

“THE WEEKLY FORERUNNER” *Our Parish Bulletin*

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

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor* +++ 2201 Duncan Avenue, Allison Park, Pa 15101
www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com +++ 412-748-0148 (Talk or Text) +++ OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com

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A WARM WELCOME TO OUR GUESTS!

Glory be to Jesus Christ! (*responded with:*

Glory be forever!) Slava Isusu Christu! (*Slava na viki!*)

We are happy that you have joined us today! It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning. We wish God's Blessings to all who are with us today and pray that you come again soon! Please see Fr. Dave if you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy.

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UPCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025 #NativityFast VOL. XI

26th Sunday after Pentecost

Within the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos

+Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria (305)

Reception of Barbara (Catherine) into the Orthodox Faith
Church School (*on the Mystery of Marriage*)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Moleben (Prayer Service) for the Nativity Fast

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Nativity Fast Paraklis to the Theotokos

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 #NATIVITYFAST

27th Sunday after Pentecost

+Prophet Nahum (7th c. B.C.)

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Tone 2; Liturgical Color: **Red**

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19 (*11th Sunday of Luke*)

Monthly Memorial (Panachida) for +Beverly Ferko (2-year),

+Ronald Dzadovsky (7-yr), +Julia Potoski (7-yr), *Father's*

Grandmother, +Josephine Urban (26-yr), *Pani's Father*,

+Stelian Popescu (6-yr)

11:30 – 2:30 Community Free Meal (Please Plan To Stay –
and Invite-A-Friend To Join Us!)

4:00 pm Pan-Orthodox Christmas Choir Concert

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17 #NATIVITYFAST

6:30 pm Akathist Hymn to the Nativity of Christ

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18 #NATIVITYFAST

6:00 pm Feast Day Vespers AT St. Nicholas

(903 Ann Street, Homestead, PA 15120)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19 #NATIVITYFAST

FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20 #NATIVITYFAST

12:30 pm Deanery St. Nicholas Charity Luncheon

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Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear

Confessions after every service or by appointment.

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THIS WEEK'S BULLETIN IS SPONSORED

in memory of +Ronald Dzadovsky (*7-year anniversary*)

May he be remembered in God's Memory forever!

Eternal Memory!

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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

**** Nativity Fast** – The Nativity Fast has begun. This fasting period is also referred to as Philip's Fast (Filipovka). We are *all* called to increase our prayer, fasting, and charity. The fasting periods in the church are prescribed as an opportunity to strengthen our faith. It is for all of us. (*When the church calendar is pink – it is a fasting day for everyone.*) Fasting is personal, but let's embark on this discipline and journey together! If you have any questions about the Fast, please talk with Fr. Dave.

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**** OCMC: Celebrating 40 years of missionary service** - St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church (601 Boone Ave. Canonsburg, PA 15317) invites you to join them for a celebration of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center's 40 year anniversary. On **Tuesday, December 9** the evening will begin with Vespers at 6:00 pm, followed by light refreshments. At 7:00 pm, Fr. Chris Rowe from OCMC will present about what the Mission Center has accomplished. OCMC missionary Kristina Mantasasvili will also present (live from Buenos Aires).

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***** THANK YOU** to everyone who helped with yesterday's Winter Maintenance and Decorating Morning. Every minute of your time was needed and appreciated! May God Bless you!

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*** St. Matrona Cookie Walk** – The 22nd Annual event will be held on **Saturday, December 13**, from 10 AM to 2 PM (or until sold out) at Ss. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church (220 Mansfield Blvd, Carnegie). Most cookies sold by the pound. No online orders. Rumor has it you should go quite early to get in line! Please contact Fr. Dave for more info.

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*** Free Community Lunch** – **NEXT Sunday, December 14** from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm we will open our doors and invite our neighbors and local First Responders over for coffee and lunch. This lunch is not limited to just our Allison Park neighbors – everyone invite someone to come and see the church that afternoon! All are invited and encouraged to stay after our regular coffee social to mingle and meet new people that day.

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**** Pan-Orthodox Choir Concert** – The Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh is hosting a Pan-Orthodox Christmas Concert featuring choirs from multiple Orthodox jurisdictions and the *Pan-Orthodox Choir of Greater Pittsburgh* on **Sunday, December 14** at 4:00 pm at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church (2110 Haymaker Road, Monroeville, PA). Fellowship will follow the concert in their hall. A Free-Will offering will be taken to benefit various Orthodox Charities.

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* **The St Nicholas Charity Luncheon** to benefit our Christ the Saviour Seminary is days away – WHO'S GOING?

