

“THE VOICE” *Our Parish Monthly Newsletter*

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

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

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

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

UPCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2024

36th Sunday after Pentecost
Translation of the relics of St. Ignatius (107)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

6:30 pm Feast Day Vespers

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15 (*40 days after Nativity*)

FEAST OF THE MEETING OF OUR LORD

9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy

Blessing of Candles

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

37th Sunday after Pentecost

Zacchaeus Sunday

Holy Martyr Agatha (251)

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 Divine Liturgy

Youth Sunday

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Tone 4; Liturgical Color: **Gold**

Blessing of Candles

Church School

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

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

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Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear Confessions after every service

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***Calendar** - Future Services are updated online at:

www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar

(Please see Fr. Dave if you want a printed copy)

SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹⁷ Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

⁷ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

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Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

The Canaanite Woman’s Faith

²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.” ²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying after us.” ²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶ And he answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷ She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

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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

FEBRUARY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Church School

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

9:30am Akathist to St. Xenia of St. Petersburg

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

SYNAXIS OF THE THREE HIERARCHS: ST. BASIL

THE GREAT, ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

6:30 pm Feast Day Vespers

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15 (*40 days after Nativity*)

FEAST OF THE MEETING OF OUR LORD

9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy

Blessing of Candles

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Zacchaeus Sunday

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 Divine Liturgy

Youth Sunday

Blessing of Candles

Church School

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 - *TRIODION BEGINS*

Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 pm Divine Liturgy

Scout Sunday

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MONTHLY COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Food Drive – This month, through the efforts of our Sr. ACRY, we will be collecting unexpired food and donations in order to make a delivery to **St. Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry** (at Holy Assumption of St. Mary Orthodox Church, 105 S. 19th St., Pgh, PA 15203). Volunteers are needed bi-weekly on Thursdays from 5:15 to 6:45 to assist in the distribution of these goods. (If interested, please contact Fr Patrick first at 412-431-6428) Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month! Here is a list of food items that they are looking for:

- ✓ Ready to eat canned fruit or vegetables
- ✓ Peanut Butter
- ✓ Jelly
- ✓ Canned Soups
- ✓ Canned Chili
- ✓ Macaroni & Cheese
- ✓ Spaghetti Sauce
- ✓ Pasta
- ✓ Noodle/Rice Mixes
- ✓ Small Package of Rice or Noodles
- ✓ Canned Stews
- ✓ Canned or Pouches of Tuna, Salmon or Chicken
- ✓ Boxed Meals ready to be prepared
- ✓ Baked Beans
- ✓ Canned and Boxed 100% Juice
- ✓ Crackers
- ✓ Tuna Helper Box
- ✓ Instant Cereal
- ✓ Boxed Cereal
- ✓ Canned Pastas (Chef Boyardee, Ravioli, etc.)
- ✓ Canned Meats

stmaryorthodoxchurch.net/stcyrilfoodpantry.html

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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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**** Blessing of Candles** – As is customary, candles will be blessed following the Feast Day Divine Liturgy on **Thursday, February 15** as well as on **February 18**, the Sunday after the Feast of the Meeting of Our Lord, the 40th day after Nativity (Christmas) that remembers the presentation of the infant Jesus into the Temple. It is recorded in the Gospel of Luke (2:22-39) that on this day the elder Simeon recognized the infant Jesus as “*a light for revelation to the Gentiles*”. Thus we highlight the use of candles, as they remind us that Christ is the true Light of the World. There will be candles available for a donation and all are encouraged to bring in candles from home to be blessed after these two Liturgies. Please place your candle(s) on the table near the icon of Christ. Let’s light up the world with our blessed candles!

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**** Electrician** – Please contact Fr. Dave if you have an electrician that you would recommend.

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**** First Aid Supplies** – A number of First Aid supplies were donated to the church to stock our First Aid kit. Too many items were donated! Please stop in the Multi-Purpose room and take whatever you like!

