



# 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, February 11

9:00 am Matins (Morning Service)

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

## Wednesday, February 12

6:30 pm Daily Vespers

7:00 pm Bible Study

## Thursday, February 13

9:00 am Matins (Morning Service)

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

## Saturday, February 15

12:00 pm Pan-Orthodox Choir Rehearsal

4:30 pm Confessions

5:00 pm Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

## Sunday, February 16

9:15 am Adult Education

10:00 am Divine Liturgy / Church School after

**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*

## First Pre-Lenten Sunday: Publican and Pharisee

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA  
OrthodoxPittsburgh.org February 9, 2020

# Announcements

➤ **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.

➤ Today the **Orthodox Teen Fellowship** will be selling Valentine's Boxes today to raise money for a charitable endeavor. Please see one of our teens to help out!

➤ Join us on Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> for the **4<sup>th</sup> Annual St Nicholas Symposium** from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. This year's Topic is "Orthodox Perspectives on Prayer." We will have three presenters, including, **Mother Seraphima** of the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City will present on the Jesus Prayer, and our own **Jenifer Rune**, who will present on her embrace of Orthodox Christian Prayer and Meditation after being a teacher of Buddhist forms of meditation. Share this event with friends and family. You won't want to miss it!

**Join Fr Tom tonight at 8:00 pm on Orthodoxy Live with Fr Evan Armatas on Ancient Faith Radio.** Call in and ask any question about Orthodoxy! And don't forget to join Fr Tom every **Tuesday at 9:00 pm for Ancient Faith Today Live** on Ancient Faith Radio. Go to [ancientfaith.com/live](http://ancientfaith.com/live) and listen in!

# Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized:* (none)  
*Home:* Georgiann Robes, 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 health of Michelle Bittner and Janet Widel. **From Marsha Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family. **From Charles A. Wasilko** for the health of (sisters) Doris & Marsha and Michelle Bittner. **From Donya Yewisiak** for the health of Michelle Bittner and Georgiann Robes. **From Jenifer Rune** for special intention. **From John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilкова and for the health and salvation of our family. **From Lindy Hamilton** for the health of Michelle Bittner and Paul Yewisiak. **From George & Nancy Shaytar** for the health of Michelle Bittner. **From Mat. Joni Soroka** for the health of Melanie, Jacqueline and Natalie. **From Alexandria Tirpak** for the health of my family; safe travels for Mat. Martha; special intentions.



# Thank You

➤ to our February donors, **Bob and MaryBeth Madalinksy**, for donating all the categories (Bulletin \$60, Holy Bread \$50, Communion Wine \$40, Altar Candles \$25, Incense \$10) May God richly bless them!

**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:** Introduction to Sacraments

## Questions to ask/review:

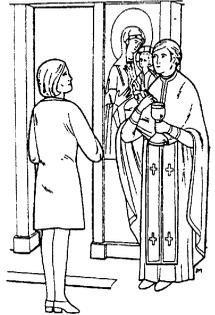
- What is another name for sacraments? (Holy Mysteries)
- Is our whole life in the Church a sacrament? How so?
- What are some sacraments that you have seen? Received?
- What do we receive through sacraments? (God's grace...direct communion with God)
- Name the seven sacraments that are generally recognized in the Church.

## Suggested Activities at home:

- Look at pictures of major milestones in the life of your family and discuss how the Church's sacraments were involved.

**Prayer:** O gracious Lord, thank you for sharing Yourself with us, through your Holy Church.

**The Church may be defined** as the new life in Christ. It is man's life lived by the Holy Spirit in union with God. All aspects of the new life of the Church participate in the mystery of salvation. In Christ and the Holy Spirit everything which is sinful and dead becomes holy and alive by the power of God the Father. And so in Christ and the Holy Spirit everything in the Church becomes a sacrament, an element of the mystery of the Kingdom of God as it is already being experienced in the life of this world.



# Hymns and Readings for Today

## **Tone 8 Troparion** *of the Resurrection*

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: “Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom!// Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind!”

## **Tone 1 Troparion** *of the Feast*

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace! From thee shone the Sun of Righteousness, ^Christ our God, enlightening those who sat in darkness. Rejoice and be glad, O righteous Elder, thou didst accept in thine arms the ^Redeemer of our souls, Who grants us the Resurrection!

## **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 1 Kontakion** *of the Feast*

By Thy Nativity Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb and didst bless Simeon's hands, ^O Christ God. Now Thou hast come and saved us through love. Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, O only Lover of Man!

## **Prokeimenon** *of the Sunday* (Psalm 33) **Tone 1**

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee!

## **Tone 3 Prokeimenon** *Song of the Theotokos*

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. (*Lk 1:46-47*)

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

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, 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.

## **Gospel** *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.”

## **Hymn to the Theotokos** *of the Feast*

O Virgin Theotokos, hope of all Christians! Protect, preserve, and save those who hope in you!

We faithful saw the figure in the shadow of the law and the scriptures: Every male child that opened the womb is holy to God. Therefore, we also magnify the first begotten Son of the unoriginate Father, The firstborn Son of the unwedded Mother!

## **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the highest. (*Ps 148:1*) I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. (*Ps 115/116:13*) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

# Don't Fast this Week!

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is read as we begin our journey through the Triodion to Pascha as a reminder that, although we may fast more than twice a week during these days, we should not be congratulating ourselves on having earned something. Rather, like the publican we should be ask for God's mercy since even in doing something good we have the tendency to pervert it as did the Pharisee.

Today, the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Church calls on us to start preparing for the Great Fast. And how does it tell us to ready ourselves? – by telling us not to fast!

Since the beginnings of the Church Christians have fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, remembering Judas' betrayal and Christ's passion. This coming week, however is one of the fast-free weeks of the Church year, when fasting is not prescribed. The other such weeks are part of a Great Feast – the Nativity, Pascha, and Pentecost. This is the only fast-free week not connected with a feast. What is the reason for not fasting this week?

The answer is found in the verse introducing the parable of the publican and the Pharisee read today: “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable” (Lk 18.9). Religious people who are “confident of their own righteousness” are complacent, self-satisfied with their level of observance.

That level may be minimal – attending church on Sundays or even the greatest observances – or it may be more. The fault is the same whatever the level of observance: the complacent person feels no need to change his or her outlook; and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The complacent person thinks that he has complied with all of the requirements of religion. What more can be asked of him?

By setting aside the regular fasts this week the Church is telling the complacent person that what we do is not as important as the spirit in which we do them. Do you take pride in your fasting? Then don't fast lest it leave you like the Pharisee.

The error of the Pharisee is to confuse the means with the end. Acts of virtue or piety are meant to dispose our hearts towards communion with God, not turn us in on ourselves. As the late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom wrote, “From the [Pharisee] learn his works, but by no means his pride; for the work by itself means nothing and does not save.” We may – and should – do good things as responses to God's love for us. We should not think that fasting, churchgoing or Bible reading automatically bring us to communion with God, merely because they are outwardly observed. Even when we practice religious observances from the best of motives, we can find them emptied of virtue through pride. In the words of St Gregory Palamas, “The unseen patron of evil ... can bring down the roof of good works after its construction, by means of pride and madness.