



SAIN'TS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

February, 2014

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church
A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America
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Birthdays in February

8 – Audrey Gale	13 – Emilee Penree
8 – Samuel Mezik	20 – Wayne Nuzum
10 – Larissa Lyszczarz	22 – Martha Mamrosch
11 – Eileen Brinck	27 – Marilyn Stevens

Memory Eternal

1 Julia Hladysz (1981)	13 Helen Brown (1993)
1 Leonard Corman (1991)	14 Julia Bruska (2000)
1 Dorothy Quackenbusg (2005)	15 Owen Dulak
2 John Garbera (1988)	16 John Yaworski (1977)
2 Helen Woods (1998)	16 Anna Kuzenech (1996)
4 Andrew Keblish (1975)	17 Andrew Yaneshak (1984)
4 Paul Shust Jr (2008)	18 Michael Kuncik (1980)
5 Stephen Sleciak Sr (1972)	21 Peter Slenska (1986)
5 Efrosina Krenichyn (1977)	22 Julia Hudyncia (1983)
5 Olga Nichols (1994)	23 Mary Mezick (2000)
8 Antonina Steckler (2007)	24 John Hubiak
10 Harry Hardish (1975)	26 Helen Pelko (2005)
10 Helen Halkovitch (1989)	28 Andrew Homyk (1984)
10 Theodosia Jago (2007)	28 Cornelius Mamrosch (1995)
13 Natalie Raspey (1973)	28 Louis Brelinsky (2004)
13 Andrew Bobak (1978)	

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

Feb 2	Debie and David Chlus	Mar 2	John Elnicky and Mark Petrochuk
Feb 9	Annual Parish Meeting	Mar 9	Anne Gale and Family
Feb 16	Norma and John Stehnach	Mar 16	Walt Tirenin and Steve Leve
Feb 23	Lyszczarz Family	Mar 23	Norma and John Stehnach
		Mar 30	M. Boncella and C. Sobolowski

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

281. Someone told me that there are more than 150 Psalms in the Psalter. Is that just a different way of numbering, or are there really more than 150 Psalms?

No, it's true – there is one more than 150 Psalms in the Psalter.

The difference in the way of numbering them depends on whether you use the Hebrew version (which the Protestant Bibles use) or if you use the Septuagint version (which the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bibles use). In the Septuagint version of the Psalms, after Psalm 150, there's one more

printed, which has the heading “*This psalm is ascribed to David as his own composition, though supernumerary, after he had fought in single combat with Goliath.*” The same heading is there before the psalm in Greek in the Septuagint, and in Slavonic in the Slavonic Psalter.

‘Supernumerary’ means ‘beyond or outside the prescribed number.’ In the Septuagint Bible, it says ‘and outside the number.’ In the Slavonic Psalter, it says ‘and outside the number of the 150 Psalms.’

This psalm is therefore not read in Church. But for your edification, we print it here.

1 I was small among my brethren, and youngest in my father’s house: I tended my father’s sheep.

2 My hands made a harp, and my fingers fashioned a lyre.

3 And who will declare it to my Lord? The Lord Himself, it is He who hears.

4 It was He who sent forth His messenger and took me from my father’s sheep, and anointed me with His anointing oil.

5 My brothers were handsome and tall, but the Lord was not pleased with them.

6 I went out to meet the Philistine; and he cursed me by his idols.

7 But I drew his own sword; I beheaded him, and removed reproach from the people of Israel.

Interestingly enough, this psalm, which was thought to exist only in Greek, was discovered in a leather document found in one of the Qumran caves, along with a number of the ‘canonical’ psalms, and several others. The text in Hebrew is significantly longer, indicating that this 151st psalm is a condensed recension of two Hebrew psalms. If the criterion for calling a text apocryphal is that it has no original Hebrew text, then for Psalm 151, the appellation ‘apocryphal’ is no longer accurate.

There are also a few more psalms which **are** apocryphal. They were probably written between the writing of the Old and New Testaments, and are probably Christian in origin.

282. A friend and I were discussing funerals the other day and I remembered a long time ago an Orthodox funeral I attended. It was the first time I saw it and I was aghast -- the priest absolved the body. At the end of the service, the priest approached the casket, took his stole in usual fashion as in confession and pronounced the words of absolution: “I absolve you from your sins...” I was told later that this was a Russian custom and that the older Russians expect it.... how can you absolve a dead person?

