

“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 31, 2023 #NATIVITY FAST

29th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday before the Nativity of our Lord
Sunday of the Holy Fathers
Martyr Sebastian (287)

BEGIN MOVING UPSTAIRS AFTER COFFEE SOCIAL

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5 #NATIVITY FAST

~~CANCELLED: 9:30am Royal Hours of Nativity~~

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6 #NATIVITY FAST

A Day of Strict Fasting
3:00 pm Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)
Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2024

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
30th Sunday after Pentecost
9:15 am Nativity Canon & Carols (*Kol’ady*);
9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Gospel: Matthew 1-25
Tone 6; Liturgical Color: **Gold**
Parish Family Photo
Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

FAST FREE UNTIL THEOPHANY

MONDAY, JANUARY 8 – 2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Commemoration of the Most Holy Theotokos
~~CANCELLED: 9:30 Divine Liturgy~~

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

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

***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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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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Moving, Cleaning, & Decorating – “It takes a village” The drywall is up... the finisher will complete his part this week... Services will be upstairs in the church proper starting Christmas weekend! We ask that as many that are able to help move items and clean this week to let Fr. Dave or Larry know so that we can plan accordingly. Here is the tentative schedule:

Sunday following coffee social

Tuesday * morning

Wednesday * morning

Wednesday # evening

Thursday * morning

Friday * morning

Friday # evening

* morning = 8:30 am to about 12:30

evening = 5:30 pm to 9:00 (with pizza)

“More hands equal less work.” We ask for All Hands On Deck for this one! If you can come for an hour or 3 hours – it will help! Reach out to relatives and neighbors and see if anyone wants to join us as we move back upstairs for Christmas!

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**** Congratulations!** to Derek and Ashley Wertz Andrekovich and their families on the birth of Carter Patrick Andrekovich born Wednesday morning, December 20 at 7 lbs 14 oz and 22 inches. Welcome to our Parish Family!

“Preserve her and this child which she has borne.

Cover her with the shelter of thy wings from this day until her final end, through the prayers of the most Holy Theotokos and of all the saints. Amen” – from *Prayers for a Woman on the 1st Day after Childbirth*

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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

Confession – A reminder to make time for you Nativity Fast Confession. Fr. Dave is available after every service or by appointment. *Prepare the Manger of our Soul for the coming of the new borne Messiah!*

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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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COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

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

January 7:	Nativity Pot-Luck
January 14:	_____?
January 21:	_____?

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***** Our Nativity Pot-luck meal** will be after the Divine Liturgy and Parish Photo next Sunday. As the 3 Wise Men brought gifts to the newborn Child, please bring a bite to share with everyone on the Nativity of our Lord.

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***** Nativity Basket Raffle** - We will have a raffle next Sunday with proceeds going to the Capital Improvement Fund.

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

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

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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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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 2450
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 256
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 93
Total Collections:	\$ 2799
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 1000

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Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; 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 Stewardship 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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*** 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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CHURCH BUILDING UPDATE

Here is a brief update from the past few weeks:

- ✘ * Foam-insulation was installed in the Sanctuary (roughly \$5,000 – donations requested)
- ✘ ** New drywall was installed in the Sanctuary (roughly \$7,000 – 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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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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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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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." ¹⁹He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. ²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial.

The Faith of Moses

²³By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—³⁸of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

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Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴and Ram the father of Ammin'adab, and Ammin'adab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵and Salmon the father of Bo'az by Rahab, and Bo'az the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uri'ah, ⁷and Solomon the father of Rehobo'am, and Rehobo'am the father of Abi'jah, and Abi'jah the father of Asa, ⁸and Asa the father of Jehosh'aphat, and Jehosh'aphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzzi'ah, ⁹and Uzzi'ah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezeki'ah, ¹⁰and Hezeki'ah the father of Manas'seh, and Manas'seh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josi'ah, ¹¹and Josi'ah the father of Jechoni'ah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoni'ah was the father of She-al'ti-el, and She-al'ti-el the father of Zerub'babel, ¹³and Zerub'babel the father of Abi'ud, and Abi'ud the father of Eli'akim, and Eli'akim the father of Azor, ¹⁴and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eli'ud, ¹⁵and Eli'ud the father of Elea'zar, and Elea'zar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; ¹⁹and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he

considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; ²¹she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman'u-el" (*which means, God with us*). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE HOLY MARTYR SEBASTIAN

Commemorated on December 31/18

The Holy Martyr Sebastian was born in the city of Narbonum (in Gaul, modernday France), and he received his education at Mediolanum (now city of Milan in Italy). Under the co-reigning emperors Diocletian and Maximian (284-305) he occupied the position of head of the imperial guards. Saint Sebastian was respected for his authority and with the love of the soldiers and those at court: he was a brave man, filled with wisdom, his word was honest, his judgement just, insightful in advice, faithful in his service and in everything entrusted him. But being himself a secret Christ, he much aided his brethren in the faith. The Christian brothers Marcellinus and Mark had been locked up in prison, and at first they firmly confessed the true faith. But under the influence of the tearful entreaties of the pagan-parents (the father Tranquillinus and mother Marcia), and also their own wives and children, they wavered in their intent to suffer for Christ. Saint Sebastian went to the imperial treasurer, at whose house Marcellinus and Mark were held in confinement, and uttered a rousing speech.

