



Archpriest Thomas Soroka, *Rector*  
Deacon Luke Loboda, *Attached*  
Mat. Janet Mihalick, *Choir Director*

**Final Pre-Lenten Sunday: Forgiveness Sunday**

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org

March 1 2020

## 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

### Tonight

**7:00 pm** Forgiveness Vespers

### Monday, March 2

7:00 pm Canon of St Andrew of Crete

### Tuesday, March 3

**9:00 am** Lenten Matins (Morning Service)

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

**7:00 pm** Canon of St Andrew of Crete

### Wednesday, March 4

**6:00 pm** Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Lenten Fellowship Meal following Liturgy

### Thursday, March 5

**9:00 am** Lenten Matins (Morning Service)

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

**7:00 pm** Canon of St Andrew of Crete

### Friday, March 6

**7:00 pm** Akathist to Our Sweetest Lord Jesus

### Saturday, March 7

**12:00 pm** Pan-Orthodox Choir Rehearsal

**5:00 pm** Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

### Sunday, March 8

**10:00 am** Divine Liturgy / Church School after

**4:30 pm** Pan-Orthodox Vespers (Holy Trinity  
Greek Orthodox Church, North Hills)

## Announcements

➤ Tomorrow we enter into the season of Great Lent (Clean Monday). During Lent we are called to increase our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We are called to offer to God this tithe (tenth) of the year to once again make right our relationship with God. Remember that our fast (abstinence from meat and dairy, as well as reducing the amount of food and certain periods of not eating) is a communal effort and we should seek to enjoin it to the best of our ability, but not to the point of discouragement. **Begin your Lenten journey with your Church Family tonight with the Great Vespers of Forgiveness at 7:00 pm.** May God strengthen you!

➤ Today week we will have our annual Blini Luncheon sponsored by the St. Nicholas Sisterhood. Delicious blini will be served with all the fillings and toppings, along with pancakes for the children. \$8/ Adult, and \$3/ Children 6-12. **Children 5 and under are free. \$25 maximum per family.** Tickets will be sold at the door.

➤ The **complete Lenten schedule of services** is enclosed in today's bulletin. Please keep it in a prominent place in your home so that you can be encouraged to increase your worship of God during the Great Lenten season.

➤ **Church School Students** are asked to bring an icon from home for next week's procession commemorating the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

## Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized:* (none) *Home:* Michelle Bittner, Paul Yewisiak, Jan Widel. *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; Happy Birthday Chuck! Many Years! **From Marsha Wasilko** for the health of Michelle Bittner. **From Charles A. Wasilko** for the health of Michelle Bittner. **From George & Nancy Shaytar** for the health of Michelle Bittner. **From Nancy Shaytar** for the health of husband, George. **From John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilкова, Elizabeth Kowalcheck (on her birthday) and for the health and salvation of our family. **From Donya Yewisiak** for the health of George Shaytar. **From Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servants, Georgiann, (father) John and (brother) William (1 yr.)~ Memory Eternal; for the health & guidance for my family; special intentions. **From Bryan & Lily** for the health of Stella on her birthday. **From Lindy Hamilton** for the health of Michelle Bittner, Elaine Hamilton and Paul Yewisiak. **From John & Nancy Pravlochak** for the health of our family and Michelle Bittner.

## Thank You

➤ to our March donor, **Lindy Hamilton**, for donating all the categories (Bulletin \$60, Holy Bread \$50, Communion Wine \$40, Altar Candles \$25, Incense \$10) in loving memory of her parents and twin-brother, Russell.

## This Week in Church School

**Today's lesson:** Chrismation

### Questions to ask/review:

- Who is the Holy Spirit? How is He described?
- How is our Chrismation like our personal Pentecost?
- What happened at Pentecost?
- What is the fruit of the Spirit?
- What is the meaning of the cutting of hair?

### Suggested Activities at home:

- Make a seal using air-drying clay. Put a dove or flame on it and use it to seal letters. Discuss the meaning of your seal at Chrismation.

**Prayer:** Lord, fill me with the fire of your Holy Spirit, given to me at my chrismation.

➤ **Jan Widel** would like to thank everyone for their kind prayers and well wishes during her recent Surgery. They are deeply appreciated! **Directory note:** Jan Widel's cell phone number in the directory is outdated. If you would like to contact her during her convalescence, please use her home phone number (724-872-0436) or this cell phone number (412-608-7786).

**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.**

**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

March 1, 2020

## **Tone 4 Troparion** *of the Resurrection*

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of thy Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: “Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen,// granting the world great mercy!”

## **Tone 4 Troparion** *of 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.

## **Tone 3 Kontakion** *of St Nicholas*

You appeared as a priest in Myra, O Saint Nicholas, Fulfilling the gospel of Christ, O ven'rable one; You laid down your life for your people And rescued the innocent from death. Therefore you have been blest as a great initiate of the grace of God.