We’re used to seeing people being absolved after they make their confessions, which implies that they accept the words of the Confessor and are then absolved. When a corpse is absolved, no sins have been confessed, no response has been given to the confessor. So absolution of a corpse is not confession and should not be thought of in the same way.

Because we believe that we are all born with immortal souls, we believe that when we die, our souls live. As the former repository of the soul, the body is still holy and worthy of a final blessing.

Archpriest Andrew Morbey offers the following additional information:

“There are two things going on here and there may be some confusion between them.

“The first is that we have a prayer of absolution at the end of the funeral: " May the Lord Jesus Christ our God, who gave his divine command to his holy Disciples and Apostles, that they should bind and loose the sins of men, and hast given to his Church the power to do the same, forgive thee, my spiritual child, all the sins committed in this life, both voluntary and involuntary: Now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."

[“Or perhaps instead the popular longer form: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his divine grace, as also by the gift and power vouchsafed unto his holy Disciples and Apostles, that they should bind and loose

the sins of men: (For he said unto them: Receive ye the Holy Spirit: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained. And whatsoever ye shall bind and loose upon earth shall be bound or loosed also in heaven.) By that same power, also, transmitted unto us from them, this my spiritual child is absolved, through me, unworthy though I be, from all things wherein, as mortal, he hath sinned against God, whether in word, or deed, or thought, and with all his senses, whether voluntarily or involuntarily; whether wittingly or through ignorance. If he be under the ban or excommunication of a Bishop, or of a Priest; or hath incurred the curse of his father or mother; or hath fallen under his own curse; or hath sinned by any oath; or hath been bound, as man, by any sins whatsoever, but hath repented him thereof, with contrition of heart: he is now absolved from all those faults and bonds. May all those things which proceed from the weakness of his mortal nature be consigned to oblivion, and be remitted unto him: Through His loving-kindness; through the prayers of our most holy, and blessed, and glorious Lady, the Mother of our Lord and ever-virgin Mary; of the holy, glorious and all-laudable Apostles, and of all Saints. Amen.]

“At this point this prayer in printed form might be placed in the hand of the deceased and / or in some traditions the priest pours in wine and oil over the body in the casket. We just sprinkle with holy water.

“The second thing is, of course, the use of what many people would call an almost Roman absolution at confession in the Russian church - "My child _____, may our Lord and God Christ Jesus by the mercy of His love absolve thee from thy sins; and I, His unworthy priest, in virtue of the authority committed to me, absolve thee and declare thee absolved of thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen" as opposed to the traditional (or Greek) form: “God through Nathan the prophet forgave David his sins; and Peter shedding bitter tears over his denial; and the Adulteress weeping at his feet; and the Publican and the Prodigal Son. May this same God, through me, a sinner, forgive + you everything in this life and in the life to come. And may he make you stand uncondemned before his awesome judgment-seat, for he is blessed forever and ever. Amen”.”

So what I think has happened was that the questioner has heard a priest or priests who, knowing that a prayer of absolution is said before closing the casket, have simply said the one they use at confession - the Russian one, introduced some say by Peter Moghila – “and I, His unworthy priest, in virtue of the authority committed to me, absolve thee and declare thee absolved of thy sins” - rather than the one appointed in the books for the funeral.

284. I am a Reader. It was always my impression that I was made a Reader for a particular place (“tonsured a Reader of the parish of Saint So-and-so” or something like that were the words). I was also under the impression that Readers should have their cassocks on only in church---so I wouldn’t drive to church in one, for instance. So my questions are: 1) when is it appropriate to wear one’s cassock? 2) Where is it appropriate (if I visit another parish, should I wear it: always, never, with advance permission from the priest there? How about at pro-life marches?)?

When a man is tonsured ‘of the church of Saint N in city Z’ he is assigned to work in one particular place, but he is also tonsured in and for the Church of Jesus Christ. Being assigned to serve in one place does not rule out serving anywhere in the Orthodox Christian Church where you are needed. Outside your assigned parish church, you also function as a representative of your parish.

