



# 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*  
 Subdeacon Ryan Ferko  
 Timothy Martin, Reader  
 Matthew Peifer, Stephen Brancho, & John Radick, *Cantors*  
 Lawrence Martin, *Parish Council President*  
[www.facebook.com/pg/St-John-the-Baptist-Orthodox-Church-of-Northside-Pittsburgh-169297619784149](http://www.facebook.com/pg/St-John-the-Baptist-Orthodox-Church-of-Northside-Pittsburgh-169297619784149)

2688 California Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa 15212  
 412-748-0148, *Talk or Text*  
[OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com](mailto:OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com)  
[www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com](http://www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com)  
*Instagram:* SJB\_Orthodox\_Pittsburgh  
*Twitter:* @SJB\_OrthodoxPGH



## A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Glory to Jesus Christ! (*responded with: Glory 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! Please see Fr. Dave if you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy.

## UPCOMING SERVICES

### SUNDAY, MARCH 6

St. Eustathius (Eustace) (337)  
 9:30 am Divine Liturgy  
 The Rite of Forgiveness

### #THE GREAT FAST BEGINS

### MONDAY, MARCH 7 #CLEAN WEEK

*A Day Of Strict-Fasting*

6:00 pm The Great Canon of Repentance

### TUESDAY, MARCH 8 #CLEAN WEEK

9:30 am The Great Canon of Repentance

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9 #CLEAN WEEK

6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts  
 with community meal following

### THURSDAY, MARCH 10 #CLEAN WEEK

9:30am The Great Canon of Repentance

### FRIDAY, MARCH 11 #CLEAN WEEK

9:30am Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

### SATURDAY, MARCH 12 #CLEAN WEEK

11 am – 1 pm Confessions Offered

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### SUNDAY, MARCH 13 #THEGREATFAST

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS

Venerable Basil the Confessor (747)

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Tone 5; Liturgical Color: **Gold**

Procession of Icons (*Bring an icon to church*)

Panachida for +Metropolitan Nicholas (3/13/11),

+Helen Revak (40-day), and newly departed

4:00 pm Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at All Saints

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### TUESDAY, MARCH 15 #THEGREATFAST

9:30 am Paraklis to the Theotokos

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16 #THEGREATFAST

6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts  
 with community meal following

### FRIDAY, MARCH 18 #THEGREATFAST

9:30am Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

### SATURDAY, MARCH 19 #THEGREATFAST

9:30 am All Souls Saturday (*Zadušna Subota*)

Divine Liturgy & Panachida (2<sup>ND</sup> OF 5)

11 am – 5 pm Diocesan Lenten Retreat at

St. Nicholas (903 Ann St., Homestead, PA 15120)

## “THE VOICE” *Our Parish Monthly Newsletter*

*John the Baptist said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ (Jn 1:23)”*

### Cheesefare

**MARCH 6th**

FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY



### Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!

**FORGIVENESS SUNDAY**

Epistle:

Romans 13: 11-14:4

Gospel:

Matthew 6:14-21

Ask each other for  
 forgiveness each evening this  
 week before bed.

1st Sunday of Lent

**MARCH 13th**



GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS

**SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY**

Epistle:

Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

Gospel:

John 1:43-51

Bring an icon to church  
 for a procession.

## BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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**Great Lent** - Let's pray that we begin the Great Fast on the right foot: taking the step of forgiveness together.

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**“Clean Week” Services** – The first week of the Great Fast is known as “Clean Week”. We will have services in the evenings and mornings. All are encouraged to come to ask many services as your schedule allows. **The Great Canon of Repentance of St. Andrew of Crete** was “written in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The Great Canon still maintains relevance for the modern age. It is the backbone of Orthodox services for the first week of Great Lent and sets the tone for a Christian's self reflection and repentance appropriate to the season.” The full text of the Canon is divided between the first four days of this week. (Each service is about an hour long.)

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**\*\* Fellowship Meals** - Got Soup? A “small t” tradition in many Orthodox parishes is to have soup (or other light meal) following the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts during the Great Fast. We will bring this meal back after our Wednesday evening services. A sign up sheet is in the hall for those interested in bringing in food. Let's gather together! Let's pray together! Let's eat together!

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**\*\*\* Bring an Icon to Church** – Next week, on **Orthodoxy Sunday, March 14**, you are encouraged to bring an icon from home to hold during the Divine Liturgy and to use in our procession of icons.

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## THIS BULLETIN IS OFFERED

for the health of  
 Michael Shuster on his birthday.  
 Many years!

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## \*\*\* NEW Book Suggestion for the Great Fast –

When I heard someone in Ukraine say, “Reading the Bible is empowering. I do it everyday.” it made me reconsider our suggested reading for the Great Fast. (If you already purchased *Gratitude in Life's Trenches*, great! It is a wonderful book, but not the one that I will focus on.) Our diocese has shared a calendar for reading the Book of Psalms throughout the Great Fast. This is a wonderful way to increase our prayer during this time. The Book of Psalms in our Orthodox Study Bible is perfect to use for this occasion. If you wish, you can search “Psalter” or “Psalms” at <https://store.ancientfaith.com/> for other wonderful books to use.

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**\*\* 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](http://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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*Spiritual Vitamin:*

“Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Great Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat.”  
- from the Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday

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\*\*\* **31 Books of March Sale** <sup>XL</sup> – The Ancient Faith Store is offering different books for 50% off each day of the month of March! Visit the site daily (or sign up for their emails) and keep an eye out for a book that will help you along your Spiritual Journey! (Contact Fr Dave with any questions.) Visit: [store.ancientfaith.com/31-books-of-march/](http://store.ancientfaith.com/31-books-of-march/)

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\*\* **Food Drive** – Thank you to everyone who brought in items for our annual February Food Drive for St. Cyril of the White Lake Food Pantry on Pittsburgh’s South Side. If anyone would like to delivery them, please let Fr. Dave know.

