

“THE WEEKLY FORERUNNER” *Our Parish Weekly Bulletin*

O Holy John, Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptizer of the Lord, pray to God for us!

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, JUNE 5

7th Sunday of Pascha
Fathers of the 1st Council of Nicea

TUESDAY, JUNE 7 – FEAST OF THE THIRD FINDING OF THE HEAD OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

7:00 Akathist to St. John the Baptist

SATURDAY, JUNE 11 – ALL SOUL SATURDAY *(S of 5)*

9:30 am Divine Liturgy and Panachida
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SUNDAY, JUNE 12 – FEAST OF PENTECOST, THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT; “RUSALJA”

9:15 – Icon procession and Litiya Prayers
9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts 2:1-11; Gospel: John 7:37-52; 8:12
Tone 7; Liturgical Color: **Green**
Kneeling Prayers of Pentecost following Liturgy

PENTECOST MONDAY, JUNE 13

9:30 am Divine Liturgy with Gospel Procession in honor of the Holy Spirit
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*There is no kneeling in prayer and omit
“O Heavenly King” from your prayers for 50 days*
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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/

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Monthly Newsletter** – June’s monthly newsletter will be next week on the Feast of Pentecost

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This Week – We continue to *not* kneel in prayer till after Pentecost Sunday’s Liturgy as the Kneeling Prayers are prescribed for Sunday evening. This week, replace “O Heavenly King” with the Feast of Ascension Prokimenon:

*“Be exalted O God above the heavens,
and let Your glory be over all the earth.”*

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** **Family Day** at Camp Nazareth (339 Pew Rd., Mercer, PA 16137) is **TODAY** with Divine Liturgy starting at 10:00 am followed by lunch and activities.

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All Soul Saturday – The 5th and last All Soul Saturday Liturgy, Panachida, and reading of the Commemoration Dyptichs (Hramoty) for this year will be this week.

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** **Summer Maintenance Morning** - Discussion began about having another community maintenance morning. We are looking to schedule it on **Saturday, June 25th**.

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** **2022 Garage Sale** – This year’s garage sale will be on **August 12-14** on the North Side. Please begin bringing your donations in to the church hall and start placing them on the tables. * *Proceeds from the Garage Sale will go to offset some of the costs of our 90th Anniversary Luncheon in October.*

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* **Vandalism** - Our parish sign on California Avenue was vandalized this past week. Before anything else is done to it, we are going to move it up on the fence at the top of the mulched area.

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor* +++ 2688 California Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa 15212
www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com +++ 412-748-0148 (*Talk or Text*) +++ OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 140
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 72
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 214
Community Outreach:	\$ 105
Total Collections:	\$ 531
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 20
Relocation Fund:	\$ 70

Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Nelson Family; Mary Jane Hudak; Patty Watson; Cindy Pavilonis

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The Eternal Lamp was offered last week by Matthew Peifer in memory of parents, +Jack and +Viola Peifer. May Their Memory Be Eternal! Vičnaya Pamyat!

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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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Bulletin Sponsor – If you wish to sponsor a bulletin In Honor of (nameday, birthday, anniversary, etc.) or In Memory of someone, please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule or by contacting Fr. Dave (email, text, or call). An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested.

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Additional Material can be found in “The Voice” monthly newsletter on the first Sunday of the month as well as the article on the cover of this bulletin.

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VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

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

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RELOCATION UPDATE

**The motion passed on, Sunday, May 15, 2022 for our parish to relocate to
2201 Duncan Avenue, Allison Park, PA 15101
We Are Heading To The North Hills!**

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** **What will we be taking to the North Hills from the North Side?** Items that we are looking to take, but not limited to include: The first tier of the Iconostasis, the two side tables in the Sanctuary, the Gospel Stand, the tetrapod, candle stands, the four banners, the tomb, and God-willing, the bell. (*By the way, our current Altar (Holy Table) will not be going to the North Hills. When a church is “deconsecrated”, the Altar is not re-used. A carpenter has already been approached for construction of a new Altar.*)

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Initial Offer – An initial offer of \$375,000 is being made for the property. As previously mentioned, this ¾ acre lot already has a church, a hall, and parking lot (*with 30 spots*) on it – no new structures need built.

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Financing is in underwriting at the bank.

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Updates - Each week, as updates are available, they will be shared here. If you have any questions, please contact Larry Martin or Fr. Dave Urban.