Do as your bishop or pastor instructs. If you are a seminarian or you are a tonsured reader and are ‘vested’ with the cassock, you may wear it all the time. This is made clear on the first day a young man

enters seminary, when he approaches holding the folded cassock in his hands, the bishop who gives his blessing for him to wear the cassock. A man who is a tonsured reader may be buried wearing his cassock.

Sometimes in parishes the pastor will ask a man to read in church and by virtue of that request, the man wears a cassock. Technically, such men are only blessed to read when the services are taking place so they are not to wear the cassock outside of church. Blessed readers are not permitted to wear the cassock when they die. Being a ‘blessed reader’ is an anomaly, which should be corrected at the bishop’s next visit to your parish.

Usually, when one is a tonsured reader, he may wear the cassock all day every day. Blessed readers should ask permission to wear the cassock in other churches or during the pro-life march. The bishop doesn’t usually withhold his blessing to wear the cassock outside services in the reader’s own parish.

Although you may wear your cassock in a parish which isn’t your own, you shouldn’t assume that you are entitled to serve there. It’s polite to wait to be asked to read in another parish. That may not be church law, but it’s good etiquette.

By the way, it’s not a good idea to drive when you’re wearing a cassock, as your feet can get caught in the bottom of the cassock and the pedals and cause an accident.

And one more point – if you’re wearing your cassock, you should be on your best behavior so that it reflects positively on your respect for the order of readers, on your Bishop and on your home parish.

285. I heard that the Methodists recently decided to stop using the name ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ because they think it’s sexist and incorrect in today’s world. So they use ‘Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier’ instead. My friend and I got into an argument - the Orthodox Church will not recognize baptisms not made in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will it?

No. The Orthodox Church recognizes only baptisms made in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We know no other God.

You should be warned that there are elements of the Roman Catholic Church which now use this formula (or a similar one) in blessings — though we understand that the bishop in charge of the order of priests who were doing that censured them. Other Protestant groups also use this new version (or ones similar to it) instead of the name of the Trinity.

286. Do we have to come to Confession to our own parish priest or can we go to any priest? I’m still confused.

According to the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, in order to be considered a ‘member in good standing’ of the church, you must go to confession and communion to your own parish priest at least once a year. According to Orthodox canon law, which was written in a time when there was no public transportation and when the family car was non-existent, this is a strong message that people who seek the sacraments outside their own communities are to have letters from their bishops or pastors giving them permission to do so, usually in connection with their being on a journey. The idea of community and belonging to that community is taken for the norm, and though the idea of ‘belonging’ to a parish didn’t exist, the idea that you were part of a particular community was strongly felt even without regulations and discussions.

Of course, in our modern world, the situation has changed greatly. There are two understandings of Confession which didn’t hold true for the Church in the past. The law and tradition in Russia, where, in order to keep your job, you had to go to confession once a year, eventually translated itself into Russian-American parish membership requirements, though in Russia, the ‘annual’ confession no

longer has any force of law. And the custom is, in Churches in the Greek tradition, where confession has, to all intents and purposes, died out, is also an annual Confession. Confession in Greece is in no way tied to Communion – people commune regularly, with or without confession.

The idea that Confession must precede each Communion is one which existed, then, only in the life of one particular group of Orthodox people in the United States and to a degree, in Canada, namely the people of the former Metropolia, now the Orthodox Church in America, in the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate and the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. The idea that Confession must precede every Communion was found also in Roman Catholic custom, brought into American Orthodoxy through the Uniat past.

Technically, there is no canon which forbids you to go to any priest you like for Confession. But the question must be asked – why are you not attending your own parish, and why would you want to confess to a priest who isn't the priest of your community? If it's a question of you traveling and wanting to commune at another parish, the normal thing to do is to contact the pastor of that parish and ask if it's acceptable, and if you need to have confession before your communion. If the answer is yes, then go to confession there. The saying 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do' is more than just a saying – it's part of the etiquette of the Orthodox Church – do as is done in the place where you are and don't contradict or criticize or say 'that's not what we do at our parish' because you aren't at your parish. When invited to dinner at someone's house, if they have a custom in that house of doing things a certain way, it isn't your prerogative to tell them how to live their lives in their own home. Courtesy says 'do as they do.'