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\*\* **90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Update** – Planning continues for our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration on **October 9, 2022**. The luncheon will be held at Pittsburgh's Grand Hall at the Priory on the North Side.

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\*\* **Masks** are optional at all church events.

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**Bulletin Sponsor** – If you wish to sponsor a bulletin In Honor of (nameday, birthday, anniversary, 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.

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**OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD**

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 806
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 320
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 893
Community Outreach:	\$ 120
Pre-Lenten Breakfast:	\$ 100

<b>Total Collections:</b>	<b>\$ 2239</b>
<b>Capital Improvement Fund:</b>	<b>\$ 50</b>
<b>Relocation Fund:</b>	<b>\$ 85</b>

*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 Cor. 9:8-9

**February Financial Report:**

**General Stewardship = \$ 7583.88**

*(includes \$ 423.80 from online stewardship)*

**\*Expenses = \$ 12,269.46**

**Net Deficit = \$ 4685.58**

*\*details listed on the church hall bulletin board*  
Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: **30**

**Fiscal Year-to-Date Financial Report:**

*(September through last month)*

**General Stewardship = \$ 50,668**

**\*Expenses = \$ 53,101**

**Net Deficit = \$ 2,433**

*\*details listed on the church hall bulletin board*  
Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: **29**

**Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials** were offered last week by Nelson Family; Melanie Shuster; Tim Martin; Mary Jane Hudak; Lawrence Martin; John Radick; Eleanor Sanger; Mirilovich Family; Kathy Schrmack; Patty Watson; Cindy Pavidonis

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**On-Line Giving** is available from our parish website to donate to the: *General Stewardship Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and/or Relocation Fund*. The best option is to come to church and give your offering to God in His Temple (2<sup>nd</sup> best is to mail it in to Tim Martin, 2225 McAleer Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143). If

you miss coming to church for a week, online giving allows you another option to “catch up” on your weekly stewardship. You can also set up a recurring donation online. For our parish to continue it’s ministries, outreach, and general bill paying, your generosity and stewardship is needed.

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\*\*\* **Candle Offerings** - Starting **March 1**, these are the new requested minimum offerings for candles:  
\* \$4 donation for the weekly vigil candles  
\* \$1 donation for the smaller votive candles  
\* free-will offering for the Eternal Lamp  
\* free-will offering for the “Christ Cross Candles”  
\* free-will offering for the “Theotokos Cross Candles”  
special intentions *In Honor of* (nameday, birthday, anniversary, etc.), *For the Health of*, or *In Memory of*. will be taken for the Eternal Lamp and the “Candle Crosses” on the two stands.

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*“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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**VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE**

Diocesan Website: [www.acrod.org](http://www.acrod.org)  
Camp Nazareth: [www.campnazareth.org](http://www.campnazareth.org)  
FB: [www.facebook.com/acroddioocese](https://www.facebook.com/acroddioocese)  
Twitter: [twitter.com/acrodnews](https://twitter.com/acrodnews)  
YouTube: [youtube.com/acroddioocese](https://youtube.com/acroddioocese)

**ORTHODOXY AROUND THE  
‘BURGH AND OUR DIOCESE**

**A Prayer Gathering for Peace** in solidarity with the Pittsburgh-area Ukrainian community is **today, March 6**, at 2:30 pm at Saint Paul Cathedral (108 N Dithridge Street, Pittsburgh). Streaming online at: [youtube.com/diopitt](https://youtube.com/diopitt).

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\*\* **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers** - The Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh is hosting the annual Sunday of Orthodoxy Service and Celebration on **Sunday, March 13** at 4:00 pm at All Saints Orthodox Church (601 W. McMurray Rd., Canonsburg, PA 15317)

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\* **Diocesan Lenten Retreat** will be held on **Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>** from 9a to 5p at St. Nicholas (903 Ann St., Homestead, PA 15120). Please note the date change and sign up in the hall if you will be attending.

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\*\*\* **Virtual National Lenten Youth Retreat** will take place on Sunday, March 20 from 4 to 6 pm for those in K-12. The theme is: “Tools for Growing closer to Christ”. Registration is required at [www.orthodoxfellowship.org](http://www.orthodoxfellowship.org)

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**Deanery Lenten Missions** - Confessions start at 3:30, Vespers at 4:00, and a Fellowship Meal following  
March 20 at St Michael's (Rankin)  
March 27 at St John's (Northside)  
April 3 at St John's (East Pittsburgh)  
April 10 at St John's (Ambridge)

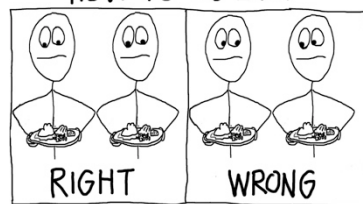
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\*\*\* **MAN OF GOD Movie** – A second showing of this internationally acclaimed film about the life of Saint Nektarios has been scheduled! MAN OF GOD depicts the trials and tribulations of Saint Nektarios of Aegina, as he bears the unjust hatred of his enemies while preaching the Word of God. View the trailer at: [www.imdb.com/title/tt6060964/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6060964/) **Showings of this movie in Pittsburgh Cinemark Theatres will be on Monday, March 21 AND 28 at 7:00 pm.** Contact Fr. Dave for more information.

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**SPF50 (Scripture, Prayer, Family): A Diocese Family Ministry** - The next edition of SPF50 is available! As you are aware, praying together and reading Scripture together are pillars of a Christ-centered Orthodox Christian family. While families may desire to have these activities in their home, they may not be sure how to start. SPF50 intends to help our families bridge that gap. *If you are already participating, please contact Fr. Dave*. If not, consider joining now! Make a commitment to reading Scripture and Praying together with your family. Visit the Diocesan SPF50 web page at [www.acrod.org/ministries/acrod-family/spf50](http://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.