## **Tone 6 Kontakion** *of the Triodion*

O Master, Teacher of Wisdom, Bestower of virtue, Who teaches the thoughtless and protects the poor: Strengthen and enlighten my heart. O Word of the Father, Let me not restrain my mouth from crying to Thee: Have mercy on me, a transgressor, O Merciful Lord.

## **Tone 8 Prokeimenon** *(Ps 76)*

Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

## **Epistle** *of the Sunday (Rom 13:11-14:4)*

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

## **Gospel** *of the Sunday (Mt 6:14-21)*

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your

Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

## Fasting

There are two aspects to the exercise of fasting. **The first one is the discipline of the body.** Any time something is limited in its freedoms, it becomes subject to whatever force is limiting it. So, when I make my body do what I need instead of what it wants, I become its master. In other words, if I tell my feet to walk and where to go, or if I tell my hands to work and what to do, or if I tell my brain to solve a problem and which one—I gain control over this incredible gift of God called my body. On the other hand, if my body forces me to do what it wants, then it becomes my master.

Thus, the discipline of the body is exercised for the purpose of keeping you in charge of your body. In our fallen state, the natural order of our being has been perverted: the flesh with its passions and desires is the ruler of our being; our mind is a slave of the flesh and is preoccupied with figuring out how to fulfill the desires of the flesh; the soul feeds on the passions of the flesh, looking for pleasure and never finding satisfaction; and the spirit—the direction in which our entire being moves—is not that of God, but rather of corruption, waste, and destruction. In other words, the human spirit, the vector, is missing its true mark, which is God. In Christianity, this is known as “sin,” or ἁμαρτία in Greek, which translates as “missing the mark” or “mistake.”

Fasting, then, helps us restore divinely ordained order to our being: the spirit or vector must always point to God, the soul must find its fulfillment in communion with God, and the body, in all of its complexity, must serve the soul in its service to God.

**The second aspect of fasting that I would like to mention is the unity of the Church which is the Body of Christ.** Fasts and feasts of the Church create a certain kind of unity among its members. Think of your family: relatives have meals together, celebrate important events together, and stick together during sad times. This helps maintain cohesion and unity within the family, and if anyone decides to abstain from family life, then he or she is essentially cutting themselves off from the family. It is the same in the Church: we keep fasts together and we celebrate feasts together as a family of God. And if anyone decides not to fast together with the Church or not to join the Church family in festal celebrations, then they are separating themselves from our family, cutting themselves off from the Body. And if you do not want to join your brothers and sisters in this short temporal life, how do you plan to spend eternity with them? Our faith is not individualistic; it is not about one single person being saved in some solitary way. Salvation is possible only in the Body of Christ, and only as a member of that Body. A branch which is cut off from the vine no longer inherits life but is thrown into a burn pile.

Fasting is only one aspect of our spiritual practice, but it is an important one. It is one of the two wings which help us rise to heaven. A bird with only one wing cannot fly; and a Christian who cannot control his belly does not have spiritual freedom. Sow the good seeds of asceticism in your life, and you will reap freedom from slavery to your belly, freedom from the passions of the flesh, and a blessing of following in the footsteps of the greatest saints and our Lord Himself. (*Fr S Sveshnikov*)

though incorrectly—that that tree represents Adam’s intercourse with Eve. After transgressing, then, Adam clothed himself in mortal flesh and received the curse, and was cast out of Paradise, and the Cherubim were assigned to guard its gate with a fiery sword. Adam sat before Paradise and bewailed how many good things he had been deprived of because he had not fasted for a time, and the entire race that sprang from him was subject to the same misery, until He Who created us, taking pity on our nature which Satan had corrupted and being born of the Holy Virgin, by His excellent way of life showed us the true way, through virtues that are contrary to Satan, namely, fasting and humility, and, having artfully overcome the one who had deceived us, led us back to our ancient dignity.

Wishing to present all these things to us, therefore, the God-bearing Fathers, through the entire Triodion, set forth the events of the Old Testament. First of these is the creation, and Adam’s fall from Paradise, which we are now commemorating, and then they set forth the rest, through the books of Moses and the Prophets and the words of David, and then, in order, the events of the New Testament, that of Grace. First of these is the Annunciation, which took place by God’s ineffable OEconomy, and which almost always falls within the Holy Fast. They continue with Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday, and Holy and Great Week, when the Holy Gospels are read, and the Holy and saving Passion of Christ, which is the subject of exquisite hymns; and then, with the Resurrection and the other Feasts, until the descent of the Holy Spirit, concerning which the Book of Acts relates how the Gospel was proclaimed and how the Spirit gathered all the Saints together; for the Acts of the Apostles confirms the Resurrection through the miracles worked by the Apostles. Since we have suffered such misery on account of Adam’s failure to fast just once, his commemoration is assigned to the beginning of the Holy Fast, in order that, remembering how much evil was brought about by not fasting, we might be eager to welcome the Fast with exceeding joy and to keep it, so that we might thereby gain what Adam missed, that is, deification, by lamenting, fasting, and humbling

ourselves until God visits us; for without these things, it is not easy for us to gain what we lost.