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***** Holy Water – Do you have a container of Holy Water at home to use? If not – any cleaned out container will work – or get a “Holy Water bottle” from the church.**

Reminders: Do Not Hoard It! While Holy Water does not “go bad”, it is best to refresh your water each year. Holy Water from the previous year(s) should be poured outside (*preferably on the corner of your house or in a garden where people are not going to walk on it*). The best scenario is to **use your Holy Water**: take a drink every morning, use in your cooking, etc. All are encouraged to bring their Holy Water bottle the next time you come to church to refill with the New Jordan Water for your home.

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Important Upcoming Liturgical Dates:

The Great Fast Begins: Monday, March 18
Holy Week: Monday, April 29
Pascha: Sunday, May 5
Ascension: Thursday, June 13
Pentecost: Sunday, June 23

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***** Stewardship Opportunities** – There are two stewardship opportunities that would aid a couple of our younger parishioners. Please see details below.

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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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***** 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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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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***** 2nd Sunday Panachida (Memorial) Service** – Starting next month, we will offer a Panachida on the 2nd Sunday of each month. If you would like to remember the anniversary of a departed loved one, please fill out the envelope that is on the curator’s desk in the vestibule and give it to Father Dave by the 1st Sunday of that month. All names for the month will be combined together. (An exception to this is remembering the 40-day memorial following one’s passing from this life.) *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 (Boiled Wheat) is also encouraged. Remember, 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:

- ✘ ******* A chandelier for the nave has been donated by our sister parish in Potomac, MD. **Tomorrow a friend of a parishioner, who drives a truck part-time, will be picking it up from MD – Glory to God!**
 - ✘ ****** 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*)
 - ✘ ***** 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 contract was signed on 11/3 for new windows on the 1st floor that will be installed around February or March (*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 Ryan, 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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AROUND OUR DIOCESE & DA ‘BURGH

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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***** Wine Tasting** – St. Barbara’s Philoptochos is hosting a Wine Tasting on **Saturday, February 24** at 7:00 pm at Riverside Event Center (12 Washington Ave., Oakmont, PA 15139). Tickets are \$50 per person. Contact Christina to RSVP at 412-370-3431 or scan the QR code on the flyer in the vestibule.

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***** Choir Concert** – On **Sunday, March 3** at 5:30 pm, the Pan-Orthodox Choir of Pittsburgh will perform, “*Orthodox Hymns of Lent and Pascha*” at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (1066 Washington Rd., Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228).

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***** Kardiotissa Icon** – The Kardiotissa Icon will be traveling to our sister parish in Monongahela on **Friday, April 5**. More details will be coming...

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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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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

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*** **Coffee Social Request** – Could we fill the Coffee Social Steward schedule a month in advance so we don't have a bunch of question marks on the schedule? The box below would then be a reminder as to who signed up and not looking for someone.

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COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

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

February 18: Liz Radomsky

February 25: _____?

March 3: _____?

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*** **THON** - Joanna Delaney has taken the initiative to volunteer in the world's largest student-run philanthropy, THON, this academic year at Penn State. It is a student run 46-hour dance marathon to raise funds and boost the morale for children and their families suffering from pediatric cancer. This year, THON weekend is February 16-18. Joanna is on the *Dancer Relations Committee* which is responsible for supporting the dancers and the THON families. She will be on the floor with the dancers in shifts for the entire 46 hours. The evening shifts are the most stressful and Joanna runs on little to no sleep.

We are asking you to please provide inspirational messages for Joanna that will be given to her during her shifts on the dance floor. In the past years, she has received letters, pictures, and videos. You can send any inspirational messages to Liz Radomsky at radomskyed@gmail.com and she can forward them to her captain or you can send them straight to her captain at: Elliott Kelchner (143 E Park Ave., State College, PA 16803)

The deadline is **Wednesday, February 14**. You could also show your support by making a donation in her name using the following link. You can also write a message for her on the donation page at: <https://donate.thon.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.participant&participantID=84402&referrer=mf%3A84402%3Ayou-share>

Thank You For Your Support!

*** **Health & Beauty Donations** – For Matthew Mirilovich's Senior Project at Seneca Valley High School, he is leading a project to support families in need through Family Links of Western PA. He is collecting new and unopened travel size containers of:

+ Body Wash + Deodorant
+ Shampoo + Feminine Hygiene Products
+ Conditioner + Toothpaste
+ Body Lotion + Toothbrushes

Donations can be dropped off in the church basement through **Sunday, March 10**. Monetary donations are also an option (*he will then purchase the items*).

