

“THE VOICE” Our Parish Monthly Newsletter

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



The Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ

“A mystery I behold which is strange and wondrous: the cave is Heaven and Virgin is the throne of the Cherubim; in the confines of the manger is laid the Infinite, Christ our God...”

January 7, 2024

Volume IX

**The Feast of the Nativity, according to the Flesh of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ
Christ Is Born!** (responded with: *Glorify Him!*) **Christos Raždajetsja!** (*Slavite Jeho!*)

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NATIVITY COMMEMORATIONS

(remembered at Proskomedija [The Preparation Prayers])

Censer (Kadilo) Incense For The Health Of The Pavilonis Family And Our Parish Family
Vesperal Litija Oil In Memory Of +John & +Catherine Gaydos
Sacramental Wine IMO +Helen & +John Kailyar
3-Candle Altar Candelabra IMO +Anastasia & +Lawrence Martin

UPCOMING SERVICES

*** 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
Parish Family Photo
Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

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*** = **FAST FREE until the eve of Theophany**
(*Sviatki* – “Holy Days”)

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

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

*** SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ
~~CANCELLED: 6:30 pm Feast Day Vespers~~

*** SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD
FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT
32nd Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday after Nativity
Sunday before Theophany
9:20 am Theophany Canon
9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12 (Circumcision)
Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52 (Circumcision)
Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Sunday before)
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday before)
Tone 7; Liturgical Color: **Gold**
take down the Manger Scene after Coffee Social

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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



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor*

Very Reverend Father John Brancho, *Pastor Emeritus*

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

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

Lawrence Martin, *Parish Council President*

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

2201 Duncan Avenue, Allison Park, Pa 15101

www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com

412-748-0148, *Talk or Text*

OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com

Instagram: SJB_Orthodox_Pittsburgh

Twitter: @SJB_OrthodoxPGH

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Glory to Jesus Christ! (responded with: *Glory forever!*) **Slava Isusu Christu!** (*Slava na viki!*)

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

Dear Family of St. John's,

Christ Is Born! (*Glorify Him!*) **Christos Raždajetsja!** (*Slavite Jeho!*)

We see in the Nativity Narratives the stewardship of the Three Wise Men and of others. Thank You for your stewardship of offering your Time, Talents, and Treasures to St. John the Baptist! *Many hands make light work.* Now let us be like the Shepherds and announce to Good News of the Birth of our Lord to all of our neighbors!

A Blessed and Merry Christmas to all our beloved parishioners and their families. May our Savior, born in Bethlehem, shower his blessings upon you!

With Love in Christ,

Maria, Sophia, Paňi Alexandra, and Father Dave (and Snoopy)

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Seasonal Greeting** - The greeting used amongst Orthodox Christians for the period from the Nativity until Theophany is “Christ is born!” with the response “Glorify Him!”

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*** **Fast-Free Period** – There is rejoicing in the celebration of the Birth of Christ! The Church reminds us of this as no fasting is required from **January 7th until January 17th**. We fasted - now we feast (in moderation). This is a time of joy when the Christ-Child, our Savior, is Born! Enjoy!

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*** **THANK YOU** to everyone who brought items in for today's Nativity Pot-Luck community meal!

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

*** **River Blessing** – The Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh will be having the inaugural Holy Water River Blessing on **Sunday, January 21** at 4:00 pm at Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church (12 Washington Avenue, Oakmont, PA 15139). Please plan to attend and prayer with other Orthodox from around Greater Pittsburgh!

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*** **Parish Picnic** – We are looking to book *The Cabin* for our Summer Picnic (*ironic as there is snow on the ground now*). Would you rather have the picnic in August or September??? Please contact Fr. Dave.

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*** **Framed Icons** – Please consider framing your previous church calendar tops: cut them out, use a 5x7 frame, and hang them on your walls. Each year you can add an icon to another room in your home. This is also a nice project to do with our youth!

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*** **Greeting Cards** – Please repurpose your greeting cards (*and if you do not frame them, calendar icons*) after the season concludes. The collection box will return to the vestibule for the *Holy Transfiguration Monastery*. Thank you for giving back!

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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!

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Additional Church Curators Needed – A synonym for *curator* is *steward*. Our curator list needs expanded! If anyone is interested in being a *steward of their time* and be “on-the-door”, please see Larry Martin

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

January 14:	_____?	
January 21:	_____?	
January 28:	_____?	

