



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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SERVICES FOR THE WEEK

please wear masks following the CDC guidelines

SUNDAY, JULY 4 * APOSTLES' FAST

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Synaxis of Regional Saints

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Romans 2:10-16; Gospel: Matthew 4:18-23

TUESDAY, JULY 6 * APOSTLES' FAST

7:00 pm Feast Day Vespers

WEDNESDAY, JULY 7 * APOSTLES' FAST

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY, JULY 8 * APOSTLES' FAST

9:30 am Akathist **CANCELLED**

SUNDAY, JULY 11 * APOSTLES' FAST

3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Translation of the relics (412) of the Holy and
 Wonderworking Unmercenaries Cyrus & John

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Rom. 5:1-10; Gospel: Matthew 6:22-33

Panachida for the newly departed

Tone 2; Liturgical Color: **Green**

11:30 am Baptism of Sonia Kretchek

7:00 pm Feast Day Vespers

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

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

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Future Services – Our online "Parish Calendar" is continually updated on our website at:

www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City is our community outreach for the month of June. www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org

There was a delay in hearing a response from the sisters at the monastery as they verified the list with each other of what they can use. We will continue to collect items through **NEXT WEEK**. Here is an updated list of items that they can use at this time.

General Supplies:

- *Toilet tissue (most needed)
- *Facial Tissues (most needed)
- *paper towels (most needed)
- tall kitchen white trash bags
- napkins
- dessert size **paper** plates
- 9 in. and 12 in. **paper** plates
- plastic forks
- plastic soup spoons

Cleaning Supplies:

- *Clorox Bathroom Cleaner (most needed)
- *Clorox Bleach Cleaner (most needed)
- *409 cleaner (most needed)
- Windex cleaner
- Dish washing liquid (refill)
- Handi-wipes
- Aluminum foil (not heavy duty)

Food Items:

- Variety of raw nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds)
- powdered sugar
- canola oil
- cooking spray

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

*(responded with: **Glory 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.

- salted canned nuts
- honey – large jars
- granola bars – snack bars - for guest houses
- dried fruit – prunes, raisins, apricots
- white sugar
- Brita water filters
- Microwave popcorn

Extra Items:

- A few outdoor toys for play area
 - balls, bats, mitts, etc.

Please place any collected items on the pews in front of the bulletin boards in the hall.

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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The Holy Apostles' Fast (Peter and Paul Fast)

- One of the four fasting seasons of the Christian year, along with Great Lent (the Great Fast), Nativity Fast (Advent), & the Dormition Fast, this one in particular culminates with our celebration of Saints Peter & Paul on July 12th. Fr. Dave continues to be available to hear Confessions after every service *(we will not have any designated times on Saturdays this year)*. Take the time to grow spiritually by fasting from something over these two weeks. Let Us Imitate Christ & The Saints & Fast As They Did!

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Church Picnic – The Parish Council is looking for an "activity coordinator" for our upcoming parish picnic on **July 18** at The Cabin in North Park (1370 E Ingomar Rd., Allison Park, PA). Please contact Larry Martin if you are interested.



LET'S FILL THE TABLES - We will have our Garage Sale from **August 13-15:** Friday and Saturday from 9am to 3pm and, *new this year*, Sunday from 12-noon to 3pm. Tax-deductible donations for the sale *(that are clean and with all of their parts)* are being accepted now through **July 23** *(no TV's or clothing please)*. WHEN YOU BRING YOUR ITEMS IN, LOOK AT THE SIGNS ON THE TABLES AND PLACE OUR ITEMS DIRECTLY ON THE TABLES AS WE CONTINUOUSLY SET UP AS A COMMUNITY FOR THIS COMMUNITY EVENT. If you are not able to bring your items in on a Sunday, please contact Fr Dave 412-748-0148 / OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com) to arrange dropping them off. *Your extra items will be a treasure to someone else!*

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Stewards needed for each day – whether you can offer your time all day or even just for 2 hours, please sign up on the sheet in the hall as we prepare for the return of our garage sale.