❖ **SATURDAY, December 20th**

❖ Bulgarian-Macedonian Hall (449 West 8th Ave., West Homestead)

❖ Doors open at **12:30 pm** with a Buffett Lunch at **1:00 pm**.

❖ Tickets: Adults: \$40; Teens 13-18: \$30; Ages 5-12: \$15

❖ See Larry or Fr. Dave for tickets by **Sunday, December 14th**

Come enjoy the fellowship, amazing food from the Cooked Goose, the carol sing-a-long, the "Rusyn Auction", meet the seminarians along with a special guest, and keep this tradition alive! Let's get our kids to the wonderful event!

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*** **St Nicholas Breakfast in Allison Park** – Our parish St. Nicholas Breakfast will be on **Sunday, December 21** following the Divine Liturgy. Please sign up in the church hall (for food prep purposes) and plan to stay for this wonderful fellowship tradition that we have!

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*** **Pirohi and Dumpling Halushki Sale** - On **Monday, December 22** from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Ambridge will sell potato/cheese pirohi for \$10 a dozen and dumpling halushki for \$10 a quart. Advanced orders can be placed by **December 17** by calling (412)512-5521. Orders to be picked up at their Parish Center (720 Fifth St., Ambridge, PA 15003)

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*** **Nativity Commemorations** – We offer you the opportunity to sponsor items to be used for Nativity as commemorations: *anonymously, in memory of departed loved ones, OR for the health of loved ones*. If you are interested in making any of these commemorations, please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule (or email Fr. Dave) and give an *additional stewardship free-will offering* to the church.

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*** **End-of-Calendar-Year** - The end of the civil calendar year is here. (*Can you believe it's December?*) Have you made a financial contribution to your parish yet? Please fulfill your stewardship responsibility of time, talent, and treasure.

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** **2026 Envelopes** are in the hallway downstairs. If you previously did not get envelopes and are interested in getting them for next year, please see Larry Martin or Fr. Dave.

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** **New Chair Lift Installed** – Everything came together smoothly and a chair lift has been installed from the vestibule to the hall. The cost will be \$6,700 and paid for by an anonymous donor.

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*** **A Carpatho-Rusyn Christmas** – The new book, *Carpatho-Rusyn Christmas*, is a publication of the Diocesan Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage Working Group. It contains Rusyn and American Christmas Carols (Koljady) in English and Rusyn plus the text for the Holy Night Supper (Svjatyj Večer) prayer service (Velija). Cost is \$10 per book and available in our Gift Shop.

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* **Church School Participation** – Our Youth Ministry Leader, Kathy S., will be the main contact for parents to update the teachers on whether their kids will be at class. **Parents** – please update Kathy before each scheduled class (1st, 3rd, & 5th Sundays)

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings: \$ 380
Candle Stewardship: \$ 44
Envelope Stewardship: \$ 410
Community Outreach: \$ 175

Total Collections: \$ 1009

Capital Improvement Fund: \$ 23

Participating Souls at: *Sunday's Liturgy: 24*

Feast Day Vespers: 9

Feast Day Liturgy: 6

Saturday's Maintenance and Decorating: 11

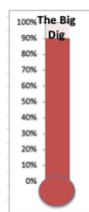
Weekly Candle Intentions or Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; Lawrence Martin; Tim Martin; Cindy Pavilonis

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Financial Reports	November	Fiscal Year
General Stewardship	\$ 14,638.64	\$ 23,611
* Expenses	\$ 5323.00	\$ 17,425
Yield +/-	\$ 9315.64	\$ 6186
Capital Improvement Fund	\$ 11,527.00	\$ 14,434
<i>Sunday Participation Average</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>41</i>

* *detailed report is on the bulletin board in the hall*

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*** **The Big Dig Update** – ONLY 10% LEFT! Through the end of November, **\$40,457** has been collected towards our **\$45,000** expense from the excavation project (*completed in May and July*). CAN WE FILL THE THERMOMETER BY THE END OF THE YEAR??? All of your additional generosity is greatly appreciated! May God bless you! Many Years!

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* **Congratulations!** to Carley and Donald Gavulich and their families on the birth of Greyson Lee Gavulich born 11/12 at 6:57pm (5 lbs 13 oz). Welcome to our Parish Family!

