

“THE VOICE” *Our Parish Monthly Newsletter*

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

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, DECEMBER 3, 2023 #NATIVITY FAST
26th Sunday after Pentecost; Venerable Gregory
Forefeast of the Entrance of the Theotokos
Reservations due for the Deanery St. Nicholas
Charity Dinner AND Christmas Candy Orders Due
11:45 am Feast Day Vespers

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4 #NATIVITY FAST
FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS
9:30 Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6 #NATIVITY FAST
6:30 pm Parish Council Meeting

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9 #NATIVITY FAST
11-1 Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession offered

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2023 #NATIVITY FAST
27th Sunday after Pentecost
Great Martyr James the Persian (421)
9:15 – Nativity Canon & Carols (*Kol’ady*);
9:30 – Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17
Gospel: Luke 13:10-17 (*10th Sunday of Luke*)
Tone 2; Liturgical Color: **Red**
Youth Christmas Carol Practice

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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)

DECEMBER SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2 #NATIVITY FAST
11a-1p Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession offered

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3 #NATIVITY FAST
9:30 am Divine Liturgy

11:45 am Feast Day Vespers

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4 #NATIVITY FAST
FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS
9:30 am Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6 #NATIVITY FAST
6:30 pm Parish Council Meeting

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9 #NATIVITY FAST
11a-1p Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession offered

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10 #NATIVITY FAST
9:30 am Divine Liturgy (*Nativity Canon begins*)
4:30 pm Pgh Deanery St. Nicholas Charity Dinner

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13 #NATIVITY FAST
6:30 pm Akathist Hymn to the Nativity of Christ

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 #NATIVITY FAST
11a-1p Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession offered

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 #NATIVITY FAST
9:30 am Divine Liturgy (and Youth Sunday)
followed by St. Nicholas Breakfast

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18 #NATIVITY FAST
7:00 pm *in Homestead* Feast Day Vespers

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19 #NATIVITY FAST
FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23 #NATIVITY FAST
11a-1p Mystery (Sacrament) of Confession offered

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24 #NATIVITY FAST
9:30 am Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 #NATIVITY FAST
9:30 am Divine Liturgy



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor*

Very Reverend Father John Brancho, *Pastor Emeritus*

Subdeacon Ryan Ferko, Kris Carlisle, Reader, Timothy Martin, Reader

Stephen Brancho, Subdeacon Ryan Ferko, & John Radick, *Cantors*

Lawrence Martin, *Parish Council President*

www.facebook.com/pg/St-John-the-Baptist-Orthodox-Church-Allison-Park

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Twitter: @SJB_OrthodoxPGH

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 12:16-21

¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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No Styrofoam – We greatly appreciate when people, in their stewardship, bring in supplies to use at the parish. A few years ago, in an effort to be more “green” towards God’s Creation, the Parish Council agreed for us to go Styrofoam Free. When bringing in supplies, please *do not* purchase Styrofoam. Thank you for your understanding and being a good steward to God’s Creation!

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No Winter Maintenance and Decorating – In the past years, we have had a Saturday Winter Maintenance and Decorating morning at the beginning of December. This has been *postponed* until we are ready to move back upstairs. At that time, we will have a major cleaning day when the more hands will make less work.

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A REMINDER TO MAKE TIME FOR YOUR NATIVITY FAST CONFESSION

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

Fr. Dave will be available for confessions after ALL services, from 11-1 on most Saturdays, or by appointment.

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.

“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

SPIRITUAL VITAMIN

"Prayer is the breath of the soul, and fasting is the water that extinguishes the flame of passions."

+Elder Arsenie Boca

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**** 2024 Nativity Fast** – It is time to prepare. Work needs done. Effort needs to increase. The 2024 Nativity Fast, also referred to as Philip’s Fast (Filipovka) is here. We are *all* called to increase our prayer, fasting, and charity. The fasting periods in the church are not prescribed only for clergy. It is for all of us. (*When the church calendar is pink – it is a fasting day for everyone.*) Fasting is personal – it is your choice to embark on this discipline and journey.