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 2840
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 118
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 688
Community Outreach:	\$ 105
Total Collections:	\$ 3761
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 110

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December Financial Report:
General Stewardship = \$ 9094.72
(includes \$ 264.72 from online stewardship)
***Expenses = \$ 5146.17**
Net Income = \$ 3948.55
Capital Improvement Fund = \$ 1700
Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 27
**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*

Fiscal Year-to-Date Financial Report:
(September through last month)
General Stewardship = \$ 39,002
***Expenses = \$ 25,488**
Net Income = \$ 13,514
**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*
Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 29

2023 Calendar Year Financial Report:
General Stewardship = \$ 79,608
***Expenses = \$ 81,558**
Net Deficit = \$ 1,950
Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 29

Church Financial Account Balances:
General Stewardship = \$ 81,914
includes the “Fundraising Account”
Capital Improvement Funds = \$ 84,377
of which \$ 49,551 in this fund is borrowed
A 2024 Budget will be presented soon

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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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Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; Carol and Tom Lorenzi; Lawrence Martin; Tim Martin; Fred and Juliana Anton; Rich and Renee Mirilovich; Cindy Pabilonis

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The **Christ Cross** was offered last week anonymously in memory of the departed family and friends of St John the Baptist

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The **Theotokos Cross** was offered last week anonymously for the health of our St John the Baptist parish family.

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The **Eternal Lamp** was offered last week anonymously in memory of the departed founders and of benefactors of St. John the Baptist. May Their Memory Be Eternal! *Vičnaya Pamyat!*

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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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Make plans to go to Camp Nazareth Events!

- ✘ April 5-7 - ACRY Spring Encounter
- ✘ April 9-11 - Sts. Joachim & Anna Seniors Retreat (*age 55 and over*)
- ✘ April 12-14 - Young Adult Retreat
- ✘ May 31 – June 2 - Family Camp
- ✘ June 2 - Family Day
- ✘ July 28- Aug 3 - Pgh Deanery Camping Week
- ✘ August 4-10 - Science & Nature Camp (ages 8-18)
- ✘ October 25-27 - Young Adult Retreat
- ✘ November 8-10 - ACRY Encounter

Please, Save the Dates and head to
339 Pew Road, Mercer, PA 16137

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JANUARY 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



FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Commemorated on January 7 / December 25

The **Nativity** according to the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, also called **Christmas**, is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church.

In the fullness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ was born to the Holy Theotokos and Virgin Mary, thus entering into the world as a man and revealing Himself to mankind.

According to the Bible and to Holy Tradition, Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in a cave, surrounded by farm animals and shepherds. The baby Jesus was born into a manger from the Virgin Mary, assisted by her husband St. Joseph. St. Joseph and the Theotokos were forced to travel due to a Roman census; the odd location of the birth was the result of the refusal of a nearby inn to accommodate the expecting couple (Luke 2:1-20). Since it is known historically that dwellings were built directly over such caves housing livestock--in order to make use of the heat

Though three magi from the East are commonly depicted as visiting during the event itself (or, in Roman Catholic tradition, twelve days thereafter), the Bible records the coming of an unspecified number of wise men as being a few years after Jesus' birth (see Matthew 2). In either case, these magi came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt 2:11). In the hymnography for the feast, these gifts are interpreted to signify Christ's royalty, divinity, and suffering.

From: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Nativity>

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THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD

Commemorated on January 14/1

The Circumcision (Obrezanie) of the Lord: On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ – in accordance with the Old Testament Law, accepted circumcision, which was decreed for all infants of the male gender as a sign of the Covenant of God with the Forefather Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17: 10-14, Lev. 12: 3). Upon the performing of this ritual the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, which had been announced by the Archangel Gabriel on the day of the Annunciation (Blagoveschenie) to the Most Holy Virgin Mary (Lk. 1: 31-33, 2: 21). According to the

explanation of the fathers of the Church the Lord, the Creator of the Law, accepted circumcision, giving example for people how faithfully the Divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord accepted circumcision for this reason – so that later on no one should be in doubt that He was truly Man, rather than merely being the bearer of illusion-seeming flesh as certain heretics (Docetism) happened to teach. In the New Testament (Covenant) the ritual of circumcision gave way to the sacrament of Baptism, which it pre-figured (Col. 2: 11-12). Accounts about the feastday of the Circumcision of the Lord in the Eastern Church continue right up through the IV Century. The Canon of the feast was written by the Monk Stephen Savvaites (Comm. 28 October and 13 July). Together with the Circumcision, accepted by the Lord as a sign of the Covenant of God with mankind, He received also the Name Jesus (Saviour) as the seal of His service – the deed of the Salvation of the world (Mt. 1: 21; Mk. 9: 38-39, 16: 17; Lk. 10: 17; Acts 3: 6, 16; Phil. 2: 9-10). These two events, the Circumcision and Naming, remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant (Testament) with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision not done by hand, in putting off the sinful body of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11). The very name "Christian" witnesses to an entrance of mankind into a New Covenant with God.