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

SAINTED HIERARCH MICHAEL THE CONFESSOR

Commemorated on June 5/May 23

Sainted Hierarch Michael the Confessor yearned from his youthful years for the monastic life and was directed by His Holiness Patriarch Tarasios (784-806) to a monastery, located at the coast region of the Black Sea. There also entered the monastery together with him – Saint Theophylaktos (Comm. 8 March), the future bishop of Nikomedia. At the monastery both monks proceeded through the efforts of salvation and soon were glorified by graced gifts from the Lord. Once during a time of harvest, when the people were weakened by thirst, by the prayer of the monks an empty metal vessel was filled with water.

His Holiness Patriarch Tarasios ordained Saint Michael as bishop of the city of Synada. Through his holy life and wisdom, Saint Michael gained the deep love of believers and the particular notice of the emperors Nicephoros I (802-811) and Michael I Rangaves (811-813). In the year 787 Saint Michael was present at the Seventh OEcumenical Council at Nicea.

When the Iconoclast heretic Leo the Armenian (813-820) entered upon the throne, he began to expel Orthodox hierarchs from their cathedrae-seats, appointing in their place his like-minded heretics.

Saint Michael during this time firmly defended Orthodoxy, bravely opposing the heretics and denouncing their error. Leo the Armenian brought Saint Michael to trial, but not fearing torture he answered resolutely: "I venerate the holy icons of my Saviour Jesus Christ and the All-Pure Virgin, His Mother, and all the saints, and it is to them I bow down. Thine decrees about the removal of icons from churches I shall not fulfill". Leo the Armenian then banished Saint Michael to imprisonment in the city of Eudokiada, where the confessor died in about the year 821. The head of Saint Michael is preserved in the Laura of Saint Athanasias on Mount Athos, and part of the relics – are at the Iversk monastery.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Acts 20:16–18, 28–36

¹⁶For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

¹⁷And from Mile'tus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ²⁸Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"³⁶And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

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Gospel: John 17:1–13

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

¹⁷When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, ²since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. ⁴I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; ⁵and now, Father, glorify

thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.

⁶"I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word. ⁷Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; ⁸for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me. ⁹I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; ¹⁰all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

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PRAYER CORNER

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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.



For the Health of... Ryan, Timothy, Suzanne, Mary Jane, Joseph, Kelly, 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... +Evelyn Perloff (6/1), +David Dutko (5/21), +Shirley Lorenzi (5/4), +Lino Conti (5/2), +Garry Omlar (4/30) ...*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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Spiritual Vitamin:

"He who has the Kingdom of God in himself will imperceptibly pass it on to others. People will be attracted by the peace and warmth in us; they will want to be near us, and the atmosphere of heaven will gradually pass on to them. It is not even necessary to speak to people about this. The atmosphere of heaven will radiate from us even when we keep silence or talk about ordinary things. It will radiate from us even though we may not be aware of it."

Elder Thaddeus(Strabulovich) of Vitovnica
Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives

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Paschal Notes – The prayer to the Holy Spirit, "O Heavenly King", **is not said** at home or in church during this season until the Feast of the Decent of the Holy Spirit: Pentecost (June 12). Instead we say or sing the Paschal Tropar, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down..." (*three times*) until the Feast of Ascension (June 2).

During the 50 days from Pascha to Pentecost, we **do not kneel or make prostrations** in church in keeping with the joyful and festal character of the season. We begin to kneel and do prostrations again with the Kneeling Prayers of Pentecost that Sunday evening.

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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.

Parishioners in “good standing” are those Orthodox Christians who, as members of Saint John’s Orthodox Church, strive to live according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church; participate in the life of the parish through regular attendance of services, regular reception of Holy Communion and periodic Holy Confession (*and receive these Mysteries no less than once a year*); if married, having been married in the Orthodox Church; and share their stewardship of their time, talents, and treasures which includes financially supporting the parish.

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.

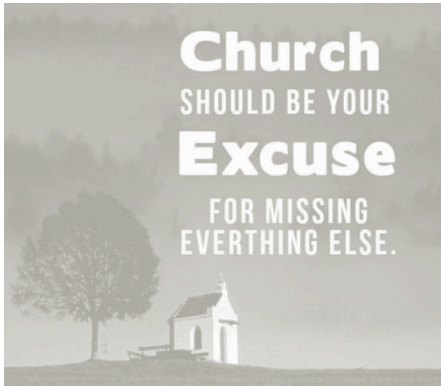
Marriages – are only solemnized on Saturdays or Sundays. They are not performed during fasting periods and certain Feast Days. Please consult Fr. Dave ASAP for more details (*before* arrangements are made for the hall). It is critical that marriages are blessed in our church.