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***** Para-Liturgical Services** – During the Nativity Fast, Para-Liturgical Services will be offered through the week for us to increase our prayer during this fasting season. The Moleben, Paraklis, and Akathist services do not have Communion, so no fasting is necessary. These services range from 25 to 45 minutes. Come and pray with us!

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**** St. John’s St Nicholas Breakfast** – Our parish St. Nicholas Breakfast will be on **Sunday, December 17** following the Divine Liturgy. Please plan to stay for this wonderful fellowship tradition that we have!

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**** 2024 Yearbook, A.C.R.Y. Annual** - If you would like to include a patron, booster, or memorial listing in this Year Book of the activities of our God-saved Diocese, a sign-up sheet has been placed in the vestibule on the black cabinet. Patron & Memorial listings are \$6; Booster listings are \$3. Please see Father with any questions. Deadline is Dec 31.

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COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

Please sign up on the door in the multi-purpose room or by contacting Fr. Dave

- * December 10: _____?
- * December 17: St. Nicholas Luncheon
- * December 24: _____?

* *meatless during the Fast*

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CHURCH BUILDING UPDATE

Here is a brief update from the past few weeks:

- ✘ ******* Quotes for foam-insulation in the Sanctuary are being explored (roughly \$5k)
 - ✘ ******* Quotes for new drywall in the Sanctuary are being explored (roughly \$5k)
 - ✘ ******* A chandelier for the nave has been donated by our sister parish in Potomac, MD – *Is anyone able to help in getting it to the parish? See Fr Dave*
 - ✘ ******* Quotes for a new electrical panel are being received (*covered by an anonymous donor*)
 - ✘ ***** A contract was signed on 11/3 for new windows on the 1st floor (*cost is \$28,000 – covered by an anonymous donor*)
 - ✘ Work in the Sanctuary began August 29 (*cost is To Be Determined*)
 - ✘ A design for a sign to be placed near the street is being designed and will be proposed to Hampton Township soon (*cost is TBD*)
- Through your generosity and dedication, all of this will come together – one thing at a time!*
Glory to God for All Things!

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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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2023-24 SJB PARISH COUNCIL OFFICERS

- President: Lawrence Martin
- Vice-President: Subdeacon Ryan Ferko
- Treasurer: Timothy Martin, Reader
- Financial Secretary: Rich Mirilovich
- Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Radomsky
- Chief Auditor: Robert Fall
- Auditors: Gina Fall, John Kirish, Mary Jane Hudak, Kathy Schrmack (*5th position open*)

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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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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 15,562
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 366
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 288
Community Outreach:	\$ 5
Total Collections:	\$ 16,221
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11-19-23 additional Stewardship Offering that was missed:	\$ 500

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Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; Lawrence Martin; Kathy Schrmack; Fred and Juliana Anton; Eleanor Sanger; Cindy Pavilonis

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The **Eternal Lamp** was offered last week in memory of departed members of the Helen Saraff family. May Their Memory Be Eternal! Vičnaya Pamyat!

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***** Significant Donations** – This past week we received two significant donations of \$10,000 (anonymously) and \$5,000 (by Judith Figura). May God grant them many and blessed years!

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

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2024 Envelopes have arrived and are in the vestibule. If you previously did not get envelopes and are interested in getting them for next year, please see Larry Martin.

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November Financial Report:

General Stewardship = \$ 19,426.13
(includes \$ 204.13 from online stewardship)

***Expenses = \$ 5780.10**

Net Income = \$ 13,646.03

Capital Improvement Fund = \$ 305

Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 28
**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*

Fiscal Year-to-Date Financial Report:

(September through last month)

General Stewardship = \$ 29,907

***Expenses = \$ 20,342**

Net Income = \$ 9,565

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

Church Financial Account Balances:

General Stewardship = \$ 81,420

includes the "Fundraising Account"
Capital Improvement Funds = \$ 84,233
of which \$ 50,000 in this fund is borrowed
A 2024 Budget will be presented soon

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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 loves 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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**** Lots–O–Luck Calendars** – The National ACRY Lots-O-Luck Calendars are available. \$25 per ticket for a year's worth of prizes totaling \$10,000! Please see Subdeacon Ryan Ferko.

