

“THE WEEKLY FORERUNNER” *Our Parish Bulletin*

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

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR GUESTS!

Glory be to Jesus Christ! (*responded with: Glory forever!*) Slava Isusu Christu! (*Slava na viki!*) We are happy that you have joined us today! It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning. We wish God’s Blessings to all who are with us today and hope you come again soon! Please see Fr. Dave if you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy.

UPCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024 #NATIVITYFAST vol. X
26th Sunday after Pentecost
The Conception By Saint Anna Of The Theotokos

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27 #NATIVITYFAST
9:30 am Nativity Fast Paraklis to the Theotokos

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2024 #NATIVITYFAST vol. X
27th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs
(2nd Sunday before Nativity)

Holy Prophet Aggei (Haggai) (500 B.C.)
9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols
9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11
Gospel: Luke 14:16-24
Tone 2; Liturgical Color: **Red**

Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear Confessions after every service *or* by appointment.

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

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

Calendar - Future Services are updated online at:

www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar

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

“Code” for reading the bulletin:

*** = new news ** = 2nd time in the bulletin

* = at least the 3rd time in the bulletin

BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

*** Nativity Fast** – The Nativity Fast has begun. This fasting period is also referred to as Philip’s Fast (Filipovka). We are *all* called to increase our prayer, fasting, and charity. The fasting periods in the church are prescribed as an opportunity to strengthen our faith. It is for all of us. (*When the church calendar is pink – it is a fasting day for everyone.*) Fasting is personal, but let’s embark on this discipline and journey together!

**** 2024 Yearbook, A.C.R.Y. Annual** – Please see Subdeacon Ryan or Fr. Dave if you would like to include a booster (\$3), patron (\$6), or memorial listing (\$6) in this Year Book of the activities of our God-saved Diocese. Deadline is Dec 31.



**** A Carpatho-Rusyn Christmas** – The new book, *Carpatho-Rusyn Christmas*, is a publication of the Diocesan Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage Working Group. It contains Rusyn and American Christmas Carols (Koljady) in English and Rusyn plus the text for the Holy Night Supper (Svjatyj Večer) prayer service (Velija). Cost is \$15 per book, or \$10 per book with an order of 10 or more. Please sign up at the curator desk in the vestibule if you are interested in getting a book for your house!

LENTEN COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

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

* December 29: _____?

* January 5: _____?

January 7: _____ Parish Pot-Luck

January 12: _____?

*meatless during the fast

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor* +++ 2201 Duncan Avenue, Allison Park, Pa 15101
www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com +++ 412-748-0148 (*Talk or Text*) +++ OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com

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**** 2025 Calendars and 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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*** THANK YOU** to everyone who gave of their time for our Winter Maintenance & Decorating Morning! It takes everyone’s stewardship of time, talent, and treasures to keep our parish alive and going strong! Many Years to all of our helpers!

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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings: \$ 631

Candle Stewardship: \$ 56

Envelope Stewardship: \$ 1590

Total Collections: \$ 2277

Capital Improvement Fund: \$ 0

Participating Souls - Sunday Liturgy: 49

Weekly Candle Intentions or Memorials were offered last week by the Nelson Family; Lawrence Martin; Tim Martin; Rich and Renee Mirilovich; Cindy Pavidonis

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*** Nativity Commemorations** – We offer you the opportunity to sponsor items to be used for Nativity as commemorations: *anonymously, in memory of departed loves ones, OR for the health of loved ones.* If you are interested in making any of these commemorations, please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule (or email Fr. Dave) and give an *additional stewardship free-will offering* to the church.

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

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A REMINDER TO MAKE TIME FOR YOUR NATIVITY FAST CONFESSION

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

Fr. Dave will be available for confessions after ALL services, from 11-1 on Saturdays December 7, 14, & 21, or by appointment.

As we prepare for the Feast of the Nativity, it is time to prepare the “Manger of our soul” for the coming of the Messiah.

“There is more mercy in God than there are sins in us. Confess your sins at once, whatever they may be.” +St Tikhon of Zadonsk

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*** Retirement** - Fr. Frank Miloro, Chancellor of the Diocese, is retiring from his position as of the end of this year. We wish Fr. Frank and Pañi Connie God’s blessings and many years as they enjoy their retirement!

