



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!

This Week

Tuesday, January 21

9:00 am Matins (Morning Service)

9:30 am-12:00 pm Office Hours/Church Open

Wednesday, January 22

6:30 pm Vespers

7:00 pm Bible Study (Romans 3)

Thursday, January 23

NO MATINS OR OFFICE HOURS

Saturday, January 25

4:30 pm Confessions

5:00 pm Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

Sunday, January 26

10:00 am Divine Liturgy

After Services Church School

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*

Mat. Janet Mihalick, *Choir Director*

31st Sunday after Pentecost

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org January 19, 2020

Announcements

➤ **"St. Nicholas Community Dinner: All are Welcome"**- Please join us in supporting this monthly hot meal ministry to our surrounding community. The meals will be served on the **last Saturday of each month from 4-5 pm in the church basement**. Help is needed to prepare & serve the food, set-up & clean-up, and to greet our guests. There is a sign-up sheet in the church basement to volunteer to help with these meals. Please contact Mat. Ashley (Ashley.loboda@gmail.com, #412-715-2163) or Sasha Gajewski (alexandra.mihalick@gmail.com) with any questions.

➤ **Notice: Annual Parish Meeting Date Change:** The Parish Council, with Fr Thomas's agreement, has moved to **change the date of the parish's Annual Meeting to Sunday, February 16** after the Divine Liturgy (for this year only). This change in date is in accordance with our parish By Laws, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph a. Please see John Kowalcheck or Fr Thomas with any questions.

➤ **Our January hoagie sale** is being held on Wednesday, Jan 29. Italian Hoagies and wraps are \$6.50 each and the Turkey hoagies and wraps are \$7.00 each. Orders can be placed by calling 412-974-9912, faxing 724-926-4052 or emailing rjmbmsam1@verizion.net. Orders are due on Sunday evening, Jan 26. Orders can be picked up between noon and 1 pm Jan 30 at the church hall on Wednesday, Jan 29.

Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized:* (none) *Home:* Georgiann Robes, Nancy Pravlochak, Paul Yewisiak. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Garnette Kerchum, Eleanor Kovacs, Olga Tryszyn, Mary Zapp.

➤ **From Mat. Nancy K. Mell and Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family and Michelle Bittner. **From Doris Wasilko** for the departed servants, (father) Charles, (Grandmother) Susan Wasilko and (brother) Raymond. **From Marsha Wasilko** for the departed servants, (parents) Charles & Mary and (grandmother) Katherine Dyczko (1/15/80). **From Charles A. Wasilko** for the departed servants, (father) Charles and (Baba) Susan Wasilko; for the health of (sisters) Doris & Marsha. **From Lindy Hamilton** for the health of Elaine Hamilton; special intentions. **From George & Nancy Shaytar** for the departed servant, (brother) John Shaytar; for the health of Stephen Shaytar and Michelle Bittner. **From John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilcova and for the health and salvation of our family. **From Janet Widel** for the health of Paul Yewisiak, Michelle Bittner and Lindy Hamilton.

2020 Church Offering Envelopes are now available at the Candle Desk. They are assigned by name and number. If you need assistance, please see Kristie Mertz.

➤ **Anyone who would like to have Fr Thomas come to bless their home** should contact him directly at frthomas@orthodoxpittsburgh.org. Everyone is encouraged to have their home blessed during this season of the year.

This Week in Church School

Today's lesson: The First Letter of Peter

Verse (younger classes): *I Peter 2- "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house...the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."*

Questions to ask/review:

- How is God like a rock?
- What is a cornerstone?
- Why does Peter call Christ "the chief cornerstone"?

Verse (older classes): *I Peter 1:25- "But the word of the Lord endures forever."*

Questions to ask/review:

- Who was Peter? What was his role in the early Church?
- What is Scripture? Where did the books of the Bible come from?
- How does the Word of the Lord "endure forever" in the Church? Give multiple examples.
- What misunderstanding do some other Christians have about the role of Scripture?
- What does Orthodoxy teach about Scripture and Tradition?

Suggested Activities at home:

- Using blocks or other materials, construct a building. Find a cornerstone and decorate it. Try to build on different surfaces. Discuss the meaning of building our lives on firm foundations.
- Play Jenga!
- Explore the different letters of the Scriptures that we have studied. Make a collage of your favorite verses.

Prayer: Lord, help me to build my life on You as my rock OR Lord, may Your Word endure with me throughout my life. Amen.

