



# Welcome!

Whether you are searching for a new church home or just visiting, we are glad you're with us today. If you have a prayer request, are looking for more information about the Orthodox Faith, would like to join our parish, or would like to speak with Fr Thomas, we invite you to fill out a visitor's card and drop it in the offering basket as your offering today. We want to get to know you! God bless you!

## Schedule This Week

### Sunday, February 25

10:00 am Divine Liturgy/Church School

### Tuesday, February 27

9:00 am Daily Matins

9:30 am-12:00 pm Office Hours

### Wednesday, February 28

6:30 pm Daily Vespers

7:00 pm Bible Study

### Thursday, February 29

9:00 am Daily Matins

9:30 am-12:00 pm Office Hours

### Saturday, March 2

11:30 am – 2:00 pm Pan-Orthodox Choir Rh.

3:30 pm Edith Humphrey Book Launch

4:30 pm Confession

5:00 pm Parish Vigil

### Sunday, March 3

10:00 am Divine Liturgy/Church School

5:30 pm Pan-Orthodox Choir Concert/Mt Lebanon

**To our Visitors: Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting. Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.**

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Rector

Deacon Luke Loboda, Attached

Deacon John Skowron, Attached

Rdr James Wargo and Danielle Bartko, Choir Dirs

## Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org

February 25, 2024

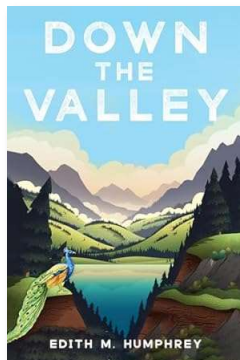
## Announcements

➤ We are pleased to announce that an anonymous donor has pledged \$25,000 as a matching donation challenge to kick off the dome restoration fund. This particular matching challenge will end on Pascha.

We prayerfully ask that you consider giving a generous donation to help meet this matching challenge by Pascha (May 5, 2024).

While we do not have the exact cost for the front three domes, our estimate is \$350,000-400,000. Our goal is to raise at least \$150,000 this year.

➤ Join us this Saturday, March 2 at 3:30 pm for the book launch of Dr Edith Humphrey's latest pre-teen/teen book, "Down the Valley." Come, learn about the book, enjoy chocolate fondu, and purchase books for family and friends at a discounted price! We start upstairs in the church followed by a reception downstairs. All are welcome and encouraged to attend! Invite a friend!



➤ The Regional Synaxes are starting up again for 2024! Please see your email for the locations and details. The South and East met Friday February 23rd. Central will meet on Monday February 26th. These gatherings are a great way to meet with parishioners in your area, and you can also bring a guest! If you have any questions, including about which region you are in, see Deacon Luke.

## Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** Known to be hospitalized (none); Home: John Mahalchak (son). William Warnak, Nancy Shaytar, Donya Yewisiak. Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home: Eleanor Kovacs, Natalie Popovich, Michael Soroka.

➤ **Vigil Lights** From **Mat. Nancy K. Mell & Gregory Mell** for the departed servants, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family. From **Doris Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family and Nancy Shaytar. From **Charles A. Wasilko** for the health of sisters, Doris & Marsha, and Nancy Shaytar. From **Marsha Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family. From **Richard & Sonia Blaha** for departed family and the newly departed; for the health of family, friends, siblings, and serving soldiers; for special intention, peace, anniversaries, and birthdays. From **John & Olga** for the departed servant, Ann Marie Kowalcheck; for the health of Galina Vilkova and Elizabeth (Ella) Kowalcheck on her birthday. From **Donya Yewisiak** for the health of Reader Michael Soroka on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday-Many Years! From **John Mahalchak family** for the health of John, Cheryl, Daniel, Mary, Gregory, Cindy, Kayla Elizabeth (child to be born), and Sarah (child to be born). From **Lindy Hamilton** for the health of the Hamilton & Scott families. From **Tatyana Sechler** for the departed servants, Roman, Nino, Sergei, Polina, Slava, Bruce, Galina, Luba, Daina, Marina, and Valentina; for the health of Tatyana, Tomas, Veronika, Kristofer, Daniel, Irina, and Tatiana. From **Daniel Michael Glozzer Turk** for the departed servant, Jacki Turk (salvation) and Edward Turk (salvation/miracle). From **Edith Humphrey** for the departed servant, Andrew.

## Thank you

➤ to our **February donors:** Kristie and Christoph Mertz (Altar Candles \$25) for the health of daughter, Katarina, on her birthday.

**St Nicholas Church will strive to glorify God through Orthodox Christian worship, sincere love and care for one another, and service to those in need around us.**

## This Week in Church School

**Today's lesson:** Baptism

### Questions to ask/review:

- What is the scriptural basis for the sacrament of Baptism?
- What feast remembers the baptism of Jesus?
- Why do we baptize infants? What is the role of Godparents (sponsors)?
- What is the order of the service? What is the meaning of each action?
- What is the purpose of the exorcism prayers?
- Why must we be put into the water 3 times?
- What does the baptized wear white?
- What song do we sing after they are baptized?
- Is baptism a "free pass" to salvation? Why not?

### Suggested Activities at home:

- Role play a baptism with a baby doll. Review and discuss the significance of each part of the service.
- Look at pictures from the baptisms of others in the family.
- Contact your Godparents this week and spend time together to keep your relationship strong.