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THEOPHANY

Commemorated on January 19/6

Theophany denotes the feast whereby through the Baptism of the Lord the Most Holy Trinity has been revealed to the world (Mt. 3: 13-17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptised by the holy ForeRunner of the Lord John, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a Dove. From ancient times this feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since that God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death" (Mt. 4: 16) and to save through grace the fallen race of mankind.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptise catechumens at the vespers of Theophany, such that Baptism also is revealed as a spiritual illumination of mankind. The origin of the feast of Theophany came

about in Apostolic times. Mention is made concerning it in the Apostolic Decretals. From the II Century there is preserved the testimony of Sainted Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord and performing the night vigil before this feast.

In the III Century on the feast of Theophany there is known the dialogue concerning Divine-services between the holy martyr Hyppolitus and Saint Gregory the WonderWorker. In the following centuries – from the IV to IX Century – all the great fathers of the Church – Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostomos, Ambrose of Milan, John Damascene, had their own comments about the feast of Theophany. The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this feastday, which even now is sung for Divine-services. The Monk John Damascene said, that the Lord was baptised not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but so that "by water to bury human sin", to fulfill the law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "watery nature" and to proffer it to us in the form and example of Baptism.

On the feastday of the Baptism of Christ, Holy Church asserts our faith in the mystery – most sublime and incomprehensible to human intellect – of the Three Persons of the One God. It teaches us to confess and glorify as equally-honoured the Holy Trinity One-Essence and Undivided. It exposes and collapses the fallacies of the ancient pseudo-teachings, which attempted with reason and by human terms to explain the Creator of the world. The Church shews the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires for us a sense of deep gratitude for the Illumination and Purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, wherefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism – keeping clean this priceless garb, about which the feast of the Baptism tells us: "As many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

[Translator Note: literally rendered from Greek "Theophany" means "Manifestation of God", whereas "Epiphany" connotes "Manifest upon"; "Theophany" is the more accurate rendering of Slavonic "Bogoyavlenie".]

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Assemblage ("Sobor" Or Synaxis") Of The Forerunner And Baptist Of The Lord, John

Commemorated on January 20/7

In the Orthodox Church it is customary, on the day following the Great Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God, to remember those saints who participated directly in the sacred event. So, on the day following the Theophany of the Lord, the Church honors the one who participated directly in the Baptism of Christ, placing his own hand upon the head of the Savior.

Saint John, the holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, whom the Lord called the greatest of the prophets, concludes the history of the Old Testament and opens the era of the New Testament. The holy Prophet John bore witness to the Only-Begotten Son of God, incarnate in the flesh. Saint John was accounted worthy to baptize Him in the waters of the Jordan, and he was a witness of the Theophany of the Most Holy Trinity on the day of the Savior's Baptism. The holy Prophet John, the son of the Priest Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth, was related to the Lord on His mother's side. The holy Forerunner, John, was born six months before Christ. The Archangel Gabriel announced his birth in the Temple at Jerusalem, revealing to Zachariah that a son was to be born to him. Through the prayers offered beforehand, the child was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saint John prepared himself in the wilds of the desert for his great service by a strict life, by fasting, prayer and sympathy for the fate of God's people.

At the age of thirty, he came forth preaching repentance. He appeared on the banks of the Jordan, to prepare the people by his preaching to accept the Savior of the world. In church hymnology, Saint John is called a "bright morning star," whose gleaming outshone the brilliance of all the other stars, announcing the coming dawn of the day of grace, illumined with the light of the spiritual Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having baptized the sinless Lamb of God, Saint John soon died a martyr's death, beheaded by the sword on orders of King Herod at the request of his daughter Salome. (On Saint John the Baptist, see Mt.3:1-16, 11:1-19, 14:1-12; Mark 1:2-8, 6:14-29; Luke 1:5-25, 39-80, 3:1-20, 7:18-35, 9:7-9; John 1:19-34, 3:22-26).