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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SECOND 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 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:* Dylan, Nicholas W., Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, Nicholas F, Aydin, Subdeacon Seamus, Nicholas L., *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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June Namedays:

Tristan Bowser - St. Dunstan (6/1)

Dustin Brozell – St. Dunstan (6/1)

Eleanor Sanger – St. Helen (6/3)

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

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June Birthdays:

Anna Karoline Dzacony (5/3), Fr Matthew Stagon (5/4), Donald Bodnar (5/6), Apryle Horbal (5/6), Fr Thomas Soroka (5/6), Ethan Gogal (5/7), Ella Kovats (5/9), Dr Phillip Labas (5/10), Jillian Gaydos (5/14), Robert Mozes (5/16), Pañi Alexandra Urban (5/16), Patrick Wertz (5/19), Linda Gavulich (5/20),

Kenneth Parks (5/22), Elias Mainolfi (5/24), Sean Watson (5/26), Alexander Hanchulak (5/27), Fr Jonathan Tobias (5/27), Michael Horbal (5/29), Melanie Shuster (5/30) *...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... Tyler, 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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June Anniversaries:

Father’s Godparents, Dick & Andrea Babbie (5/7)
Father’s Best Man, Joe & Sarah Lavra (5/7)
Father’s sister, Melissa & Christopher Ditmore (5/17)
Fr Dave’s Ordination to the Priesthood (5/17)
Ashley & Derrick Andrekovich (5/19)
Ernest & Claudia (Herbert) Pido (5/19)
Fr Dave & Pañi Alexandra (5/25)
Jim & Katherine Schrmack (5/26)
Anthony & Donna Horbal (5/27)
...through the prayers of St. Nicholas Planas

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For Pregnant Mothers... Marilynn (*due in June*), Sammy (*June*), Caitlin (*September*), Mallory (*September*), Brittany () *...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. Dzacovsky 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 FOR THE MONTH

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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.

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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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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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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

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Stewardship of Treasure Guide															
Weekly offering to God through the Sunday Offertory - Will you take a step up?															
Weekly Income	Beyond a Tithe 15%	12%	10%	Tithe 9%	Upper Range Giving 8%	7%	Middle Range Giving 6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%			
\$200	\$30	\$24	\$20	\$18	\$16	\$14	\$12	\$10	\$8	\$6	\$4	\$2			
\$300	\$45	\$36	\$30	\$27	\$24	\$21	\$18	\$15	\$12	\$9	\$6	\$3			
\$400	\$60	\$48	\$40	\$36	\$32	\$28	\$24	\$20	\$16	\$12	\$8	\$4			
\$500	\$75	\$60	\$50	\$45	\$40	\$35	\$30	\$25	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$5			
\$600	\$90	\$72	\$60	\$54	\$48	\$42	\$36	\$30	\$24	\$18	\$12	\$6			
\$700	\$105	\$84	\$70	\$63	\$56	\$49	\$42	\$35	\$28	\$21	\$14	\$7			
\$800	\$120	\$96	\$80	\$72	\$64	\$56	\$48	\$40	\$32	\$24	\$16	\$8			
\$900	\$135	\$108	\$90	\$81	\$72	\$63	\$54	\$45	\$36	\$27	\$18	\$9			
\$1,000	\$150	\$120	\$100	\$90	\$80	\$70	\$60	\$50	\$40	\$30	\$20	\$10			
\$1,100	\$165	\$132	\$110	\$99	\$88	\$77	\$66	\$55	\$44	\$33	\$22	\$11			
\$2,000	\$300	\$240	\$200	\$180	\$160	\$140	\$120	\$100	\$80	\$60	\$40	\$20			
\$3,000	\$450	\$360	\$300	\$270	\$240	\$210	\$180	\$150	\$120	\$90	\$60	\$30			

1. Find where YOU are on the chart (your weekly income/giving).
2. Move one block to the left to determine what GROW ONE% would be.

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A Virtual Orthodoxy on Tap with Fr. Jonathan Bannon will be on June 20 at 7pm on *“Iconography from the UK”*

Fr. Jonathan recently traveled to midland England to study with Aidan Hart, who is considered to be one of the greatest living iconographers of our time. He has offered to share some of his experiences to those across the diocese through Zoom!