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

During the Nativity Fast, we are called to increase our Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. This month, through the efforts of our Sr. ACRY, we will be having a monetary collection for the **Sr. ACRY Stewardship Campaign** (our community outreach collection for the month). The Stewardship Campaign helps support the ACRY Scholarship Fund, Camp Nazareth, Youth Workers' Conference Fund, Ambassador Fund, and Lenten Retreat Fund. *Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month!*

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19

⁸ for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; ¹³ but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." ¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be

foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

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Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹ And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." ¹³ And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

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PRAYER CORNER

For the Health of... Thomas, Angelo, Craig, Timothy, Patrick, Patricia, Cassandra, Melissa, Christopher, Brian, Liliana, Melanie, Carrie, Lindsay, Jason, Barbara, Paul, Juliana, Fredrick, and Michael

...through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer

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ONLINE BONUSES

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VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

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

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For the souls of the newly departed... +Angela Lauro ...*May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God's Memory!*

NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2025

Met. Gregory asks each member of our Diocese, either as a family or individually, to pray this every evening of the Nativity Fast.

We praise, bless and give thanks to You, O Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Son of the Father! Taking upon Yourself the redemption of the human race, You did not disdain the Virgin's womb. You, the King of Glory, were humbly born amidst poverty in a stable to raise up fallen humanity and enrich it with Your grace.

As a newborn Child, You were bound in swaddling clothes to release us from the bondage of sin and death.

What can we give You, O Christ, for Your boundless love for us? Instead of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, accept the offering of our whole life to You.

As we now prepare to joyfully remember Your Nativity, grant peace to the world, growth to Your Church, stability to our country, wisdom to all civil authorities, and unity to our families.

Make us worthy to celebrate the coming feast and to join with the angelic choirs in singing and glorifying You, O Emmanuel—"God with us"—unto ages of ages. Amen

A REMINDER TO MAKE TIME FOR YOUR NATIVITY FAST CONFESSION

"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." (Lk. 5:12)

As we prepare for the Feast of the Nativity, it is time to prepare the "Manger of our soul" for the coming of the Messiah.

Fr. Dave will be available for confessions after ALL services or by appointment (including Saturdays).

"There is more mercy in God than there are sins in us. Confess your sins at once, whatever they may be."
+St Tikhon of Zadonsk

LIVING THE ORTHODOX FAITH

THE ORTHODOX NATIVITY FAST CAN HELP PREVENT POST-HOLIDAY BLUES

By Lisa DeLuca
published online November 20, 2008

Much of the post-holiday blues that occur in the United States may have something to do with the way Americans celebrate

Christmas. The Orthodox Nativity fast May be the remedy many people need.

When people are suffering in their lives with things like divorce or other losses, financial stress, aging or illness; the sudden onset of pre-Christmas cheeriness may leave them feeling even more isolated and deprived, because the rest of world is portrayed as happy and fulfilled in stark contrast to how they feel.

Others who do embrace pre-holiday celebrations often feel let down and weighed down by food and debt shortly after Christmas day. The novelty of the new material things wears off quickly, friends and family go home, and people may be left feeling blue. This is the feeling known as post-Christmas let-down.

The Orthodox way of celebrating Christmas can yield completely different results.

The Nativity Fast Addresses Pain as Well as Pleasure

"The birth of Christ brought joy and hope to those who had been in darkness and the way the Orthodox celebrate Christmas is designed to let people feel that hope again," states Father Jonathan Ivanoff, an Orthodox Christian Priest and Pastor of St. John the Theologian Orthodox Church in Shirley, New York. The Orthodox Church teaches that Advent represents the time before Christ, when God's people were lost and disconnected from God. Experiencing this loss and disconnection in some way is seen as a necessary pre-requisite to embracing the joy of Christ's birth in its fullness.

To achieve this, instead of "pre-celebrating" the Christmas holiday during Advent, Orthodox Christians participate in a solemn, six-week fast during this time.

What is the Nativity Fast?

Those who are fasting eat less and avoid all meat, cheese, eggs, fish and wine on most days. They keep a primarily vegetarian diet. The faithful do not get caught up in the "letter of the law" and do not freak out if they have to have a piece of meat. The spirit of the practice is more important than what is eaten. There is no threat of eternal damnation. In place of food, drink and partying during Advent, the Orthodox are asked to nourish their souls with increased prayer, communion with their fellow parishioners, and drawing closer to God. For those who are struggling with personal problems, this period can give them a spiritual boost. Their brothers and sisters are experiencing the somber reality of the human condition with them, through the fast. They are not alone.

According to Fr. Ivanoff, Christmas parties are put off until Christmas day when the fast is finally broken. The "famine" ends and the celebration begins. In fact, the Orthodox continue to celebrate for 10 days after Christmas.