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Garden Blessing – Let's schedule some garden blessings! *(The format of the blessing is similar to our annual home blessing.)* You say you've never had your garden blessed? Well, it's okay to do something new! Please contact Fr. Dave if you are interested.

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Axios! "He is Worth!" to Father Andrew Wythe on his ordination to the Holy Priesthood last week at St. John the Baptist in Perth Amboy, NJ, by the laying on of hands by our Metropolitan Gregory. May God grant him many years!

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship:	\$ 110
Candles/Eternal Lamp Offerings:	\$ 116
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 485
Parish House Offering:	\$ 200
Community Outreach:	\$ 155

Total Collections: \$ 1066

In faith that God provides: “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, ‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.’” – 2 Corinthians 9:8-9

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Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Nelson Family; Tim Martin; Melanie Shuster; Mary Jane Hudak; Eleanor Sanger; Mirilovich Family; Patty Watson; Cindy Pavilionis

“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

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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)

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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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St John’s Parish Family Picnic – Our parish picnic will be on Sunday, July 17th from Noon till 5:00 at The Cabin in North Park (1370 E Ingomar Rd, Allison Park, PA 15101). Everyone is welcome! Come and experience a day of fun amongst family and friends. We will share a pot-luck meal – so bring your favorite recipe to share (a sign up sheet is in the church hall so that we get a good variety). There will be activities for all! If you need directions, please see Fr Dave. If you have other questions, please see a Parish Council member.

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1st and 2nd Banns of Marriage are Announced for Alexei Kroh and Patrick Wertz who will be united together in the Mystery of Holy Matrimony at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church on Saturday, July 17, 2021. If anyone has canonical reason why this Mystery (Sacrament) should not be administered, please relay the objection to Father.

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Pussy Willow Bush – There are two bushes that took root and are ready for a new home. Please let Fr. Dave know if you are interested.

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Curator Stewards – As we look for more curators to be stewards of their time and help “at the door”, please consider coming early one Sunday just to see what happens. Please contact Theresa Sharpless for more information.

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Church School – As we prepare for Church School to return this fall, we are looking for additional teachers to participate with the stewardship of their time and talents. Please contact Gina Fall if you are interested.

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Monday’s Spiritual Vitamin:

“The lives and praises of the saints are like the bright stars. Because of their number, we do not know the names of all the saints. Still, they amaze us by their radiant majesty, as do the stars.” + St. Dimitri of Rostov

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Coffee Social – Please feel free to bring in individually packaged items for our parish family to enjoy during our coffee socials.

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ORTHODOXY AROUND THE ‘BURGH AND OUR DIOCESE

St. John the Baptist Golf Classic – Details have been finalized for East Pittsburgh’s golf outing. Please contact Fr. Dave for more information.

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Kennywood – Here are some Nationality Days that you might be interested in: Slovak Day: July 15; Serbian Day: July 24.

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VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

Diocesan Website: www.acrod.org
Camp Nazareth: www.campnazareth.org
FB: www.facebook.com/acroddioecese
Twitter: twitter.com/acrodnews
YouTube: youtube.com/acroddioecese

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SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Romans 2:10-16

¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

¹¹For God shows no partiality.

¹²All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

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Gospel: Matthew 4:18-23

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zeb’edee and John his brother, in the boat with Zeb’edee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People

²³And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

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Tuesday’s Spiritual Vitamin:

Tropar (Tone 3) to St. Raphael of Brooklyn
Rejoice, O Father Raphael, Adornment of the Holy Church! * Thou art Champion of the true Faith, * Seeker of the lost, Consolation of the oppressed, * Father to orphans, and Friend of the poor, * Peacemaker and Good Shepherd, Joy of all the Orthodox, * Son of Antioch, Boast of America: * Intercede with Christ God for us and for all who honor thee.

