



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

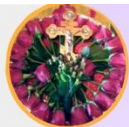
Father Dave Urban, *Pastor*
 Very Reverend Father John Brancho, *Pastor Emeritus*
 Timothy Martin, *Reader*
 Subdeacon Ryan Ferko
 Matthew Peifer, Stephen Brancho, & John Radick, *Cantors*
 Lawrence Martin, *Parish Council President*
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3rd Sunday of Lent

APRIL 4th



VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

HALF WAY TO PASCHA!

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6
 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

Wear your cross to church and
 kiss the cross
 each morning with a bow!

SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

SUNDAY, APRIL 4 #THE GREAT FAST
 Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra (362).
 9:30 – Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

TUESDAY, APRIL 6 #THE GREAT FAST
 9:30am Moleben to the Holy Cross

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7 #THE GREAT FAST
 FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS
6:00 pm Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. John

THURSDAY, APRIL 8 #THE GREAT FAST
 9 to 11 am Church open for personal prayer
 (enter from the side door)

FRIDAY, APRIL 9 #THE GREAT FAST
 9:30am Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts

SATURDAY, APRIL 10 #THE GREAT FAST
 9:30am All Soul Liturgy and Panachida (4 of 5)
 11 am – 1 pm Mystery of Holy Confession

SUNDAY, APRIL 11 #THE GREAT FAST
 PriestMartyr Mark, Bishop of Arethuseia (364)
 9:30 – Divine Liturgy of St. Basil
 Panachida: +Philip Fall (1-year); +Darline
 Labas (1-year)
 Tone 3; Liturgical Color: **Purple**

Monday's Spiritual Vitamin:

"Once you have cultivated the Jesus Prayer, you will become children of the palace. You will know the King's language and the ways of true royalty." +Saint Amphilochios of Patmos

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wed.)

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Great Lent 2021:

We Are In This Journey Together!

We are halfway in our Journey To Pascha. Great Lent prepares us for Holy Week, which prepares us for Pascha, the Feast of Feasts. Please reach out to Fr. Dave if you have questions about this important fasting period that is upon us.

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48 Days to the "Great Day" – If you did not receive the meditation book from Johnstown, please let Father know today.

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Panachida Offerings – Reminder: Panachidas (Memorial Services for the Departed) CANNOT be served on the Major Feast Days of our Lord including Palm Sunday (April 21st), Holy Pascha (April 28th), as well as on St. Thomas Sunday (May 5th).

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Spring Parish Maintenance Day will be **Saturday, April 17**. Please sign up in the church hall (or call Kathy Schrmack) if you are able to share your time and talent on this day.



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

(responded with: **Glorify be forever!**)

Slava Isusu Christu! (Slava na viki!)

We are happy that you have joined us today! It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning and we wish God's Blessings to all who visit with us today and hope you stop again soon! If you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy, please see Fr. Dave.

BULLETIN IS OFFERED:

If you wish to sponsor a bulletin In Honor of (anniversary, birthday, etc.) or In Memory of someone, please do so by signing up on the sheet in the church hall or by contacting Fr. Dave (email, text, or call). An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested.

4th Sunday of Lent

APRIL 11th



ST JOHN of the LADDER

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20
 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

Every time you climb stairs this week
 ask St. John to help you reach
 Paradise with the sign of the cross!

Lenten Coin Boxes – "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Mt 28:19) Coin boxes are available in the Church Hall to collect your spare change throughout the Great Fast for our Community Outreach next month (OCMC). More information is available at www.ocmc.org. "Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1 Tim 6:18)

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Palms & Pussywillows – We are collecting in the Church Hall our Palms and Pussywillows from prior years. These will not be simply thrown away, but they will respectfully be taken care of. Please bring yours in so that your home will be ready for the new ones in a few weeks!

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The Mystery of Confession - Confessions will be heard in the first pew in front of the Icon of Christ. Confessions will be heard following every service, from **11am – 1pm** on Saturdays during Great Lent (the side door will be open), and at other times by appointment: please contact Fr. Dave to arrange this. If you have a regular Spiritual Father, or wish to go to another Orthodox priest to have your confession heard, please let Fr. Dave know. Confessions will only be heard through Holy Wednesday.