The Spirit of the Fast

Participating in the fast helps people tame their worldly appetites. It is an exercise in transcending the body and not being ruled by impulses. People who are fasting begin to feel that regardless of their worldly limitations or deprivations, they have a connection to God that sustains them through the fast and always.

In addition to increased prayer, almsgiving is expected to increase during the Nativity fast. According to Fr. Ivanoff, this means, specifically, giving money to relieve poverty and material need. Doing this offers a counterbalance to people's

urges to overspend on material goods during Christmas. It brings people in contact with others who are far worse off financially, quelling feelings of wanting more than they already have.

Feeding the Soul

These acts of almsgiving can restore feelings of connection with fellow human beings and even with our greater purpose. It reminds people that life means more than the consumption of material goods. It helps people out of the rut of day-to-day life. If people stick to the fast, they will find themselves feeling more somber. A certain mental clarity can dawn. They may have even shed excess pounds. They can feel much more in control of themselves and their appetites, and therefore more hopeful. They may feel closer to God and have more love and compassion towards others.

Breaking the Fast

Towards the end of the fast, people feel like they have accomplished something difficult. On Christmas day they break the fast, exit the period of darkness and celebrate the birth of Christ. The feast is that much sweeter because of the famine that preceded it, just as a drink of water is most meaningful when one is very thirsty.

Because those observing the fast have done the work of nourishing the soul they are now ready to give and receive the God-given blessings of food, drink, material things, family, friends and fun.

Orthodox Christians believe that God wants people to be joyful in this world. The world is a gift. Even those who are still afflicted, having had their souls filled, may feel comforted and, in spite of their situation, may experience the joy and hope that tends to come after breaking the fast. They may feel a renewed connection with God and others.

Orthodox Christmas Trees

Orthodox Christians tend to put up their Christmas trees later—some don't do it until Christmas Eve—and to keep them up longer. Even as the joy of new "toys" wears off, and family and friends go home, the joy of Christ's birth continues to lift them up because they have felt this renewed connection to God and others through the fast. The hard work is behind them and they are living in the light of Christ's birth.

Just as a little baby in a manger offered hope to the world, Christians are called to follow in His footsteps and to be like lights in their worlds. No person is too flawed or too ordinary to make a difference, according to Orthodox teaching. Each person is called by God in his or her own way, to do the Lord's work. Spiritual efforts like the Advent fast may be a form of training for, and part of the manifestation of this.

Authors note: I grew up in a Christian household. My family celebrated Christmas with gifts, food and family but no meaningful (to me) spiritual practice. When I was 11 or 12 years old, I remember feeling depressed on Christmas Day. While I loved receiving many gifts and having new things, I had learned that the joy in that wore off very quickly, and I felt a sense of meaninglessness about the holiday and emptiness inside.

I remember vividly when I spoke to my mother about this problem. She knew right away what I was talking about and told me that I was experiencing the "post-Christmas let down." I was

shocked to learn there was a name for it, because if other people felt that way too, I couldn't understand why no one was talking about it or trying to fix it!

As I grew older, I constantly heard people lamenting how let down they felt days after Christmas, but people just seemed to accept it. I couldn't. Years later I converted to Orthodox Christianity. When I participated in the Advent fast for the first time, my past negative experience with Christmas was turned on its head. I knew I would never be subject to post-holiday blues again.

I realize that many people have Christmas spiritual traditions that they value and my personal experience is not universal. But as a mental health professional, I can't help but marvel at the complete grasp of the needs of the human soul and psyche, that informs the spiritual practice of pre-holiday fasting in the Orthodox Church.

While I wrote this article from more of an analytical point of view of why this spiritual practice can be so helpful to many, it is personal too. Lisa C. DeLuca

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE HOLY GREATMARTYRESS CATHERINE

Commemorated on November 24 (November 25 by Greek Calendar)

The Holy GreatMartyress Catherine was the daughter of the governor of Alexandrian Egypt Constus during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-313). Living in the capital – the centre of Hellenistic knowledge, and possessed of an uncommon beauty and intellect, Catherine received a most splendid of educations, having studied the works of the finest philosophers and teachers of antiquity. Young men from the most worthy families of the empire sought the hand of the beautiful Catherine, but none of them was chosen. She declared to her parents that she would be agreeable to enter into marriage only with someone who surpassed her in illustriousness, wealth, comeliness and wisdom.