**HOW TO DO LENT**



*(Look at their eyes...)*

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**\*\* Camp Nazareth** The Pittsburgh camping week will be from **July 17 to 23**. Registration will begin on March 15. Staff applications are also being accepted. Visit [www.campnazareth.org](http://www.campnazareth.org) for more info.

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## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

*Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4*

### An Urgent Appeal

<sup>11</sup> Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; <sup>12</sup> the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup> let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

### Do Not Judge Another

<sup>14</sup> As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. <sup>2</sup> One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand.

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*Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21*

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

### Concerning Fasting

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### Concerning Treasures

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

## LIVING ORTHODOXY



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/](http://www.acrod.org/prayercorner/lentenresources/)

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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, on most Saturdays during the Great Fast, or by appointment*).
- ✠ Approach the Chalice to receive the Holy Eucharist as often as possible.
- ✠ Also, add additional prayers to your personal *Prayer Rule* at home. (See the attached about reading the Book of Psalms during Great Lent.)

#### FASTING:

- ✠ The Great Fast begins tomorrow, March 8. This is a day of strict fasting (no meat or dairy products). Likewise, strict fast on Great & Holy Friday (4/22) and Great & Holy Saturday (4/23)
- ✠ 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 18-23*).

✠ 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” (or “label Lent”).

#### ALMSGIVING:

✠ Find a way to give more of your time, talent, and treasures.

A general guideline for the Great Fast is this:

Try to do more than last year.

Please reach out if you have questions about this important fasting period that we are blessed with. May our journey to Pascha be a spiritually beautiful one! – *Fr. Dave*

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### A Note About 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 most 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. Do not wait to plan for your confession! Confessions will only be heard *through Holy Wednesday*.

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## WE HAVE TO GO TO LITURGY, EVEN IF WE STAND THERE LIKE STUMPS

By Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol

From <http://orthochristian.com/144079.html>

***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.***

This blessing and grace that we receive and accept is given to those who attend the Divine Liturgy. Therefore, we say you have to go to the Divine Liturgy and participate in it.

People often ask: “Why should I go to Liturgy?” You have to go because you won’t receive all these blessings and this grace if you don’t participate in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...** What does “grace” mean? It means energy; it’s the uncreated energy of God; it’s an energy similar to electrical energy. For example, who’s seen a current? No one’s seen it, it’s invisible, but if you touch a bare cable, the current will hit you. Electrical energy isn’t like water, which you can see, although you see its result, and you can feel it.

Such is the grace of God. It’s uncreated energy; you can’t see it, but you feel it when you receive this energy from without. It’s like connecting a transistor and it starts working—such is grace. It’s not something abstract, not some kind of feeling, not something subjective, such that a person creates it himself: It doesn’t come from man, but from God and enters into man, activates him, and you know and feel it. Grace is the energy of God, the power of God that activates human souls.

**... the love of God the Father...** God the Father infinitely loved the world, and you can’t understand Him with your mind; you can neither describe, nor limit, nor express God’s love; it’s inexpressible. But our love is human. We are people and, naturally, limited beings. We say: “I love one person with all my heart.” But whatever we say or do to them, our love will be much less than what we can say and express.

And now think about God. When God loves, Who is boundless by nature—neither the human mind nor angelic minds can grasp Him—then no one can fully

comprehend God’s love. This infinite Divine love of the Father, Who so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that He might save the world, that the world might come to Him, and men might become His children, that we might have access to His love and Kingdom.

... and the communion of the Holy Spirit...—that is, that we might partake of the grace of the Holy Spirit, and it might enter into us, and we might unite with it. That we might become like flour, which, having absorbed water, becomes dough. Then, the flour can no longer separate from the dough, such that you could say: “This is flour, and this is water”—because it’s already dough. So when we have communion with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we become one with God, and this blessing of the priest, taken from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 13:13), directly transmits to us the blessing of the Holy Trinity.

... be with you all! When the priest says something in the Divine Liturgy or in the Sacraments, it’s not just a prayer that could come true or not. When the priest says something in the Sacraments, through his priesthood, it’s already considered an accomplished event. For example, when he blesses water and it becomes holy water, there’s no chance that it won’t become holy water. When the priest reads a prayer over a man or blesses him, it’s impossible that this blessing could not be a blessing, regardless of who the priest is. He may be the most sinful, accursed, a thief, a liar, a sinner—it doesn’t matter. From the moment he became a canonical priest, and if the Church hasn’t defrocked him, his blessing and Liturgy are equal to the Liturgy that Christ Himself would serve.

That is, if we had a Liturgy served by Christ Himself and a Liturgy served by this priest, which Liturgy which would have greater power? They’re both the same. Because Christ does everything in everyone, and the priest is a minister. Of course, an unworthy priest burns up serving unworthily, because the Holy Mysteries are a flame turning him into ashes. But whether he burns, whether he turns to ashes—that’s his business, and we can’t condemn him or pass sentence on him. There are competent Church organs that can investigate these issues. We’re interested in whether the priest is canonical or not, whether he’s

been defrocked or not; and if not, then by virtue of his priesthood he celebrates the Holy Sacraments.

St. John Chrysostom says that in his time, some people venerated good priests. We do it too, just like that, in a human way, that is:

“Such and such a priest has come! Oh, he’s a holy man!”—and everyone rushes off to kiss his hand.

Then another priest comes who, alas, isn’t a saint or whom we haven’t perceived as a saint. They just say to him: “Bless, Father,” if they even say that. That we take a blessing from him is good, but what does it mean? The priesthood isn’t a question of personal holiness. Whether he’s a saint or a sinner—it’s his business. When you honor a holy priest, you honor not the priesthood, but holiness. And when you honor any priest, in the person of the priest you honor the priesthood, and in honoring the priesthood, you honor Christ, Who is the source of the priesthood and the Great High Priest of the Church.