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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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Giving at the Church – The “flow of traffic” is a little different in Allison Park, but the ways to give your stewardship treasures has not changed. One can:

- ✘ hand your offering to the curator who sits at the desk in the vestibule (to the right after you enter),
- ✘ there are multiple baskets around the church for you to drop your offering in, or
- ✘ when saying your prayer and lighting 2 candles, put your donation in the box in the candle stand.

We will continue to not “*pass the basket*” which interrupts our focus on our prayers.

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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.

Stewardship of Treasure Guide

Weekly offering to God through the Sunday Offertory - Will you take a step up?

Weekly Income	Beyond a Tithe	Tithe	Upper Range Giving	Middle Range Giving	Lower Range Giving							
	15%	12%	10%	9%	8%	7%	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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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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MONTHLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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 at the end of the month). The Stewardship Campaign helps support the ACRY Scholarship Fund, Camp Nazareth, Youth Workers’ Conference Fund, Ambassador Fund, and Lenten Retreat Fund,
- **Food Drive Project** for Neighborhood Resilience Project (formerly FOCUS Pittsburgh). *Please bring in non-perishable unexpired food items: canned fruits and vegetables, cereals, canned meats, soups, oatmeal, pasta, peanut butter and jelly, and rice.*,
- And reaching out to **our homebound** parishioners. *Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month!*

ORTHODOX WORDS OF THE WEEK

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”.

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.

PARAKLIS – 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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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE MONK GREGORY DEKAPOLITES

Commemorated on December 3 / November 20

The Monk Gregory Dekapolites was born in the city of Isaurian Dekapolis in the VIII Century. From the time of his childhood he was fond of the temple of God and church services. He read constantly with reverence in the Holy Scripture. In order to avoid the marriage which his parents had intended for him, he secretly left home. He spent all his life wandering: he was in Constantinople, Rome, Corinth, and he pursued asceticism for a certain while on Olympos. The Monk Gregory preached everywhere the Word of God, denouncing the Iconoclast heresy, strengthening the faith and fortitude of the Orthodox, whom the heretics in those times were oppressing, torturing and imprisoning. Through his ascetic effort and prayer, Saint Gregory acquired the graced gifts of prophecy and wonderworking. Having attained to purity of heart, he was granted to hear Angelic singing in praise of the Holy Trinity. To better contend against the Iconoclast heresy, Saint Gregory left the monastery of Saint Minos where he had asceticised for a long while, and he set off again to Constantinople. At the capital, a grievous illness undermined his strength, and he expired to the Lord in the year 816.

FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

The Entry Into The Temple Of The Most Holy Mother Of God

Commemorated on December 4 / November 21

The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God happened, according to the preserved accounts of Holy Tradition, in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Righteous Joakim and Anna, in praying for a solution to their childlessness, gave a vow that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached three years of age, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. Having gathered together their kinsfolk and acquaintances, and having dressed the All-Pure Mary in Her finest clothes, and with the singing of sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands they carried Her to the Jerusalem Temple. There the high-priest with a throng of priests met the maiden of God. In the Temple, the stairway led up fifteen high steps. The Child Mary, so it seemed, could not Herself make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly made it up over the remaining steps and ascended to the highest. Then the high-priest, through an inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, and herein of all people it was only the high-priest that entered one time a year with a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

Righteous Joakim and Anna, having entrusted their Child to the will of the Heavenly Father, returned home. The MostBlessed Mary remained in the domicile for girls, situated near the Temple. Round about the Temple, through the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Lk. 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters, in which dwelt those dedicated to the service of God.

In remembrance of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Jerusalem Temple, Holy Church from ancient times established a solemn feastday. The decretals for the making of the feast in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the

traditions of Palestinian Christians, where mention is made that the holy Empress Helen built a church in honour of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God.