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* **Third Hour** – Chanting of the Third Hour before Sunday Divine Liturgies has returned. If you are interested in reading or chanting this short prayer service, please contact Fr. Dave.

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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Stewardship Offerings: | \$ 165 |
| Candle Stewardship: | \$ 375 |
| Envelope Stewardship: | \$ 993 |
| Community Outreach: | \$ 45 |
| Total Collections: | \$ 1578 |
| Capital Improvement Fund: | \$ 160 |

Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; John and Barbara Kirish; Carol and Tom Lorenzi; Tim Martin; Kathy Schrmack; Juliana and Fred Anton; Mary Jane Hudak; Eleanor Sanger; Rich and Renee Mirilovich; Melanie Paieski; Cindy Pavilonis

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The **Christ Cross** was offered last week anonymously in memory of the departed of our Pittsburgh Deanery. May Their Memory Be Eternal! Vičnaya Pamyat!

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The **Theotokos Cross** was offered last week anonymously for the health of parishioners of our Pittsburgh Deanery. Many Years! Mnohaya Lita!

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The **Eternal Lamp** was offered last week by Tim Martin in memory of +Mary Gaydos Daniella (birthday remembrance). May Her Memory Be Eternal! Vičnaya Pamyat!

December Financial Report:

General Stewardship = \$ 6514.67

(includes \$ 242.67 from online stewardship)

***Expenses = \$ 7186.23**

Net Deficit = \$ 671.56

Capital Improvement Fund = \$ 410

Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 35

*details listed on the church hall bulletin board

Fiscal Year-to-Date Financial Report:

(September through last month)

General Stewardship = \$ 45,517

***Expenses = \$ 32,674**

Net Income = \$ 12,843

*details listed on the church hall bulletin board

Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 30

Church Financial Account Balances:

Balances as of the end of last month

General Stewardship = \$ 89,435

includes the "Fundraising Account"

Capital Improvement Funds = \$ 71,022

of which \$ 49,551 in this fund is borrowed

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* **2023 Summary – LAST CALL** - If you would like a copy of your 2023 SJB Donation Summary, please contact Rich Mirilovich at 412-523-1848 or jrmrsqrd@gmail.com.

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Additional Church Curators Needed – A synonym for *curator* is *steward*. Please see Larry Martin if you are interested in being a *steward of their time* and be "on-the-door". Our curator list needs expanded!

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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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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 prayers 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.

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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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.*

| 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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A Theological Basis for Planned Giving in the Church by KEN SLOANE

Gift giving is at the heart of the Christian faith. The biblical record chronicles the activity of God as a gift giver and demonstrates how people of faith have responded with gifts of their own. This understanding of our giftedness, which is the heart of Christian stewardship, provides a powerful motivation for giving — both current and deferred. The fundamental task of planned giving in the church is to enable people to expand their vision of stewardship to encompass their wealth as well as their income.

The very first message of the scriptures is that "In the beginning, God created. . ." God's ownership of all is implicit in God's creative work. As people who have been gifted, we appropriately are called to give. The Old Testament account makes it clear that God's people must be prepared to recognize the temporal nature of possessions. What we have has been given to us and will pass to another. The faithful take care that some of this is given back to God.

Leviticus 25 describes the charge to pass on property each 50 years. Quite clearly, 50 is intended to be a symbolic number that corresponds closely with the lifespan. The Year of Jubilee, when all ownership would be dramatically reoriented, is a powerful symbol of planned giving through one's estate. We do not have the option of true ownership, and we can't "take it with us." Accordingly, our only faithful alternative is the thoughtful distribution of our property in accordance with our faith.

Jesus emphasized money and possessions as important means for living out citizenship in the kingdom of God. The full appreciation of the kingdom always had a

future orientation. Wealth and possessions were not to be seen as the end of one's labor, but as yet another manifestation of God's grace. The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) demonstrates a powerful stewardship principle regarding wealth and possessions. Property and other wealth are no more than means to a larger end. Those who fail to grasp this distinction are judged rather harshly, but those who see the greater utility of building for the Master are praised and rewarded. There is a hopeful dimension to the parable, as the vision of building a kingdom yet to come is brought into clearer focus.

