to create in us the right spirit, so we will enter into Great Lent in the most soul-profitable way.

One feature of Lent is the increased number of services that are celebrated throughout the week.

The first week (February 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>) we will celebrate:

- Great Compline on Monday and Tuesday;
- the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday, followed by our lenten potluck;
- Great Compline on Tuesday;
- Small Compline with the Salutations to the Theotokos (Akathist Hymn) on Friday.
- Saturday of the first week is dedicated to the memory of Saint **Theodore the Tyro**, whose miracle of the kolyva we celebrate, together with the third of three consecutive **Soul Saturdays** when we commemorate all those who have reposed in faith.
- The first Sunday is the **Sunday of Orthodoxy**, on which we commemorate the witness of the Holy Icons to the central truth of our Faith: the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God.

In succeeding weeks of Lent, we will serve Great Compline on Monday evenings, the Liturgy of the Presanctified on Wednesdays, and Small Compline with the Salutations on Fridays, until we arrive at the Great and Holy Week.

Much of the benefit of Great Lent comes from our private efforts in increasing our prayer, fasting, and works of mercy. However, there is also much to be gained by spending more time than usual praying together in church. Of course, Lent is also an ideal time to prepare ourselves and make a deep, soul-cleansing confession, and then, after more preparation, to receive Holy Communion for the remission of sins and the healing of soul and body.