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nativity Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7

⁴But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

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Nativity Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12:

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ²"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; ⁸and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; ¹¹and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI: MELCHIOR, CASPAR, AND BALTHASAR

Commemorated on January 7 / December 25

See Matthew ch. 2. According to the verses of the Feast and most of the Holy Fathers, the Magi were astrologers from Persia or Babylonia (The Scripture says only that they came "from the east.") The star which they followed was no inanimate object, but one of the Angelic Powers of heaven, appointed to lead them to the Savior. From the very beginning, the Good News of Christ was proclaimed to the nations.

VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE

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

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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MONTHLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH



This month, through the efforts of our Sr. ACRY, we will be collecting donations for the **Orthodox Christian Network**. (This is the site that Father uses to get the "Children's Word" that is distributed each week.) The Orthodox Christian Network (OCN) is an official agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. **MyOCN is YourOCN!** Visit www.myocn.net to see the variety of materials they provide online! *Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month!*

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... Lawrence V., Christopher, Robert, Eleanor, Joanne, Patricia, Jason, Kevin, Carlene, David, Donna, George, Kelly, Marie, 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, 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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January Namedays:

Juliana Anton – Virgin-martyr Juliana of Nicomedia (1/3)
Stephen Brancho - Holy Protomartyr & Archdeacon Stephen (1/9)
Melanie Shuster - Venerable Melania the Younger (1/13)
John Sharpless - St John the Baptist (1/20)
Ashley Wertz Andrekovich - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)
Anthony Winkler - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)
...*May God grant them many and blessed years!*

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January Birthdays:

Carol Lorenzi (1/2), Joshua Mainolfi (1/3), Anna Martellotti (1/4), Steven Buhonick (1/7), Elizabeth Fucsko (1/7), Jason Shelpman (1/9), Pañi Kathy Fester (1/13), Brenda Labas (1/15), Fred G. Anton (1/16), Pañi Fedornock (1/16), *Father's Godson*, Alex Schreiber (1/18), *Father's Goddaughter*, Jenna Schreiber (1/18), Kevynn Christina Anton (1/19), Patricia Watson (1/19), Nicholas Ditmore (1/19), Fr Joseph Fester (1/19), Katherine Schrmack (1/22), *Father's niece*, Abigeal Verbanick (1/22), Thomas Lorenzi (1/23), Mary Ann Brady (1/26), Fr Frank Miloro (1/26), Roberta 'Bobbie' Kruchkevich (1/27), Allison Kretchek (1/29) ...*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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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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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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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave know if you wish to make additions or subtractions (*in the case of answered prayers*) to our Parish List. The words of the Gospel are true: **it is good to pray for one another.**

Let this be a place where we lay out our concerns and beg the help of our brothers & sisters in Christ. *This prayer list is NOT limited to only Orthodox Christians.*

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A Prayer for our Diocesan Clergy

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Bishop (*name*), and our spiritual father (*name*), and all our diocesan clergy, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God Who loves us and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving- Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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A Prayer for Peace

Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray, all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honor and praise. Amen.

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A prayer for our Neighborhoods

by Archbishop Demetrios of America

I pray to you, God, for the families of my neighborhood. Visit them. Throw their troubles out of them and bring hope. Make the daily cares that devour the heart disappear. Present solutions to life's problems. Settle the disturbed relationships among members of different families whom I know or do not know. O Lord, remind the people of our area that You exist, that You are a strong and loving Protector. Keep away, Lord, anything that causes the disappearance of peace from souls, and the escape of sleep from our eyes. Stay a little while more tonight in our neighborhood. Spread peace along with the night. Let the harshness of the day and its struggles not spread over the night. Amen.

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ONLINE BONUSES

Did You Know?

The "12 Days of Christmas" is the period from Christmas (Dec. 25) to Epiphany (Jan. 6) – not, as some mistakenly believe, the 12 days before Christmas. In traditional Christianity, this season is one great celebration of the appearance of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh.