Therefore, one of the prayers of the Divine Liturgy says: “For Thou art He that offereth and is offered, that accepteth and is distributed, O Christ our God.” It’s Christ serving the Liturgy, not the priest. He is the One Who offers the gift, and offers Himself; He is the gift and the Giver of the gift; He accomplishes everything in everyone.

We honor the priesthood; we honor the grace of the Holy Spirit acting through the priest. Therefore, woe be to us if the Church were based on subjective holiness; that is, if it were the case that if the priest is holy then the Liturgy is valid, and if the priest is a sinner then the Liturgy is invalid. That’s not how it is. Thus, when a priest celebrates a Sacrament, all of God’s blessing and grace are transmitted through the priesthood to men.

You’ll say to me: “Why does the blessing of some priests have power, and that of others doesn’t?” It doesn’t depend on the priest; it’s because we don’t accept it with faith, because we’re human and we have our human infirmities. We have more faith when we receive a blessing from a holy priest because we set ourselves up in advance with our faith, saying: “He’s holy, a good man,” and so on. And so, thanks to our faith, we predispose ourselves to him.

We have to go to Liturgy, even if we stand there like stumps. Some will say: “I’m not how I should be. I

don’t understand any of it. My mind can’t concentrate there.” But go, no matter what. One elder said: “When you stop into a perfume store, your clothes smell fragrant after you leave, even if you didn’t buy anything.” This is what happens, he says, when you go to Liturgy.

Maybe you won’t be able to do anything spiritual, but even the fact that you went, that you stood there like a stump—that’s already something. So tell yourself: “I’ll go as I am—an unhewn log. After all, God knows how to hone down the unhewn log.” And if you don’t go because you say, “I can’t, I can’t concentrate,” then everything will get worse and worse, and you’ll never get better.

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*Spiritual Vitamin:*

“As bodily food fattens the body, so fasting strengthens the soul; imparting it an easy flight, it makes it able to ascend on high, to contemplate lofty things and to put the heavenly higher than the pleasant and pleasurable things of life.”

+St. Bails the Great

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**FASTING: WHERE IS IT IN THE BIBLE?**

“Scripture contains myriad instances of fasting, most of which are total fasts from food and drink: Christ’s total fast in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–2), David’s for the life of his ailing child (2 Sam. 12:13–23), Esther’s for her people (Esther 4:16) and Nehemiah’s fasting and imploring God to save Israel (Neh. 1:4). In Scripture, fasting is a means of repentance and of crying out for God’s attention and help. But fasting doesn’t necessarily re- quire total abstention from food: it can also mean the simple avoidance of meat and dairy, as in the case of Daniel (Dan. 10:3). John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1–4), as a consumer of locusts and honey, was not strictly a vegan, but through his ascetic diet and lifestyle often causes him to be considered the father of monastic fasting traditions. These Scriptural examples set the precedent for Christian traditions of abstaining from animal products, particularly during Lent.”

*From “Christianity Today,” Feb. 24, 2020*

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**FASTING: DO NOT JUDGE!**

“Two visitors, looked with disapproval on the Elder who was boiling milk being careful not to let it overflow or burn. Eventually one of them couldn’t stand it anymore and said to him: ‘Elder Paisios, we are in the first days of Lent, we have a strict fast, and you are boiling milk to drink?’ The saint was silent. He did not respond. He took off the pot because the milk was boiling. Next, he went to the cell, brought six small, old, porcelain cups, arranged them in a row and carefully filled them. The two pious people saw all this with disgust, because they were thinking that because there were six people visiting and six cups, the monk therefore would dare to offer them milk during these days of strict fasting. Elder Paisios took the filled cups one by one and placed them on a wooden tray and left them on the ground, at the edge of a bush. A few minutes later a viper appeared cautiously and later five baby snakes—her children. The snakes came, slowly reaching the cups, and gently began to drink their morning milk...”

*Translated from From “Aghoritikes Mnimes”*

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***The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: Communing from the Body and Blood of the Master during the period of spiritual combat***

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is attributed to Saint Gregory the Dialogist († 604), Pope of Rome, but in actuality, it is not the work of one individual, but is a composite work coming down to us from Holy Tradition.

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, which consists of the Service of Vespers and the Communion of the Faithful with the Holy Gifts. It is commonly celebrated daily in monastic communities, and on Wednesdays and Fridays in parishes, with Holy Bread—that is, the Body of Christ—which has been intincted in the Holy Blood and consecrated at the preceding complete Liturgies on Saturdays or Sundays. The Presanctified or “abridged” Divine Liturgy (since it is affixed to Vespers), is normally celebrated in the late afternoon, when Christians, having fasted until that time, commune, afterwards eating a meal of dry food (dried fruits and nuts).

The celebration of the Divine Liturgy, because it is festive and Resurrectional in character, is not allowed

during Great Lent and the somber period of the fast, according to ancient tradition and the forty-ninth Canon of the Synod of in Laodiceia [336]. However, from their side, the faithful children of the Church, engaged in the abstemious struggle of the Great Fast and having a clear and particular need for reinforcement by the Holy Mysteries during this period of intensive spiritual combat, desired to commune as often as they could, since Holy Communion was indeed their life and sustenance. For this reason, so that the faithful not be deprived of the Holy Eucharist on the weekdays of the Great Fast, but that they might be able to commune from the Presanctified Holy Bread [the Body if Christ], the Church, by way of the fifty-first Canon of the Fifth-Sixth [Quinisext] Synod [692], appointed that the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts take place on the weekdays of the Great Fast. Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite [† 1809], in his Rudder, citing the Byzantine canonologist Matthew Blastaris [fl. 14th century], reminds us that the faithful resemble wrestlers, and just as wrestlers cease their matches in the afternoon to take nourishment in order to strengthen themselves for the upcoming bout, so the faithful commune from the Body and Blood of the Master during the period of spiritual combat in the Great Fast, that they might be reinvigorated and reinforced by the Lord, thus to continue their match against the passions and the spiritual enmity of the devil with renewed powers and more vigorously. With love in Christ,  
Abbot Tryphon