Do not wait to plan your confession!

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Live-Broadcast – If you are unable to make it to church on Sunday morning, please pray along with our Diocesan Cathedral's services online at 9:00 am.

www.acrod.org/organizations/cathedral/live/

The best scenario is to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive the Eucharist, but in the current scenario, please take the time Sunday morning to pray via the *live broadcast* on the web. Their bulletin has the schedule of weekday services to be broadcast.

www.acrod.org/organizations/cathedral/bulletins/

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All-Soul Saturday (Zadušna Subota) – the remaining Liturgies with Panachidas for 2021 will be on **April 10th** and **June 19th**. On these days, we especially pray for the departed loved ones of our families. If you are not working on a Saturday, come to church and pray with us, light two candles (*one for the living and one for the departed*), and remember your departed loved ones. **Please inform Fr Dave if there are any additions to be made to your Commemoration Diptychs (Hramoty) from last year.** Offering Envelopes and cards are available in the vestibule and curator table in the hall.

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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship:	\$ 1005
Candles/Eternal Lamp Offerings:	\$ 113
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 420
Community Outreach:	\$ 246

Total Collections: \$ 1784
Relocation: \$ 50

We must give in trust that God will use it to produce fruit: "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your sowing (resources) and increase the harvest of your righteousness (benevolence)." - 2 Cor. 9:10

Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Nelson Family; Shuster Family; Tim Martin; Lawrence Martin; Eleanor Sanger; Mirilovich Family; Patty Watson; Cindy Pavilonis.

"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." - John 8:12

The Eternal Lamp was offered last week by Melanie Paieski, in memory of her +Mother, +Catherine Gaydos. May Her Memory Be Eternal! Vičnaya Pamyat!

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Weekly Offerings to God – During this time, if you are not yet coming to the church, we request that weekly donations be mailed to Tim Martin (2225 McAleer Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143)



On-Line Giving is now available from our parish website! The best option is to come to church and give your offering to God in His Temple (2nd best is to mail it in). Now you can also donate from your home and set up a recurring donation to the:

- ✧ General Stewardship Fund,
- ✧ Capital Improvement Fund, or
- ✧ Relocation Fund.

If you miss coming to church for a week, this allows you another option to "catch up" on your weekly stewardship. For our parish to continue it's ministries, outreach, and general bill paying, we need your generosity to continue.

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Paschal Commemorations – We offer you the opportunity to sponsor items to be used during Holy Week and Pascha as commemorations: *anonymously, for the health of loved ones, OR in memory of departed loved ones.* If you are interested in making any commemorations, please sign up on the sheet in the Vestibule or by emailing Fr. Dave (fr.sleepless@gmail.com) **by Palm Sunday (April 25)** and give an *additional free-will stewardship offering* to the Church. *Thank you in advance for your prayers and support of our parish!*

Book Suggestion for the Great Fast:

FASTING FOR THE FEASTS: A STARTER BOOK
by Pañi Marianna Bannon

Fasting for the Feasts is intended for those who may have never fasted before. In addition to over 40 recipes, the book includes a brief introduction as to the "why" behind fasting. The Table of Contents includes (but not limited to): Fasting Cycles in the Church; Stocking a Fasting-Friendly Pantry; Nutritional Information; and Preparing a Church Potluck.

Lulu Publishing ISBN # 978-1304800817

Coil Bound: \$ 15.00

Paperback Binding: \$ 10.00

Kindle Version: \$ 4.99

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LOOKING AHEAD LOCALLY

- ✧ **Tuesday 4/13** 9:30am Canon of Repentance
- ✧ **Wednesday 4/14** 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy
- ✧ **Friday 4/16** 9:30am Presanctified Liturgy
- ✧ **Saturday 4/17** 9:30am Parish Spring Cleaning 11:00 – 1:00 Confessions offered
- ✧ **Tues. 4/20** 9:30am Paraklis to the Theotokos
- ✧ **Wednesday 4/21** 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy
- ✧ **Friday 4/23** 9:30am Presanctified Liturgy
- ✧ **Lazarus Saturday 4/24** 9:30am Divine Liturgy 11:00 – 1:00 Confessions offered

Tuesday's Spiritual Vitamin:

"The Lord will reward us with His peace if we change our way of thinking and turn toward Absolute Goodness."