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Sainted Nicholas, Archbishop Of Myra In Lycia, And Wonderworker

Commemorated on December 19 / 6

Sainted Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, and Wonderworker is famed as a great saint pleasing unto God. He was born in the city of Patara in the Lycian region (on the south coast of the Asia Minor peninsula), and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had given a vow to dedicate him to God. As the fruition of longtime prayer of his childless parents, the infant Nicholas from the very day of his birth revealed to people the light of his future glory as a wonderworker. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth was immediately healed from illness. Saint Nicholas from his infancy began a life of fasting, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he accepted milk from his mother only but once, after the evening prayers of his parents.

From the time of his childhood Nicholas thrived on the study of Divine Scripture; by day he would not leave church, and by night he prayed and read books – fashioning in himself a worthy dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. His uncle, Bishop Nicholas of Patara, rejoiced at the spiritual success and deep piety of his kinsman. He ordained him a reader, and then elevated Nicholas to the dignity of presbyter, making him his assistant and entrusting him to speak instructing the flock. Constantly at work and vivacious, being in unceasing prayer, presbyter Nicholas displayed great kind-heartedness towards the flock, and towards those afflicted coming to him for help, and he distributed all his inheritance to the poor. Having learned about the bitter need and poverty of a certain formerly rich inhabitant of his city, Saint Nicholas saved him from great sin. Having three grown daughters, the despairing father considered to give them over to profligacy so as to save them from hunger. The saint, grieving lest the man perish a sinner, by night secretly brought him through the window three sacks with gold and by this saved the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, Saint Nicholas always strove to

do this secretly and conceal his good deeds.

In setting off on pilgrimage to the holy places at Jerusalem, the bishop of Patara entrusted the guidance of the flock to Saint Nicholas, who fulfilled this obedience carefully and with love. When the bishop returned, he in turn asked blessing for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Along the way the saint predicted the onset of a storm threatening the ship with inundation, since he saw the devil itself having got on ship. At the entreaty of the despairing pilgrims, he calmed by his prayers the waves of the sea. Through his prayer also was restored to health a certain sailor of the ship, who had fallen from the mast and was mortally injured.

Having reached the ancient city of Jerusalem and having come to Golgotha, Saint Nicholas offered up thanksgiving to the Saviour of the race of mankind and he made the rounds of all the holy places, doing poklons and making prayers. By night on Mount Sion the closed doors of the church opened by themselves in front of the arriving great pilgrim.

Upon the death of archbishop John, he was chosen bishop of Lycian Myra – after one of the bishops of the Council gave a decisive reply on the question of choice of a new archbishop – the choice of God as directed him in a vision – Saint Nicholas. Summoned to the flock of the Church in the dignity of archbishop, Sainted Nicholas remained a great ascetic, appearing to his flock as an image of gentleness, kindness and love towards people. This was particularly precious for the Lycian Church during the time of persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Bishop Nicholas, locked up in prison together with other Christians, sustained them and exhorted them to bravely endure the fetters, punishment and torture. He himself the lord preserved unharmed. Upon the accession to rule of the holy equal-to-the-apostles Constantine, Saint Nicholas was restored to his flock, which joyfully received back their guide and intercessor.

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, Saint Nicholas was a zealous and ardent warrior of the Church of Christ. Fighting evil spirits, the saint made the rounds of the pagan temples and shrines in the city of Myra and its surroundings, shattering the idols and turning the temples to dust.

In the year 325 Saint Nicholas was a participant in

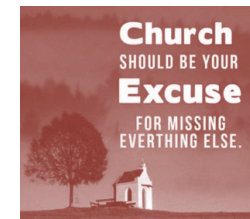
the I OEcumenical Council (Sobor). This Council proclaimed the Nicene Symbol of faith, and he stood up with the likes of saints Sylvester the pope of Rome, Alexander of Alexandria, Spyridon of Trimiphuntum and others of the 318 fathers of the Council against the heretic Arius.