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FEAST DAY FEATURE

THE NATIVITY OF THE HOLY FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST OF THE LORD, JOHN

Commemorated on July 7 / June 24

The Nativity of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, John: The Gospel (Lk. 1: 57-80) relates that the righteous parents of Saint John the Baptist – the Priest Zachariah and Elizabeth, lived in the ancient city of Hebron, and reached old age being childless, since Elizabeth



was barren. One time, Saint Zachariah was making Divine services at the Jerusalem Temple and saw the Archangel Gabriel, standing on the right side of the incense offertory. He predicted, that Saint Zachariah would father a son, who would announce the Saviour – the Messiah, awaited by the Old Testament Church. Zachariah was troubled, and fear fell upon him. He had doubts that in old age it was possible to have a son, and he asked for a sign. And it was given to him – it appeared at the same time as a chastisement for his unbelief: Zachariah was struck speechless until the time of the fulfillment of the archangel's words.

Saint Elizabeth came to be with child, and fearing derision over the lateness of her pregnancy, she kept it secret for five months, until there came visiting her distant relative the All-Blessed Virgin Mary, to share with her Her own joy. Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, was the first to greet the Virgin Mary as

the Mother of God. And together with her Saint John also – in the womb of his mother Righteous Elizabeth – did greet "with leaps as in song" the MostHoly Virgin Mary and the Son of God incarnated within Her.

It became time, and Saint Elizabeth gave birth to a son, and all the relatives and acquaintances rejoiced together with her. On the eighth day, in accord with the law of Moses, was made the circumcision. His mother named him John. Everyone was amazed, since no one in their family had been named such. When they asked Saint Zachariah about this, he motioned for a tablet and wrote on it: "John is his name" – and immediately the binding of his tongue at the prediction of the archangel was unbound, and Saint Zachariah, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, glorified God and pronounced the words of prophecy about the Advent-Coming into the world of the Messiah, and about his own son John – the Forerunner of the Lord.

After the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the worship of the shepherds and the Magi, wicked king Herod gave orders to kill all the infants. Hearing about this, Saint Elizabeth fled into the wilderness and hid in a cave. Saint Zachariah as a priest was at Jerusalem and was doing his priestly service in the Temple. Herod sent soldiers to him to find out the abode of the infant John and his mother. Zachariah answered, that their whereabouts were unknown to him, and he was killed right there in the Temple. Righteous Elizabeth continued to live in the wilderness with her son and she died there. The lad John, protected by an Angel, dwelt in the wilderness until such time, when he came preaching about repentance and was himself vouchsafed worthy to baptise the Lord Who was come into the world.

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Wednesday's Spiritual Vitamin:

"Every action, every job should be accomplished in a spirit of prayer." - Elder Sergei of Vanves

Thursday's Spiritual Vitamin:

Kondak (Tone 3) to St. Raphael of Brooklyn

Today the memory of blessed Raphael hath shone on us; * For having received Christ's call, he faithfully took up his cross * and followed Him becoming a fisher of men. * Let us cry aloud to him saying: Rejoice O Father Raphael!

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Sunday of Regional Saints

The 2nd Sunday following Pentecost is dedicated to Regional Saints.

Saint Raphael of Brooklyn

Commemorated on Mar 14 / Feb 29 and the 2nd Sunday of Pentecost (North American Saints)

On November 20, 1860, Rafla Hawaweeny was born in Damascus, Syria. He was baptized in Beirut, Lebanon on the Feast of Theophany, the same day the church celebrates the Baptism of Jesus Christ. As an elementary student, he worked very hard and received very good grades. This helped him to receive a scholarship to study at the School of Theology in Halki Island, Turkey. After Rafla was ordained a deacon on December 8, 1885, he wanted to learn even more about the church, so he continued his studies at the Theological Academy in Kiev, Ukraine. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1889. Six years after his ordination, he arrived in Brooklyn, NY. In the summer of 1896, he began traveling across the United States. While traveling 3,000 miles between New York and California, he visited people in thirty different cities. At each place he visited, he talked about God. During the visits, he also performed many Mysteries of the church. In 1904, on the third Sunday of Great Lent, the Sunday of the Cross, Saint Raphael became the very first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated in North America. Both Archbishop Tikhon of Moscow (St. Tikhon) and Bishop Innocent performed the consecration of the new Bishop in New York City. Bishop Raphael thought it was very important for children to learn about the church and he