Elder Thaddeus (Strabulovich) of Vitovnica

"Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives"

ORTHODOXY AROUND THE 'BURGH AND OUR DIOCESE

The next **"The Vine and the Branches"** online Diocesan Youth event for ages 5-18 (K to 12th Grade) will be **Sunday, April 11** at 6:00 pm for ages 5-12 and 7:00 pm for ages 13-18. His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory is calling all our youth to once again come together online in order to strengthen their faith and connect with their peers around the Diocese. Register from the link on www.acrod.org

Registration closes THIS Thursday, April 9

His Eminence looks forward to seeing all of you!!

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SPF50 (Scripture, Prayer, Family): A Diocese Family Ministry - The 6th Edition of SPF50 is available! (*If you are already participating, please contact Fr. Dave.*) If you did not start with us last year, consider joining now! Make a commitment to reading Scripture and Praying together with your family. (*Please contact Fr Dave to fill out the Commitment Card.*) Visit the Diocesan SPF50 web page at www.acrod.org/ministries/acrod-family/spf50 to find out more about SPF50 and how to help your family read Scripture and Pray together at home.

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VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

Diocesan Website: www.acrod.org

Camp Nazareth: www.campnazareth.org

FB: www.facebook.com/acroddiocese

Twitter: twitter.com/acrodnews

YouTube: youtube.com/acroddiocese

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Jesus the Great High Priest

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in

every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

⁵For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

"Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee";

⁶as he says also in another place,

"Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchiz'edek."

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Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

³⁴And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his life? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." ⁹¹And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

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Wednesday's Spiritual Vitamin:

"The word [*free-will*] of the creature [*Mary*] brought the Creator [*Jesus*] down into the world." + Saint Philaret of Moscow

FEAST DAY FEATURE

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

Commemorated on April 7 / March 25

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. There is a painting of the Annunciation in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome dating from the second century. The Council of Toledo in 656 mentions the Feast, and the Council in Trullo in 692 says that the Annunciation was celebrated during Great Lent.

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as “good tidings.” This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of Saint Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the “beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery,” for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man. There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God’s promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel.” The Fathers of the Church understand “her seed” to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

In his Sermon 23 on the day of the Annunciation, Saint Philaret of Moscow boldly stated that “the word of the creature brought the Creator down into the world.” He explains that salvation is not merely an act of God’s will, but also involves the Virgin’s free will. She could have refused, but she accepted God’s will and chose to cooperate without complaint or further questions.

The Annunciation falls during Lent, but it is always celebrated with great joy. The Liturgy of Saint Basil or Saint John Chrysostom is served, even on the weekdays of Lent.

Thursday’s Spiritual Vitamin:

"There is no labor greater than prayer to God. For every time a man wants to pray, his enemies the demons, want to prevent, for they know that it is only by turning him from prayer, that they can hinder his journey... Prayer is warfare to the last breath."

Abba Agathon (*Sayings of the Desert Fathers*)

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The PriestMartyr Basil

Commemorated on April 4 / March 22

The PriestMartyr Basil was a presbyter in Galatian Ancyra. During the time of the widespread Arian heresy he summoned his flock to hold on firmly to Orthodoxy. For this Saint Basil was deprived of the priestly dignity by a local Arian council, but at a Palestine Council of 230 bishops he was restored to the dignity of presbyter. Saint Basil openly continued his preaching, denouncing the Arians, and for this he became the victim of persecution and was subjected to beating as a man allegedly dangerous to the state. Two apostates – Elpidios and Pegasios – were appointed for breaking away Saint Basil from Orthodoxy. But the saint remained unshakable and for this was again subjected to tortures. When the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) arrived in the city of Ancyra, Saint Basil affront him at the trial bravely confessed Christ, and denounced the emperor for his apostasy. Julian gave orders to cut a strip of skin from the back of the saint. But the holy Presbyter Basil undauntedly endured the gruesome torture.