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

SAINTED EUSTATHIOS, ARCHBISHOP OF ANTIOCH

Commemorated on March 6 / February 21

Sainted Eustathios, Archbishop of Antioch (323-331) was born in Pamphylian Sidon in the second half of the III Century. He was bishop of Beria (Beroea), and enjoyed the love and esteem of the people, and at the request of his flock he was elevated by the fathers of the First OEcumenical Council (325) to the Antioch cathedra-chair.

Sainted Eustathios was profoundly learned as a theologian, and was likewise distinguished by his broad knowledge in the mundane sciences. When in the East there began spreading about the heresy of Arius, which denied the Consubstantiality of the Son of God together with the Father, Saint Eustathios struggled zealously – in both word of mouth and in writing – for the purity of the Orthodox faith. The First OEcumenical Council was convened in the year 325 by the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine the Great (306-337). The first to preside over this Council was Saint Eustathios. The Council condemned the heretical teachings of Arius and expounded the Orthodox confession into the Symbol of Faith (i.e. the Nicene Creed). But the mad Arius, as Saint Eustathios called him, who refused to renounce his errors, together with those of like mind with him, were deprived of dignity and excommunicated from the Church by the Council. Though among the bishops, who put their signature to the Nicene Symbol of Faith, were also those sympathising with the heresy of Arius yet signing the Acts of the Council not through conviction, but through fear of excommunication. After the Council, intrigues started against Saint Eustathios. With great cunning they gained his consent for the convening at Antioch of a Local Council. Having bribed a certain profligate woman, they persuaded her to appear at the Council with an infant at her breast, and falsely declare that the father of the infant was Saint Eustathios. Violating the Apostolic Rule concerning this, that accusations against clergy-servers need to be vouched to by two witnesses, the Arians declared Saint Eustathios deposed. Without a trial he was sent off into exile to Thrace. But the lie to the accusation was soon unmasked: having fallen grievously ill after the slandering, the woman repented, summoned the clergy and in the presence of many people she confessed her sin. But in this same time period Saint Constantine the Great had died, and onto the throne entered his son Constantius (337-361), who shared the heretical views of Arius and patronised the Arianising bishops. Even in exile Saint Eustathios struggled with all his same zeal for Orthodoxy. He died in exile, in the city of Philippi or Trajanopolis, in the year 337.

Convened in the year 381 at Constaninople, the Second OEcumenical Council confirmed the Orthodox Symbol of Faith, which Saint Eustathios had so assiduously defended. The Arian false-teaching was once again anthematised as heretical.

In the year 482 the relics of Saint Eustathios were reverently transferred from Philippi to Antioch, to the great joy of the Antioch people, who had not ceased to honour and love their confessor-patriarch.

Saint Eustathios was esteemed by the great hierarchs of the IV Century – Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Athanasias of Alexandria, Epiphanius of Cyprus, Anastasias of Sinai and Jerome of Stridonía. The reknown church historian Bishop Theodorit of Cyr calls Saint Eustathios a pillar of the Church and a man of piety, of an equal footing with Saint Athanasias of Alexandria and the other bishops at the forefront in the struggle for Orthodoxy.

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Spiritual Vitamin:

“Fasting is wonderful, because it tramples our sins like a dirty weed, while it cultivates and raises truth like a flower.”  
St. John Chrysostom

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ORTHODOX WORD OF THE WEEK

**PROSTRATION** - Full prostration, also simply called prostration, in the church is an act of distributing one's weight on the knees, feet, and hands, touching the forehead to the floor, staying in the position as long as desired or necessary, then standing up. One usually makes the Sign of the Cross *before or after* the movement.

Interestingly, the use of the word prostration in this way is different than common English usage, where prostration means to pronate oneself or lay completely flat. The full prostration is sometimes called kneeling. Again, this word usage is different than the English usage of kneel, which means to distribute one's weight on the knees and feet only. Prostration is known by other various names: Full reverence, great reverence, earthly reverence, "reverence down to the ground" (Slavonic: zemnoy poklon); Great metania

Prostration is associated with penance, submission, and obeisance. According to custom and tradition, prostration is assumed (or not assumed) at different times in the services and church calendar. The twentieth canon of the First Ecumenical Council forbids kneeling on every Sunday and the fifty days between Pascha and Pentecost.



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FEAST DAY FEATURE

1<sup>st</sup> (4 C.) And 2<sup>nd</sup> (452) Discovery Of The Head Of The Prophet, Forerunner And Baptist John

Commemorated on Mar. 9 / Feb. 24

After the cutting off of the Head of the Prophet, ForeRunner and Baptist John (Comm. 29 August), his body was buried by disciples in the Samaritan city of Sebasteia, and the venerable head was hidden by Herodias in an unclean place. Pious Joanna, wife of king Herod's steward Chuza (there is made mention about him by the holy evangelist Luke – Lk 8: 3), secretly took the holy head and placed it into a vessel and buried it on the Mount of Olives – in one of the properties of Herod. After many years this property passed into the possession of the dignitary Innocentius, who began to build a church there. When they dug a trench for the foundation, the vessel with the venerable head of John the Baptist was uncovered. Innocentius recognised the great holiness of it from the signs of grace occurring from it. Thus occurred the First Discovery of the Head. Innocentius preserved it with great piety, but before his own death, fearful so that the holy relic should not be abused by unbelievers, he again hid it in that same place, where it was found...Upon his death the church fell into ruin and was destroyed.