If you go to another parish and ask to go to confession, normally the priest will ask you why you are coming to him, and not going to your own priest. If the answer is that you're having a 'problem' with your own priest, that he told you to do something you don't like, that you got in an argument with him, that your feelings were hurt by a sermon or an announcement or whatever other reason, then the priest in the other community will normally refuse to hear your confession and will send you back to your priest to 'work it out' with him. That's the way it's supposed to be – unfortunately, not every priest knows enough to ask these questions. If you 'pull a fast one' by going to confession to a priest other than the priest you're having a 'difference of opinion' with, you have transgressed a major spiritual principle, for which you will be held responsible at the Last Judgment. You can rectify this by returning to the priest who you have a problem with, and confessing to him, and, if he's your pastor, requesting a blessing (asking permission) to go to a different priest for confession.

The worst scenario would be that you are going to a different priest because you were given an order or were advised in confession (which is binding to you) and you don't want to obey that order or advice.

When daddy says you can't do something, and you don't like that answer, and you go ask mommy instead because you know mommy will give you an answer you like and she has a soft touch, you're playing a clever little childish game. Usually it won't result in much, but sometimes, you leave yourself open to a spanking when daddy and mommy find out they've been played for chumps. In the Orthodox Church, you can't play God for a sucker. You may get away with your behavior of playing one authority figure off another, but you won't get away with it forever. Sooner or later, if you want to grow spiritually, you'll have to put away your childishness, and grow up into someone who respects the spiritual authority of the pastor and confessor and grow into someone who faces the music for his own behavior.

American principles of shopping around and hunting for the best bargain, freedom to do as you will, popular psychology, political correctness, institutionalized pluralism, thumbing your nose at

authority, looking for loopholes in everything, right to privacy, considering rebelliousness to be a virtue, picking and choosing and so on, are strongly influencing Christian life in the Orthodox Church, and these are NOT at all positive influences, and we must fight them and resist them at every turn.

Furthermore, though there may not be a particular canon law or even statute or bylaw regarding your confession, there is an even stronger rule which needs to be considered – the Command of Jesus Himself, in the Sermon on the Mount, where He says, *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to the men of old, You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* (Matthew 5.20-24). If this is the command of Jesus, if this principle applies to the relationship of one Christian to another, it applies even more to the relationship between pastor and parishioner.

If you hide the truth and don't confess humbly and openly every sin you commit or every sin of omission, every argument, every disagreement, every disobedience, every lost opportunity to do good instead of harm, every avoidance of fulfilling God's commands in your life – whether taught in Scripture or coming from the mouth of God's minister blessed by the Holy Spirit with authority to bind or loose sins, you are twice guilty or doubly guilty of those sins.

If you attempt to play games with Confession or any sacrament, you will get burned. The Prophet Isaiah says, *"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."* (Isaiah 6:67). The priest quotes the seraph after he gives you Communion, (which used to be distributed not with a spoon, but with tongs!) and, as he wipes your lips, he says, *"Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."* And again, numerous places in the Three Canons of preparation before Holy Communion, and in the verses of instruction for the prayers before Holy Communion give us plenty of frightening warnings, *"When you intend, O Man, to eat the Master's Body, approach with fear, lest you be burned – for behold It is fire! before drinking the Divine Blood in Communion, make peace with those who have grieved you. Only then may you dare to eat the Mystical Food"*.

287. My church recently did a survey to ask what parishioners liked, disliked, would like to see changed, etc. Upon reviewing these, our priest found several requests that an organ be allowed to accompany the choir during services. We would like to prepare a response to this request that is based on the teachings of the Church and the canons. Could anyone post specific information / canons regarding the use of instrumental music in church or direct me where to find it?

One of the first things to understand is that the likes and dislikes of parishioners have no bearing on the liturgical and theological life of the Church.

There is a canon law of the church which says that musical instruments are not to be used in the services, that only the human voice is appropriate for praising God. The explanation from the priest that these are the canon laws of the Church should be sufficient response.

The reason for not using musical instruments is that God created us. What we offer back to God as our offering (and our communal prayer is one of our offerings to God) has to come from us, from our hearts, minds and bodies. And musical instruments are artificial, man-made, not divinely made. So,

though music from musical instruments may be pleasing to us, in the eyes of the Church it is seen as something mechanical. An offering which no other created being can offer is intelligent song sung from the heart, from the depth of our souls.