Catherine's mother, a secret Christian, sent her for advice to her own spiritual father – a saintly elder pursuing prayerful deeds in solitude in a cave not far from the city. Having listened to Catherine, the elder said that he knew of a Youth, who surpassed her in everything, such that "His beauty was more radiant than the shining of the sun, His wisdom governed all creation, His riches were spread throughout all the world – this however did not diminish but rather added to the inexpressible loftiness of His lineage". The image of the Heavenly Bridegroom produced in the soul of the holy maiden an ardent desire to see Him. Truth, to which her soul yearned, revealed it to her. In parting, the elder handed Catherine an icon of the Mother of God with the God-Child Jesus on Her arm and bid her to pray with faith to the Queen of Heaven – the Mother of the Heavenly Bridegroom – for the bestowing of the vision of Her Son.

Catherine prayed all night and was given to see the Most Holy Virgin, Who sent Her Divine Son to look upon the kneeling of Catherine before Them. But the Child turned His face away from her saying, that He was not able to look at her because she was ugly, of shabby lineage, beggarly and mindless like every person – not washed with the waters of holy Baptism and not sealed with the seal of the Holy Spirit. Catherine returned again to the elder deeply saddened. He lovingly received her, instructed her in the faith of Christ,

admonished her to preserve her purity and integrity and to pray unceasingly; he then performed over her the mystery / sacrament of holy Baptism. And again Saint Catherine had a vision of the Most Holy Mother of God with Her Child. Now the Lord looked tenderly at her and gave her a ring – a wondrous gift of the Heavenly Bridegroom.

At this time the emperor Maximian was himself in Alexandria for a pagan feastday. Because of this, the feast was especially splendid and crowded. The cries of the sacrificial animals, the smoke and the smell of the sacrifices, the endless blazing of fires, and the bustling crowds at the arenas filled Alexandria. Human victims also were brought – because they consigned to death in the fire the confessors in Christ, those not recanting from Him under torture. The Saint's love for the Christian martyrs and her fervent desire to lighten their fate impelled Catherine to go to the pagan head-priest and ruler of the empire, the emperor-persecutor Maximian.

Introducing herself, the saint confessed her faith in the One True God and with wisdom denounced the errors of the pagans. The beauty of the maiden captivated the emperor. In order to convince her and show the superiority of pagan wisdom, the emperor gave orders to gather 50 of the most learned men (rhetoricians) of the empire, but the Saint got the better of the wise men, such that they themselves came to believe in Christ. Saint Catherine shielded the martyrs with the sign of the cross, and they bravely accepted death for Christ and were burnt by order of the emperor.

Maximian, no longer hoping to convince the saint, tried to entice her with the promise of riches and fame. Having received an angry refusal, the emperor gave orders to subject the saint to terrible tortures and then throw her in prison. The Empress Augusta, who had heard much about the saint, wanted to see her. Having prevailed upon the military-commander Porphyry to accompany her with a detachment of soldiers, Augusta went to the prison. The empress was impressed by the strong spirit of Saint Catherine, whose face glowed with Divine grace. The holy martyress explained the Christian teaching to the newly-arrived, and they in believing were converted to Christ.

On the following day they again brought the martyress to the judgement court where, under the threat of being broken on the wheel, they urged that she recant from the Christian faith and offer sacrifice to the gods. The saint steadfastly confessed Christ and she herself approached the wheels; but an Angel smashed the instruments of execution, which broke up into pieces with many pagans passing nearby. Having beheld this wonder, the empress Augusta and the imperial courtier Porphyry with 200 soldiers confessed their faith in Christ in front of everyone, and they were beheaded. Maximian again tried to entice the holy martyress, proposing marriage to her, and again he received a refusal. Saint Catherine firmly confessed her fidelity to the Heavenly Bridegroom – Christ, and with a prayer to Him she herself put her head on the block under the sword of the executioner. The relics of Saint Catherine were taken by the Angels to Mount Sinai. In the VI Century, through a revelation, the venerable head and left hand of the holy martyress were found and transferred with honour to a newly-constructed church of the Sinai monastery, built by the holy emperor Justinian (527-565; Comm. 14 November).

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ADDITIONAL BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Journey to Orthodoxy** – Congratulations and God's choicest blessings to Barbara (Catherine) Leone who was received into the Orthodox Faith and our parish family Sunday morning. May God grant to His newly-illuminated servant, Barbara (Catherine), Many Years of Peace, Health, Happiness and Salvation! Blessings also to her sponsors, Kathy and Larry. Many Years! Mnohaja L'ita!

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* **Free ACRY Annuals** – Feel free to take a past edition of the Diocesan Yearbook, the ACRY Annual. They are on the ledge in the vestibule by the window.

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* **Pop Can Tab Collection** – Join the National Jr. ACRY in supporting the Ronald McDonald House. A collection bin for *Can Tabs* has been placed in the vestibule near the bin for repurposed Greeting Cards. During the next year, please help fill the container with your pop can tabs.