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.

Hymns and Readings for Today

Troparion of the Resurrection Tone 6

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; the guards became as dead men.

Mary stood by Thy grave, seeking Thy most pure body.

Thou didst capture hell not being tempted by it.

Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life.//

O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, glory to Thee.

Troparion of St Nicholas Tone 4

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.

Troparion of St Macarius Tone 1

Dweller of the desert and angel in the body

Thou wast shown to be a wonder-worker, our

God-bearing Father

Macarius.

Thou didst receive heavenly gifts through

fasting, vigil, and prayer;

healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to

thee by faith.

Glory to Him Who gave thee strength!

Glory to Him Who granted thee a ^crown!//

Glory to Him Who through thee grants healing to all!

Kontakion of the Resurrection Tone 6

When Christ God the Giver of Life,

raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His mighty hand,

He bestowed resurrection on the human race.//

He is the Savior of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of all.

Kontakion of St Macarius Tone 4

The Lord truly placed thee in the house of abstinence,

as a star enlightening the ends of the earth,//

Venerable Macarius, Father of Fathers.

Kontakion of the Theotokos Tone 8

Steadfast protectress of Christians,

constant advocate before the creator,

do not despise the cry of us sinners,

but in your goodness come speedily to help us

who call on you in faith.

Hasten to hear our intercessions and to

intercede for us, O Theotokos

for you always protect those who honor you.

Prokeimenon of the Sunday Tone 6

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance! (*Ps 27/28:9*)

Epistle of the Sunday (1 Tim 1:15-17)

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel of the Sunday (Luke 18:35-43)

Then it happened, as He was coming near

Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Then those who went

before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Communion Hymn (Titus 1:11)

Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the highest.

Blessed Xenia of St Petersburg

Saint Xenia lived during the eighteenth century, but little is known of her life or of her family. She passed most of her life in Petersburg during the reigns of the empresses Elizabeth and Catherine II.

Xenia Grigorievna Petrova was the wife of an army officer, Major Andrew Petrov. After the wedding, the couple lived in Saint Petersburg. Saint Xenia became a widow at the age of twenty-six when her husband suddenly died at a party. She grieved for the loss of her husband, and especially because he died without Confession or Holy Communion.

Once her earthly happiness ended, she did not look for it again. From that time forward, Xenia lost interest in the things of this world, and followed the difficult path of foolishness for the sake of Christ. The basis for this strange way of life is to be found in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:18-24, 1 Cor. 2:14, 1 Cor. 3:18-19). The Lord strengthened her and helped her to bear sorrow and misfortune patiently for the next forty-five years.

She started wearing her husband’s clothing, and insisted that she be addressed as “Andrew Feodorovich.” She told people that it was she, and not her husband, who had died. In a certain sense, this was perfectly true. She abandoned her former way of life and experienced a spiritual rebirth. When she gave away her house and possessions to the poor, her

relatives complained to the authorities. After speaking to Xenia, the officials were convinced that she was in her right mind and was entitled to dispose of her property as she saw fit. Soon she had nothing left for herself, so she wandered through the poor section of Petersburg with no place to lay her head. She refused all assistance from her relatives, happy to be free of worldly attachments.

When her late husband’s red and green uniform wore out, she clothed herself in rags of those colors. After a while, Xenia left Petersburg for eight years. It is believed that she visited holy Elders and ascetics throughout Russia seeking instruction in the spiritual life. She may have visited Saint Theodore of Sanaxar (February 19), who had been a military man himself. His life changed dramatically when a young officer died at a drinking party. Perhaps this officer was Saint Xenia’s husband. In any case, she knew Saint Theodore and profited from his instructions.

Saint Xenia eventually returned to the poor section of Petersburg, where she was mocked and insulted because of her strange behavior. When she did accept money from people it was only small amounts, which she used to help the poor. She spent her nights praying without sleep in a field outside the city. Prayer strengthened her, and in her heart’s conversation with the Lord she found the support she needed on her difficult path.

When a new church was being built in the Smolensk cemetery, Saint Xenia brought bricks to the site. She did this in secret, during the night, so that no one would know.