During the days of Equal-to-the-Apostles

Constantine the Great (+ 337, Comm. 21 May), when the Christian faith began to flourish, the holy ForeRunner himself appeared twice unto two monks journeying to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to the holy places, and he revealed the location of his venerable head. The monks uncovered the holy relic and, placing it into a sack of camel-hair, they proceeded homewards. Along the way they encountered an unnamed potter and gave him to carry the precious burden. Not knowing what he was carrying, the potter continued on his way. But the holy ForeRunner himself appeared to him and ordered him to flee from the careless and lazy monks, together with that which was in his hands. The potter concealed himself from the monks and at home he preserved the venerable head with reverence. Before his death he sealed it into a water-carrying vessel and gave it over to his sister. From that time the venerable head was successively preserved by pious christians, until the priest Eustathios infected with the Arian heresy – came into possession of it. He seduced a multitude of the infirm, healed by the holy head, adding abundance to the heresy. When his blasphemy was uncovered, he was compelled to flee. Having buried the holy relic in a cave, near Emessus, the heretic intended to afterwards return and again take possession of it for disseminating falsehood. But God did not permit this. Pious monks settled into the cave, and then at this place arose a monastery. In the year 452 Saint John the Baptist in a vision to the archimandrite of this monastery Marcellus indicated the place of concealment of his head. This became celebrated as the Second Discovery. The holy relic was transferred to Emessus, and later to Constantinople.

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SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

*Father is available to meet Monday thru Friday from 8:30am to 3:00pm or by appointment.*

**Online Community:** Please email Fr. Dave to receive the weekly bulletin via email.

**Parish Phone Tree** - Please call Fr. Dave to be added.

**Emergency Sick Calls** – Please notify Fr Dave when you or a family member are going into the hospital or having a procedure. He will pray with you and you will receive the Mystery of Holy Anointing (Unction) to be fully prepared.

**Mystery of Confession** – Opportunities are available after every service, most Saturdays during fasting periods from 11am to 1pm, OR by appointment.

**Holy Communion/Eucharist** – The reception of the Holy Eucharist is encouraged for all Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves, with fasting from midnight on, regular Confession, and forgiveness for all people. Those who are not Orthodox may receive *a blessing* from the chalice.

**Lapsed Members** – You are always welcome home and we want you back! Generally speaking, sincere participation in the Mysteries of Confession, Communion, and regular attendance at the divine services are all that is required to begin parish life anew! See Fr. Dave for specific details.

**Baptisms** – Two God-parents are required, at least one of whom must be Orthodox by faith (and the other a practicing Christian). In the case of infants, the newly-baptized must have one name that is Christian in origin. Parents/grandparents/guardians must also promise to bring the child up in an Orthodox Christian way of life. Please consult Fr. Dave for more details.

**Adult Chrismation** – New parishioners are always welcome! In the case of adults seeking entrance into the Church, a period of prescribed catechism will be established with Fr. Dave before administration of the Mysteries. An Orthodox Christian sponsor is also required.

**Marriages** – are only solemnized on Saturdays or Sundays. They are not performed during fasting periods and certain Feast Days. Please consult Fr. Dave ASAP for more details (*before* arrangements are made for the hall).

**Church Funerals** – are provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual responsibilities and their stewardship. Otherwise, burial is from the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

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*“The cremation of bodies is not a Christian act. It is a custom of modern times. The body of a Christian has been sanctified with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and as such may not be burned. God did not create our bodies for burning.” - Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica*

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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...** Mareena, David, Patricia, Michelle, Paul, Kathleen, John, Joanne, Barbara, Brian, Kristina, Sean, Julia, Susan, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, Michael, and Roberta *...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. David S., Fr. Myron, Dcn. Michael L., Laura & family, Carlene, Georgia, Eleanora, Mark, Michaleana, Dorell, Donald, Susan, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Amee, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin *our diocesan seminarians:* Nicholas, Dylan, Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, Nicholas, Aydin, Subdeacon Seamus, Nicholas, *and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee:* Lawrence, Matthew, Timothy, Theresa, Rich, Gina, Robert, Jane, Mary Jane, Katherine, Kenneth, John, Wendy, Margaret, John, Patricia,

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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**March Namedays:**

*...May God grant them many and blessed years!*

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**March Birthdays:**

Alisha Zak (3/1), Matthew Wensel (3/3), Christopher Kubis (3/6), Michael Shuster (3/6), Fr Daniel Mahler (3/6), Randall Paieski (3/09), *Father's nephew,* Michael Verbanick (3/9), *Father's God-mother,* Andrea Babbie (3/10), Callum Brozell (3/10), Allen Dzambo (3/11), Noella Gaydos (3/14), Fr David Cochran (3/18), Amee Francken (3/18), Pañi Alison Archer (3/21), Annie Jesko (3/24), Sarah Monaco (3/24), Marianne Kubis (3/29), Kenneth Watson (3/29), Ben Anton (3/30) *...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, & St. John Maximovitch.*

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**For those preparing for Marriage...** Nicole & Dustin *...through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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**March Anniversaries:**

Lindsay & AJ Matolyak-Ferraz (3/6)

Wendy & Mark Martellotti (3/7)

*...through the prayers of St. Nicholas Planas*

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**For Pregnant Mothers...** Allison (*due in May*) *...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. Dzadoovsky and Trevor Meegan *...through the prayers of St George, the Great-Martyr & Wonderworker.*

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*Spiritual Vitamin:*

“Fasts and vigils, the study of Scripture, renouncing possessions and everything worldly are not in themselves perfection, as we have said; they are its tools. For perfection is not to be found in them; it is acquired through them. It is useless, therefore, to boast of our fasting, vigils, poverty, and reading of Scripture when we have not achieved the love of God and our fellow men. Whoever has achieved love has God within himself and his intellect is always with God.”  
+St. John Cassian

***For the souls of the newly departed...*** +Kimberly Bining (2/23), +John Neimer (2/18), +Marge Huron (2/6), Pani +Mary Panchisin (2/2) ...*May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God's Memory.*  
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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.*

**DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS  
OF THE GREAT FAST**

**A Prayer for Peace**

Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray, all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honor and praise. Amen.