established evening schools for children. In order for church services and church books to be easier to understand, St. Raphael believed English should be the language used in those books. While he served as Auxiliary Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church in America, he helped establish thirty parishes across the country and in July of 1905 he blessed the land on which St. Tikhon's Monastery is located.

On February 27, 1915, at the age of 55, St. Raphael died. In 1989, his relics were taken to the Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. In March 2000, the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America canonized St. Raphael. On Memorial Day weekend of May 2000, his glorification services were held at St. Tikhon's Monastery, South Canaan, PA.

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LIVING ORTHODOXY

Fasting That is Pleasing to God

"But as for me, when they (the demons) troubled me, I put on sackcloth. And I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer shall return to my bosom (Psalm 34:13)."

Since the Apostles Fast began this past Monday, it is a good time to take a look at just how fasting relates to our lives as Orthodox Christians. Our fasting is pleasing to the Lord when it is accompanied by mercy and kindness, and done without hypocrisy or pride. Fasting brings the passions under control by not only taming the body, but bringing victory over the demons. Fasting gives us power over the demons because it has a powerful impact on our own spirit. The body is brought under submission by fasting and gains freedom, sobriety, purity and strength.

Another benefit of fasting is what it does for our health. What we put into our bodies does matter and the periods of fasting given to us by the Church afford us the opportunity to cleanse our bodies of toxins and extra weight. An important part of keeping the fast is the reduction of the amount of food we eat, not just the type of food. Some make the mistake of simply eating foods that are devoid of meat. Rather than replacing

these foods with beans, vegetables, soups, salads and whole grains, they replace meat with soy products and other prepared foods. Fasting is a good time to bring all the passions under control, including our compulsive food intake. Eating only whole organic foods during these fasting periods makes us feel lighter. It clears the mind and makes us more open to the things of God. Finally, periods of fasting should be approached with joy. This is not about deprivation but about renewal of body and soul. With love in Christ, Abbot Tryphon

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Friday's Spiritual Vitamin:
“Sanctity is not just a virtue. It is an attainment of such spiritual heights, that the abundance of God’s grace which fills the saint overflows on all who associate with them.
Great is the saint’s state of bliss in which they dwell contemplating the Glory of God. Being filled with love for God and man, they are responsive to man’s needs, interceding before God and helping those who turn to them.”
+St John Maximovitch

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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... Christopher, John, Fr. Thomas, Michelle, Frederick, Fr. Patrick, Joseph, Gary, Joanne, Barbara, Mary Jane M., Brian, Kristina, Sean, Julia, Susan, John, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, Michael, Roberta, and 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... His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. Photios, Fr. Theodore, Deacon Charles, Carlene, 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:* Dylan, Thomas, Nicholas, and Aydin *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):
Rich Mirilovich - St. John the Baptist (7/7)
(contact Fr. Dave with your Patron Saint)
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Birthday Prayers for... Pañi Stacey Mihaly (7/5), Allyssa Yakemawiz (7/7), Charles Deluca (7/8), Jessica Winkler (7/8), *Father's Godfather*, Richard Babbie (7/9) ...*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...
Susan, Marilynn, John ...*through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. John Maximovitch.*
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For those preparing for Marriage... Lexi & Patrick, Lauren & Corey ...*through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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Anniversary Prayers for...
...*May God fill them with His grace that they may continue to live in unity with Him!*
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For Pregnant Mothers... Carley (*due in July*), Lindsay (*July*), Theresa (*August*), Pañi Davina (*September*) ...*through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, and St. Irene Chrysovalantou.*