When they began to burn and tear at the shoulders and stomach with red-hot rods, he fell down upon the ground from the torments and loudly prayed: "O Christ, my Light! O Jesus, my Hope! Quiet Haven for the pounding by waves. I give Thee thanks, O Lord God of my fathers, in that Thou hast snatched my soul from the pit of hell and preserved Thy Name in me unstained! Let me finish my life a victor and inherit rest

eternal according to the promise, given my fathers by Thee, Great High-Priest Jesus Christ, our Lord! Now in peace accept my soul, plying steadfast in this confession! For Thou art merciful and great is Thine mercy, Thou Who dost live and sojourn throughout all the ages, amen".

Having made suchlike prayer, and lacerated all over by the red-hot rods, the saint as it were fell into a sweet slumber, giving up his soul into the hands of God. The PriestMartyr Basil died 29 June 362. On account of the feastday of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, his memory was transferred to 22 March.

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LIVING ORTHODOXY



Great Lent 2021:

We Are In This Journey Together!

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To assist the faithful in making the most of this holy season, additional resources have been added to our Diocesan Website at:

www.acrod.org/prayercorner/lentenresources/

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VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

This week's reflection is written by Rev. Fr. John Salem, of St. Elijah Church in Oklahoma City

The Work of Following Christ

The Lord said: “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” — MARK 8:34

On the third Sunday of Great Lent, Mark’s Gospel reminds us that following Christ requires work. In this season, the Church offers fasting, prayer, and giving as part of this work. These disciplines are ways we can each follow Christ. Commenting on another Lenten Gospel (Mt 6:1 ff.), read during Great Compline earlier in the fast, the Blessed Theophylact—11th and 12th century Archbishop of Bulgaria—suggests how we can achieve the goals set before us in a proper way.

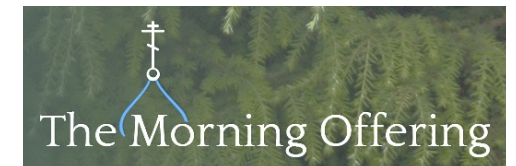
Giving alms is a private discipline and calls for humility: “When you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does” (Mt 6:3). “The left hand,” writes Theophylact, “represents vainglory and the right hand, almsgiving. Let not your vainglory be aware of your almsgiving.”

Likewise, prayer is for personal spiritual growth, not display: “When you pray, enter into your inner chamber and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father Who is in secret” (Mt 6:6). “Should I not then pray in church?” asks the bishop. “Indeed I should, but with a right mind and not for show. It is not the place which harms prayer, but the manner and the intent with which we pray.”

Finally, why do we pray? “Not to inform God of anything,” Theophylact writes, “but instead, that we may detach ourselves from the cares of life and receive benefit by conversing with God.”

This, in the end, is the aim of our Lenten disciplines and in part what it means to take up our cross. May we each earnestly, humbly seek our Lord this Lent.

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Repeat Offenders: Our habitual and repetitive sins make us repeat offenders

In the Mystery of Confession we avail ourselves before the analog stand, upon which the holy cross and the Gospel Book rest. The priest stands in as the witness, whereas in the early Church confession was done before the whole congregation of the faithful. After we have confessed before the Lord, the priest, acting in Christ’s stead, and by His authority, pronounces the absolution. Thus begins the process of transformation, which leads to holiness. Regular confession is necessary if we are to triumph in our battle over sin, for only in confession do we face the reality of our fallen nature and confront the ego, seeking out God’s help in conquering the passions.

Confession and Communion are bound together, for the Church asks that we confess our sins before approaching the Holy Gifts, as the Scriptures make it clear that it is dangerous to partake of Christ's Body and Blood unworthily. The priest, as witness, also helps guide the penitent, helping develop a "war plan" by which we can learn to do battle with our fallen nature and find victory over our sins. The importance of confessing before the priest is evident in that secret sins are rarely triumphed over, for we can happily travel through life dismissing our shortcomings, when no one knows. Since all sin (even those committed in secret) is against the whole Body of Christ (the Church), confession before the representative of the Church (the priest) is all important. When we confess our sins regularly to our confessor, we are acknowledging our failings and shortcomings to someone who knows us so well that he can help guide us to true repentance, where we find victory over habitual sins that bring us down. When we find ourselves constantly repeating the same sins, over and over, having a regular confessor is especially valuable, for he can help us focus on ways to avoid the same sins over and over. Keeping a journal of our struggles can be especially helpful, for we can begin to see patterns in our behavior that lead to habitual sins, thereby helping us to minimize the frequency of our falls. It can be helpful if we remember that sin is that which inhibits us from becoming holy. Holiness being better understood as wholeness. When we are whole, we are as God meant us to be. We are healthy in a spiritual way, and communion with God is opened up. As we are made whole, we become the very image and likeness that God intended, gaining our inheritance. When we find ourselves struggling with the same sins over and over, it is good to remember that we have but to give ourselves over to Christ, Who promises us victory over our sins. The struggle for holiness is not about what we can do, but what Christ can do in us. With love in Christ, Abbot Tryphon