Saint Nicholas, in the heat of denunciation and fired up with zeal for the Lord, even gave the false-teacher a good drubbing on the ears. He was indeed a light in the world and the salt of the earth, wherein his life did shine and his word was mixed with the salt of wisdom.

Having reached old age, Saint Nicholas expired peacefully to the Lord (+ 345-351). His venerable relics were preserved undecayed in the local cathedral church and flowed with curative myrh, from which many received healing. In the year 1087 his relics were transferred to the Italian city of Bari, where they rest even now.

Part of all the churches devoted to the saint were those established at market-squares by Russian merchants, sea-farers and land-goers, venerating the wonderworker Nicholas as a protector of all those journeying on dry land and sea. They sometimes received the name among the people of "Nicholas soaked". Many village churches in Russia were dedicated to the wonderworker Nicholas, reverently venerated by peasants as a merciful intercessor before the Lord for all the people in their work. Ancient Kiev preserves the memory about the miraculous rescue of a drowning infant by the saint. The great wonderworker, hearing the grief-filled prayers of the parents in the loss of their only child, by night snatched up the infant from the waters, revived him and placed him in the choir-loft of Saint Sophia church in front of his wonderworking image. And here in the morning the infant was found safe by his thrilled parents, praising with a multitude of the people Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker.

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SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Father 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 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 here 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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PRAYER CORNER

*Our Parish Prayer List for Special Intentions & other needs**
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A Prayer For The Sick: O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant *name(s)*. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver *him/her/them* from sickness and bitter pain. Heal *him/her/them* so that *he/she/they* may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

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For the Health of... Robert, Eleanor, Alexandra, Joanne, Patricia, Allison, Jason, Kevin, Carlene, David, Donna, George, Kelly, Marie, Brian, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, and Michael *...through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer.*

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For the Special Intentions of... His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. David S., Fr. Myron, Dcn. Dean, Michael L., Laura & family, Carlene, Georgia, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Amee, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin *our diocesan seminarians*: Nicholas, Dylan, Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, Nicholas, Aydin, Subdeacon Seamus, Nicholas, Ignatios, *and our Parish Council and Curators*: Lawrence, Subdeacon Ryan, Timothy, Rich, Elizabeth, Robert, Gina, John, Mary Jane, 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:

Caitlinn Brozell, Carol Lorenzi, Katherine Schrmack - Great-martyr Catherine of Alexandria (12/7)
Andrew Mirilovich, Fr. Dave Andrew Urban - Holy & All-praised Apostle Andrew the 1st-called (12/13)
Barbara Kirish - Great martyr Barbara (12/17)
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 (Martin) Dzambo (12/1), Joshua Winkler (12/1), *Father's Godson*, Joseph Sekerak (12/2), Lucy Blobner (12/4), His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory (12/7), Pañi Eleanor Herbert (12/8), Deborah Brancho Chow (12/9), Jim Potoski (12/10), *Father's God-sister*, Lauren Babbie (12/12), Brian Gogal (12/15), Madelyn Spirnak (12/17), Donald P. Gavulich (12/19), Patricia Deluca (12/20), Patricia Donley (12/20), Fr Nik Ferencz (12/20), Mike Puhac (12/21), Jaydon Maruscak (12/23), Molly Blobner (12/27) *...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 *...through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, & St. John Maximovitch.*

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For those preparing for Marriage... Francis & Alexandra. *...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... Ashley (*due in December*), Lauren (*December*), Ashley (*March*) *...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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For the souls of the newly departed...

+ Kathleen Ferko (12/2), +Greg Steinmetz (11/29), +Sandra Hricak (11/21), +Irving Liberman (11/6), +Maria Sokur (10/28), +Mary Jane Matolyak (10/27) *...May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God's Memory!*

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

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NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2023

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

Most-merciful Master, Lord Jesus Christ our God, at Your Holy Birth, the choirs of angels proclaimed peace on earth.