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

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

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*** **Panachida (Memorial) Services** – If you desire

to offer a Panachida Service in memory of a departed loved one, please contact Fr. Dave prior to Sunday morning to make these arrangements. (Depending on the number of requests, we may combine with other families' commemorations.) *Customarily in the Orthodox Church, Panachidas are offered at 40 days; at 3, 6, and 9 months; at 1 year; at 3 years; annually on All Soul Saturdays; and (at the family's request) on the anniversary of their passing from this life to our eternal life. Making and offering the Koliva (Kutya or Boiled Wheat) is also encouraged. On a side note, sponsoring the bulletin in memory of someone should not replace having the prayers of a Panachida Service*

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CHURCH BUILDING UPDATE

Here is a brief update from the past few weeks:

- ✘ *** We have returned to the Nave of the Church for services going forward! Thank You for your stewardship in this journey!
- ✘ * 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 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. IF You Have An Electrician You Would Recommend – Please Contact Fr. Dave. (*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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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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LIVING THE ORTHODOX FAITH

The Condescension of God The Holy Nativity and the Condescension of God

Those of us who observe the Julian Calendar are now about to complete the Nativity Fast, where we have abstained from meat, eggs, dairy products, anger, envy and other habits, for the sake of promoting the discipline of the soul. We are now joining hundreds of millions of Orthodox Christians around the world, in celebrating the Birth of Our Saviour.

We Orthodox Christians on the Julian Calendar will be celebrating the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of God on Earth. And this celebration of the Nativity of Christ will mark the spiritual upheaval of the universe, for this solemn day marks the embodiment of God on Earth, and the day God became flesh in Jesus, and, potentially, in all creatures.

The celebration of the Nativity of Christ is as important for our salvation as Pascha, for the compassion revealed in the Nativity is but a precursor to the gift this compassionate God incarnate has for us. That which began with the incarnation of God taking on our flesh in order to unite Himself to His creation, will culminate with the bodily resurrection. Nativity provides all of us with the possibility of divine redemption, for it is in the Holy Nativity that God reveals His love for us, in His great condescension to become like us.

This celebration of the birth of Jesus is not about the commemoration of a helpless baby given birth in a

stable, nor is this about a sort of magic baby discovered by the Wise Men. The birth of Christ is not about Jesus who died on the cross to “atone” for the sins of all humanity, as a sacrifice to pacify an angry God. The celebration of the Nativity of Christ is not about the concept of original sin, that all humans are born inherently corrupt. Nativity is about the essential goodness of humans, who have been created in the image and likeness of our Creator.

The messages of both the Nativity and the crucifixion is that we are most human, most like God, when we respond to the suffering of others. Our Orthodox theology about Nativity, is about the “co-suffering love of God.” The Nativity of Christ is about the God who created the world becoming incarnate, while the foundations of the Earth are shaken. The Nativity of Christ is about Theosis, whereby we are deified, and by His grace, share in His Divinity, just as He has joined Himself with our humanity.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!
Abbot Tryphon

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The Nativity Sermon by Saint John Chrysostom

"I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn! The angels sing!
The archangels blend their voices in harmony!
The cherubim resound their joyful praise!
The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead herein... on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice! Ask not how this is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He had the powers He descended. He saved. All

things move in obedience to God.

Today He Who Is, is born ! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man-while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor powers, nor principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold kings have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; Women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin...

Infants, that they may adore Him who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; Children, to the Child who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men, to Him who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants;

Shepherds, to the Good Shepherd who was laid down His life for His sheep;

Priests, to Him who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek;

Servants, to Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom (Philippians 2:7);

Fishermen, to the Fisher of humanity;

Publicans, to Him who from among them named a chosen evangelist;

Sinful women, to Him who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope! This is my life!

This is my salvation!

This is my pipe, my harp!

And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing:

"Glory to God in the Highest! and on earth peace to men of good will!"

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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

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On-Line Giving is available from our parish website to donate to the: General Stewardship Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and/or Relocation Fund. The best option is to come to church and give your offering to God in His Temple (2nd best is to mail it in to Tim Martin, 2225 McAleer Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143). If you miss coming to church for a week, online giving allows you another option to “catch up” on your weekly stewardship. You can also set up a recurring donation online. For our parish to continue it’s ministries, outreach, and general bill paying, your generosity and stewardship is needed.

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Bulletin Sponsor - If you wish to sponsor a bulletin *In Honor of* (nameday, birthday, anniversary, etc.) or *In Memory of* someone, please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule or by contacting Fr. Dave (email, text, or call). An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested. *Remember, sponsoring a bulletin in memory of someone does not replace having a Panachida (Memorial Service) for them.*

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A Prayer of Stewardship

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

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Stewardship of Treasure Guide

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

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

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

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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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