**THE PRAYER OF SAINT EPHRAIM  
THE SYRIAN**

*(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 one  
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]*

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**The Jesus Prayer**

*(Inhale)* O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
*(Exhale)* have mercy on me, a sinner!

*(Repeat until your heart is calm...)*

**A Prayer Of Repentance (Psalm 50/51)**

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your great mercy; And according to the multitude of Your compassions, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my iniquity, And my sin is continually before me. Against You only have I sinned, And done this evil before You. That You might be justified in Your words, And prevail when You judge. For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, And in sins did my mother bear me. For behold, You have loved truth; The hidden and secret things of Your wisdom You have made clear to me. You shall sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be made clean; You shall wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow. You shall make me to hear joy and gladness, The bones which have been humbled shall rejoice. Turn Your face away from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create a clean heart in me, O God, And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, And take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And with Your governing Spirit establish me. I shall teach transgressors Your ways, And the ungodly shall turn back to You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, who are the God of my salvation, My tongue shall rejoice in Your righteousness. O Lord, You shall open my lips, And my mouth shall declare Your praise. For if You had desired sacrifice, I would have given it; With whole burnt offerings You shall not be pleased. A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, A heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise. Do good, O Lord, in Your good pleasure to Zion; And let the walls of Jerusalem be built Then shall You be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole burnt offerings; Then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.

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**A prayer for our Neighborhoods**

*by Archbishop Demetrios of America*

I pray to you, God, for the families of my neighborhood. Visit them. Throw their troubles out of them and bring hope. Make the daily cares that devour the heart disappear. Present solutions to life's problems. Settle the disturbed relationships among members of different families whom I know or do not know. O Lord, remind the people of our area that You exist, that You are a strong and loving Protector. Keep away, Lord, anything that causes the disappearance of peace from souls, and the escape of sleep from our eyes. Stay a little while more tonight in our neighborhood. Spread peace along with the night. Let the harshness of the day and its struggles not spread over the night. Amen.

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**A Prayer for our Diocesan Clergy**

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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*Spiritual Vitamin:*

“They who feed their bodies beyond due measure leave their souls hungry... They despise fasting, which is an important means for salvation. Instead they sink into gluttony and are conquered by sin, particularly by adulterous lust.”  
+St Cyril of Alexandria

**How to stay connected with the departed:**

- ✕ Pray for them during the Divine Liturgy,
- ✕ Remember them in your daily prayers,
- ✕ Organize memorial services for their remembrance on their anniversary,
- ✕ Honor their memory by following their good deeds,
- ✕ Light a candle weekly for your departed loved ones,
- ✕ Give alms on their behalf, and
- ✕ Take care of their tombs [graves].

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***The Great Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian and The Moral Person***

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/orthodixie/2005/03/o-lord-master-of-my-life.html>

March 16, 2005 By Fr Joseph Huneycutt

**O Lord and Master of my life,**

**Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk;**

**But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.**

**Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen. (1)**

*This prayer, written by St Ephraim the Syrian in the 4th century, is a regular part of the Orthodox Christian's prayer "diet" during the Great Fast (Lent).*

The first part of The Prayer bids God, "the Lord and Master of [our] life," to take certain "spirits" from us. Then follows a petition for the Lord to give certain "spirits." The Prayer concludes by bidding the Master to grant sight and self judgment. Thus, we bid God to take, give, and grant. Underlying the petitions of The Prayer are several admissions. The first admission is that we have a Master, who is God. We come face to face with the God of the living at the outset of The Prayer.

In beseeching the Lord to take certain things from us, we are admitting that we currently possess them. The

first spirit to be removed is "sloth" (2). Whether the ascetic exercise is prayer, fasting, or alms giving, sloth leads to an abundance of sins. This has been true in all ages. However, it seems that sloth is currently viewed as the means and end of the modern person. What would the Lord ask of those who sit idly in front of the TV for hours on end? Or, how about our sloth in areas of charity, hospitality, prayer and good works? Thus, we must begin by asking God to deliver us from this spirit of sloth in order to practice good works, watchfulness, and vigilance. St. Mark the Ascetic warns us of three giants: spiritual ignorance, forgetfulness, and laziness. He claims that if these three are slain "all other powers of the evil spirits are removed" (3). It must be added, however, that a person might be extremely busy, productive, and active – all the while neglecting the things that are needful. This is also a form of sloth.

The next spirit is variously translated as "despair" or "meddling" (4). What do despair and meddling have to do with each other? Despair is often the result of failed pride. And what causes most meddling? Pride and the belittling spirit of superiority. It should go without saying that these never cease to fail us in the moral life.

Besides that, they learn to be idlers, gadding about from house to house, and not only idlers, but gossipers and busybodies, saying what they should not (5).

We should, rather, strive for hope and joy. This is the goal of the spiritually moral person. Despair is of the devil.

St. Symeon the New Theologian, an experienced spiritual physician, recognized that long and untimely sorrowing of the heart 'darkens and disturbs the mind,' it banishes pure prayer and compunction from the soul and creates a painful pining of the heart which results in hardness and painful callousness. This is how the demons bring about despair (6).

In admitting the defeating sin of despair and meddling, we are able to open our eyes to the Sovereign Lord of Hope and Joy. Note the words of St. Paul:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever

things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praise-worthy — meditate on these things (7).