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*** New Chancellor** - Fr. Stephen Lopusky has been appointed the new Chancellor of the Diocese. He and Pañi Daria will remain at Camp Nazareth for the time being until further arrangements are made. We pray that God will strengthen them and keep them as they undertake this new task in His Name! Many Years!

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DEC. COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

During the Nativity Fast, we are called to increase our Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. This month, through the efforts of our Sr. ACRY, we will be having a monetary collection for the **Sr. ACRY Stewardship Campaign** (our community outreach collection for the month). The Stewardship Campaign helps support the ACRY Scholarship Fund, Camp Nazareth, Youth Workers’ Conference Fund, Ambassador Fund, and Lenten Retreat Fund,
Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month!

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19

⁸for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; ¹³but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."
¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

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Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was not one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

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

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The Conception By Saint Anna, Of "Whence Is Conceived The Holy Mother Of God"

Commemorated on December 22/9

The Conception by Saint Anna, of "Whence is Conceived the Holy Mother of God": Saint Anna, the mother of the Most Holy Mother of God, was the youngest daughter of the priest Nathan from Bethlehem, descended from the tribe of Levi. She entered into marriage with Saint Joakim (their mutual memory is made 9 September), who was a native of Galilee. For a long time Saint Anna was childless, but after a span of some 20 years, through the fervent prayer of both spouses, an Angel of the Lord announced to them the Conception of a Daughter, Who would bring blessing to all the human race. The Conception by Saint Anna took place at Jerusalem, where also was born the Most Holy Virgin Mary by name. The majority of icons, dedicated to the Conception by Saint Anna, portray the Most Holy Virgin trampling underfoot the serpent. "Down the icon, along its sides, Saints Joakim and Anna are depicted usually with upraised hands prayerfully folded; their eyes also are directed upward and they contemplate the Mother of God, Who as it were soars in the air with outstretched hands; under Her feet is portrayed an orb wound round with a serpent symbolising the devil, which in the face of fallen forefathers strives to conquer with its power all the universe".

There also exist icons, upon which Saint Anna holds on her left arm the Most Holy Virgin at an infant age. Upon the face of Saint Anna is portrayed a special reverence. An ancient icon of large size, written on canvas, is located in the village of Minkovetsa in the Dubensk district of Volynsk diocese. And from ancient times this feast was especially venerated in Russia by pregnant women.

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PRAYER CORNER

For the Health of... Reed, Maria O., Cheryl, Christina, Carol, Daniel, Allen, Elizabeth, Robert, Matthew, David, Stephanie, Suzanne, William, Boyd, Millicent, Barbara, Paul, Robert, Kelly, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, and Michael ...*through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer*

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For the souls of the newly departed...
+Norman Teklinsky, Jr. (12/2), +Ralph Parks (12/2)
...*May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God's Memory!*

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NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2024

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

All-Merciful Savior, You are the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.
(John 1:29) When You were born in a cave and placed in a manger, an angel announced this good news to the shepherds. (Luke 2:8) They came to adore You, the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11) As we journey through these holy days of preparation to celebrate Your Nativity, we humbly implore You: Look with compassion upon our families, our churches, our country, and the whole world. When we stray from Your presence, lead us back to You. Gather us into one flock. (John 10:16) Guide us to springs of living water and wipe away every tear from our eyes. (Rev. 7:17) Number us among the sheep at Your right hand who continually cry out: "To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13) Amen!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ONLINE BONUSES

Thoughts On The Feast Of The Conception By St. Anna Of The Holy Theotokos

Fr Paul Martin, Thought of the Day, Annunciation-St. Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church, New Buffalo, MI

Today The Orthodox Church celebrates, according to the Julian Calendar, the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos. The Roman Catholic Church celebrated the Immaculate Conception on 8 December. So, let's contrast the Orthodox understanding of Mary's conception with the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Here is the Orthodox position:

Reading from the Synaxarion: According to the ancient tradition of the Church, since Saint Anna, the Ancestor of God, was barren, she and her husband Joachim remained without children until old age. Therefore, sorrowing over their childlessness, they besought God with a promise that, if He were to grant them the fruit of the womb, they would offer their offspring to Him as a gift. And God, hearkening to their supplication, informed them through an Angel concerning the birth of the Virgin. And thus, through God's promise, Anna conceived according to the laws of nature and was deemed worthy to become the mother of the Mother of our Lord (bold stress mine).