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COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

Please sign up by the kitchen or by contacting Fr. Dave

* December 14: _____ Sr. ACRY

* December 21: _____ St. Nicholas Breakfast

* December 28: _____?____, _____?____, _____?____, _____?____

* *meatless during the fast*

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* **A new approach to the Coffee Social:** 4 people bring 1 item each. A modified sign-up sheet is now available. *(If someone wants to host the entire event, that is still an option – just sign your name through all 4 boxes.)* Also, the Kitchen Crew, led by Liz, will be the “point person” for signing up or any questions. **Please consider hosting a coffee social in honor of someone's Nameday, Birthday, Anniversary, or in memory of a departed loved one near their anniversary.**

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CHURCH BUILDING UPDATE

Here is a brief update from the past few weeks:

✱ ** A **Temporary Sidewalk** has been modified and updated which wraps from the double doors in the middle around to the back of the church (ending at the shed). The 2' pavers were found online for free and the stewardship of members of the construction crew installed them.

✱ * **Temporary Flooring** has been added between the Solea and the start of the pews in the nave of the church. This “dresses up” this area until the ceiling and walls are finished *(plans still being finalized)*. When the day comes to do the floor in the nave, this laminate can be re-used elsewhere (i.e. offices downstairs). The cost was less than \$850. Thank you and God's blessings to members of the Construction Crew who worked on this project.

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Glory to God for All Things!

Through your generosity and dedication, everything is coming together – one thing at a time. **Thank you!** Many stewards keep coming to the church and working very hard to make improvements. May God grant you many years!

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“Code” for reading the bulletin:

*** = new news ** = 2nd time in the bulletin

* = at least the 3rd time in the bulletin

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Live-Broadcast – If you are unable to attend church services, please pray along with our Cathedral online:

www.acrod.org/directories/cathedral/live/

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Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear Confessions after every service or by appointment.

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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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Random Tidbits... Father Dave is available to meet Monday thru Friday from 8:30am to 2:30pm 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 (Sacrament) of Holy Anointing (Unction) to be fully prepared.

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Speaking With Your Priest - Please know you can call me anytime if there is something troubling you. It is not a sign of weakness to share something that may be heavy on your heart or mind. As a priest and Father to our parish, I am here for you. Please call if you need someone to listen or to pray with you. Every heart has a cross and you do not need to carry it alone. Please also call if you have an idea for the growth of our parish. I am praying for you and am grateful for your prayers. With love in Christ, Fr. Dave

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2025-26 SJB PARISH COUNCIL OFFICERS

President: Larry Martin

Vice-President: Liz Radomsky

Treasurer: Tim Martin, Reader

Financial Secretary: Rich Mirilovich

Recording Secretary: Gina Fall

Chief Auditor: Bob Fall

Auditors: Mary Jane Hudak, Ray Kilmer, Kim Opsitos, Matt Opsitos, and Kathy Schrmack

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THIS MONTH'S SERVICE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Moleben (Prayer Service) for the Nativity Fast

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3 #NATIVITYFAST

6:30 pm Feast Day Vespers

7:30 pm Orthodoxy 101

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4 #NATIVITYFAST

FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 #NATIVITYFAST

9:00 am Winter Maintenance & Decorating Morning

11a-1p Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession offered

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Reception of Barbara into the Orthodox Faith

Church School

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Moleben (Prayer Service) for the Nativity Fast

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Nativity Fast Paraklis to the Theotokos

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Monthly Memorial (Panachida)

11:30 – 2:30 Community Free Meal

4:00 pm Pan-Orthodox Christmas Choir Concert

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17 #NATIVITYFAST

6:30 pm Akathist Hymn to the Nativity of Christ

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18 #NATIVITYFAST

6:00 pm Feast Day Vespers AT St. Nicholas

(903 Ann Street, Homestead, PA 15120)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19 #NATIVITYFAST

FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20 #NATIVITYFAST

12:30 pm Deanery St. Nicholas Charity Luncheon

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Youth Sunday

St. Nicholas Breakfast

Church School

MONDAY, DECEMBER 22 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Moleben (Prayer Service) for the Nativity Fast

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28 #NATIVITYFAST

SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29 #NATIVITYFAST

6:30 pm Moleben (Prayer Service) for the Nativity Fast

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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET



TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

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PARISH STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

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* **Ride Share** – We were blessed to have a number of college students with us last week for our Student Blessing. When their schedules work out, they will need rides from Point Park, Duquesne, or Pitt. We have also received requests from a couple

other people who are interested in getting a ride to the church. Please contact Fr. Dave or Larry if you would be able to bring your “neighbor” to the church.