On the other hand, in certain jurisdictions in the United States it has come to be a custom to have an organ accompany the choir. In some cases, with some choirs, the organ could be done away with once the choir learns the music. In other cases, the organ should be played much, much louder.

288. (from the Internet) I understand the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile has canonized the former Czar, but not the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate. What does the Orthodox Church in America say on this subject? Response: The OCA, being the local church in America, can not canonize saints outside of her territory, and thus waits for the Church of Russia to make a decision. Another Response: ...But that does not prohibit local and individual remembrance of the Royal Martyrs (or any of the New Martyrs of Russia, for that matter).

Where does the idea that anyone anywhere anytime decide for himself or herself that someone is a saint, and begin to venerate them “locally”?

This sort of ‘grass roots’ ‘get out the vote’ self-appointed democratic ‘local veneration’ without church approval leads to chaos and disorder.

This may come from a misunderstanding of the idea of “glorification,” or “canonization.” Even the idea of glorification is a later development, but for us it pretty much means the whole Church celebrates a Saint together – and follows private veneration by the faithful.

Of course, now that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia has returned to the Patriarchate of Moscow, all recognize the members of the Imperial Family as canonized saints – Royal Martyrs.

289. (from the Internet) How common would it be to see a baptism at which the child has two godfathers and four godmothers? Are multiple (more than two, that is) godparents usual or unusual?

It not only would be rare to see such a thing, it would never happen.

First, let us say that the historical Orthodox word for godparent is ‘witness.’

The norm is for there to be one godparent of the same sex as the child. In some traditions, it is the custom for there to be one godfather and one godmother for the child. Unless more than one child was being baptized, seeing more than one or two godparents at a baptism is unusual, and illogical – how can one person have more than one [god]father and one [god]mother?

290. (from the Internet) Based on 1 Corinthians 11:14, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” why do Orthodox clergy vow never to cut their hair, either on top of the head, or on the face? Men letting their hair on top of the head grow long seems to go against Saint Paul’s teaching.

Some say that Our Lord and Saint John the Baptist were Nazarites (or Nazirites). That is, they had taken vows never to cut their hair or beards and to live lives of strict chastity and asceticism. Orthodox Christian monastics follow the same path. Some of the secular clergy also do the same.

However, long hair and a beard were the signs of authority in the Byzantine Empire and in the Turkish Empire. That is, if you were an official of the Empire, you had long hair and a beard. Laymen were prohibited from wearing long hair or having beards.

So, in general, Saint Paul’s admonition is in force. However, the vow a deacon or priest makes to God supercedes the direction given by the Apostle. He, in a way, is distinguishing the worldly from the

“temple service.” This understanding has been part of the Orthodox ethos since Apostolic times. By the very appearance of a clergyman, the faithful should be reminded of their calling and the need to be constantly aware of the “unworldliness” of the Christian. Even in the persecution of Christians in the communist times, many were brought to repentance in the concentration camps by the sight of a bearded priest, even though he was not permitted to wear his cross.

I know from personal experience that when I am in public, most everyone recognizes that I am an Orthodox clergyman because I always wear my cassock and cross.

The significance of males wearing their hair long has probably changed since the time of Saint Paul.

291. (from the Internet) A three-year boy asked me why I lit a candle. I answered as simply as I could; “Because I’m telling God that I’m here.” Obviously, I need help. Any suggestions? On both a 3-year old level, and a more sophisticated level (suitable for my pea-brain).

The lighting of a candle represents our prayer to God. Light is symbolic of life (the ‘living’ flame). When we offer something to God, we offer back to Him what He has given to us, and life is the greatest of His gifts, next to forgiveness. So, your candle also represents you existentially. You could say that your candle represents your prayer – for the health of someone or in memory of someone who is fallen asleep. Or, as your inspired response has it: it just tells God that you’re there.

292. Are the penances in the Canon Laws punishments?

No. Penance is given to help bring you to repentance. They teach. They never punish.

293. Is it appropriate to tell one’s confessor in confession that one has sinned against him personally? Is it better to say: 1) I have held others in contempt, or 2) I have held members of the clergy in contempt, or 3) I have held you, Father X, in contempt for your pastoral blunders? Or is it better to find another confessor for the occasion? (from the Internet)

It is not appropriate to tell the priest who is hearing your confession that you have sinned against him. Doing so would be a misuse of confession.