St. Paul contributes a helpful word regarding special gifts and endowments in his instructions found in I Timothy 6:17-19 (NIV):

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

As a wealthy and gifted people, we are called to invest in the kingdom yet to come, establishing a "firm foundation" for the coming age.

Planned giving is the technique the faithful may use to give concrete expression to this biblical witness and mandate. Such gifts not only may provide enrichment for the coming age, but a salutary benefit to the donors here and now. Such blessings, whether the satisfaction of faithful stewardship or the tax benefits of a well-planned gift, are entirely consistent with the witness of scripture that proper stewardship is satisfying and moves the giver to be "cheerful" (2 Cor. 9:7).

The congregation that encourages such an attitude will be marked by more than increased financial strength. It will also exhibit the healthy glow of a community of people who are excited about their role as builders of the kingdom of God and co-creators with the one who graciously gifted each one of them. The "treasures in heaven" of which Jesus spoke (Matt. 6:19-21) can be manifest here on earth when the faithful find expression for planned giving.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

THE TRANSFER OF THE RELICS OF THE PRIESTMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER:

Commemorated on February 11 / January 29

The Transfer of the Relics of the PriestMartyr Ignatios the God-Bearer: (the account about him is located under 20 December). After the holy PriestMartyr Ignatios was thrown for devouring by wild beasts at Rome dying in the year 107 – on orders of the emperor Trajan, Christians gathered up his bones and preserved them at Rome. Later in the year 108 they were transferred to the outskirts of Antioch. A second transfer – into the city of Antioch itself, was done in the year 438. And after the taking of Antioch by the Persians, the relics of the PriestMartyr Ignatios were returned to Rome and placed into the church in honour of the holy PriestMartyr Pope Clement in the year 540 (but according to other histories, the year was 637). The PriestMartyr introduced antiphonal singing into Church Divine-services. He has left us seven archpastoral epistles in which he provided instruction on faith, love and good works, he urged likewise the preserving of the oneness of the faith and to beware of heretics, and he bid the obeying and honouring of bishops, "looking upon the bishop as upon Christ Himself".

"Hearken ye unto the bishop, so that God in turn might hearken unto you... let Baptism remain with you, like a shield and buckler; faith – like an helmet; love – like a spear; patience – like full armour".

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LIVING THE ORTHODOX FAITH

Candles in Divine Services

From the book *Fundamentals of Orthodoxy*
What does a person first do upon crossing the threshold of a church? In nine out of ten cases, he goes to the candle stand. Our practice of Christianity, our involvement in its ritual, begins with a little beeswax candle. It is impossible to imagine an Orthodox church in which candles are not lit. Blessed Simeon of Thessalonica (15th century), commentator on the Liturgy, states that pure wax

symbolizes the purity and chastity of those who offer it. It is offered as a sign of our having repented of stubbornness and self-will. The softness and pliability of wax speaks of our readiness to obey God. The burning of the candle represents man's deification, his becoming a new creature through the fire of God's love.

Moreover, the candle is a witness to faith, of man's belonging to the Divine light. It expresses the flame of our love for the Lord, for the Mother of God, for the angels, or for the saints. One must not light a candle with a cold heart, merely as a formality. The external action must be supplemented by prayer, if only the simplest one, using one's own words.

A lighted candle is present at many church services. It is held by the newly baptized and by those being joined together in the Mystery of Matrimony. The funeral rite is performed amidst a multitude of burning candles. Protecting their burning candles from the wind, the faithful walk in Processions of the Cross.

There are no absolute rules as to where or how many lighted candles must be offered. Their purchase is a little sacrifice to God, voluntary and not burdensome. A large and expensive candle is no more grace-giving than is a small one.

Those who are meticulous about attending church try to light several candles during each visit: before the festal icon at the center of the church, at the icon of the Savior or of the Mother of God; **for the health of their loved ones**, and on the rectangular candlestand (*kanun*) before the Cross; **for the repose of the souls of the deceased**. If the heart so wishes, one may light candles to any saint or saints.