At Your Glorious Resurrection,
You came to Your disciples saying
“Peace be with you!”

As we prepare to celebrate Your coming in the flesh, send Your peace upon the whole world, especially upon the Holy Land and all other places of warfare and unrest.

Cleanse us of all impurity, O Lord, so that our hearts may be filled with Your peace which surpasses all understanding.

In this way, may we live peacefully according to Your commandments in our families, communities, and churches.

For You are the King of Peace and the Savior of our Souls, and to You we give glory forever.

Amen!

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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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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ONLINE BONUSES

Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple

Volume II - Worship The Church Year

The second great feast of the Theotokos is the celebration of her entrance as a child into the Jerusalem Temple which is commemorated on the twenty-first of November. Like the feast of her nativity, this feast of Mary is without direct biblical and historical reference. But like the nativity, it is a feast filled with important spiritual significance for the Christian believer.

The texts of the service tells how Mary was brought as a small child to the temple by her parents in order to be raised there among the virgins consecrated to the service of the Lord until the time of their betrothal in marriage. According to Church tradition, Mary was solemnly received by the temple community which was headed by the priest Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. She was led to the holy place to be “nourished” there by the angels in order to become herself the “holy of holies” of God, the living

sanctuary and temple of the Divine child who was to be born in her.

There is no doubt that the verses of the Old Testament Psalm 45, used extensively in the services of the feast, provided a great inspiration for the celebration of Mary's consecration to the service of God in the Jerusalem Temple.

Hear, O Daughter, and consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your Lord, bow to him . . .

The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes, in many-colored robes she is led to her king, with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train.

With joy and gladness they are led along, as they enter the palace of the king.

Instead of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations, therefore, the peoples will praise you forever and ever (Ps 45.10–17).

The Orthodox Church understands these words of the psalm to be a prophecy directly related to Mary the Theotokos. According to the Gospel of Saint Luke which is read at the Vigil of each of her feasts, Mary herself speaks the following words:

My soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. For behold, hence-forth all generations shall call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation (Lk 1.47–50).

The main theme of the feast of Mary's entrance to the Temple, repeated many times in the liturgical services, is the fact that she enters the Temple to become herself the living temple of God, thus inaugurating the New Testament in which are fulfilled the prophecies of old that “the dwelling of God is with man” and that the human person is the sole proper dwelling place of the Divine Presence (Ezek 37.27; Jn 14.15–23; Acts 7.47; 2 Cor 6.11; Eph 2.18–22; 1 Pet 2.4; Rev 22.1–4).

Today is the preview of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. The Virgin

appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Divine Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation (Troparion).

The most pure Temple of the Saviour, the precious Chamber and Virgin, the Sacred Treasure of the Glory of God, is presented today to the house of the Lord. She brings with her the grace of the Spirit, which the angels of God do praise. Truly this woman is the Abode of Heaven! (Kontakion).

The fortieth chapter of Exodus about the building of the tabernacle is read at Vespers, together with passages from the First Book of Kings and the Prophecy of Ezekiel. Each one of these readings all end with exactly the same line, “for the glory of the Lord filled the house [tabernacle] of the Lord God Almighty” (Ex 40.35; 1 Kg 8.11; Ezek 44.4).

Once again on this feast, the Old Testament readings are interpreted as symbols of the Mother of God. This “glory of the Lord” is referred to the Mother of Christ and it “fills” her and all people after her who “hear the word of God and keep it” as the Gospel of the festal liturgy proclaims (Lk 11.37–28). The epistle reading at the Divine Liturgy also proclaims this very same theme (Heb 9.1–7).

Thus, the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple is the feast which celebrates the end of the physical temple in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God. When the child Mary enters the temple, the time of the temple comes to an end and the “preview of the good will of God” is shown forth. On this feast we celebrate—in the person of Christ's mother—that we too are the house and tabernacle of the Lord.

. . . We are the temple of the living God, as God said, “I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor 6.16; Is 52.11).

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-year/entrance-of-the-theotokos-to-the-temple>