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- SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR THE GREAT FAST (GREAT LENT):**
- We are called to increase our *Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving* during this time...
- PRAYER:**
- ✠ *Attend as many of the services as possible and be strengthened in community prayer.*
 - ✠ *Come to the Mystery of Confession (offered after every service and on most Saturdays during Great Lent).*
 - ✠ *Approach the Chalice to receive the Holy Eucharist as often as possible.*
 - ✠ *Also, add additional prayers to your personal Prayer Rule at home.*
- FASTING:**
- ✠ *The Great Fast begins tomorrow, March 15. This is a day of strict fasting (no meat or dairy products). Likewise, strict fast on Great & Holy Friday (4/30) and Great & Holy Saturday (5/1)*
 - ✠ *The tradition of the Orthodox Church is a strict fast (no meat or dairy products eaten) by all of the faithful for the entire 40 days of the Great Fast and for all of Holy Week.*
 - ✠ *If you cannot physically do this, adopt a fasting rule and stick to it for the duration of the Great Fast (see Father for some guidance). Here are a few examples:*
 - *a) strict fast on certain days of the week while keeping a meat fast on the others;*
 - *b) fast only from meat;*
 - *c) fast from meat for certain weeks (Clean Week, Cross Week, and Holy Week); or*
 - *d) fast from meat on Wednesdays, Fridays, and all of Holy Week (April 12-18).*
 - ✠ *The more effort you put forth in your fasting, the more spiritually uplifting your Lenten Season will be!*
 - ✠ *A minimum three (3) hour fast from all food and drink for those receiving Communion at the evening Pre-sanctified Liturgy (the regular "midnight Fast" is called for the Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom & St. Basil the Great)*
 - ✠ *The sick and infirm are not bound by the fast at any time.*

- ✠ *Those requiring medications or certain prescribed diets are to follow their physician's instructions.*
 - ✠ *Lastly, the Great Fast is not a "40 day diet program" or simply a "dietary adjustment".*
- ALMSGIVING:**
- ✠ *Find a way to give more of your time, talent, and treasures.*
- A general guideline is this:**
- try do to more than last year.**
- Let's talk about different ideas that you have.

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Friday's Spiritual Vitamin:

"The Cross, is wood which lifts us up and makes us great ... The Cross uprooted us from the depths of evil and elevated us to the summit of virtue." St. John Chrysostom

ORTHODOX CHURCH ETIQUETTE

How and When to Make the Sign of the Cross
The Cross is perhaps the most well-known symbol in all of Christendom. Even non-Christians recognize it. And we all understand and agree on what the Cross means (on the surface, at least). But the way Christians make the sign of the Cross differs depending on which Christian community you encounter. So, in this post, we explain specifically how and when Christians in the Orthodox Church make the sign of the Cross.

A SYMBOL OF VICTORY

As the instrument Christ chose to bring about His ever-memorable and life-creating death, the Cross holds a special place in the heart of every Orthodox Christian. We understand that this symbol, once a primitive means of torture and capital punishment, now reminds us of Christ's victory over death. Orthodox Christians make the sign of the Cross because it affirms what we believe about Christ as the Incarnate Son of God and all that He did for us. It is an outward manifestation that illustrates our view of God in Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and our belief

in the two natures of Christ (fully God and fully Man). It is, in essence, a physical form of prayer. Because of our love for the sign of the Cross, the Orthodox use it daily. Not only do we use it during worship, but also before and after meals, during personal prayer, and in moments of worry or need. The saints, and Christ Himself, make this sign in holy icons. We love the cross perhaps just as much as we love the Theotokos, if not more. Because Christ used it to bring about our salvation. To show our love and devotion to Christ, during any given service or liturgy, the faithful may cross themselves close to one-hundred times!