One should not be upset if, at the end of the Service, your candle is extinguished; the sacrifice has already been accepted by God.

There is no reason to believe talk that one should set a candle only with the right hand, that if it should go out, it is a sign misfortune will follow, that to singe the base of the candle to make it fit more firmly into the receptacle is a deadly sin, etc. There are many such superstitions, and they are all meaningless. The burning wax candle is pleasing to God, but He prizes the burning of the heart even more. Our spiritual life, our participation in church services, is

not limited to the candle. The candle will not free us from sin, will not unite us with God, and will not give us the power to wage the unseen warfare. The candle is filled with symbolic meaning, but we are saved not by symbols, but by the full reality, Divine grace.

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.

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... Paul, Thomas, Cheryl, David, Lawrence V., Christopher, Robert, Joanne, Patricia, Jason, 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. Stephen B., Fr. Thomas B., Protodeacon Gregory B., 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:* Dcn Peter S, Nicolas W., Seamus M., Samuel L., Timothy P., Nicholas L., Alexander H., 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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February Namedays:

Timothy Martin, Reader – Apostle Timothy of the 70 (2/4)
Dolores Bowser - Virgin-martyr Dorothea (2/19)
Father's Godson, Zachariah Kalaluhu – Prophet Zachariah (2/21)
...*May God grant them many and blessed years!*

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February Birthdays:

Anthony Winkler (2/1), Fr. Marc Wisnosky (2/1), Fr. Edward Pehanich (2/4), *Pañi's mother*, Alexandrina Liana Popescu (2/6), Charles Kretchek (2/8), Richard Gedid (2/9), Harmonie Torchia (2/11), Pañi Buczak (2/11), Fr. James Gleason (2/12), Matthew Peifer (2/13), *Father's niece*, Samantha Ditmore (2/14), Pañi Christyn Dranginis (2/14), W. Dylan Mushinsky (2/17), James Hanchulak (2/17), John Petrovich (2/18), Eleanor Sanger (2/19), Carly Anton (2/21), Barbara Kirish (2/22), Theresa Sharpless (2/22), *Father's nephew*, Brian Verbanick, Jr (2/22), Fr Stephen Krivonak (2/23), Fr William Bennett (2/28), His-All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I (2/29/40)

...*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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February Anniversaries:

Cynthia & Jeffrey Morrison (2/5)
Derek and Ashley (Wertz) Andrekovich (2/18)
...*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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For the souls of the newly departed...

...*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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A PRAYER WHEN LIGHTING A CANDLE

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Set our hearts on fire with love for You, O Christ our God, so that in its flame we may love You with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, so that by keeping Your commandments we may glorify You, the giver of all good gifts.
Amen.

ONLINE BONUSES

Religion Lost: Shrugging off Religion and Replacing it with Nothing

According to Professor Mark Silk of Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., "The real dirty little secret of religiosity in America is that there are so many people for whom spiritual interest, thinking about ultimate questions, is minimal,"

Increasing numbers of people are concerned only with new cars, mortgages, entertainment, or their favorite rock band or football team, unconcerned about spiritual matters. Even people who were raised in the Church, and who regularly participated in the life of the Church, have shrugged off God, preferring sleeping in on Sundays, or spending their leisure time in the pursuit of social engagements, or sporting events, to the fulfilling of their obligations to God. Many even begin to question their faith, having withdrawn themselves from the abounding grace that had previously sustained them. They begin to question if the Church is relevant to them, or even if God really exists.

Having become their own gods, they've surrendered to a secular world view, where self fulfillment is everything, and where pride rules supreme. "When a fall has overtaken us, there pride has already pitched its tent; because a fall is an indication of pride (St. John Climacus)."

Having become minimalists in the area of religion, they slowly sink in the quagmire of secularism, and the ultimate atheism that follows. Surrendered to the hazardous behavior of absenting from the grace filled Mysteries of Christ's Church, they sink into the mud of a life devoid of meaning, surrendering themselves to material pursuits. Ultimately they find that life hasn't been very fulfilling, and they wonder why.

