

“THE WEEKLY FORERUNNER” *Our Parish Weekly Bulletin*

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

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Glory be 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.

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 17, 2023 #NATIVITY FAST

28th Sunday after Pentecost

Venerable John Damascene (760)

Youth Sunday; St. Nicholas Brunch

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18 #NATIVITY FAST

7:00 pm in Homestead Feast Day Vespers

(903 Ann Street, Homestead, PA 15120)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19 #NATIVITY FAST

FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS

CANCELED: 9:30 am Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23 #NATIVITY FAST

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023 #NATIVITY FAST

28th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs

Venerable Daniel the Stylite (490)

9:15 – Nativity Canon & Carols (*Kol’ady*);

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

Tone 4; Liturgical Color: **Red**

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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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***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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SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Colossians 1:12-18

Giving thanks to the Father for having made you worthy to share the lot of the saints in light. He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Through Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures. In Him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; all were created through Him, and for Him. He is before all else that is. In Him everything continues in being. It is He who is head of the body, the church; He who is the beginning, the first-born of the dead, so that primacy may be His in everything.

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Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then said Jesus, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Thank You** to everyone who helped in any way with the St. Nicholas Brunch today! Your stewardship is a blessing to our parish family community!

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

CHURCH BUILDING UPDATE

Here is a brief update from the past few weeks:

- ✘ Foam-insulation in the Sanctuary is being installed **this week** (roughly \$5k – donations requested)
- ✘ New drywall in the Sanctuary will be installed the **week of 12/25** (roughly \$5k – donations requested)
- ✘ A Major Clean Up will occur the week of **1/1/24** (everyone’s stewardship)
- ✘ *** 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 in January 2024? 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 that will be installed around February (*cost is \$28,000 – covered by an anonymous donor*)

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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*** **Work Evenings** – We will have work evenings **the week of January 1, 2024**. In the past years, we have had a Saturday Winter Maintenance and Decorating morning at the beginning of December. This was *postponed* as a major clean up was coming. God-willing – this will happen the week of January 1! **PLANS ARE TO BE UPSTAIRS FOR JANUARY 6, 2024 AND NATIVITY!!!**

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COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

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

- * December 24: _____?
- * December 31: _____?
- January 7: _____ Nativity Pot-Luck

** meatless during the Fast*

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

** **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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** **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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** **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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*** **2024 Calendars** are in the vestibule on the pew.

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 110
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 96
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 328
Total Collections:	\$ 534
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 105

Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; John and Barbara Kirish; Carol and Tom Lorenzi; Lawrence Martin; Tim Martin; Fred and Juliana Anton; Cindy Pavilonis

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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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**** 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.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE MONK JOHN DAMASCENE

Commemorated on December 17/4

The Monk John Damascene was born in about the year 680 at the capital of Syria, Damascus, into a Christian family. His father, Sergios Mansuros, was a treasurer at the court of the caliph. John had also a foster brother, the orphaned lad Cosmas, whom Sergios had taken into his own home. When the children were growing up, Sergios concerned himself over their education. At the Damascus slave market he ransomed

from captivity the learned monk Cosmas of Calabria and entrusted to him the teaching of his children. The boys displayed uncommon ability and readily mastered their courses of the secular and spiritual sciences. After the death of his father, John at court occupied ministerial posts and became city-governor.

During these times at Byzantium there had arisen and quickly spread about the heresy of Iconoclasm, supported by the emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717-741). Rising up in defense of Orthodox Icon-Veneration (Ikonomoulia), Saint John wrote three treatises entitled, "Against the Revilers of Holy Icons". The wise and God-inspired writings of Saint John enraged the emperor. But since the author was not a Byzantine subject, the emperor was unable to lock him up in prison, or execute him. The emperor thereupon resorted to slander. By his command there was composed a counterfeit letter under the name of John, in which the Damascus official was supposed to have offered his help towards the conquest of the Syrian capital. This letter and its hypocritically-flattering answer was sent off by Leo the Isaurian to the caliph. The caliph immediately ordered that Saint John be removed from his post, and that his right hand be cut off and then led through the city in chains. That same evening they returned the cut-off hand to Saint John. The saint began to pray to the Most Holy Mother of God for healing. Having fallen asleep, he beheld an icon of the Mother of God and heard Her voice telling him that he had been healed, and together with this commanded him to toil unceasingly with his healed hand. Awakening, he saw that his hand was intact.