On the other hand, here is the 1854 ex cathedra proclamation of Pope Pius IX, Ineffabis Deus: *The most Blessed Virgin was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all state of original sin.*

What are we to make of this papal proclamation, according to which there was something supernatural about Mary's birth? For according to our Synaxarion, "Anna conceived according to the laws of nature". Clearly, the Roman Catholic position here contradicts the ancient, traditional understanding of the Eastern Church Fathers.

Fr. Stanley Harakas summarizes the Orthodox position on the Conception of the Most Holy Theotokos vis-à-vis that of Rome: *Traditional Roman*

Catholic and Eastern Orthodox views on original sin are quite different. The Roman Catholic view emphasizes guilt as the major aspect of original sin. The Eastern Orthodox view emphasizes the condition of separateness between all persons and God prior to the acceptance of the saving work of Christ. So, for the Roman Catholics, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is a way of saying that the Theotokos was guilty of no sin. Eastern tradition tends also to hold that the Virgin Mary committed no voluntary sin, but this is different from saying that she was born without sin (The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers).

As Fr. Stanley says, we Orthodox stress the "condition of separateness between all persons and God" resulting from Adam's sin, while Roman Catholics (and many Protestants) emphasize the guilt taken on by all human beings as a result of this sin. In the Orthodox view, Adam's sin results in separation, a weakening of that vital link connecting us to God and to one another. Further, in the Orthodox view, Adam's sin defines "the human condition", experienced as alienation, brokenness—and finally, death.

And yet regardless of our separation from God and one another, human beings remain connected. In the Roman Catholic view there is a connecting thread in our common guilt, since "all have sinned with Adam," as Augustine puts it. But according to the Orthodox view it is our shared experience of alienation from one another and from God—in fact, from life, for God is the source of life. It has to do with what is often called "our common humanity" running like a thick, red thread of blood from our first parents, through the ages, and to the present.

Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky stresses the continuity of this human bloodline when discussing the part played by the Virgin Mary in our salvation. He says, "The dogma of the immaculate conception is foreign to the Eastern tradition, which does not wish to separate the Holy Virgin from the descendants of Adam upon which the fault of the first parents weighs" (The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church). This is important, for the Eastern Fathers understand the Fall from grace, Adam and Eve's "fault", to be The Ancestral Sin (Propatorikon

amartema) which brought death into the world. In the Orthodox view, it is death, not the primal guilt of our first parents that separates humanity from God, who alone is immortal. For Christ came to save us from death, to defeat sin and death, by sharing His deified humanity with us—His Very Body and Blood. According to Orthodox doctrine, in contradistinction to Catholic doctrine, humanity does not sin with Adam, as sin is voluntary; it is personal, and we do not take on Adam's guilt.

In other words, the Original Sin is Ancestral. But it is personal—that is, voluntary—only to our first parents, not to us.

Nevertheless, although Mary was born mortal ("according to the laws of nature"), it is Mary's living and active faith that makes our salvation possible; it is her "Yes" that gives God flesh.

The Venerable Nicholas Cabasilas, a Church Father of the 14th century, says this: *The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father, by His power and by His Spirit, but it was also the work of the will and faith of the Virgin. Without the consent of the Immaculate, without the agreement of her faith, the plan was as unrealizable as it would have been without the intervention of the three divine Persons Themselves. It was only after having instructed her and persuaded her that God took her for His Mother and borrowed from her the flesh, that she so greatly wished to lend Him. Just as He became incarnate voluntarily, so He wished that His Mother should bear Him freely and with her full consent (bold stress mine, as appearing in Lossky).*

The Orthodox Church emphasizes Mary's solidarity with the saints of the Old Testament—and indeed with all of humanity. She is mortal by nature as they were mortal—and as we are mortal. But it is her active, holy faith and her single-minded willingness that set her apart from us. She brings our humanity to God freely, willingly: "Be it done unto me according to Thy Word", as she says. Offering her pure flesh and blood made sacred by God, she cooperates with the Holy Spirit, so that we may be saved from death and our own personal sins by Jesus Christ, her only Son and God's Only Begotten.