**Prayer:** Lord, may you keep me renewed with your light, as the day of my baptism.



### Looking ahead:

- Sunday March 10** – Meatfare Sunday
- Sunday, March 17** – Cheesefare Sunday
- Monday, March 18** – Great Lent Begins
- Sunday, March 31* – Western Easter
- Sunday, May 5** – Holy Pascha

# Hymns and Readings for Sunday, February 25

## **Tone 5 Troparion** (Resurrection)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead// by His glorious Resurrection.

## **Tone 4 Troparion** (St Nicholas)

You appeared to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility, and a teacher of abstinence. Because of your lowliness heaven was opened to you! Because of your poverty riches were granted to you! O holy Bishop Nicholas, pray to Christ our God to save our souls.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

## **Tone 3 Kontakion** (St Nicholas)

Thou didst appear as a priest in Myra, O Saint Nicholas Fulfilling the gospel of Christ, O ven'rable one. Thou didst lay down thy life for thy people, and didst rescue the innocent from death, Therefore thou hast been blest as a great initiate of the grace of God.

*Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

## **Tone 4 Kontakion** (from the Lenten Triodion)

Let us flee from the pride of the Pharisee! Let us learn humility from the Publican's tears! Let us cry to our Savior: "Have mercy on us,// O only merciful One!"

## **Tone 5 Prokeimenon** (Resurrection)

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever.

## **Epistle of the Sunday** (2 Timothy 3:10-15)

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

## **Epistle of the Sunday** (Luke 18:10-14)

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

## **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (Ps. 148:1) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

# Piety and Good Works

Pharisaic righteousness is always outside the atmosphere of divine grace, because it is a purely pietistic state. Here we must distinguish between piety and *pietism*, because the case of the Pharisee of the parable and all the Pharisees through the ages reminds us of the *pietist*.

First of all, it must be emphasized that **piety is not an external presentation, but our union with Christ** and through it with the entire All-Holy Trinity. The Apostle Paul identifies the mystery of piety with the incarnation of Christ. "And without controversy great is the mystery of piety: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory"(1 Tim. 3:16).

Therefore **piety is not a human manifestation and energy but the energy of the Triune God**. From this we can begin to say that the pietistic person has some superficial virtues and does some external works "in the sight of people". Their virtues are not the fruit of a life in Christ, they are not done in a climate of repentance, but are human works done in an effort to be projected. On the contrary, the works and virtues of the pious are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the result of their union with Christ. That is, virtues have a deep theological meaning. It is not a natural way of life, or a habit, but gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, given to man who by the working of God's commandments submits the body to the soul and the soul to God. Thus to the pietist all actions are human, they are acts of "autonomous deontological ethics", while to the pious all actions are divine-human.

After this distinction, it is understood **that these works themselves do not justify man**, because "good deeds" can be done by all heretics and all unredeemed human systems, but without ensuring salvation. Those **good deeds that are not done in the climate of repentance, but in the spirit of self-justification, separate man more from God**. Saint Gregory Palamas teaches that "if God is not active within us then everything from us is a sin."

One can do almsgiving, practice temperance, etc. but because he does not have the spirit of humility and is not sacramentally connected with the Church, he is separated from God and therefore his whole life (even if he is temperate) is sinful.

Therefore, good works in themselves neither justify nor condemn man, but justification and condemnation are regulated by his relationship with the God-man Christ. As an example we have the two thieves at Golgotha. One was saved not for his good works, since he was a criminal, but because he confessed Christ. And the other was condemned not for his crimes, since he was not worse than the other, but because he cursed Christ. So our salvation is regulated by our relationship with Christ and His holy Church, His Body.

**It should be noted that those who unite with Christ and confess Him, do works**, but these are fruits of the Holy Spirit, for which they do not feel the need, like the Pharisee, to boast. In this way they show that they live the spirit of salvation and are holy. For holiness is not a moral concept, but an ontological, existential one, that is, it is participation in the experience of repentance, in the search and union with the Grace of Christ.

The true Christian goes beyond Pharisaic righteousness, justification of works and self-justification and, like the Publican, seek the mercy of God. They are the ones who are distinguished for the great virtue of self-reproach or, as Saint Basil says, "speaking first" (we are to speak the first word against ourselves) is an essential element of Orthodox morality. Because it is always connected with the humility of the soul, that is why he who has this virtue shows the existence of divine Grace. Self-reproach is the "invisible preoccupation", according to the Holy Fathers. It leaves no room for stress and all the psychological complexes that today's psychology is talking about, which is, after all, a creation of the climate of self-justification and the Pharisaic righteousness. May we live the spirit of repentance, so that we may enjoy the Resurrection of Christ. (*Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, Greece*)



# Orthodox Hymns of Lent and Pascha

**Sunday, March 3, 2024 5:30 pm**

St Paul's Episcopal Church  
1066 Washington Road  
Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228

performed by  
**The Pan-Orthodox Choir  
of Pittsburgh**

*Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh & Western Pennsylvania*

# WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED FROM THE CHURCH?

*- How to Lead Effective Christian Ministry -*

with **Steven Christoforou**

*Director of Operations & Community  
Engagement for FOCUS North America*



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## RETREAT FOR LAITY

*Saturday, March 9*

*\$20 registration at the door*

Memorial Liturgy at 9am • Continental Breakfast, following  
Session 1 at 11am • Lunch at 12pm • Session 2 at 1:15pm

## ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY CATHEDRAL

*8290 Thompson Run Rd, Allison Park, PA 15101*

*To register contact - Fr. David Vernak*

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