

and to serve his own brotherhood at the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Petras.

In 2004, he was tonsured to the Great Schema, taking the name Melchisedek, and raised to the rank of Archimandrite.

On April 2, 2009, Archimandrite Melchisedek was elected Bishop of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America. He returned to the US during Great Lent of 2009 to celebrate Holy Week and Pascha in parishes of the Diocese of Western Pennsylvania.

Since returning to the US and taking up residence at the Western Pennsylvania Diocesan Center, Fr. Melchisedek has begun familiarizing himself with diocesan parishes and institutions and taking on administrative duties in the diocese.

On the Ascension of our Lord

Without leaving the Father's bosom,
having lived with mankind as a Man,
today You have ascended in glory from the Mount,
mercifully raising our fallen nature,
enthroning it with the Father on high.
The Angelic Hosts were amazed with awe,
seeing Your great love for mankind!
With them, we glorify Your condescension to us;
with them, we glorify Your Ascension from us.
By it, You filled Your Disciples and Your Mother with great joy.
By their prayers, and through Your great mercy,
make us, Your chosen people, worthy of this joy!

— *from Vespers of Ascension*

Rector's Letter

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

We are coming to the season of summer vacations and travel plans. Did you ever consider how much attention the Church gives to travel? Every service, we pray for “those who travel by land, by sea, and by air.” There are special prayers that can be said for anyone about to go on a journey. Much spiritual counsel has been written for those who are traveling. Perhaps this seems a little odd: we’re just going for a little “R & R,” after all. What’s the big deal?

Well, the Scriptures see travel as a really big deal. It’s dangerous: think of the man attacked by thieves on the way to Jericho in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It’s a time of temptation: think of the Israelites complaining for 40 years in the wilderness, “Are we there yet?” It can also be an opportunity to meet the Lord: think of how many people met Jesus Christ as he was traveling himself, and changed their lives.

The temptation is to leave behind not just our business and chores but our consciences, too: to “take a vacation from God,” or even to engage in pursuits we’d be ashamed of at home. And then we’re surprised when we come back feeling worse than when we left! A true vacation is one that refreshes the soul — and who better than God himself to ask for that refreshment?

So it is worth preparing spiritually for our vacations, so that they may be a blessing and “lead us not into temptation.” Travel is still dangerous today: why not make a point of preparing for communion and asking for the special prayers before going on a journey? We also need to take the time to find the local church where we are going, and to let the local priest know we are coming.

Pack your prayer book along with your sunscreen, too. It’s good to break out of our routines, but it makes it hard to keep the good

habits of prayer. We actually need to make extra efforts to pray when we travel. Otherwise, we lose our spiritual compass and can find ourselves in distress at a time when we imagined we would be at our best.

On the other hand, if we make the effort to meet the Lord even as we travel, he himself will give us rest and refreshment:

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day [of the Lord's resurrection] to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know him. ... Now it came to pass, as he sat at the table with them, that he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew him; and he vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us on the road, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:13-16, 30-32)

Who might we meet on the road?

Yours in Christ,



Please note:

Fr. Joshua will be on vacation from June 12 to 20. Our Dean, Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, has not yet identified who will be leading the service on Sunday, June 14 — most likely a deacon. This will also mean that there will be no Vespers in Meriden on June 13 and June 20. Please plan to attend one of our neighboring parishes for Vespers instead. Finally, if there is a pastoral matter that requires the immediate attention of a priest, please contact John Stoidis, who will coordinate with our dean.

After High School, Thomas Pleska first attended the University of Michigan School of Music and then Miami University in Oxford, OH, where he completed a BA with a major in Philosophy, with aspirations to eventually receive a doctorate and teach. After graduating he entered the business world, first in a stock brokerage and later in real estate.

In the early 1980s, he made the decision to take a Master of Divinity degree at St. Vladimir's Seminary. During his studies, under the deanship of Protopresbyter John Meyendorff, Thomas was encouraged to consider ordination. Through several encounters with monastic spiritual fathers, including Elder Dionysios of the Simono-Petras Monastery on Mount Athos and Archimandrite Dimitry Egouroff, a monk of Old Valaam, he also made the decision to take the monastic tonsure after ordination.

Thomas Pleska was ordained to the Diaconate in 1985, on the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, November 21, by His Grace, Bishop Job. In 1986, on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, he was ordained to the Priesthood by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius.

In the Fall of 1986, Fr. Thomas accepted the position of Instructor of Dogmatic Theology at St. Tikhon's Seminary. During his time teaching at St. Tikhon's, he served as chaplain at the Holy Myrrhbearers Women's Monastery in Otego NY, and as interim pastor at the Churches of the Holy Trinity in Pottstown, PA, St. Michael in Old Forge, PA, and St. Basil in Simpson, PA. It was also at this time that he made his acquaintance with the Elder Sophrony and his monastery in Essex, England.

From 1989 to 1998, Fr. Thomas served as rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Meriden, CT.

In 1998, Fr. Thomas traveled to Greece where he served first at the Monastery of the Holy Cross, an international women's community in Thebes. In 2003, he was transferred to serve as chaplain at the women's monastery of St. George the Great Martyr

Archimandrite Melchisedek (Pleska)
to be consecrated Bishop of Pittsburgh
June 27, 2009

It's official: Fr. Melchisedek, formerly Fr. Thomas Pleska who served our parish for many years, will be consecrated Bishop of Pittsburgh. This news report was originally published at the OCA website, www.oca.org.

PITTSBURGH, PA [OCA Communications] — On Saturday, June 27, 2009, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah and the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America will consecrate Archimandrite Melchisedek (Pleska) Bishop of Pittsburgh and the Diocese of Western Pennsylvania.

