

Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church



American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

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Pastor – Very Rev. R. Michael Zak, Cell phone:(412)-804-8865

Deacons: Fr. Deacons Artemius Stienstra & Dr. Marc Wisnosky

Sub- Deacon: Andrew Halapin, Jr.

Cantor/Choir Director: Danielle Bartko

Assistant Cantors: Donald Bodnar, Jr. & Michele Tomko

Parish Council President: Tom Pingor

Vol. 8; No. 9

Sunday, March 1, 2020

SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS AND CHEESE-FARE SUNDAY

Service of the 3rd Hour: 8:20 A.M.

Divine Liturgy: 9:00 A.M.

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4;

Resurrection Tone: 4

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

Tropar & Kondak: Blue Book: 90-92, 178-179 / Red Book: 105-107, 200-201

Altar Flowers' Sponsor: In memory of +**Edward Pingor**, offered by the Family.

Panachida Service conducted for the repose of the soul of God's departed servant, +**Ann Timko**, on her birthday remembrance (3/1/'20), offered by the Family.

Panachida Service conducted for the repose of the soul of God's departed servant, +**Edward Pingor**, on the 21st Anniversary of his falling asleep in the Lord, offered by the Family.

Sunday Pre-Lenten Breakfast Buffet following the Liturgy, with a free-will offering in effect 11 A.M. to 12 Noon; **12:05 P.M. Sunday Forgiveness Vespers** – Note; The Priest begins the service in Gold vestments and changes to Purple vestments during the Great Prokimen.

MONDAY, MARCH 2... Clean Monday: First Day of the Fast (Strict Fast: when no meat or dairy products are to be eaten); 7:00 P.M. Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete chanted.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4... 7:00 P.M. Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (3-hr. fast of food or drink before partaking of Holy Communion.

FRIDAY, March 6... 7:00 P.M. Akathist Hymn to the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sunday, March 8, 2020

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST: SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Matins: 8:00 A.M.

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great with the Procession of Icons and Reading the Passage from the Synodikon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council: 9:00 A.M.

Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40, 12:1-2; Resurrection Tone: 5 Gospel: John 1:43-51

Tropar & Kondak: Blue Book: 93-95, 179-180 / Red Book: 108-110, 201-203

Altar Candles' Sponsor: In memory of +**Mildred Sukal**, offered by Cheryl & Michele.

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY PAN-ORTHODOX VESPERS AT 4:30 P.M. at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 985 Providence Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA 15237. Celebrant and

Homilist: His Grace Bishop John of the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of Worcester and New England. Also featuring the Pan-Orthodox Choir under the direction of Fr. Tom Soroka.

Vespers will be followed by fellowship and Lenten Refreshments.

Matthew 6:14-21 –

6:14, 15 – Jesus insists on mutual forgiveness between people as a precondition of God's forgiveness. Those who do not **forgive** are not forgiven – period. This teaching is repeated in

the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:21-35), which concludes with the same teaching. To not forgive others is to willfully flee from the forgiveness of God for ourselves.

6:16-18 – Keeping a **sad countenance** to show off one’s fasting is mere external display. Jesus rejects such hypocrisy. For the one who fasts, the compassion of God outshines the physical discomfort. During the fasting seasons of the Church, the hymns call the faithful to **wash** and **anoint** their faces (thus, there is no “Ash Wednesday” in the Orthodox Church). Fasting is for spiritual growth and the glory of God, not to be seen by those around us.

Fasting also is not merely abstinence from food, but consists of self-denial in all areas of life in order to escape the control of the passions. On the eve of Great Lent, we sing, “Let us abstain from passions as we abstain from food.” St. John Chrysostom writes, “What good is it if we abstain from eating birds and fish, but bite and devour our brothers?”

6:19-21 – By attaching themselves to **treasures on earth**, people cut themselves off from heavenly treasures. They become slaves to earthly things rather than free in Christ. The heart of discipleship lies in (1) disentangling ourselves from the chains of earthly things, and (2) attaching ourselves to God, the true **treasure** (v. 21)

RECTORY OFFICE HOURS are 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Monday thru Friday.

EMERGENCY SICK CALLS can be made anytime. Please notify your Pastor when someone is taken to the hospital; Sacred Scriptures remind us to call the presbyter to anoint the sick.

MARRIAGES are celebrated on Saturdays and Sundays. Consult the Pastor at least 6 months in advance and before wedding reception plans have been made. Marriages cannot be celebrated during Lent or Advent, or on Fridays.