Probably, your suggestion number 2, “I have held members of the clergy in contempt,” is the best idea. Perhaps, because of these words, the priest hearing your confession might be moved to examine his own conscience to see if he might be the cause of such a confession. But if you were to confess, ‘I have contempt for you, Father, because of your pastoral blunders,’ it sounds like an accusation. The priest would be offended and hurt and would perhaps seek only to justify himself.

You should not seek another confessor for the occasion – your spiritual father is your pastor, unless you have a blessing to have a different spiritual father. God gave you to this spiritual father for a reason.

If your spiritual father, your pastor, is so inept that his inability is causing serious problems, you should speak with the Dean of your Deanery, who will bring the matter to the Bishop’s attention, if necessary. Perhaps a quiet word in the ear of your pastor, from a senior priest or a priest in spiritual authority, will be enough to wake him up to his shortcomings. But coming from you, such a word would be a sign of your pride. It’s not our place to correct our elders – but it is the responsibility of the Dean or the Bishop to do so.

294. I know that the Canons say that menstruating women should not come to Church or be communed. Is this Canon still in force in our modern world?

Who is going to sit at the doors of the church and certify that each woman who desires to enter is not menstruating? Or who will certify that every male who desires to enter the church is not guilty of the shedding of blood or other infringements on the Canons? In Old Testament times and in the Early Church, there was no record of anyone fulfilling such a function. So it is up to the women to decide if they are in their 'time of the month' or not. And given the variety of health care products available today, the signs of menstrual bleeding can be covered and hidden.

Saint John Chrysostom's Homily III on Titus 1:15 and following, is a great discourse on what is clean and what is unclean. He concludes that the real uncleanness is from sin, malice, covetousness and wickedness.

The canons prevent anyone who is bleeding from receiving Holy Communion for fear that the Holy Communion will drain from the wound with the blood. According to the strict interpretation of the Canons anyone who cuts himself shaving, who breaks the skin for any reason, for example, who injects medication, is in a situation similar to the woman with her monthly issue of blood.

If you, out of piety, choose to obey the Canons of the Church and not receive Holy Communion when you are bleeding or have bled that day, and not even enter the Church on such a day, that is a good and salutary thing. But if you say that this is merely an old wives' tale not supported by science or clear thinking, that's up to you and on your conscience. The Canons of the Church have not been rescinded or abolished. Whether they are enforced or not is another thing. There's no general dispensation. Some pastors are more strict than others, so there's no easy answer to your question.

295. To what extent can a presbyter excommunicate someone for non-canonical (disciplinary) offenses without the approval of his bishop? Must such an excommunication be then ratified by the bishop?

There are different types of excommunication. The early Church, following the penitential discipline of the Jews, followed total excommunication – the sinner would not only be cut off from Holy Communion and the sacraments of the Church, but also be completely shunned and ostracized by the Body of Christ, the Church. Christians would be forbidden to speak with or eat with those who are excommunicate, and they would be refused entry into the Church.

Today, it might be more correct to say that a priest suspends from receiving Holy Communion even though etymologically 'excommunicate' means the same thing. A priest suspends someone from receiving Holy Communion until they repent or complete a penance because they have committed a particular sin. This does not require the approval of the bishop. But any penance which suspends a penitent from communion for a longer period of time does require that the priest inform the bishop.

When a priest excommunicates a sinner, he often requires that the sinner attend all the services until the completion of his penance and return to confession (without absolution) regularly as a sort of progress report. The excommunication given by a priest can be removed or lifted by completion of the penance, and the return of the sinner to confession for absolution.

The apostle warns us that we should do everything in good order. So when a priest excommunicates someone, it's his responsibility to report this to the bishop, in writing.

On the other hand, when a bishop excommunicates someone by means of a public document or announcement, the formal excommunication might include a statement about the length of time of the excommunication (and that might mean that there is no time limit) and the total prohibition of the sinner from the Church and its services until they repent. When a bishop gives a formal excommunication, it is usually lifted only after formal Confession and reconciliation, sometimes private – sometimes public.