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ACRY NEWS

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* **Joining the ACRY** – If you would like to become a part of our philanthropic organization of the ACRY (*American Carpatho-Russian Youth*), which is open to anyone over age 8, please contact Subdeacon Ryan Ferko.

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Why Should I Join the Local ACRY? The ACRY is an Orthodox Christian family fellowship dedicated to the purpose of encouraging spiritual growth through charitable and apostolic missionary works, prayer and fellowship for the Glory of God and the building up of the Church and our Diocese. The local ACRY focuses on outreach to the community in various forms and fellowship within. This could be a fundraiser or family event at the church grounds to introduce people to our parish, or the volunteering of our time to help support a community event. In addition to these, the ACRY has the opportunity to branch out and meet other members of our diocesan ACRY community through deanery and nation events and partake in outreach at a broader level.

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Giving at the Church – The opportunities to give your stewardship treasures at SJB are to:

- ✦ hand your offering to the curator who sits at the desk in the vestibule (to the right after you enter),
- ✦ drop your offering in one of multiple baskets around the church, or
- ✦ place your offering in the box in the candle stand after saying your prayers when lighting 2 candles.

The ministries of the church cannot happen without your dedication and support.

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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 its 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. *Remember, sponsoring a bulletin in memory of someone does not replace having a Panachida (Memorial Service) for them.*

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A Prayer of Stewardship

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the good steward, who redeemed Adam and Eve of their failed stewardship by offering Yourself for the life of the world. You did teach us in the feeding of the multitudes that whatever we give to God is returned to us multiplied. You did praise those good and faithful servants in the parable of the talents who returned to the Master their gifts. So help us to learn the joy of stewardship, remembering that everything we have comes from You and belongs to You. We know, Lord, that we often live in fear of the future and insecurity. Help us to remember the lilies of the field and so to trust in Your providence. Grant to us a cheerful and generous spirit. Enkindle in the hearts of all Your people a zealous love for You. For You are the Good Steward, and to You we give thanks, praise and glory, together with Your Father and Your all holy good and life-giving Spirit now and ever and onto the ages of ages. Amen.

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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%	Tithe 12%	Upper Range Giving 10%	Tithe 9%	Upper Range Giving 8%	Middle Range Giving 7%	Middle Range Giving 6%	Lower Range Giving 5%	Lower Range Giving 4%	Lower Range Giving 3%	Lower Range Giving 2%	Lower Range Giving 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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ORTHODOX WORD OF THE WEEK

A Few Types of Para-Liturgical Services

AKATHIST – a hymn (*a song of praise or adoration*) dedicated to a saint, holy event, icon, or one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The word Akathist itself means, "not sitting".

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MOLEBEN - a supplication prayer service in honor of either our Lord Jesus Christ, the Theotokos, or a particular saint or martyr. It is a Slavic service, but closely related to the Paraklis service.

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PARAKLIS (Paraklesis) – a service of supplication specifically for the living (*as opposed to a Panachida (Memorial Service), which is a supplication for the departed*). This service is most often addressed to the Theotokos (*the Virgin Mary*), but may be used to seek the intercessions of any saint. It is appropriate to be served at any time of need.

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PARASTAS (or GREAT PANACHIDA) – a memorial service for the dead in the Byzantine-Slavic tradition. The common brief memorial service, the *Small Panachida* (or just *Panachida*) forms the conclusion of the Parastas. The full title in the Euchologion or Trebnik Prayer Books is *The Great Panachida or Parastas, for all our brethren who have fallen asleep, and for all Orthodox Christians who have departed* (i.e. from this life). The word Parastas itself means, "standing service".

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SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Father is available to meet Monday thru Friday from 8:30am to 3:30pm 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 prepared or not of the Orthodox Faith may receive a blessing from the chalice.

How to receive - Please remember the following helpful hints aimed at helping to preserve the solemnity and safety of the Holy Mystery. Anyone wearing lipstick should remove it before receiving. Be sure to offer your baptismal name to the priest before receiving. Please take great care that the red cloth held by the acolytes (servers) is fully under your chin (*you should not hold it*), then use the centuries-old practice of receiving: please fully open your mouth, tilt your head back, receive the Holy Gifts, wait until They are securely in your mouth and so that none of the holy and precious Body and Blood of Christ is accidentally spilled. Thank you for your cooperation, and may God have mercy on us all!