Having learned of the miracle, which witnessed to the innocence of John, the caliph asked his forgiveness and wanted to restore him to his former office, but the saint refused. He distributed away his riches and together with his step-brother and comrade in learning, Cosmas, he set off to Jerusalem, where as a simple novice he entered the monastery of the Monk Sava the Sanctified. It was not easy for him to find a spiritual guide. Among the monastic brethren there consented to this only one very experienced monastic elder, skilled to nourish in a student the spirit of obedience and humility. Before anything the elder forbade John to write, on the supposition that success in this area might present a source of pride. One time he sent the monk to

Damascus to sell baskets, made at the monastery, and commanded him to sell them at a certain inflated price, more than their real value. And here, passing by on the tormenting path under the searing sun, the former dignitary of Damascus was now to be found at the marketplace in the ragged garb of an humble basket-vendor. But Saint John was recognised by his former house steward, who bought up all the baskets at the entrusted price.

One time at the monastery, one of the monks chanced to die and the brother of the deceased besought Saint John to write down something by way of consolation. Saint John for a long time refused, but out of pity he yielded to the petition of the grief-stricken, and wrote his reknown funeral tropari. For this disobedience the elder banished him from his cell. All the monks began to plead for John. The elder thereupon assigned him one of the worst and most unpleasant tasks – to remove the wastes from the monastery. And even in this the monk was a model of obedience. After a certain while, the elder was commanded in a vision by the All-Pure and Most Holy Mother of God to allow Saint John again to write. The Jerusalem Patriarch learned of the monk: he ordained him priest and made him a preacher at his cathedral. But the Monk John soon returned to the Laura of the Monk Sava, where until the end of his days he spent his time in the writing of spiritual books and church song. He left the monastery only to denounce the iconoclasts at the Constantinople Council of 754. They subjected him to imprisonment and torture, but he endured everything and through the mercy of God he remained alive. He died in about the year 780, at perhaps over age 100.

[trans. note: It is extremely deplorable that this and several other Russian accounts of Saint John of Damascus, Saint John Damascene, gloss over and ignore his great significance within the area of dogmatic theology. Saint John is generally considered to represent the close of the classical Patristic age, and his great work, "Exposition on the Orthodox Faith" ("De Fide Orthodoxa"), presents a collection and summary of the dogmatic teachings of the fathers. The "Exposition on the Orthodox Faith" is part of a larger work, the "Fount of Wisdom" ("Pege Gnoseos"), which includes "Philosophic Chapters" and an "History of

Heresies", reviewing the teaching and examining the defect of thought in all the heresies up to his time. Saint John Damascene, when he was "discovered" in the West during the Medieval period, exerted an enormous influence within Western Christianity, and was highly esteemed and used by Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics. For Eastern Orthodoxy too, Saint John Damascene's work serves, and should serve, as a dogmatic primer and summation of Patristic thought. Its sad neglect, East and West, points to the religious and dogmatic slumber of our times].

PRAYER CORNER

*Our Parish Prayer List for Special Intentions & other needs**

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.*

For the souls of the newly departed...

+Kathleen Ferko (12/2), +Greg Steinmetz (11/29), +Sandra Hricak (11/21) ...*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 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!

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:

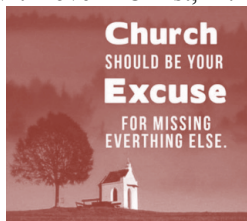
- Having a monetary collection for the **Sr. ACRY Stewardship Campaign** (our community outreach collection at the end of the month). The Stewardship Campaign helps support the ACRY Scholarship Fund, Camp Nazareth, Youth Workers' Conference Fund, Ambassador Fund, and Lenten Retreat Fund,
- **Food Drive 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!*

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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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



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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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
 CANCELED: 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

STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

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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 its 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 15%	Tithe 12%	Upper Range Giving 10%	Middle Range Giving 9%	Lower Range Giving 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.*

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.

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 Nicean 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 myrrh, 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 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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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*), 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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* 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.

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 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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