Please join us on June 20th at 7pm for a 30-minute presentation followed by some fellowship! Feel free to enjoy food or drink of any kind, and everyone across the Orthodox world is welcome to join. If there are any questions feel free to email ACRY President, Paul Zdinak, at paulzdinak@gmail.com. We hope to see you there, no registration needed!

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ONLINE BULLETIN BONUS

Where Should We Ascend?
Priest Dimitry Shishkin from 13 June 2013

The Lord dwelt on earth for forty days after His Resurrection. But He was not with the disciples constantly, but appeared and spoke with them from time to time, sometimes in another form, for which reason the Apostles could not outwardly recognize their Teacher (Mark 16:12). Thus, on the road to Emmaus the disciples knew the Lord only in the breaking of bread, later lamenting that they had not hearkened to the voice of their hearts burning within them while Jesus spoke with them along the way. The

Lord, as it were, accustomed the Apostles to another kind of communication, not like when He spoke and exhorted them directly, but to a transfigured and loftier communication in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

Earthly life cannot go on forever; it is not the goal of our cherished aspirations. We are only guests and wanderers here, as we accomplish our procession into eternity. Now, forty days after His Resurrection, the Lord shows us the path of this ascent through His Ascension.

It would seem that the Lord could have simply disappeared, once He had parted with the disciples, by melting nicely into the air. But He commanded His disciples to climb the Mount of Olives, where He presented Himself to them before ascending. Imagine the disciples standing with their heads thrown back, having forgotten everything earthly, looking rapturously into the heavens. They probably could neither disperse nor tear their eyes away from the heavens for a long time...

I think there is a hidden, deeper meaning in this ascent, in this total upward striving. The spiritual heavens are not, of course, located above our heads. After all, the Lord did not ascend into the cosmos, where cosmonauts later “didn’t see” Him, but into other, unfathomable heights – into the Kingdom that is “within us.” But this difference from our customary horizontal life is expressed outwardly through an upward ascend, as a reminder that we need to strive upwards towards God.

We must all rise above vanity, above agitation, above everyday cares, and to step over our human fears – fear, in general, is false – that repeat to us: “What prayers? What ascension? Look around: you need to sink your teeth into this earthly firmament, to dig your claws into it, in order to live, to exist, to take back your place under the sun!” This is a perfectly natural feeling. But there was a reason why the Apostle Paul said that the natural man does not inherit that which comes from the Spirit of God. What is “natural” for us stands in irreconcilable conflict with the “supernatural” call to perfection.

The Lord tells us: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). As for what you will eat or drink, or how you will be

clothed, all of that will be added onto you. But we do just the opposite: we persistently and diligently seek what to eat, what to drink, and how to be clothed. But as for the Kingdom of God – well, we think, it will somehow get added on by itself... Alas! We turn God’s commandment upside down without even realizing it! Instead of ascending to God, we want Him to descend into our darkness and “bless” it without changing or scattering it, to “approve” and sanction it, leaving things exactly as they were... We persistently and stubbornly make “gods” in our image and likeness and want to live only as we like, the way we want to, in whatever way seems right and convenient to us.

Recall the Eucharistic canon: “Let us lift up our hearts.”

Of course, we need to put everything aside at least sometimes and lift up our gaze and our heart.

When we look upwards, we cannot engage with anything earthly; at that moment we cannot even take a single step. But this standstill, this prayer, this standing in the Spirit is not a fruitless waste of time when we could, it might seem, be doing so many useful and necessary things. This is a time of gathering, of communion with God. In this communion we can acquire the most important thing: a clear vision and understanding of what we need to do and how. It is this understanding that we often lack when we toss and turn and do a thousand things at once, but without really accomplishing anything necessary. We ultimately end up back where we started.

Perhaps it was to bring us to a standstill, to make us look on high, to direct our attention upwards, towards God, that the Lord exhorted us with such extraordinarily inspiring words when ascending to Heaven: Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). This means that the Ascension is neither a withdrawal nor a break, but a call to transfiguration, to our own active ascent to God, to our humble ascent upwards. Let us follow the Lord into His Kingdom!

From <https://www.pravmir.com/where-should-we-ascend/>

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WAYS TO CELEBRATE PENTECOST

1. Attend Divine Liturgy and Learn the Tropar

Attending Divine Liturgy on Pentecost is far easier than for many other feasts, as Pentecost is always celebrated on a Sunday. The service is a particularly joyful one where we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is also the first time that we kneel after the Paschal period. Many churches include the prayers known as the Kneeling Prayers in the Divine Liturgy. Other churches may have a separate Vespers service. If possible, try to participate in the Kneeling prayers and enter into the spirit of repentance, forgiveness, and strength for our journey.