Lapsed Members – You are always welcome home and we want you to come back! Generally speaking, sincere and regular participation in the Sunday Divine Liturgy and in the Mysteries of Confession and Communion 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 in the church. 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 the 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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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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ONLINE PRAYER CORNER

Special Intentions – Did you ever wonder for what reasons would a person’s name go under “For the Special Intentions of...” on our Prayer Page? A special intention request is very diversified! It could be when one is under extreme job stress, struggling with spiritual issues, infertility, dealing with the loss of a loved one... the list goes on. As with the other lists on our page, one does not have to be Orthodox to be added.

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Prayer requests – During the Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, prayers are said for the sick and those celebrating special occasions listed in the bulletin. If silent prayers are requested, they will be offered quietly at the Altar at all services. All those listed in the “Prayer Corner” are prayed for during the Proskomedia (Preparation of the Bread and Wine for Communion). Prayer requests will remain for (about) 40 days unless requested otherwise. Please let Fr. Dave know if you wish to make additions or subtractions (in the case of answered prayers) to our prayer list.

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Our Parish Prayer List for Special Intentions

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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A Prayer For The Sick: O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant(s) *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. Stephen B., Fr. Thomas B., Protodeacon Gregory B., Stephanie B, Kevin, Michael L., Laura & family, Georgia,

Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Amee, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin, David, Donna, George, *our diocesan seminarians:* Dcn Peter S, Dcn Maximus C, Alexander H, Monk David M, Nicholas C, John B, John F, Bradley S, Clay W, and *our Parish Council and Curators:* Lawrence, Subdeacon Ryan, Timothy, Rich, Elizabeth, Robert, Gina, John, Kimberly, Matthew, Katherine, Kenneth 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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December Namedays:

Nicholas Sarandou - *St. Nicholas the Wonderworker (NC 12/6)*

Barbara Leone, Carol Lorenzi, Katherine Schrmack - *Great-martyr Catherine of Alexandria (12/7)*

Andrew Mirilovich, Fr. Dave Andrew Urban - *Holy & All-praised Apostle Andrew the First-called (12/13)*

Barbara Kirish - *Great martyr Barbara (12/17)*

Nicholas Ditmore, Nicholas Kubis - *St. Nicholas the Wonderworker (12/19)*

Patrick Wertz - *St. Sturm of Fulda Monastery (12/30)*
...*May God grant them many and blessed years!*

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December Birthdays:

Matthew Hanchulak (12/1), Stacy Dzambo (12/1), Joshua Winkler (12/1), *Father’s Godson*, Joseph Sekerak (12/2), Lucy Blobner (12/4/15), Brynn Jozwiakowski (12/6), His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory (12/7), Pañi Eleanor Herbert (12/8), Deborah Brancho (12/9), Jim Potoski (12/10), Noah Thorn (12/10), *Father’s God-sister*, Lauren Babbie (12/12), Thomas Figura (12/15), Brian Gogal (12/15), Madelyn Spirnak (12/17), Donald Paul Gavulich (12/19), Carter Andrekovich (12/20), Fr Nik Ferencz (12/20), Mike Puhac (12/21), Molly Blobner (12/27/), Melissa Turner (12/27), Lilly Turner (12/28)

...*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...

Hekuran, Maxwell, Barbara, Tyler
...*through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, & St. John Maximovitch.*

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For those preparing for Marriage...

Nicholas & Cassie, Nicholas & Camile
...*through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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December Anniversaries:

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

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For Pregnant Mothers...

Morgan (*due in January*)
...*through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Theotokos, and St. Irene Chrysovalantou.*

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For those serving in the Armed Forces & Civil Authorities...

Thomas R. Dzadovsky

...through the prayers of St George, the Great-Martyr &
Wonderworker.

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NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2025

*Metropolitan Gregory asks each member of our Diocese,
either as a family or individually, to pray this every
evening of the Nativity Fast.*

We praise, bless and give thanks to You, O Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Son of the Father! Taking upon Yourself the redemption of the human race, You did not disdain the Virgin's womb. You, the King of Glory, were humbly born amidst poverty in a stable to raise up fallen humanity and enrich it with Your grace. As a newborn Child, You were bound in swaddling clothes to release us from the bondage of sin and death. What can we give You, O Christ, for Your boundless love for us? Instead of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, accept the offering of our whole life to You. As we now prepare to joyfully remember Your Nativity, grant peace to the world, growth to Your Church, stability to our country, wisdom to all civil authorities, and unity to our families. Make us worthy to celebrate the coming feast and to join with the angelic choirs in singing and glorifying You, O Emmanuel—"God with us"—unto ages of ages. Amen

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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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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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