This is what we celebrate and remember today: Anna's giving birth to God's Mother, the Holy

Theotokos.

Let us praise St. Anna—she who bore the Theotokos "according to the laws of nature"—for the day is hers. And then let us praise the Holy Theotokos. And then let us praise all the saints of the Old Testament, for the Theotokos is the ripe fruit of their efforts to bring the fullness of God into this world—to give God flesh.

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ADDITIONAL BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

**** Random Tidbits...** Father Dave 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 (Sacrament) of Holy Anointing (Unction) to be fully prepared.

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Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear Confessions after every service *or* by appointment.

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Camp Nazareth: www.campnazareth.org

FB: www.facebook.com/acroddioocese

Twitter: twitter.com/acrodnews

YouTube: youtube.com/acroddioocese

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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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CHURCH BUILDING UPDATE

Here is a brief update from the past few weeks:

- ✘ ** Kitchen Update: Some little changes have been happening in the kitchen from moving outlets and adding more outlets. Soon we will be installing a new stainless steel backsplash behind the stove (and moving that one to behind the sink). Changing the lights and ceiling tiles will also happen soon.
- ✘ * The building committee and Parish Council continue to discuss our plan of action going forward with work in the church proper. Please be patient with us! Also, remember that for a project like the one that we are undertaking, work goes top down so the ceiling and walls will be done before the floor. As mentioned, please be patient with us!

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Glory to God for All Things!

Through your generosity and dedication, all of this is coming together – one thing at a time! **Thank you!** Many stewards keep coming to the church and working very hard to make improvements. May God grant you many years!

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MONTHLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3 #NATIVITYFAST

6:30 pm Feast Day Vespers and Orthodoxy 101

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4 #NATIVITYFAST

FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Akathist Hymn to St. Nicholas

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 #NATIVITYFAST

9:00 am Winter Maintenance & Decorating Morning

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

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Third Hour

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Monthly Memorial (Panachida)

5:00 pm Deanery St. Nicholas Charity Dinner

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11 #NATIVITYFAST

6:30 pm Moleben for the Nativity Fast

7:00 pm Exploring Orthodox 101

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Nativity Fast Paraklis to the Theotokos

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 #NATIVITYFAST

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

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Youth Sunday

St. Nicholas Breakfast

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16 #NATIVITYFAST

CANCELED: 9:30 am Akathist Hymn to the Nativity of Christ

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18 #NATIVITYFAST

7:00 pm Feast Day Vespers AT St. Nicholas

(903 Ann Street, Homestead, PA 15120)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19 #NATIVITYFAST

FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21 #NATIVITYFAST

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

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27 #NATIVITYFAST

9:30 am Nativity Fast Paraklis to the Theotokos

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29 #NATIVITYFAST

9:15 am Nativity Canon and carols

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

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FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

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

Commemorated on December 4 / November 21

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

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

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

In remembrance of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Jerusalem Temple, Holy

Church from ancient times established a solemn feastday. The decretals for the making of the feast in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, where mention is made that the holy Empress Helen built a church in honour of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God.

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Sainted Nicholas, Archbishop Of Myra In Lycia, And Wonderworker

Commemorated on December 19 / 6

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

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

brought him through the window three sacks with gold and by this saved the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, Saint Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and conceal his good deeds.

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

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

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

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, Saint Nicholas was a zealous and ardent warrior of the Church of Christ. Fighting evil spirits, the saint

made the rounds of the pagan temples and shrines in the city of Myra and its surroundings, shattering the idols and turning the temples to dust.

In the year 325 Saint Nicholas was a participant in the I OEcumenical Council (Sobor). This Council proclaimed the Nicean Symbol of faith, and he stood up with the likes of saints Sylvester the pope of Rome, Alexander of Alexandria, Spyridon of Trimiphuntum and others of the 318 fathers of the Council against the heretic Arius.