The tropar (*in tone 8*) for the feast is:

*“Blessed are You, O Christ our God! * You filled the fishermen with wisdom, * sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. * Through them You have caught the whole world in Your net. * O Lover of Mankind, glory to You!”*

2. Wear Green

The liturgical color of Pentecost is green. You can dress your family in green to help your children notice this change, and point out the new life found when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. (*The leavetaking for the feast is Saturday – so wear green all week.*)

3. Decorate the House with Greenery

In keeping with the theme, you can also decorate your house with greenery. These may include potted herbs that you can later plant in an herb garden. We had a lovely bouquet of fresh basil, parsley, and rosemary that we placed in a vase before our festal icon last year. The fragrance filled the house and reminded us of the birth of the Church all week.

4. Learn to Say “Hello” in Different Languages

The story of Pentecost is filled with many interesting and exciting things (tongues of fire, a rushing wind–how cool is that to a child?!). **One of these is the fact that the Apostles were able to speak in languages they hadn’t learned before.** The Holy Spirit gave them a gift so that they could preach the Gospel to people of all languages visiting Jerusalem at the time.

Parents can help children understand this concept of different languages by teaching children how to say “hello” in multiple languages. Look online to find out how to greet others in Spanish, Russian,

Greek, Arabic, and Japanese. You can teach them to say “hello” in languages that people in their area might use. Is there a large Korean population in your town? Do you have people from Bulgaria in your church? Do you live by a Native American reservation? Have fun learning new languages!

5. Fill the House with Candles and Tell the Story

In remembrance of the tongues of fire that descended upon the apostles, fill your house with candles. Then, tell, read, or listen to the story of Pentecost.

6. Orthodoxy Around the World Activity

Finally, help children appreciate the diversity of the Church by learning about churches around the world. See if you can find websites for churches on all seven continents. Or, look for and print out pictures of churches from every continent. You can make a collage by pasting the pictures, church names, and locations on a poster board.

On the Feast of Pentecost, let us rejoice because God Himself is with us in his Church!

www.orthodoxmotherhood.com/ways-celebrate-pentecost/

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HOW TO HANDLE SADNESS AND GRIEF

I had mixed emotions after seeing *Inside Out*. I walked out of the theater feeling uncomfortably sad. The film is set in the mind of a young girl who grapples with joy, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust. Now, I’m used to watching dramas (so I welcome the emotional roller coaster that film can take us on) but somehow *Inside Out* felt more personal than other movies.

It made me feel *my* emotions and, after all, who likes to feel sad?

But as the film *Inside Out* shows us, sadness is a part of this life. As much as we may want to escape feelings we do not enjoy, ignoring them does nothing but keep us from dealing with reality.

Ignoring sadness and grief keeps us from living in the present.

When we experience loss, it can be hard to think of anything else. It can be hard to remember the Resurrection when you’re standing before the Cross. So how can we as Christians better navigate that least favorite of emotions, sadness, and the process of grief?

Here are three things to keep in mind.

1. LET YOURSELF FEEL

Nobody likes to feel uncomfortable. In fact, we go to great lengths to stay comfortable. It’s what keeps many of us from working out, from keeping a healthy diet, or from going to Confession. So instead of letting ourselves feel negative emotions (sadness, anger, frustration), we try to avoid them or to cover these feelings up with something else. This avoidance of reality can even cause people to turn to food, work, or an addictive behavior in an attempt to cover up the unwelcome feeling.

Unfortunately, this never works. Eventually the feelings bubble up again and we’re forced to work through them. We’re forced to feel. If we never let ourselves feel sad or grieve for our loss, we’ll stay in the first stage of grief (shock and denial) and never get to the last stage of acceptance.

I’ve found that the arts, since they put us to work doing something, are effective in helping us feel. At a recent concert I went to, the singer spoke about how writing music has been her greatest asset in working through her own emotions. And even Pete Docter, the writer and director of *Inside Out*, spoke of this as he accepted the Oscar for Best Animated Feature earlier this year. He said:

“Anyone out there who’s in junior high, high school, working it out, suffering — there are days you’re going to feel sad. You’re going to feel angry. You’re going to feel scared. That’s nothing you can choose. But you can make stuff. Make films. Draw. Write. It will make a world of difference.”