BAPTISMS are scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays at 11 A.M. Two God-parents are required; at least one of whom must be an Orthodox Christian by Faith, and the other a practicing Christian. An infant’s first or middle name must be a saint’s name.

CHURCH FUNERALS are provided for parishioners who are current in their spiritual and financial obligations to the Parish. Otherwise, burial is from the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

FOLLOW OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE! Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org> Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews> You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

HOMILY ON CHESSEFARE SUNDAY

Today is called “Forgiveness Sunday.” It received this name from the pious Orthodox Christian custom at Vespers of asking each other’s forgiveness for discourtesy and disrespect. We do so, since in the forthcoming fast we will approach the sacrament of Penance and ask the Lord to forgive our sins, which forgiveness will be granted us only if we ourselves forgive each other. “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. 6:14, 15).

Yet it is said to be extremely difficult to forgive discourtesy and to forget disrespect. Perhaps our selfish nature finds it truly difficult to forgive disrespect, even though in the words of the Holy Fathers it is easier to forgive them than to seek revenge. Yet everything in us that is good is not accomplished easily, but with difficulty, compulsion and effort. “The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matt. 11:12) For this reason we should not be discouraged at the difficulty of this pious act, but should rather seek the means to its fulfillment. The source of forgiving our neighbors, of not judging them, is included in seeing (acknowledging) our sins. “Imagine,” says a great pastor, who knows the heart of man, Father John of Kronstadt, “picture the multitude of your sins and imagine how tolerant of them is the Master of your life, while you are unwilling to forgive your neighbor even the smallest offense. Moan and bewail your foolishness, and that obstruction within you will vanish like smoke, you will think more clearly, your heart will grow calm, and through this you will learn goodness, as if not yourself had heard the reproaches and indignities, but some other person entirely, or a shadow of yourself,” He who admits his sinfulness, who through experience knows the weakness of human nature and its inclination toward evil, will forgive his neighbor the more swiftly, dismissing transgressions and refraining from a haughty judgment of others’ sins. Let us remember that even the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman caught in adultery to Christ were forced to depart, when their conscience spoke out, accusing them of their own sins. (John 8:9).

Unfortunately, brethren, we do not like to acknowledge our transgressions. It would seem natural and easy for a person to know his own self, his own soul, and his shortcomings. This, however, is actually not so. We are ready to attend to anything but a deeper understanding of ourselves, an investigation of our sins. We examine various things with curiosity, we attentively study friends and strangers, but when faced with solitude, we immediately become bored and attempt to seek amusement. For example, do we spend much time examining our own conscience even before confession? Perhaps a few minutes, and once a year at that. Casting a cursory glance at our soul, correcting some of its more glaring faults, we immediately cover it over with the veil of oblivion until next year, until our next uncomfortable exercise in boredom.

Yet we love to observe the sins of others. Not considering the beam in our own eye, we take notice of the mote in our brother’s eye. (Matt. 7:3). Speaking idly to our neighbor’s detriment, mocking and criticizing him are not often considered sins but rather an innocent and amusing pastime. As if our sins

were so few! As if we had been appointed to judge others! "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" ? God! (James 4:12)

The pious ascetics provide a good examine of this. They turned their minds to themselves, meditated on their own sins and avoided judging their neighbors at all costs. One pious starets, noticing that his brother had committed a sin, sighed and said, "Woe is me! As he sinned today, so will I tomorrow." And the following story about another ascetic, Abba Moisei. A monk committed a sin. The brethren, who had assembled to decide his case, sent for Abba Moisei, but the humble starets refused to attend the council. When the rector sent for him a second time, he appeared, but in quite a striking manner. He had taken an old blanket, filled it with sand and was carrying it on his back. "What does this mean?" asked the monks, catching the sight of him. "See how many sins I bear behind me?" answered Moisei, pointing to the heap of sand. "I don't see them, yet I have come to pass judgment upon another." So therefore, brethren, following the example of the asetics, upon observing others' sins, we should consider our own sins, regard our own transgressions and not judge our brother. And should we hold anything against him, let us pardon and forgive him that our merciful Lord may forgive us also.

MAY THE LORD GOD GRANT TO OUR NEWLY-ELECTED CHURCH OFFICERS THE DESIRE TO "BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST" IN THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PARISH OF ST. NICHOLAS OF HOMESTEAD, PA! Bless and guide their works in the Lord's holy Church. Prosper their undertakings, grant them perseverance in their labors, and stimulate others by their example to like zeal in Christ's service. And, grant to them, O God, many years of good health, peace and happiness!

MEMBERS OF ST. NICHOLAS: JOIN OUR CHURCH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DEPOSITING YOUR TREASURES IN THE COIN BOXES TO BENEFIT THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER!

The self-denial banks are available for adult parishioners in the vestibule of the church and downstairs in the auditorium. The icon on the front of the O.C.M.C. Coin Box reminds us of Christ's command to make disciples of all nations. The sacrificial money that you graciously collect will be used to help Orthodox Christians who serve as missionaries, volunteer for Mission Teams and support the mission of the Church to take the Gospel to people around the world. Please return the self-denial banks to the church office in the parish hall on Palm Sunday, April 12, 2020!

SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING CLEANING! The church board is looking for volunteers to do a spring cleaning of the Sunday School Building. We intend to clean classrooms on the first floor, hallways, and restrooms; not the entire building. Are you willing and able to set aside a few hours on Saturday, March 14 at 11:00 A.M. to come down to the church and help clean for our children? If so, please sign the volunteer sheet in the church hall. Thank you... with regards, Tom Pingor, Church President.

YOUNG ADULT RETREAT AT CAMP NAZARETH ON MARCH 13-15, 2020 NEAR MERCER, PA WITH THE REGISTRATION FEE OF: \$75 FOR THE WEEKEND! Theme: Engaging the non-religious with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Have you ever felt that you'd love to share your Orthodox Christian faith with friends and family; classmates and colleagues; neighbors and the non-religious, but just don't want to come across as pushy, judgmental or...weird? If so, this retreat is for you! Join a group of fellow Orthodox Christians as we reflect on strategies for "serving Christ, His Church, and the world" by engaging people who are struggling with questions of faith, particularly those who are atheists, agnostics, doubters, inquirers, lapsed, "spiritual but not religious," or unchurched. We will reflect critically on scripture, patristic and contemporary apologetics and themes of spirituality, conversion, and apologetics. Participants will learn & practice strategies and principals for ministering to those who reject or struggle with Christian faith.

CENTRAL REGION DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREAT – SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2020 FROM 9:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. AT ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH, 903 ANN STREET, HOMESTEAD, PA 15120!

SCHEDULE: 9:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy – All Souls Saturday; 11:00 A.M. Coffee Social; 12:00 noon – First Session of Metropolitan Gregory's Lenten Address; 1:30 P.M. Lunch; 2:30 P.M. Second Session of the Retreat Master, His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory; 4:00 P.M. Vespers. (Includes Continental Breakfast and Light Lunch). Cost: (Free-will Offering). Registration Deadline: March 21, 2020. Sponsored by the National A.C.R.Y. Our beloved Hierarchy, Metropolitan Gregory is pleased that his schedule will allow him to participate in the Central Regional Retreat, and he looks forward to this opportunity to spend quality time with the clergy and faithful of the Diocese.

MARK ALSO ON YOUR CALENDAR, THE 70TH ANNUAL ACRY "COMMUNION BREAKFAST" ON SUNDAY, MARCH 29TH, FOLLOWING THE DIVINE LITURGY. Invite your relatives and friends to worship in the Orthodox church on a Sunday during the Great & Holy Fast and partake of an appetizing repast in the hall with faithful members of the Orthodox Christian parish.

EMAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED! We are looking to become more connected as a parish by sending out important announcements, updates, death and sickness notices, and other pertinent information via email. Our high school Sunday School class has volunteered to collect these email addresses. If you have not already provided your email address, we invite you to do so. Email addresses can be submitted by writing it on the sheet in the vestibule, giving it to any high school Sunday School student, or by emailing Bob Bartko at RABartko@gmail.com. Thank you for your participation!

PARTAKE OF THE PRE-LENTEN BRUNCH TODAY IN THE AUDITORIUM ON THIS "FORGIVENESS SUNDAY" BEFORE THE VESPERS SERVICE AT 12:05 P.M.! An appetizing repast has been prepared and hosted by the Men's Club for all of our worshipers on this first Sunday in March, as we begin the holy and sacred season of the Great Fast. The Lenten meal will permit you to feed your body, before you replenish your soul for the second prayerful service, known as Forgiveness Sunday Vespers.

