

“THE WEEKLY FORERUNNER” *Our Parish Weekly Bulletin* *O Holy John, Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptizer of the Lord, pray to God for us!*

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

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3rd Sunday of Lent
MARCH 27th



VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

HALF WAY TO PASCHA!

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

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

4th Sunday of Lent
APRIL 3rd



ST JOHN of the LADDER

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

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



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 27 #THEGREATFAST

St. Theognostus of Kiev and Moscow (1353)
 9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil
 Additional collection for our Community Outreach, Ukrainian Refugees in Moldova
 4:00 pm Deanery Lenten Missions (HERE)
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TUESDAY, MARCH 29 #THEGREATFAST

9:30 am Moleben to the Holy Cross

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30 #THEGREATFAST

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

FRIDAY, APRIL 1 #THEGREATFAST

9:30am Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

SATURDAY, APRIL 2 #THEGREATFAST

9:30 am All Souls Saturday (*Zadušna Subota*)
 Divine Liturgy & Panachida (*4TH OF 5*)
 11 am – 1 pm Confessions offered
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SUNDAY, APRIL 3 #THEGREATFAST

St. Cyril, bishop of Catania (2nd c.)
 9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil
 Tone 8; Liturgical Color: **Purple**
 4:00 pm Deanery Lenten Missions (East Pgh)
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During #THEGREATFAST, each week we will offer a Para-Liturgical service every Tuesday morning, Presanctified Liturgy Wednesday evening (with meal) and Friday morning. Saturday All Souls (*Zadušna Subota*) Divine Liturgy & Panachida will be on 4/2 followed by Confessions (until 1pm)
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Calendar - Future Services are updated online at:

www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar
 (*Please see Fr. Dave if you want a printed copy*)
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Live-Broadcast – If you are unable to attend church services, please pray along with our Cathedral online:

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

MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022

Psalms 78
 Psalms 79, 80, 81

Kathisma 11, Stasis 1
Kathisma 11, Stasis 2

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022

Psalms 82, 83, 84, 85
 Psalms 86, 87, 88

Kathisma 11, Stasis 3
Kathisma 12, Stasis 1

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2022

Psalms 89
 Psalms 90, 91

Kathisma 12, Stasis 2
Kathisma 12, Stasis 3

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022

Psalms 92, 93, 94
 Psalms 95, 96, 97

Kathisma 13, Stasis 1
Kathisma 13, Stasis 2

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022

Psalms 98, 99, 100, 101
 Psalms 102, 103

Kathisma 13, Stasis 3
Kathisma 14, Stasis 1

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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

www.acrod.org/prayercorner/lentenresources/
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Deanery Lenten Missions - Confessions start at 3:30, Vespers at 4:00, and a Fellowship Meal following

April 3 at St John's (East Pittsburgh)

April 10 at St John's (Ambridge)
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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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THIS BULLETIN IS OFFERED

in memory of +Lawrence H. Martin (*24-year anniversary*). May he be remembered in God’s Memory forever! Eternal Memory!

Mid-Lenten Checkup – We have reached the middle of the Great Fast. How are you doing? When we want to improve – remember that we need to do some work! Have you been able to maintain your goals for increasing your prayer, fasting, and charity? If not, restart today! If your goal was to read our book suggestion for Great Lent, the Book of Psalms (*the Psalter*), how is that going? If you are behind, read a little more each day and/or add weekends if you need. (The guide is above for this week.) Every day try to read scripture, pray the St Ephraim Prayer, and/or Psalm 50. No matter what you do, try and do more than last year on your Lenten Spiritual Journey through the Great Fast! – *with love in Christ, Fr. Dave*
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***** Spring Maintenance Day** – On **Saturday, April 9** starting at 8:30am, we will gather for our next parish maintenance (and mulch) morning. Please sign up in the church hall (or call Kathy Schrmack) if you are able to share your time and talent on this day.
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**** Ukraine** – The community outreach for the month of March will be for the support of Ukrainian Refugees. In 2014 Fr. Dave went on a mission trip to Moldova. This church is now assisting refugees as they arrive. Our collections will go to that church.

* **Paschal Commemorations** – We offer you the opportunity to sponsor items to be used during Holy Week and Pascha as Special Intentions: *anonymously, for the health of OR in memory of departed loved ones*. Please sign up on the sheet in the Vestibule by **Palm Sunday (April 17)** and give an *additional free-will stewardship offering* to the Church.

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All-Soul Saturday (Zadušna Subota) Liturgies with Panachidas remaining for 2022 will be on **Apr. 2nd** and **Jun. 11th**. If you are not working on a Saturday, come to church, pray with us, and light two candles for your living and departed loved ones. **Please inform Fr Dave if there are any additions to be made to your Commemoration Diptychs (Hramoty).** Offering Envelopes and cards are available in the vestibule.

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

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* **Cement Mason Needed** – As we approach spring, some cement repairs need to be made on our front steps. Is anyone handy with masonry work who could offer their time to fix them? Please let Fr. Dave or Larry know.

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*** **Pirohi** – St George Ukraine Catholic Church (3455 California Ave.) sells Pirohi every Thursday & Friday. Call 412-766-8801 for the available varieties.

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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.

VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

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

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 235
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 322
Envelope Stewardship	\$ 770
Community Outreach:	\$ 70
Total Collections:	\$ 1397
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 65
Relocation Fund:	\$ 100

Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Nelson Family; Melanie Shuster; Lawrence Martin; Tim Martin; Patty Watson; Mary Jane Hudak; Mirilovich Family; Kathy Schrmack; Cindy Pavilonis

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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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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 (2nd 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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* **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 to find out more about SPF50 and how to help your family read Scripture and Pray together at home.

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Additional Material can be found in “The Voice” monthly newsletter on the first Sunday of the month.

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SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Jesus the Great High Priest

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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

⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “*Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee*”; ⁶as he says also in another place, “*Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchiz'edek*. ”

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Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

³⁴And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole

world and forfeit his life? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his life? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” ⁹¹And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

St. Theognostus, Metropolitan Of Kiev And Moscow (1353)

Commemorated on March 27/14

He was born in Greece and succeeded St Peter of Kiev as Metropolitan of that city. Some of his enemies among his own flock denounced him to the Mongol ruler, saying that he had paid the no tribute to obtain his position — as was often done by the clergy. Summoned before the Mongol prince and asked about this, he answered 'Christ our God bought His Church from the unbelievers with His precious Blood. For what do we pay tribute to unbelievers?' Returning home, he governed the Church for twenty-five more years and reposed in peace in 1353.

PRAYER CORNER

For the Health of... Matthew, 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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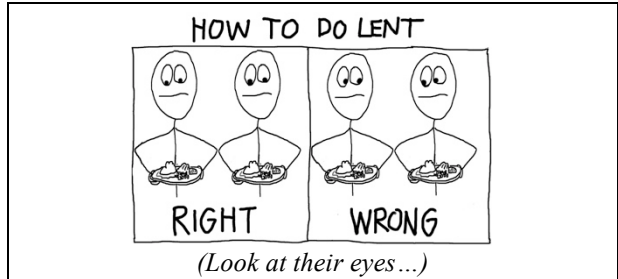
For the souls of the newly departed... +David Himelright (3/6), +Kimberly Bining (2/23), +John Neimer (2/18) *...May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God’s Memory.*

Spiritual Vitamin:

"If I read a hundred prayers in the silence of Athos a day, and you, in the noise of the city, with work and family responsibilities, read three prayers, then we are in the same position."
+St. Ephraim of Katounakia



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Icon of Christ's Extreme Humility

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PRAYER CORNER CONTINUED

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 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, Ameer, 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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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... Justin & Erica, Francis & Alexandra, Nicole & Dustin ...*through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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For Pregnant Mothers... Allison (*due in May*), Stacey (*June*), Sammy (*June*), Caitlin (*September*), Mallory (*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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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our

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

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DEVOTIONAL 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.

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.

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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**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...)

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SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

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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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MONTHLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Slava Ukrainii! Glory to Ukraine! - We are taking monetary donations to send to Moldova to assist in refugee aid.

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VIRTUAL BULLETIN BONUSES

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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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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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ORTHODOX ETIQUETTE

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

A SYMBOL OF VICTORY

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

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

HOW TO MAKE THE SIGN

If you’ve ever come to an Orthodox service and looked around, you probably saw someone crossing themselves at some point. To newcomers and inquirers, this can be a bit strange, since we cross

ourselves differently than other Christians. Let’s walk through the Orthodox way of making the sign of the cross, step by step.

How to Make the Sign of the Cross

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

Let your fingers rest there for a moment.

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

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

5. **Move your fingertips to touch the front of your right shoulder.**

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

Note a couple differences between the Orthodox sign and that of Roman Catholics and Protestants. First, Roman Catholics cross themselves from left to right and typically keep all five fingers straight. Secondly, Protestant practice in making the sign of the cross, much like Protestantism itself, varies. Protestantism does not prohibit it, but they do not necessarily encourage it either, because there is no Biblical command to use the sign of the cross.

VARIATIONS OF THE SIGN

You may also have noticed some people make the sign three times in a row, while others only do it once. Some make large sweeping motions, while others keep things simple and small. All these variations! But, which way is the *right* way?

Put simply, there isn’t one. Crossing yourself is not an issue of dogma (belief necessary for salvation) in Orthodoxy. Instead, it is a matter of personal piety. In other words, aside from the arrangement of the fingers and direction of the movement, all else is up to you. If you feel moved to always make the sign of the cross in three’s, you may do so. If you wish to venerate icons in a slightly different manner than another parishioner, you can. Each Orthodox

Christian can express his or her faith in whatever physical ways they feel necessary, as long as they do so out of love for God. (If you do things instead to bring attention to yourself and feed your pride, you should reflect upon that.)

WHEN TO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

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

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

This is by no means an exhaustive list! We cross ourselves many other times as well. Again, it all comes down to personal choice. If the Holy Spirit moves you to express your piety in a particular way, no one will judge you or look at you strangely for it.

WHEN NOT TO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

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

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

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Orthodox cross themselves the way Christians have for millennia. Additionally, we have guidelines for when we should and should not cross ourselves during worship. However, we don’t force them on anyone who decides to come and worship

with us. If you aren't Orthodox and do visit a local parish, please don't feel as if you must make the sign of the cross. We make the sign out of love for God, as a way of expressing with our bodies our faith in Him. You need not make the sign until you, too, feel such conviction.

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

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