"O ye valiant warriors of Christ! Cast not away the standards of your victory on account of womanly tears nor let up upon the enemy cast down beneath your feet, wherein he, in regaining strength would again renew the struggle with you. Over every earthly impulse raise up the glorious banner of your deed. If

those, whom ye see weeping should know that there be another life – bereft of death and ill, in the which doth reign unceasing bliss, then assuredly they would wish to enter into it with you, and contemning temporal life, they would instead strive to receive the eternal. For he that desireth not to be servant of life eternal, doth indeed perish in this temporal life in vain".

Saint Sebastian thus persuaded the brothers to go through with their act of martyrdom. His speech stirred everyone present. They beheld, how the very face of the saint did shine like that of an angel, and they saw how seven Angels did attire him radiant garb, and a fair Youth did bless the orator and say: "Always shalt thou be with Me". The wife of the imperial treasurer Nicostratus, named Zoa, had lost the ability to speak 6 years previously, and she fell down at the feet of Saint Sebastian, with her gestures imploring him to heal her. The saint made the Sign of the Cross over the woman, and she immediately began to speak and she glorified the Lord Jesus Christ. She said that she had seen an Angel with an open book, from which Saint Sebastian did read his preaching. Thereupon all present came to be believers in the Saviour of the world. Nicostratus removed the chains from Marcellinus and Mark and offered to hide them, but the brothers refused.

Mark said: "Let them rend our bodies with cruel torments; they can kill the body, but the soul, warring for the faith, is not to be conquered by them". Nicostratus and his wife asked for Baptism. Saint Sebastian advised Nicostratus to arrange matters such, that Baptism might be made over possibly a large number of people. Nicostratus then requested the Roman prison-head Claudius to send to him all the imprisoned. Conversing with the prisoners, Sebastian became convinced that they were all worthy of Baptism, and he summoned the presbyter Polycarp, who prepared them for the mystery with a catechetical talk, he instructed them to fast, having set for evening time the making of the sacrament.

During this while Claudius informed Nicostratus, that the Roman eparch named Arestius Chromatus was pressing him for an explanation as to why the prisoners were gathered at his house. Nicostratus told Claudius about the healing of his wife, and Claudius

in turn led to Saint Sebastian his own sick sons, Symphorian and Felix. In the evening the priest Polycarp baptised Tranquillinus with his kin and friends, and Nicostratus and all his family, Claudius and his sons, and likewise 16 condemned prisoners. The newly-baptised numbered 64 in all.

Appearing before the eparch Chromatus, Nicostratus told him how Saint Sebastian had converted them to the Christian faith and healed many from sickness. The words of Nicostratus persuaded the eparch. He summoned to him Saint Sebastian and the presbyter Polycarp, being enlightened by them and became a believer in Christ. Together with Chromatus, his son Tiburtius and all his household accepted holy Baptism. The number of the newly-enlightened increased to 1400. In consideration of being a Christian, Chromatus resigned his office of eparch.

During this time the bishop at Rome was Saint Caius (afterwards Pope of Rome from 283-296, Comm. 11 August). Saint Caius gave blessing to Chromatus to go to his estates in Southern Italy together with the presbyter Polycarp. Christians unable to undergo the suffering of martyrdom went with them. The priest Polycarp had been dispatched for strengthening the newly-converted in the faith and for making the sacraments. Tiburtius, the son of Chromatus, desired to accept martyrdom and he remained in Rome with Saint Sebastian. Of those remaining, Saint Caius ordained Tranquillinus to the dignity of presbyter, his sons Marcellinus and Mark were ordained deacons, and there remained also Nicostratus, his wife Zoa and brother Castorius, and Claudius, his son Symphorian and brother Victorinus. They gathered at the court of the emperor together with a secret Christian, the dignitary Castulus, but soon the time began for them to suffer for the faith.

The pagans arrested Saint Zoa first, praying at the grave of the Apostle Peter. At the trial she bravely confessed her faith in Christ and she died, hung by her hair over rotting refuse; her body then was thrown into the River Tiber. Appearing in a vision to Saint Sebastian, she told him about her death. Presbyter Tranquillinus was the next after her to suffer: pagans pelted him with stones at the grave of the holy Apostle Peter, and his body was likewise thrown into

the Tiber. Saints Nicostratus, Castorius, Claudius, Victorinus and Symphorian were seized at the riverbank, when they were pulling out the bodies of the martyrs. They led them to the eparch, and the saints refused his command to offer sacrifice to idols. They tied stones to the necks of the martyrs and then drowned them in the sea. The false-Christian Torquatus betrayed Saint Tiburtius. But not gaining a renunciation of Christ from him, the trial-court gave orders to put young Tiburtius on red-hot coals, but the Lord preserved him: Tiburtius walked through the burning coals, not feeling the heat. The torturers then beheaded Saint Tiburtius. Unknown Christians then buried the saint.