How can we avoid the "lust of power" (8) when our culture makes of it a supreme goal? This moral self-love is advertised by our media and taught by our culture to such an extent that it seems archaic to criticize it.

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them (9).

What of the moral person?

It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (10).

It is our high calling to be servants to our fellows and slaves to God. Allowing God to be our Lord and Master is a humbling experience.

The next section of the prayer should cause fear and trembling for us all. Here we ask the Lord to take from us the spirit of "idle talk" (11). Here we connect our tongue with the sin of sloth.

I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (12) .

Instead, giving in to the spirit of idle talk, we speak to make ourselves look better, which leads us to be judgmental and slanderous. We live in an age of unprecedented, unbridled, unadulterated idle talk. The modern person fills the hours with radio, television, phone, internet, and gossip. The moral person should practice self-criticism, examination of conscious, and silence.

We now come to the second part of St. Ephraim's prayer wherein we ask the Lord and Master to give us certain "spirits." The first gift besought is "chastity" (13). Chastity is synonymous with faithfulness. It is self-control, whole-mindedness, and the opposite of a broken character — which is caused by the sin of sloth.

Bid the older men to be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness (14). Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she

continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty (15).

By these examples from Scripture, we can see that the meaning of chastity is more than fidelity. It is fidelity to the Truth. Truth is a Person, Jesus Christ. Thus to be chaste, we must be in a relationship where we keep our hearts and minds on Christ. This fidelity is required in the moral Christian life.

The second gift is "humility" (16). In contrast to Greek literature where humility is viewed as a weakness, Scripture celebrates it as a cardinal virtue (17). However, as with Greek literature, this virtue is missing from the paradigm of modern man. It is the model of the Saviour: "And being found in the human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (18) . It is our calling as Christians.

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind ... (19) serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews ... (20) with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (21). Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves (22).

Our society views pride as a virtue. Yet pride is residual of the fall of Lucifer and his angels from the heavenly realm. As Vlachos writes, "Of course when a person's heart has been purified, he must not be proud of it, for no creatures are purer than the bodiless ones, the angels, and yet Lucifer, by exalting himself, became the devil and is unclean (23). The enemy of souls is pride incarnate. The opposite of pride — humility — is the very essence of the Holy Incarnation.

The discipline of the moral person requires "patience" (24). Yet, it is inherent in our fallen nature to be impatient, quick to judge and condemn.

By your endurance you will gain your lives (25). More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us (26) ... for you know that

the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (27).

How can we grow in patience lest God sends us trials? The virtue of patience is a great comfort— one rarely praised in our day of quick fixes (e.g., abortion, drugs, euthanasia).

The fruit of the moral life is “love” (28). “That is to say, when a person lives naturally, he wants to know God completely, he desires only God, and he struggles to attain God, that is, to attain communion with God. The fruit of this pursuit is love. A person united with God acquires the blessed state of love, since God is love” (29). Contrast this with what could seemingly be a definition of our own age:

These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever (30).

Next, we beseech the Lord and Master to “grant” us two things: sight (31) and non-judgmentalness (32). Is there a difference between the words “give” (33) and “grant?” (35). We ask God to give us “the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.” We then ask Him to grant us “to see [our] own transgressions and not to judge [our] brother.” Isn’t it possible that the difference lies in that with which we are familiar and that which is foreign to us? For instance, we’re not all that familiar with chastity, humility, patience, and love. True, we may experience them from time to time. Yet for most, familiarity with these virtues is uncommon. On the other hand, we are all too familiar with seeing transgressions and being judgmental! In The Prayer we ask God to transform this very sight and judgment. We ask the master to help us to see our transgressions and not our brothers’. This last part of The Prayer is key to our soul’s petition for transformation. All that precedes this section mirrors our current state and our needs. However, attainment of this high calling is impossible lest we, with God’s help, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling — judging, not our brother, but ourselves.

Jesus looked up and said to her, “Woman, where are

they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you (36).

The cornerstone of the Prayer of St. Ephraim is relationship “O Lord and Master of my life.” Unlike the “individual”, who is self-centric, a “person” is someone who is in relationship — in this case, to the Lord Jesus Christ. From the outset of The Prayer, we are turning over our lives to the One who is to be at the center of our life, Jesus Christ. By our very words (in The Prayer) we invite discipline and imply obedience, both of which are missing in the self-centered modern person.

To humble oneself before God is to admit one’s weakness and dependence, God’s power and goodness, and one’s trust and hope in God. This disposition (described in Mic. 68 as one of the principle requirements of a “good” life) is expressed in obedience and repentance (James 46-10). Such humility is a chief characteristic of the OT heroes of faith (e.g., Gideon, Hannah, David, and Solomon) and a virtue celebrated repeatedly in wisdom literature (37).

The other key to The Prayer is sight. We pray that God will grant us to see of our own transgressions. This is a plea for our own salvation. St. Seraphim of Sarov “Find inner peace, and thousands around you shall find their salvation.” How can we continually see the demons in those round us when our own passions condemn us?

Why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye (38).

Our eyes are filled with the modern “judges” of the media: news anchors, politicians, talk show hosts, and all the other “talking heads” of the air waves. The moral person must guard against the promiscuous judgments spewed forth daily from the media.

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness, If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can

serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (39).

No one can serve two masters. Herein lies the key to understanding the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian as a moral tool for the Christian life. We pray that God take from us the spirit of the world and give us, rather, His spirit. Within this short prayer lies the essence of our struggle known as spiritual warfare.

**“Let us begin the fast with joy. Let us give ourselves to spiritual efforts. Let us cleanse our souls. Let us cleanse our flesh. Let us fast from passions as we fast from foods, taking pleasure in the good works of the Spirit and accomplishing in them love.”** From the Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday