

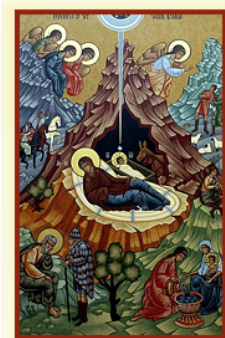
“THE VOICE” *Our Periodic Parish Newsletter*

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

January 7, 2025

Volume X

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



The Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ

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

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Dear Family of St. John’s,

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

Allow the joy of this season bring you peace!

May you, your family, and your friends have a most blessed Nativity Season!

With Love in Christ,

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

UPCOMING SERVICES

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2025

vol. X

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Parish Family Photo

Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

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

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8 – 2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9 – 3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 12

29th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday after Nativity and before Theophany

Sunday of the Holy Ancestors (*Righteous Joseph*)

*the Betrothed, Holy Righteous David the King,
and James the Brother of the Lord*

9:15 am Nativity Canon & Carols (*Koljady*)

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (Sunday before)

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday before)

Tone 4; Liturgical Color: **Gold**

Monthly Memorial (Panachida)

take down the Manger Scene after Coffee Social

Sr. ACRY Meeting

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MONDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ

No Vespers Scheduled

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

9:20 am Theophany Canon

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



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; Readers: Kris Carlisle, Nicholas Ditmore, & Timothy Martin

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

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412-748-0148, *Talk or Text*

OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com

Instagram: SJB_Orthodox_Pittsburgh

Twitter: @SJB_OrthodoxPGH

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.

NATIVITY COMMEMORATIONS

(remembered at Proskomedia [The Preparation Prayers])

Censer (Kadilo) Incense For The Health Of The Pavilonis Family And Our Parish Family

Censer (Kadilo) Incense Offered Anonymously For The Health Of Our Parish

Prosphoran (Eucharistic Bread) In Memory Of (IMO) The Founders Of St. John The Baptist

Sacramental Wine IMO +Helen & +John Kailyar

2 Altar Vigil Candles For The Health Of The Mirilovich Family And Friends

4 Iconostasis Candles IMO +Anastasia & +Lawrence Martin

2 Tetrapod Vigil Candles IMO The Departed From The Mirilovich And Kuneman Families

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

9:30 am Royal Hours of Theophany

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18 ## STRICT FAST DAY

5:00 pm 2nd Holy Night Supper *see blurb below

6:30 pm Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)

Vigil Service with the Great Blessing of Water

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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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*** **Seasonal Greeting** - The greeting used amongst

Orthodox Christians for the period from the Nativity

until Theophany is “Christ is born!” with the response

“Glorify Him!”

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*** **Thank You** to everyone who brought items in for

today’s Nativity Pot-Luck community meal!

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*** **Fast-Free Period** – There is rejoicing in the

celebration of the Birth of Christ! The Church

reminds us of this as no fasting is required from

January 7th until January 17th. We fasted - now we

feast (*in moderation*). This is a time of joy when the

Christ-Child, our Savior, is Born! Enjoy!

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*** **Framed Icons** – Please consider framing your

previous church calendar tops: cut them out, use a 5x7

frame, and hang them on your walls. Each year you

can add an icon to another room in your home. This is

also a nice project to do with our youth!

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*** **Greeting Cards** – Please repurpose your greeting

cards (*and if you do not frame them, calendar icons*)

after the season concludes. The collection box is in

the vestibule for the *Holy Transfiguration Monastery*.

Thank you for giving back! *By the way – this*

collection is taken year round...

*** **Maintenance Person** - Thank you to Nick Sarandou who in his stewardship has graciously accepted the position of maintenance person. His experience with maintaining various properties will be immeasurable to the church. Thank you for giving of your time, talents, and treasures! Many years!

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*** **Christmas Caroling** - The St. Nicholas Choir of Homestead has put together four virtual caroling videos of Christmas Carols (Koljady) for all to enjoy! They can be viewed from their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/stnichomestead>

(One should be able to watch the videos whether they have a Facebook account or not.) Please feel free to share this with your loved ones near and far!

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** **School Excuse** – Parents are invited to get an excused absence letter request from Fr. Dave for bringing your family to the Feast of the Nativity Liturgy on Tuesday morning.

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** **2nd Holy Night Supper** – Theophany Eve is a day of Strict Fasting. This is sometimes referred to as a Second Holy Night Supper after the fast-free period between Nativity and Theophany ends (*one practice is to freeze any leftovers from Christmas Eve Supper*). This year, Fr. Dave will host a Strict Fast Dinner at the church on **Saturday, January 18**, Theophany Eve, at **5:00 pm**. (*Please talk to him if you would like to contribute anything to the meal.*) Following dinner, the Virgil Service for the Theophany of our Lord will be celebrated at **6:30 pm**, concluding with the Great Blessing of Water, Church Sanctification, and distribution of the Holy Water to the faithful.

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COFFEE SOCIAL STEWARDS

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

January 12:	_____?
January 19:	Sr. ACRY
January 26:	_____?

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** **Coffee Request** – We are down to our last container of coffee in the kitchen storage room. We typically get the giant containers from Costco or Sams. If you are able, please bring in a regular coffee to add to the shelf.



*** 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 \$10 per book and will be available soon in our bookstore.

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“Code” for reading the bulletin:

*** = new news

** = 2nd time in the bulletin

* = at least the 3rd time in the bulletin

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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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STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET



TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

*** **STEWARD**, translated from the Greek word *oikonomos*, means *a caretaker, a faithful manager of all of God's gifts*. As Stewards, each of us are called upon to respond to God's gifts through offering our gifts of time, talent and treasure. This is our form of supporting our parish and it leaves us with the question, "How will I respond to God's gifts this year?" Our gifts represent who we are and how we care about God and His Church. How can we live with the framework of being a caretaker of the blessings God gives us?

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PARISH STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

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*** **ACRY Meeting** – The next meeting will be this **Sunday, January 12**, following the Coffee Social.

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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.

+++

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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OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD

Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 675
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 40
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 1400
Community Outreach:	\$ 88
Total Collections:	\$ 2203
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 236

Participating Souls - Sunday Liturgy: 34

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

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December Financial Report:

General Stewardship = \$ 17,420.64
(includes \$ 317.64 from online stewardship)

***Expenses = \$ 6751.90**

Net Gain = \$ 10,668.74

Capital Improvement Fund = \$ 5686

Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 31

**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*

Fiscal Year-to-Date Financial Report:

(September through last month)

General Stewardship = \$ 35,261

***Expenses = \$ 24,914**

Net Gain = \$ 10,346

Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 36

2024 Calendar Year Financial Report:

General Stewardship = \$ 82,320

***Expenses = \$ 77,511**

Net Gain = \$ 4,809

Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 35

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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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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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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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JAN. COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY



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

LIVING THE ORTHODOX FAITH

Why a Virgin Birth?

By Bishop Kallistos Ware: The Orthodox Way

"In the New Testament it is clearly stated that Jesus Christ's mother was a virgin (Matthew 1:18,23,25). Our Lord has an eternal Father in heaven, but no father on earth. He was begotten outside time from the Father without a mother, and he was begotten within time from the Mother without a father. This belief in the Virgin Birth does not, however, in any way detract from the fullness of Christ's humanity. Although the Mother was a virgin, yet there was a real human birth of a genuinely human baby.

Yet why, we ask, should his birth as a man have taken this special form? To this it may be answered that the mother's virginity serves as a "sign" of the Son's uniqueness. This it does in three closely connected ways:

First, the fact that Christ has no earthly father means that he points always beyond his situation in space and time to his heavenly and eternal origin. Mary's child is truly man, but he is not only man; he is within history but also above history. His birth from a virgin emphasizes that, while immanent, he is also transcendent; although completely man, he is also perfect God.

Secondly, the fact that Christ's Mother was a virgin indicates that his birth is to be ascribed in a unique manner to the divine initiative. Although he is fully human, his birth was not the result of sexual union between man and woman, but it was in a special way the direct work of God.

Thirdly, Christ's birth from a virgin underlines that the Incarnation did not involve the coming into being of a new person. When a child is born from two human parents in the usual fashion, a new person begins to exist. But the person of the incarnate Christ is none other than the second person of the Holy Trinity. At Christ's birth, therefore, no new person came into existence, but the preexistent person of the Son of God now began to live according to a human as well as a divine mode of being. So the Virgin Birth reflects Christ's eternal preexistence."

FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

KONDAK HYMNS OF THE FEASTS:

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Feast Of The Nativity According To The Flesh Of Our Lord, God And Saviour Jesus Christ.

Commemorated on January 7 / December 25

The Virgin today gives birth to the highest Being; and the earth provides the Inaccessible One with a cave. The angels with the shepherds glorify Him; the Wise Men journey with the star, because for our sake is born a little Child, the Pre-Eternal God.

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Synaxis (Sobor-Assemblage) Of The Most Holy Theotokos, Mother Of God

Commemorated on January 8 / December 26

He Who before the morning star was begotten without mother of the Father, is today without father made flesh of you upon earth. A star announces the good tidings to the Magi, while angels with shepherds sing the praises of your undefiled child-bearing, O you who are full of grace.

+++

Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Commemorated on January 14 / 1

The Lord of All endures circumcision and His goodness purifies the sins of men and grants salvation to the world today. Therefore, Basil the priest and torchbearer of the Creator, the divine mystic of Christ, rejoices on high.

+++

Feast of the Holy Theophany of Our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ (Baptism of the Lord)

Commemorated on January 19 / 6

You have appeared today to the inhabited earth, and Your light, O Lord, has been marked upon us, who with knowledge sing Your praise. You have come, You are made manifest, the Light that no man can approach.

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Synaxis Of The Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner And Baptist, John

Commemorated on January 20 / 7

Your presence in the flesh terrified the Jordan River, and it reversed its course from fear. John, hesitated in fear, to baptize You even though it was foretold by

the prophets. The angels were overtaken with wonder when they saw You being baptized as a Man. All those who were in darkness, enlightened, sang praises to You, O Lord, Who appeared and shed Your Light upon all.

MONTHLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2025 #NATIVITYFAST

Sunday before the Nativity of our Lord
Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ
Sunday of the Holy Fathers
9:15 am Nativity Canon & Carols (*Koljady*)
9:30 am Divine Liturgy

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MONDAY, JANUARY 6 #NATIVITYFAST

A Day of Strict Fasting
Canceled: ~~9:30 Royal Hours of Nativity~~
7:00 pm Great Compline (*Velikij Povečerije*)
Vigil of the Nativity of our Lord

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
9:15 am Nativity Canon & Carols (*Koljady*)
9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy
Parish Family Photo
Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

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

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8 – 2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9 – 3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 12 #NATIVITYFAST

Sunday after Nativity and before Theophany
Sunday of the Holy Ancestors (*Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, Holy Righteous David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord*)
9:15 am Nativity Canon & Carols (*Koljady*)
9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Monthly Memorial (Panachida)

Sr. ACRY Meeting

MONDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ
No Vespers Scheduled

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD
FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT
9:20 am Theophany Canon
9:30 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
take down the Manger Scene after Coffee Social

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

9:30 am Royal Hours of Theophany
SATURDAY, JANUARY 18 ## STRICT FAST DAY

5:00 pm 2nd Holy Night Supper
6:30 pm Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)
Vigil Service with the Great Blessing of Water
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 19

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD
9:20 am Theophany Canon
9:30 Divine Liturgy
Youth Sunday

MONDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
9:30 Divine Liturgy

?? WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22 (OR 29TH)

6:30 pm Parastas (Memorial) for aborted babies
7:00 pm Exploring Orthodox 101
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 26

9:20 Theophany Canon
9:30 Divine Liturgy

?? WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29 (OR 22ND)

6:30 pm Parastas (Memorial) for aborted babies
7:00 pm Exploring Orthodox 101
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Spiritual Vitamin:

“Such splendor of heavenly glory was revealed to the simple shepherds of Bethlehem. Up until then, such glory could only be seen by chosen individuals, and this is the first instance that we find in Holy Scripture of a whole group of mortal men clearly seeing and hearing the immortal, angelic host. This is a sign that, with Christ’s coming to earth, heaven is wide open to all who seek it in purity of heart.”
+St. Nikolai Velimirovich

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SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Father is available to meet Monday thru Friday from 8:30am to 3:30pm 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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TODAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nativity Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7

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

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Nativity Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

The Visit of the Wise Men

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

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

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

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PRAYER CORNER

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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Nativity Tropar (Tone 4)

Your Nativity O Christ our God, * has shown forth the Light of knowledge to the world: * for through it, those who studied the stars * learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of truth, * and to acknowledge You rising from on high; *** O Lord, glory to You!

Nativity Kondak (Tone 3)

The Virgin today gives birth to the highest Being, * and the earth provides the Inaccessible One with a cave. * The angels with the shepherds glorify Him; * the Wise Men journey with the star, * because for our sake is born a little Child, *** The Pre-Eternal God.

Our Parish Prayer List for Special Intentions *

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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.

For the Health of... Felix, Bella, Reed, Maria O., Cheryl, Christina, Carol, Daniel, Elizabeth, Robert, Matthew, David, 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 Special Intentions of... His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. Stephen B., Fr. Thomas B., Protodeacon Gregory B., Stephanie B, Kevin, Michael L., Laura & family, Carlene, Georgia, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Ameer, 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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January Namedays:

Juliana Anton – Virgin-martyr Juliana of Nicomedia (1/3)
Stephen Brancho - Holy Protomartyr & Archdeacon Stephen (1/9)

Ashley Wertz Andrekovich - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)

...*May God grant them many and blessed years!*

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January Birthdays:

Carol Lorenzi (1/2), Joshua Mainolfi (1/3), Elizabeth Fucsko (1/7), Jason Shelpman (1/9), Pañi Kathy Fester (1/13), Fred G. Anton (1/16), Pañi Fedornock (1/16), *Father's Godson*, Alex Schreiber (1/18), *Father's Goddaughter*, Jenna Schreiber (1/18),

Kevynn Christina Anton (1/19), Nicholas Ditmore (1/19), Fr Joseph Fester (1/19), Katherine Schrmack (1/22), *Father's niece*, Abigeal Verbanick (1/22), Thomas Lorenzi (1/23), Mary Ann Brady (1/26), Fr Frank Miloro (1/26), Allison Kretchek (1/29) ...*May God allow them to grow in peace and love all the days of their lives and may He grant them many and blessed years!*

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For our Catechumens & Inquirers...

Raymond, Kathryn, 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 ...*through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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January 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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For the souls of the newly departed... +Michael Miklos, the Priest (1/3), +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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* 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.*

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

Reflection on the Gospel from the Feast of the Nativity (Matthew 2:1-12)

By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

<https://myocn.net/the-nativity-from-the-gospel-of-matthew-3/>

Christ is Born! Glorify Him

There are traditionally two Divine Liturgies celebrated in connection with the Feast of the Nativity. The first is the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil and the second includes the Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. (When the Nativity falls on a Sunday or Monday, the first Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve is celebrated in the morning and is of St. John Chrysostom. Great Vespers is celebrated in the evening of Christmas Eve, so there is no “Vespereal Liturgy” and Orthros and Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil is celebrated on the morning of December 25.) The Gospel at the Vespereal Liturgy (or at Vespers) is the Nativity narrative from St. Luke, which included the angels and the shepherds. The Gospel at the Liturgy on the Feast of the Nativity is from St. Matthew, and talks about the visit of the Magi.

As with the passage in Luke, there are definitely differences between how we portray the Magi and what the Bible really says about them. First of all, they are called “Magi” or “wise men” in the Bible. They were not kings, but more likely astrologers or scientists. Of course it sounds a lot easier to sing “We Three Kings” instead of “We Three Wise Men.” The popular Christmas carol perpetuates something that is not correct. Secondly, the Bible is not clear as to how many Magi there were. We think “three gifts, three people.” Again, that is not true. Third, we have this idea that the Magi all came from the same place. We don’t know for sure—we know that the Magi would have travelled with an entourage, so whether there was one entourage or several, we don’t know.

When the wise men came to Jerusalem, they went to King Herod and asked where the Christ was to be born. Herod was upset, worried that any “king” would be a threat to his kingship. Herod asked the wise men what time the star had appeared, making a plan to kill the new king once the wise men had found Him. We

know that later on in Matthew 2, Herod will order the slaughter of all male children, age two and under, “according to the time he had ascertained from the wise men.” (Matthew 2:16) This means that the journey of the wise men took two years and that they didn’t show up at the manger with the shepherds as is depicted in Nativity scenes and in Christmas programs. This is confirmed in Matthew 2:11, where we read that “going into the house” (rather than the cave where Jesus was born) “they saw the Child” (Jesus was at this point a toddler, not a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes).

The wise men brought three gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh. This is why we have a tradition of three kings, because of the three gifts. Gold is given for a king, representing new kingdom Jesus has come to begin on earth. Frankincense is for the divinity of Christ. And myrrh was given in anticipation of His crucifixion and burial. The passage ends with the wise men being told not to return to Herod and with them departing to their own country without stopping to see him.

The lessons of this passage are several. First, the wise men were seekers. They were looking for “the king of the Jews.” This is a lesson to us that we are to be seekers of God.

Second, their journey was long. So is ours. I’m sure they had many good days and many setbacks, but they continued their journey until they found the Christ. The lesson here is that we too have to be trusting and committed, as the wise men, to finishing our journey through life and to finding Christ first in this life and ultimately for everlasting life.

Third, the wise men used the star as their guide. They followed the star wherever it led them. They didn’t question it. The lesson for us is to ask ourselves “who is our guide?” Is it Christ? Is it the media? Is it peer pressure? Friends? Addictions? We have to find a godly guide. We have to trust first and foremost in God as our guide. We have to let the Holy Scriptures guide us. It is helpful to have a priest to guide us through confession. It is important that we guide one another by encouraging one another.

Fourth, like the wise men, do we rejoice in the journey or are we continually frustrated? The wise men rejoiced when they saw the star. Again, they

didn’t know where it was leading, but they were eager followers and rejoiced over what they were following. We should be doing the same, rejoicing in our journey, looking for the positive signs and people that encourage us and keep us going on the right path. Fifth, the wise men didn’t come empty-handed to meet Christ. They brought gifts that were appropriate for Him, and gifts that represented the best of what they had to offer. What gifts are we bringing to Christ? How much of ourselves are we offering to Him?

And finally, the wise men did not go back to Herod. They didn’t want to harm Christ in any way. We should also be working to advance the message of the Gospel and not hurt it in any way.

Today He who holds the whole world in His hand is born from a Virgin. He who in essence is impalpable is swaddled in rags as a mortal. God who established the heavens of old in the beginning is lying in a manger. He who rained down manna for the people in the wilderness is breastfed with milk. He who is the Bridegroom of the Church is summoning Magi. And He, that Son of the Virgin, is accepting their gifts. We adore your Nativity of Christ. Show us also Your divine Epiphany. (From the Royal Hours of the Nativity, Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

The story of the wise men isn’t just a cute part of the Nativity story. Rather, it represents our story—the long journey, the need to trust in God, to get good guidance, to rejoice throughout the journey, to offer appropriate gifts and to protect the message, not only preserving it but spreading it!

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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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ADDITIONAL BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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

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

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Calendar - Future Services are updated online at:

www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar

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

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“Code” for reading the bulletin:

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

* = at least the 3rd time in the bulletin

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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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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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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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Stewardship of Treasure Guide

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

Weekly Income	Beyond a Tithe	15%	12%	10%	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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ONLINE PRAYER CORNER

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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