HOW TO MAKE THE SIGN

If you've ever come to an Orthodox service and looked around, you probably saw someone crossing themselves at some point. To newcomers and inquirers, this can be a bit strange, since we cross ourselves differently than other Christians. Let's walk through the Orthodox way of making the sign of the cross, step by step.

How to Make the Sign of the Cross

1. **Join the thumb, index, and middle fingers of your right hand.**
2. **Rest the other two fingers of your right hand down against your palm.**
3. **Take that hand and touch your joined fingertips to your forehead.**

Let your fingers rest there for a moment.

4. **Then bring your fingertips down to your abdomen.**

Again, let your fingers rest here a moment. Some people bring their fingers only as far as the chest, while others reach down to their navel. Either of these is acceptable.

5. **Move your fingertips to touch the front of your right shoulder.**
6. **Finally, touch your fingertips to the front of your left shoulder.**

Note a couple differences between the Orthodox sign and that of Roman Catholics and Protestants. First, Roman Catholics cross themselves from left to right and typically keep all five fingers straight. Secondly, Protestant

practice in making the sign of the cross, much like Protestantism itself, varies. Protestantism does not prohibit it, but they do not necessarily encourage it either, because there is no Biblical command to use the sign of the cross.

VARIATIONS OF THE SIGN

You may also have noticed some people make the sign three times in a row, while others only do it once. Some make large sweeping motions, while others keep things simple and small. All these variations! But, which way is the *right* way? Put simply, there isn't one. Crossing yourself is not an issue of dogma (belief necessary for salvation) in Orthodoxy. Instead, it is a matter of personal piety. In other words, aside from the arrangement of the fingers and direction of the movement, all else is up to you. If you feel moved to always make the sign of the cross in three's, you may do so. If you wish to venerate icons in a slightly different manner than another parishioner, you can. Each Orthodox Christian can express his or her faith in whatever physical ways they feel necessary, as long as they do so out of love for God. (If you do things instead to bring attention to yourself and feed your pride, you should reflect upon that.)

WHEN TO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Because crossing yourself is an issue of personal piety, the Orthodox do not have strict guidelines about when you should and should not cross yourself. In the Orthodox tradition, we cross ourselves on many occasions. Below is a list of times when you *should* cross yourself:

- Whenever the priest, chanter, reader, or choir invokes or alludes to the name of the Holy Trinity
- At the beginning and/or end of personal (and communal) prayer
- Upon entering and leaving the church
- When venerating holy icons, relics, the cross, or the Gospel
- Before receiving Communion*
- Whenever you pass in front of the Holy Altar, whether the doors are open or closed

This is by no means an exhaustive list! We cross ourselves many other times as well. Again, it all

comes down to personal choice. If the Holy Spirit moves you to express your piety in a particular way, no one will judge you or look at you strangely for it.

WHEN NOT TO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Though the Orthodox make the sign of the cross rather liberally, there are a couple times when we should not make the sign of the cross during services:

- At the chalice before or after taking Holy Communion*
- Whenever a bishop or priest blesses the congregation with his hand and says, "Peace be to all." Here, we merely give a slight bow and receive the blessing.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Orthodox cross themselves the way Christians have for millennia. Additionally, we have guidelines for when we should and should not cross ourselves during worship. However, we don't force them on anyone who decides to come and worship with us. If you aren't Orthodox and do visit a local parish, please don't feel as if you must make the sign of the cross. We make the sign out of love for God, as a way of expressing with our bodies our faith in Him. You need not make the sign until you, too, feel such conviction.