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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 the souls of the newly departed...
+George Livanos, the Priest (7/1), +Dale Fisher (6/15), +Stephen Hall, the Deacon (6/10), 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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Saturday's Spiritual Vitamin:
“And I, a sinner, have been trying to love God for more than forty years, and cannot say that I perfectly love Him. If we love someone we always remember him and try to please him; day and night our heart is occupied with that object. Is that how you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always remember Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments? ‘For our good, for our happiness at least let us make a vow that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall strive to love God above all else and to fulfill His holy will.’” +St. Herman of Alaska

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DEVOTIONAL PRAYER OF THE WEEK

A Prayer to Accept the Will of God
by Metropolitan Philaret
Lord, I do not know what to ask of You. You alone know what I need. You love me more than I am able to love You. Father, give Your servant that for which I am unable to ask. I do not dare to ask either for a cross or for consolation: I only stand before You. My heart is open to You, and You Yourself see needs of which I am unaware. See and do according to Your mercy. Strike me and heal me; knock me down and lift me up. I show reverence and keep silence before Your holy will: Your destiny for me is beyond understanding. I offer myself as a sacrifice to You. I have no other desire besides the desire to carry out Your Will. Teach me how to pray - and You Yourself pray in me! Amen.

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A Prayer for our Diocesan Clergy (Sunday)
O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Bishop (name), and our spiritual father (name), and all our diocesan clergy, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God Who loves us and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving- Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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A Few Words From Fr. Jonathan Tobias:

Much has been said lately of the terrifying act of withholding communion.

I say "terrifying" for ultimately, greater peril awaits the one who withholds than the one who communes "unworthily."

The peril is in the judgment one uses to determine just what "unworthiness" is. There have been, in the many centuries and cultures of the Christian Church, many criteria -- and not all of these have been consistent (especially from one jurisdiction to another). Amongst them is the frequency and quality of fasting and confession and participation in the divine services.

But the truest criterion lay in the Divine Liturgy itself. Immediately before the Anaphora is the recitation of the Creed, which stands as a sort of "gateway" into the Eucharistic service. Prior to this moment the catechumens were excused leaving only the "faithful," those who have been prepared to commune in this most valuable of substances, the highest "daily bread" of the Lord's Prayer.

The Creed is certainly not a mere inventory of opinions. "I believe" is a cry of the heart that embraces intellect and behavior inseparably and unconfusedly. The truth that God is Father, and that Jesus Christ is Redemptive God and Ascended King, and that the Spirit is God as Lord and Giver of Life -- this truth will and must shine in obviousness.

And that shining -- which the Celebrant is required to discern rightly -- is the human "yes" to the Divine Gift that is the Eucharist.

The debate over criteria for giving or withholding communion mostly misses this point. If one selects a single politically charged moral issue as a point of judgment, then he risks disregarding a hundred other politically charged moral issues.

It would be like trying to cut off a single head of the hydra. Certainly, such an issue is a "participation in a demonic structure." But can a Celebrant withhold on the basis of any participation in all the demonic structures there are?

There is indeed a strong priestly tradition of protecting the Eucharist -- a tradition that is symbolized by the ordaining bishop placing in the

ordinand's hands a portion of the Lamb, telling him to "preserve it unstained until the Last Judgment."

It is tempting to confine the force of this charge to a sort of watchfulness over the possible unworthiness of others.

But really, the likeliest stain comes from the giver or withholder of the Eucharist, much moreso than the potential unworthy.

At the Last Judgment, I will indeed hold the memory of +Metropolitan Nicholas placing the Lamb in my hand and hearing those terrifying words.

But I believe that when I am judged, I will not be charged so much with the guilt of communing the unworthy.

Instead, the Lord Jesus, at the separation of the sheep from the goats, will ask me much more, "Why is not so-and-so standing with you? Why is so-and-so missing? Where are all those who bear My humanity whom I meant for you to bring?"