The rite of consecration will take place at a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, Pennsylvania, beginning at 8:30 AM that Saturday. On Friday evening, June 26, the Rite of Nomination and Proclamation will take place at the cathedral at 7:00 PM, immediately before Vespers.

Archimandrite Melchisedek was born Thomas Alexander Pleska, in Dayton, Ohio, August 20, 1942. His father, Alexander Peter Pleska, was born in Byelorussia near Brest-Litovsk, and immigrated with his parents to the US in 1925. His mother Johanna (Eugenia Stachuk) Pleska was born in Cleveland, Ohio, of Ukrainian immigrant parents, and baptized in St. Theodosius Cathedral.

At the time he was growing up in Dayton there was no Orthodox parish present, and he and his sister received their Christian formation in local Protestant parishes and taken to the “Russian” Church in Cleveland for important Holy Days, and other visits. It was as an adult that Fr. Melchisedek describes himself as becoming a member in the Orthodox Church at Christ the Savior Church in Cincinnati, under the pastorship of Fr. Daniel Rentel.

Around the Parish

We are preparing a **new version of the Parish Directory and need your updated information.** Thank you to the many people who have already sent in their forms. If you did not already respond, please look for the enclosed form in this newsletter and return it in person to the candle desk at church, to the parish mailing address, or to frjmosher@sspeterpaul.org.

This month, we are **appealing for contributions toward the parish fuel bill.** Yes, the warm months are here, but in the current unpredictable economic environment, it proved necessary to pay for our fuel up-front this year — no company was committing to a reasonable price for monthly billing. This means there is a sharp squeeze on our budget right now, with a benefit to be seen next year. Please do consider making an offering using the enclosed envelope. (We apologize, electronic subscribers: you will need to use your own envelopes!)

A request from our treasurer: when putting a donation in the plate toward the fulfillment of your pledge, please put your name on the envelope to ease recording.

Many have continued to **pray for the baby Owen Bernheim.** We have recently heard from Owen's parents that his tumor has not grown at all, thanks be to God! It will continue to be monitored but at this time no treatment will be done, which is wonderful as he truly is too small for the treatment not to cause other damage. Please continue to keep him in your prayers.

The Feast of Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Pascha, on Sunday, June 7. On that day, we commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, when the apostles began their public preaching and the Church was revealed to all. Until that day, we

honor our Lord's rising from the grave by remaining standing in prayer, but at Kneeling Vespers of Pentecost (celebrated immediately after the Divine Liturgy that Sunday), we kneel for the first time.

We are holding the **second tag sale of the year on Saturday, June 10**, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, at the Community Center, 305 Center Street. Volunteers are always welcome. Also, we have a demand for costume jewelry; we would be grateful for any donations in that regard. For more information, please speak to John Stoidis ((203) 269-1575).

Since our **parish feast of the Holy Apostles Peter & Paul**, June 29, this year falls on a Monday, we will be holding our festal dinner on Sunday, following the usual Sunday Liturgy, with Great Vespers after the dinner and the Liturgy for the Apostles on Monday morning. **We stand in need of a coordinator for this dinner.** If you are willing, please speak with John Stoidis.

The annual **FORCC (Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut) Banquet will be held on Sunday, Oct. 4**. This year, we are inviting parishioners to sign up early, because we expect the event to sell out. The new head of the OCA, **Metropolitan Jonah will deliver the keynote address.** Many are looking forward to hearing more about his vision of a healthy and ambitious Orthodoxy in America. If you would like to purchase a ticket, please speak to Alexia Tassmer: adults \$35, children \$10, with reservations ending Sept 20th (if it doesn't sell out first). Dinner choices this year are Stuffed Fillet of Scrod **or** Stuffed Chicken Breast. All proceeds go to benefit the work of FORCC to promote Orthodoxy in Connecticut.

Also, each year the Benefit Dinner features a program journal. **Advertisements are available for parishes, individuals, and businesses** in sizes to fit various budgets. Again, please speak to Alexia if you are interested.

On Holiness and the Holy Spirit

by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom)

As we celebrate Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, it is good to reflect on what "holiness" means. The following is an excerpt from God and Man, by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), p. 93.

All holiness is God's holiness in us: it is a holiness that is participation and, in a certain way, more than participation, because as we participate in what we can receive of God, we become a revelation of that which transcends us. Being a limited light, we reveal the Light. But we should also remember that in this life in which we are striving towards holiness, our spirituality should be defined in very objective and precise terms. When we read books on spirituality ... we see that spirituality ... is repeatedly defined as an attitude, a state of soul, an inner condition, a type of interiority, and so on. In reality, if you look for the ultimate definition and try to discover the inner core of spirituality, you find that spirituality does not consist of the states of soul that are familiar to us, but that it is the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in us, by us and through us in the world. It is not fundamentally a matter of the way in which we express it.

There is an absolute objectivity both to holiness and to the spirituality which is expressed in it. Spirituality is that of the Spirit; didn't St. Paul tell us that it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to say: "Abba, Father"? Doesn't he mean that it is the Holy Spirit, God himself, who shapes in us the knowledge of God? And, furthermore, there is no other holiness than that of God; it is as the Body of Christ that we can participate in holiness, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.



Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

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Parish Directory Update Form

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Email Address: _____

Family Members: _____

Birthdays: _____

Anniversary: _____

Please fill out this information for our new parish directory, and return it to the candle desk at church, or by mail to SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, P.O. Box 334, Meriden, CT, 06450. Or you can email us the requested information: fjmosher@sspeterpaul.org or dzaved@comcast.net.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thess. 5:16–18).