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

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

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

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2024-25 SJB PARISH COUNCIL OFFICERS

- President: Lawrence Martin
- Vice-President: Elizabeth Radomsky
- Treasurer: Timothy Martin, Reader
- Financial Secretary: Rich Mirilovich
- Recording Secretary: Gina Fall
- Chief Auditor: Robert Fall
- Auditors: Subdeacon Ryan Ferko, John Kirish, Kimberly Opsitos, Matthew Opsitos, and Kathy Schrmack

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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET



**TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES
PARISH STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:**

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Joining the ACRY – If you would like to become a part of our philanthropic organization of the ACRY (American Carpatho-Russian Youth), which is open to all ages, please contact Subdeacon Ryan Ferko at 484-744-2771 or rferko85@yahoo.com.

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Why Should I Join the Local ACRY?

The ACRY is an Orthodox Christian family fellowship dedicated to the purpose of encouraging spiritual growth through charitable and apostolic missionary works, prayer and fellowship for the Glory of God and the building up of the Church and our Diocese. The local ACRY focuses on outreach to the community in various forms and fellowship within. This could be a fundraiser or family event at the

church grounds to introduce people to our parish, or the volunteering of our time to help support a community event. In addition to these, the ACRY has the opportunity to branch out and meet other members of our diocesan ACRY community through deanery and nation events and partake in outreach at a broader level.

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

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Garbage and Recycling – Did you ever notice that we do not have a dumpster at the church? Being non-residential without pick up in Allison Park, all of our garbage and recycling heads to stewards’ houses. If you would be willing to stick around at the end of coffee social and take a bag, please let Larry know. *(please grab the coffee grounds before taking the bag)*

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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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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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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.

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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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| 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 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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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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ONLINE 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(s) *name(s)*. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver *him/her/them* from sickness and bitter pain. Heal *him/her/them* so that *he/she/they* may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

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For the Special Intentions of... His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. Stephen B., Fr. Thomas B., Protodeacon Gregory B., Kevin, Michael L., Laura & family, Carlene, Georgia, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Amee, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin, David, Donna, George, *our diocesan seminarians:* Dcn Peter S, Nicolas W., Seamus M., Samuel L., 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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*** **Nameday, Birthday, and Anniversary Prayer List is being reset** – Our parish prayer list of key dates and special occasions in our lives will be reset going forward (starting 3/1/24). If one of your special days is missing – please let Fr Dave know ASAP. See Fr. Dave with any questions.

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December Namedays:

Nicholas Sarandou - St. Nicholas the Wonderworker (NC 12/6)

Carol Lorenzi, Katherine Schrmack - Great-martyr Catherine of Alexandria (12/7)

Andrew Mirilovich, Fr. Dave Andrew Urban - Holy & All-praised Apostle Andrew the First-called (12/13)

Barbara Kirish; Barbara Leone - Great martyr Barbara

(12/17)

Nicholas Ditmore; Nicholas Kubis - St. Nicholas the Wonderworker (12/19)

Patrick Wertz - St. Sturm of Fulda Monastery (12/30)
...May God grant them many and blessed years!

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December Birthdays:

Stacy (Martin) Dzambo (12/1), *Father's Godson*, Joseph Sekerak (12/2), Lucy Jo Blobner (12/4), Brynn Jozwiakowski (12/6), His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory (12/7), Pañi Eleanor Herbert (12/8), Deborah Brancho (12/9), Jim Potoski (12/10), *Father's God-sister*, Lauren Babbie (12/12), Thomas Figura (12/15), Brian Gogal (12/15), Madelyn Spirnak (12/17), Donald Gavulich (12/19), Carter Andrekovich (12/20), Fr Nik Ferencz (12/20), Mike Puhac (12/21), Molly Blobner (12/27/21)

...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... Maxwell, Barbara, Tyler *...through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, & St. John Maximovitch.*

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For those preparing for Marriage... Allison & Michael, Francis & Alexandra *...through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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December Anniversaries:

...through the prayers of St. Nicholas Planas

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For Pregnant Mothers...

Mallory (*due in March*), Lindsay (*April*)
...through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Theotokos, and St. Irene Chrysovalantou.

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For those serving in the Armed Forces & Civil Authorities... Thomas R. Dzadovsky
...through the prayers of St George, the Great-Martyr & Wonderworker.

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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave

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

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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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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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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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