And if I mumble something about canonical unworthiness, the Lord Jesus will tell me to get up and go back into the world, leaving behind the ninety-nine and go into the existential storm and find the lost lamb.

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“Never leave your house without making the sign of the cross. It will be to you a staff, a weapon, an impregnable fortress. Neither man nor demon will dare to attack you, seeing you covered with such powerful armor. Let this sign teach you that you are a soldier, ready to combat against the demons, and ready to fight for the crown of justice. Are you ignorant of what the cross has done? It has vanquished death, destroyed sin, emptied hell, dethroned Satan, and restored the universe. Would you then doubt its power?”
+St. John Chrysostom

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A Few Words From Fr. Barnabas Powell:

It's fascinating to me to see the uproar over the Roman Catholic Bishops recent statement concerning Eucharistic discipline and the central doctrine of the value of Life.

None of this conflict is new.

When a man is ordained to the Orthodox

priesthood, the "amno" (the square piece of bread cut from the prosphora) is placed in his hands and he is told to keep this unstained because it will be required of you at the Last Judgement.

Every priest realizes that the tension of Eucharistic discipline is meant to be both hard and community forming. The tension between "akrevia" and "economia" is meant to form the loving character of Christ within us all.

A priest struggles with the reality that there are parishioners who are not properly preparing to receive the Eucharist. There are others who are not approaching the Divine Mystery out of the unhealthy notion of being "unworthy." And there are others who hold theologies incompatible with the Orthodox understanding of Church.

Add to this the very American and very un-Orthodox mindset of entitled "rights" and you have the perfect storm of what has happened many times in the history of the Church where the message of the Faith so conflicts with the current mindset of society that the Church has no choice but to stand for timeless truth rather than actually put people at risk by ignoring the Theology of the Real Body and Blood of Jesus.

The Church will be maligned and criticized. The Church will be bullied and shamed. The Church will be misunderstood, both purposefully and accidentally. And those who wish the Church to serve their ideology will eventually either become strong enemies of the Church or they will partner with those who love the popularity of the day more than they actually love their neighbors.

To see Roman Catholic politicians threaten the Roman Catholic bishops with economic sanctions if they don't change their stance and give these politicians the Eucharist "or else" is to see the failure of these same bishops in catechizing their faithful.

Sadly, the West has long lost the therapeutic understanding of "ex-communication" and the vast majority of Roman Catholics see it as punishment and "unfair" because' after all, "We mean well."

Whereas the East still holds to confession and

Eucharistic discipline as "medicine" for spiritual illness and not punishment for breaking the rules.

But still, the hard work of Eucharistic discipline still falls on the shoulders of the local priest. We are the ones who have to love our faithful enough to fight against the "illness" of "I'm not worthy so I can't approach" and the deeper illness of "I have a right to take communion because I want it."

Basic Orthodox Eucharistic discipline is straightforward: You must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing who has had a recent confession, has fasted on Wednesday and Friday and the morning of the Eucharistic service, and you are regularly and actively supporting your spiritual life by active participation in the Life of the parish.

In other words, you have to actually be practicing the Orthodox Faith to participate in the central act of worship in the Orthodox Church. UNLESS it's Pascha night liturgy, then, well, we Orthodox always do things the same way unless we don't!

This work is meant to be hard. It's meant to offer so many exceptions and caveats that we are forced to revisit the spirit of the wisdom of Eucharistic disciplines to participate with the Holy Spirit in His work to form the likeness of Jesus Christ within us.

This will mean we will need to stay intimate with Christ and each other. We will need to avoid the too-easy reduction of this discipline to mere legislation. We will need to love others enough to say to them "No, you should not approach" because we priests are called to serve the deep work of loving people enough to tell them "no."

This conflict is not avoidable. It will be misunderstood. It will mean I am accused of not loving people when the truth is the exact opposite. But, at the Last Judgment, I want to present the "amno" I received at my ordination unblemished and whole. Lord, have mercy on me!