I was so taken by this statement, because I found it to be true in my own life. In moments of sadness or even moments of joy, I’ve taken to writing. Getting my thoughts and emotions out on paper let me get out of myself and help me sort through the emotions I don’t want to feel.

Not everyone is a writer. Not everyone is creative in the artistic sense of the word, but everyone can create. **We all need to feel and then let that emotion out in a healthy way**, avoiding one key danger.

2. DON'T FALL INTO DESPAIR

When we grieve the loss of something or someone, the temptation is to think we're alone. We might think we're the only one that can understand what we feel in that moment, so we try to bear it alone. **We can forget that in the Church, we help bear one another's burdens and that it is Christ who gives us rest when we think we have to bear the weight of the world.**

I'm reminded of a quote about despair by an important figure in modern Orthodox history named Elder Sophrony of Essex. He said, *"Stand at the brink of the abyss of despair, and when you see that you cannot bear it anymore, draw back a little and have a cup of tea."* As one Orthodox blogger commented on this quote, **when we feel overwhelmed by our present circumstances, tea helps us rest and stay in the present moment.** Taking time to step back and rest helps us to have a better vision of reality.

Despair, on the other hand, keeps us worrying about the past or projecting into the future. So despair has no room in the Christian life.

Staying connected to one another and to Christ keeps us grounded and in the moment. It keeps us from slipping into despair. But that doesn't mean that there's no place for mourning and sadness in the life of a Christian.

3. MOURN WITH HOPE

At every funeral service, we hear the words of Saint Paul about how to grieve as Christians (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). We grieve death, but there's an element of hope behind our grief. At every baptism service, we hear that everyone who has been baptized into Christ gets to participate in His life (Romans 6:3-5). So when we die, we actually live because we are part of *His* risen Body.

As a Christian, I can have joy in the midst of suffering – even if I can't feel happy just yet. Happiness is a feeling based on circumstances. But joy is about expectation; it's an attitude that defies circumstances. *It's about being able to look past the present circumstances to see something greater to come.*

We have hope because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and of our own resurrection. In the midst of our

sadness, we can take hope in the fact even Jesus mourned death. He wept when He learned of His friend Lazarus' death (John 11:35). He didn't stand stoically and try to bear His pain without showing emotion. But neither did He get lost in waves of pain. Jesus grieved the pain of separation from His friend and the sadness of death. And then He raised His friend from the dead.

If we are mourning our departed loved ones, having the joy of Christ reminds us to pray for them. This joy calls us to pray for the other members of our family who are dealing with their grief too. We pray for the departed, that their memory will be eternal, and that God will have mercy on those still living in this life.

In prayer, we are able to get out of our own heads and reach out to others. If we are having a hard time putting words to our grief, it's possible other people are too. That's why simply being present with our family and being there for them is an inseparable component of dealing with our own grief too.

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My Uncle Art passed away two weeks ago. As I write this, I'm still coming to realize how I'm grieving his life and the relationship we weren't able to cultivate. But when I remember to pray for him and to pray for my family, and when I try to be present with them, I see that I don't bear my grief alone. As frustrating and painful as death is, I have hope in Christ.

It's important that we allow ourselves to feel and to be aware of our own sadness and grief. Turning to Christ and to the Church guides our mourning and keeps us from falling into despair.

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MONTHLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City is our Community Outreach for the month of June. Along with a monetary donation that we will collect throughout the month, they can use the following items:

- ✓ LED Light bulbs
- ✓ AA and AAA Batteries
- ✓ Match Books
- ✓ Zip lock bags
- ✓ Bottles of Water
- ✓ Canned fuzzy water
- ✓ Tuna in water
- ✓ Toilet paper
- ✓ Facial Tissues
- ✓ Paper towels
- ✓ Napkins
- ✓ Tall white kitchen trash bags
- ✓ Black trash bags
- ✓ White plastic knives
- ✓ White plastic spoons
- ✓ 10 or 12 oz. paper cups for cold drinks
- ✓ Chlorox bathroom cleaner
- ✓ 409 type cleaner
- ✓ Chlorox bleach cleaner
- ✓ Simple green (gallon size)
- ✓ Windex
- ✓ Dawn dish soap
- ✓ Salted mixed nuts
- ✓ Raisins
- ✓ Coffee mate non dairy creamer powder (small sizes)
- ✓ HE Laundry detergent
- ✓ Fabric softener
- ✓ Canola oil
- ✓ Honey
- ✓ Cooking spray

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