Soon her great virtue and spiritual gifts began to be noticed. She prophesied future events affecting the citizens of Petersburg, and even the royal family. Against her will, she became known as someone pleasing to God, and nearly everyone loved her. They said, “Xenia does not belong to this world, she belongs to God.” People regarded her visits to their homes or shops as a great blessing. Saint Xenia loved children, and mothers rejoiced when the childless widow would stand and pray over a baby’s crib, or kiss a child. They believed that the blessed one’s kiss would bring that child good fortune.

Saint Xenia lived about forty-five years after the death of her husband, and departed to the Lord at the age of seventy-one. The exact date and circumstances of her death are not known, but it probably took place at the end of the eighteenth century. She was buried in the Smolensk cemetery.

Yet we know that despite our efforts to do good, each of us falls at times and does evil. But with incredible compassion, our God who knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb still loves and respects us. He still loves each and every human being, despite our faults and mistakes, even those who have made terrible mistakes and have worked evil.

Thus, if we recognize that our purpose in this life is to become images of God, we must also forgive, help, pray for, and love all those who have committed wrong. In imitation of our loving God, whose mercy is immeasurable, we too must love those who have been involved in the evil of abortion, showing mercy and compassion to the poor, desperate, and confused parents who have committed abortions, and praying fervently for the repentance of abortion doctors and advocates everywhere. We must love them and forgive them their sins, knowing that God loves all of humanity and is willing to forgive all sins.

At the same time, we cannot allow any excuse for abortion. We firmly believe that a new person comes into being in the moment of conception, and because of this, we must ever strive to prevent abortions from happening, making sure our local communities know of the many Christian-supported pregnancy crisis services available to unprepared and confused young parents. In turn, our churches must ever be willing to love and help such parents and their unborn children.

Thus, this year, as we mark the sorrowful 47th anniversary of the legalization of abortion, we remember to hate the sin of abortion, and to make every effort we can to stop it from happening, while loving the misguided and confused ones who have been involved in abortions, knowing that God is willing to forgive all transgressions. In this way, we fulfill the purpose that God has given us in this life to become His images and presence in the world, while helping others – unborn and born alike – to have that same opportunity to come to “the knowledge of the truth” and fulfill their own lives’ God-intended purposes. For this “truth,” as we all should be reminded of again and again, is that:

God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. *For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.* - John 3:16-17

With love in Christ,



+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

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Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate



**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon
Sanctity of Life Sunday
Sunday, January 19, 2020**

To the honorable Clergy, venerable Monastics, and pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

From ancient times, all who have believed in the One God have believed that He takes special care in the formation of each human being. As God Himself expressed to Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (Jeremiah 1:5).

In the moment of conception in the mother's womb, a human being comes into existence. Yet even before being conceived and formed, this human being is known by God. God exists outside of time, and already knows and loves each one of us personally, knowing what we will do and who we will become both in this life and in eternity. As Solomon proclaims, “God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. *For he created all things that they might exist*” (Wisdom of Solomon 1.13-14). God wants us to be alive, and certainly, this is why we must speak against abortion and its legalization in our country: it is in opposition to God's loving plan to bring a human being into the world to live.

For just as He consecrated Jeremiah a prophet so that he might speak God's word, God brings each human being into the world with a unique purpose of speaking a unique word to the world, to reveal something to the world that will bring it closer to Him. Our lives are intended to be a period of sanctification, each one of us helping in the salvation and sanctification of our neighbor, and in this way being sanctified ourselves. Whatever occupations we have, together with the universal human callings to be loving children, siblings, parents or friends, can thus be holy and life-giving. For the purpose of all of our lives' activities is ultimately to become sanctified images of God by imitating God in caring for others. Because of this, we must give every human being the opportunity to live their life and work toward sanctification, just as we have been given that opportunity.

And what does this work of sanctification look like? Keeping in mind that David instructs us to “turn away from evil, and do good” (Psalm 33:15), we must begin to sanctify ourselves and the world by preaching the truth about evil, just as Jeremiah did. Above all, we reject Cain's first sin of murder, in all of its loathsome forms: murder against the unborn, murder through violence, murder by starvation or deprivation, and murder of the ill and elderly. We also reject greed, lust, and selfishness, and we reject harming others, being dismissive of others, and hating others. We then “do good” by being imitators of God in caring for one another, by speaking the truth in love, and by emptying ourselves for the sake of others. Remembering that “this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life” (John 6:40), we couple our efforts of care for humanity with a call to the world to believe in the Son of God, Jesus the Savior of the human race, who was “given as a ransom for all,” because His Father “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:6, 4).

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