In the ongoing pursuit of material and carnal pleasures, they spend countless hours in health clubs, toning their bodies in an attempt to stave off the aging process, while seeing no need to prioritizing the very pursuits that have eternal value. Finding themselves asking the question, "is that all there is", is it any wonder shrugging off religion has led to an empty feeling within, an inner nothingness?

When I was a young man I regularly went to the gym

for weight lifting. A few years ago after having had a hip replaced, I decided I needed to strengthen my body in order to give support to the other hip, and fight off the arthritis that was starting to weaken my knee joints. Since I had access to the fire department's weight room (I was their chaplain at the time) I decided to resume weight lifting. I was surprised at how quickly my muscle tone returned, and remembered the truism that muscles have memory.

The soul is like that. Just as muscles rebuild themselves when we make the effort to exercise, so too the soul is quickly restored to health when we avail ourselves to the healing grace that abounds within the Church.

As we continue this new year, why not make a resolution to commit ourselves to a reformation of our life? We must commit ourselves to regular church attendance, and recommit ourselves to keeping the fast periods, spiritual reading, and prayer. We must not worry that we've not been attentive to our spiritual life during this past year, but focus on 2024 as the year of spiritual revival. Let us usher in a new year of enlightenment, where the Son of Righteousness reigns in our life, anew!

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

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Candles: The Candles Represent the Light of Christ

The Orthodox Church from its very inception has always used oil lamps (or lampadas) and candles during its worship and prayers. The burning of candles and oil lamps have always been the traditional source of lighting in God's churches.

Candles and oil are offered to God from material goods that He has given us, as pure beeswax, because bees make the wax by collecting the pollen from various flowers. For this reason, some of the saints have taught that a candle reminds us of not only how hard-working the bee is but also the fact that it collects the good and rejects the polluted. Furthermore, the Church has taught that the use of pure beeswax candles produced by virgin bees represents the human nature of Christ which came from the Holy Virgin Mary.

But first and foremost, the candle represents the

Light of Christ in our midst, because, as it burns, it illuminates the darkness. Candles represent the deification of our souls because the candle is mixed with fire, representing the Light of Christ. They represent the love and peace which are attributes each Christian should have because the candle burns and comforts everyone with its light in the darkness. Lighting a candle reminds us we must remember to live in the light we received with our baptism.

This light is renewed every time we participate in the Divine Liturgy, every time we receive the Holy Mysteries, and every time we offer prayers. At the end of every celebration of the Divine Liturgy we sing: "We have seen the True Light! We have received the Heavenly Spirit! We have found the True Faith! Worshiping the Undivided Trinity, Who has saved us." The candle also reminds us of how Fire, that is, the Triune Deity Himself, unites with the malleable soul and then softens and illuminates both it, and all those who come into contact with it.

When we as Christians sacrifice ourselves for the love of God, we enlighten our fellow human beings and show them the way of salvation. And just as the candles we light at the baptism represent the spiritual light received by the newly baptized person, so too the candles we hold and light during funerals, at memorial services, and those placed on the tomb of the reposed represent the light of Christ, which we wish the deceased receive.

Just as we light candles for the living and the dead we should always accompany them by offering words of prayer. For the living we ask for God's mercy and protection. For the dead we ask for God's compassion and eternal rest.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

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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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FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

"Three Holy Hierarchs" – the Assemblage (Sobor, Synaxis) of the Holy Ecumenical Teachers of the Church and Sainted-Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostomos
Commemorated on Feb. 12 / Jan. 30

"Three Saints" – the Assemblage (Sobor, Synaxis) of the Holy Ecumenical Teachers of the Church and Sainted-Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostomos: At Constantinople for a long time there raged disputes about which one of the three sainted-hierarchs should be accorded the primacy of honour. One faction of the people preferred St Basil (Comm. Jan. 14/1), others stood forth for St Gregory the Theologian (Comm. Feb. 7 / Jan. 25), while a third revered St John Chrysostomos (Comm. Nov 26/13).

From this arose among church factions amongst Christians: some called themselves Basilians, others – Gregorians, and the third – Johannites.