Torquatus betrayed also the holy Deacons Marcellinus and Mark, and the dignitary Saint Castulus. After torture they threw Castulus into a pit and buried him alive, but Marcellinus and Mark had their feet nailed to stumps of wood. They stood all night in prayer, and in the morning they were pierced with spears.

Saint Sebastian was the final one taken off to torture. The emperor Diocletian personally interrogated him, and persuading himself of the resoluteness of the holy martyr, he ordered him taken out beyond the city, tied to a tree and shot with arrows. The wife of the dignitary Saint Castulus, Irene, went at night in order to bury Saint Sebastian, but found him alive and took him to her home. Saint Sebastian soon recovered from his wounds. Christians urged him to leave Rome, but he refused. Coming nearby a pagan temple, the saint saw the emperors approaching there and he publicly denounced them for their impiety. Diocletian gave orders to remove the holy martyr to the Hippodrome (Coliseum) and there execute him. They killed Saint Sebastian, and cast his body upon the rubbish heap. The holy martyr appeared to the Christian Saint Lucina (Lucy) in a dream vision, and bid her take his body and bury it in the catacombs. And thus the pious Christian buried the body of the saint.

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PRAYER CORNER

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

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For the Health of... Lucia, Sophia, Christopher, Robert, Eleanor, Joanne, Patricia, 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 souls of the newly departed...
+Kathleen Ferko (12/2), +Greg Steinmetz (11/29)
...*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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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!

ONLINE BONUSES

THE CANON OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Ode 1: Christ is born, glorify him! Christ comes from heaven, meet Him! Christ is an earth, be exalted! O all the earth, sing to the Lord, and sing praises in gladness, all people, for He has been glorified.

Ode 3: To the Son Who was begotten of the Father without change before all ages, and in the last times was without seed made flesh of the Virgin, to Christ our God, let us cry aloud: You have raised up our horn, holy are You, O Lord!

Ode 4: Rod of the root of Jesse, and flower that blossomed from his stem, O Christ, You have sprung forth from the Virgin. From the mountain overshadowed by the forest You came, made flesh for her that knew not wedlock, O God not formed from matter. Glory to Your power O Lord!

Ode 5: As You are God of Peace and Father of mercies, You have sent to us Your Angel of Great Counsel, granting unto us peace. So are we guided towards the light of the knowledge of God. And watching by night, we glorify You, O Lover of mankind.

Ode 6: The sea monster spat forth Jonah as it had received him, like a babe from the womb: while the Word, having dwelt in the Virgin and taken flesh: came forth from her yet kept her undefiled. For being Himself not subject to decay. He preserved His Mother free from harm.

Ode 7: Scorning the impious decree, the three children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire: but standing in the midst of the flame they sang: "O God of our fathers, blessed are You!"

Ode 8: The furnace moist with dew was the image of a wonder past nature. For it burned not the children whom it had received, even as the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin's womb into which It had descended. Therefore in praise, let us sing: let the whole creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him above all forever.

Ode 9: I behold a strange and wonderful mystery. The cave has become heaven, the throne of the Cherubim, the Virgin. The manger a noble place where lies Christ our God Who cannot be contained. Let us praise Him in song and magnify You!

SPIRITUAL VITAMIN

Tropar of Preparation

At that time Mary registered with the venerable Joseph in Bethlehem since she was of the house of David. She was with child, having conceived without seed. When the time for her delivery drew near, they could find no room in the inn but the cave seemed a joyful palace for the Queen. Christ is born to renew the likeness that had been lost of old.

Kondak of Preparation

Today, the Virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth in a manner beyond understanding to the Word Who is from all eternity. Rejoice, therefore, universe, when you hear it heralded. With the angels and the shepherds, glorify Him Who chose to be seen as a newborn babe while remaining God in all eternity.

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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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SUNDAY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6 ## *STRICT FAST DAY*

3:00 pm Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)

Vigil Service of the Nativity of our Lord

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Parish Family Photo

Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

FAST FREE THROUGH JANUARY 17

MONDAY, JANUARY 8 – *2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS*

CANCELLED: 9:30 Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9 – *3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS*

FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ

6:30 pm Feast Day Vespers

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

9:20 am Theophany Canon

9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

take down the Manger Scene after Coffee Social

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18 ## *STRICT FAST DAY*

9:30 am Royal Hours of Theophany

6:30 pm Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)

Vigil Service with the Great Blessing of Water

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21

9:20 Theophany Canon

9:30 Divine Liturgy (and Youth Sunday) followed
by Church School

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

9:30 Divine Liturgy

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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!*

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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

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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.

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A Prayer of Stewardship

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

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Stewardship of Treasure Guide

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

Weekly Income	Beyond a Tithe 15%	12%	10%	Tithe 9%	Upper Range Giving 8%	7%	Middle Range Giving 6%	5%	4%	Lower Range Giving 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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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 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, Ameer, 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 Spirmak (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 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.

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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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