**Notice we mentioned Communion in both lists? Here's why! If you cross yourself too close to the chalice, you might hit the chalice with your hand, or cause some of the Body and Blood of Christ to spill. However, it is okay for you to cross yourself before approaching the chalice and after backing away to receive blessed bread.*

Source: www.saintjohnchurch.org/how-to-make-the-sign-of-the-cross/

Saturday's Spiritual Vitamin:
"The devil is afraid of us when we pray and make sacrifices. He is also afraid when we are humble and good. He is especially afraid when we love Jesus very much. He runs away when we make the Sign of the Cross." +St. Anthony the Great

PRAYER CORNER

Our Parish Prayer List for
Special Intentions and Other Needs

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A Prayer For The Sick:

O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant *name(s)*. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver *him/her/them* from sickness and bitter pain. Heal *him/her/them* so that *he/she/they* may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

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For the Health of... Met. Gregory, Fr. Robert, Sandra, Fr. Frank, Pañi Connie, Michael, Jerrod, Maria, Pamela, Barbara, John, Julius, Mary Jane M., Anthony, Dale, Matthew, Alexandra, Joseph, Brian, Kristina, Fr. George L., Douglas, Sean, Julia, Susan, John, Viola, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, Michael, Roberta, Lino, June, for all those battling viruses ...*through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer.*

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For the Special Intentions of... Metropolitan Gregory, Georgia, Eleanora, Mark, Michaleana, Dorell, Elizabeth, Donald, Susan, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Nancy, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Amee, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin our seminarians: Daniel, Dylan, Thomas, and Nicholas and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee: Lawrence, Matthew, Timothy, Theresa, Rich, Gina, Robert, Jane, Anthony, Mary Jane, Steven, Kenneth, Jillian, John, Wendy, John, Margaret, John, John, Todd and for those who labor towards our Community Outreaches ...*through the prayers of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; St. John the Baptist; the Archangels Michael & Gabriel; and the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.*

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Patronal Feast Days (Name's Day):
(*contact Fr. Dave with your Patron Saint*)

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Birthday Prayers for... Tristan Bowser (4/5), Milena Petrovich (4/5), Bryce Blobner (4/10), Jenelle (Petrovich) Specca (4/10) ...*May God allow them to grow in peace and love all the days of their lives and may He grant them many and blessed years!*

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For our Catechumens & Inquirers...

Dustin, Stephen, Susan, Marilynn, John ...*through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. John Maximovitch.*

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For those serving in the Armed Forces & Civil Authorities... Thomas R. Dzadovsky and Trevor Meegan ...*through the prayers of St. George, the Great-Martyr & Wonderworker.*

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For those preparing for Marriage...

Lexi & Patrick, Lauren & Corey, Ashley & Derek ...*through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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For Pregnant Mothers... Marilynn (*due in April*) Pañi Katie (*June*), Carley (*July*), Lindsay (*July*) ...*through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, and St. Irene Chrysovalantou.*

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For the souls of the newly departed...

+John Cochran (3/25), and those who have passed from the coronavirus ...*May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May their Memory in God be Eternal*

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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave know if you wish to make additions or subtractions (*in the case of answered prayers*) to our Parish List. The words of the Gospel are true: **it is good to pray for one another.** Let this be a place where we lay out our concerns and beg the help of our brothers & sisters in Christ. *This prayer list is NOT limited to only Orthodox Christians.*

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DEVOTIONAL PRAYER OF THE WEEK



A PRAYER OF SAINT EPHRAIM

*(in the Ruthenian tradition as
found in St. Peter Mogila's
1639 Liturgikon (Sluzhebnik))*

O Lord and Master of my life, take from
me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust for
power, and vain talking. + *[Prostration]*
But give to me, Your servant, the spirit of
purity, humility, patience, and love.
+ *[Prostration]*

Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my
own sins, and not judge my brother, for
blessed are You forever and ever.
Amen. + *[Prostration]*

*The following triplet is recited 4 times
(making a total of 12 bows):*

O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.
[bow]

O God, cleanse me of my sins and have
mercy on me. *[bow]*

O Lord, forgive me, for my sins are
many. *[bow]*

Then the prayer again with only 1 prostration:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from
me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust for
power, and vain talking. But give to me,
Your servant, the spirit of purity, humility,
patience, and love. Yes, Lord and King,
grant me to see my own sins, and not
judge my brother, for blessed are You
forever and ever. Amen. + *[Prostration]*