It should be known that this Holy and Great Fast constitutes a tenth of the entire year; for since, out of slothfulness, we do not choose always to fast and to refrain from evildoing, the Apostles and the Divine Fathers handed down this Fast as a time of spiritual harvest, in order that, humbling ourselves now through contrition and fasting, we may blot out whatever wicked deeds we have committed during the course of the year, and we ought to keep this Fast more strictly than the others. But we should also keep the three other Fasts, those of the Apostles, the Theotokos, and the Nativity, which the Divine Fathers have bequeathed to us. We accord greater honor to this Fast on account of the Holy Passion, and because Christ fasted for forty days and, overcoming the Tempter, was glorified, and Moses, after fasting for forty days, received the Law, as did Elias and Daniel and all of the others who found favor with God. That fasting is a good practice is shown by the contrary example of Adam. For this reason, therefore, Adam’s banishment from Paradise was placed here by the Holy Fathers.

In Thine ineffable compassion, O Christ our God, vouchsafe us the delight of Paradise, and have mercy on us, O Thou Who alone lovest mankind. Amen.



## Expulsion from Paradise

Our Holy Fathers appointed this commemoration before the Holy Fast, as if to show in actual fact how beneficial the medicine of fasting is to human nature, and also how great is the shame of gluttony and disobedience. Passing over all the individual sins committed in the world on account of him, as being without number, the Fathers set forth how much evil Adam, the first-formed man, suffered from not fasting even for a brief time, and how much evil he thereby brought upon our race, clearly pointing out also that the virtue of fasting was the first commandment that God gave to mankind. Not keeping this commandment, but yielding to his belly, or rather, through Eve, to the deceitful serpent, Adam not only did not become God, but also incurred death and transmitted corruption to the whole human race.

Because of the self-indulgence of the first Adam, the Lord fasted for forty days and was obedient. For this reason, the present Holy Fast was designed by the Holy Apostles, in order that we might enjoy incorruption, through fasting, by keeping the commandment which he did not keep, thereby suffering the loss of incorruption. Furthermore, as we said previously, the aim of the Saints is to encompass in brief the works wrought by God from the beginning to the end. Since Adam’s transgression and his expulsion from the Paradise of delight were the cause of all our woes, for this reason they now set this transgression before us, so that, remembering it, we might avoid it and not in any way emulate his incontinence.

Adam was fashioned by the hand of God on the sixth day, being honored with His image through the Divine breath and at once receiving the commandment, concerning which fruits he should eat and which he should not, and he spent up to six days in Paradise; then, when he transgressed this commandment, he was driven out thence. Philo the Hebrew says that Adam spent a hundred years in Paradise; others say that he was there for seven days or seven years, because the number seven is accorded special honor. But that Adam stretched

out his hands and touched the fruit at the sixth hour is shown by Christ, the New Adam, Who stretched out His hands on the Cross at the sixth hour and on the sixth day, remedying Adam’s destructive action.

Adam was created in between corruption and incorruption in order that, in whichever direction he should incline by his choice, he might gain the object of his desire. Now, it was possible for God to make him sinless; but in order that he might achieve this by his own choice, God gave him a law that he could touch all of the plants except one. By this we may perhaps understand the knowledge of Divine power that derives from all created things, but in no way knowledge of God’s nature, as does Saint Gregory the Theologian, who reasons that the former are the Divine conceptions, while the latter is the vision of God. That is, God allowed Adam to meditate on all the other elements and the other qualities, to recall them to mind, and to glorify God thereby—for this is what constitutes delight—and perhaps also to meditate on his own nature, but in no way to inquire into God, Who He is by nature, where He is, and how He brought the universe into existence from non-being. But Adam, leaving all the rest aside, inquired rather into God and scrutinized precisely the Divine nature, though he was still imperfect and very simple, and an infant in such matters; he fell after Satan suggested to him, through Eve, fantasies of deification. The great and Divine Chrysostom says that that tree had a twofold power and that Paradise was on earth; he reasons that it was both noetic and sensible, just as Adam was, midway between corruption and incorruption, at the same time preserving the meaning of Scripture and not adhering to the letter.

Some say that that tree of disobedience was a fig-tree, and that, immediately becoming aware of their nakedness, Adam and Eve used its leaves to cover themselves. For this reason, Christ cursed the fig-tree as being the cause of their transgression. For the fig bears some resemblance to sin: first, it is sweet; secondly, its leaves feel rough; and thirdly, it is viscous on account of its juice. There are others who have understood—