In accord with the will of God, in the year 1084 the three sainted-hierarchs appeared to the Eucharistic Metropolitan John, and in declaring that they were equal before God, they gave orders that the disputes should stop and that a day in common celebration of their memory should be established.

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On the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord

Commemorated on February 15/2

On the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, the Church commemorates an important event in the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 2: 22-40). On the 40th day after birth the God-Infant was taken to the Jerusalem Temple – the centre of religious life of the God-chosen nation. By the Law of Moses (Lev 12) a woman, having given birth to a child of the male gender, was forbidden for 40 days to enter into the Temple of God. After this interval the mother came to the Temple with the child, so as to offer to the Lord thanksgiving and a purification sacrifice. The MostHoly Virgin, the Mother of God, did not have need for purification, since without defilement she had given birth to the Source of purity and sanctity, but in profound humility she submitted to the precepts of the Law.

At this time there lived at Jerusalem the righteous elder Simeon (the account about him is located under the day of his commemoration – 3 February). It had been revealed to him that he would not die until he should behold Christ the Saviour. By inspiration from above, the pious elder went to the Temple at that very moment when the MostHoly Mother of God and Righteous Joseph had brought there the Infant Jesus, so as to fulfill the ritual ceremony of the Law. The God-Bearer Simeon took the God-Infant in his arms, and having given thanks to God, he uttered a prophecy about the Saviour of the world: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, with peace according to Thy word, wherefore hath mine eyes beheld Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to the enlightening of gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Lk 2: 29-32). Righteous Simeon said to the MostHoly Virgin: "Behold, This One is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel and for the sign spoken against, and for Thee Thyself a sword shalt

pierce the soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed" (Lk 2: 35).

At the Temple also the 84 year old widow Anna the Prophetess, daughter of Phanuel (Comm. 3 February), "who did not leave the temple, serving God both day and night in fasting and prayer. And she also at that time, having drawn near, glorified the Lord and spake about Him (the God-Infant) to all awaiting deliverance at Jerusalem" (Lk 2: 37-38).

Before the Birth of Christ, all righteous men and women lived by faith in the Future Messiah the Saviour of the world, and they awaited His coming. The final righteous ones of the closing Old Testament – Righteous Simeon and the Prophetess Anna – were deemed worthy to meet at the Temple the Bearer of the New Testament, in the Person of Whom both Divinity and humanity do meet.

The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord is among the most ancient feasts of the Christian Church. It is known, that on the day of this solemnity were proclaimed sermons by Sainted Bishops Methodios of Patara (+ 312), Cyril of Jerusalem (+ 360), Gregory the Theologian (+ 389), Amphylokios of Iconium (+ 394), Gregory of Nyssa (+ 400), and John Chrysostom (+ 407). But in spite of its early origin, this feast was not so solemnly celebrated until the VI Century. During the reign of Justinian in the year 528, a catastrophe befell Antioch – an earthquake, in which many people perished. And upon this misfortune there followed others. In the year 544 there appeared a pestilential plague, daily carrying off several thousand people. During these days of widespread travail, it was revealed to a certain pious christian that the celebration of the Meeting of the Lord should be done more solemnly.

When at the day of the Meeting of the Lord the all-night vigil was finally made with church procession, the disasters at Byzantium ceased. In thanksgiving to God, the Church established in 544 that the Meeting of the Lord should be done more solemnly.

Church melodists adorned this feast with many a church work of song: in the VII Century – Sainted Andrew ArchBishop of Crete; in the VIII Century – Sainted Cosma Bishop of Maium, Monk John Damascene, Sainted Germanos Patriarch of

Constantinople; and in the IX Century – Sainted Joseph the Studite, ArchBishop of Thessalonika.

With the event of the Meeting of the Lord is associated the icon of the MostHoly Mother of God named: "the Softening of Evil Hearts" or "Simeon's Prophecy", which it is necessary to distinguish from the icon "Seven Arrows".

The icon "Simeon's Prophecy" symbolises the fulfillment of the prophecy of the righteous elder Simeon: "for Thee Thyself a sword shalt pierce the soul" (Lk 2: 35).

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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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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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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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