



The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

Orthodox Church O.C.A.

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<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>

Very Rev. John Horosky - Priest
 John Conkey - Council President

March 2014

Glory Be to Jesus Christ

Service Schedule

March 2 Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday

Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Special collection for Seminarian
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy
 Council Meeting

March 5 Wednesday

Confession @ 5:00 PM
 St. Andrew's Canon @ 6:00 PM

March 9 Orthodoxy Sunday

Turn clocks ahead

Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy

March 15 Soul Saturday

Confession @ 9:00 AM
 Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM

March 16 Gregory Palamas Sunday

Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy

March 19 Wednesday

Confession @ 5:00 PM
 Presanctified Liturgy @ 6:00 PM

March 23 Cross Veneration Sunday

Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy

March 25 Tuesday Annunciation

Confession @ 5:00 PM
 Vesperal Liturgy @ 6:00 PM

March 30 St. John Climacus Sunday

Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Pot Luck following Liturgy

Reader's Schedule

Hours

3/2 John Conkey
 3/9 Tom Demchak
 3/16 Larry Ammerman
 3/23 Mark Ammerman
 3/30 Doug Donovan

Epistle

John Conkey
 Tom Demchak
 George Sura
 Mark Ammerman
 Doug Donovan

Feasts & Saints

3/2 Cheesefare/Expulsion From Paradise
 3/9 Sunday of Orthodoxy
 3/9 The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
 3/16 St. Gregory Palamas
 3/23 Veneration of the Cross
 3/25 Annunciation of the Theotokos
 3/30 St. John Climacus
 3/31 repose of St. Innocent



Remember in your prayers: Bishop MELCHISEDEK, Father John, Father Adam, Father Ted, Father Paul, Father Michael, Matushka Judy Horosky, Matushka Ksenia Batchko, Larry Ammerman, Mary Ann Ammerman, Karen Blackburn, Matthew Boroughf, Chris Conkey, Drew Conkey, John Conkey, James Crites, Helen Czar, Eugene Demchak, Joe Demchak, Mike Demchak, Steve Demchak, Kari Donovan, Matthew Donovan, Michael Evans, Bonnie Fetcenko, Randy Fetcenko, Rose Marie Fetcenko, Olga Finlayson, Kenneth Finlayson, Jack Foster, Mary Foster, Harry Horosky, Alexandra Mamrak, Evan Morgan, Richard Nakles, Harry Socie, Eleanor Sura, Andrew Tocimak, Irene Tocimak, Louise Tocimak, Walter Varagea, Delores Varagea, Patricia Wood

“O Master, the all-sustainer, and Holy King, Who punishes, but reduces not to death, Who strengthens the failing and raises the outcast, Who remedies the bodily sorrows of men, we pray unto Thee, O Our Lord, visit Thine infirm servants with Thy mercy; forgive them every transgression, voluntary and involuntary. Verily O Lord, send down from Heaven Thy healing power, touch the body, extinguish the fever, lessen the suffering and every infirmity of Thy servants, raise them decumbent, from sickness, and from the bed of evilness, make them whole and all-restored, return them to Thy Church well-pleasing and fulfilling Thy will. For it is of Thine own, to be merciful and to save us, O Lord, and unto Thee we send glory, to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Birthdays

Richard Nakles	03/03
Lilian Ammerman	03/04
Irene Pollock	03/06
Silvia Marko	03/10
Joe Demchak	03/16
Tom Demchak	03/23
Elizabeth Blake	03/24

Anniversaries

none

Congratulations to **Mary Ann Ammerman** and **George Sura** who received Special Recognition Certificates for their service to Saint John's. *God grant you many years!*

Thank you to **John Conkey** for helping to provide articles for the bulletin this month. *God grant you many years!*

Altoona-Johnstown Deanery Mission Services for 2014

March 9 (Vespers) - Christ the Savior Cathedral, 300 Garfield Street, Johnstown, PA 3:00 PM

March 16 (Vespers) - Nativity of the Virgin Mary, 50 Koleski Club Rd. Osceola Mills, PA 4:00 PM

March 23 (Vespers) - St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, 1600 Guyton Rd., Allison Park, PA 5:00 PM

March 30 (Vespers) – Chapel of the Holy Spirit, 350 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown, PA 4:00 PM

April 6 (Holy Union Services) – SS. Peter & Paul, R.D. 1 Urey, Urey Rd, Glen Campbell, PA 4:00 PM

From the Desk of Father John Horosky

We are coming to the time of Lent and the Lenten Fasting and more services, which the church recommends.

This year the Sunday of Meatfare is February 23, also called the Sunday of the Last Judgment. Next Sunday, is the Sunday of Forgiveness, which calls for Vespers of Forgiveness. We all know what the Church prescribes for Lenten Fast. HOWEVER, all those who are unable to fast are allowed to be more moderate in their fasting, those who are sick, have problems with eating before Liturgy and in general have trouble fasting. Starting on March 9, 2014 will begin the Lenten Mission Vespers and if you can attend please do so.

May your Lenten journey be a healthy and spiritual time.

Father John

A Message from your Parish Council President, John Conkey

This month and future bulletins will incorporate a message from the Council President, hopefully issues relevant to the parishioners and our parish.

Five Factors that Define a "Successful Parish"

A recent study sponsored by the OCA (Orthodox Church in America) and the GOA (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese) tried to look at data from successful parishes and determine why they were successful.

The main conclusion of the study was that successful parishes are those that "pursue stewardship as a way of life" and "have abundant programs for youth". The five factors that were distinct features of successful GOA and OCA parishes in America:

- * Openness to diversity in parishioners
- * Connectedness to the local community
- * Welcoming innovations in the parish
- * Encouraging critical thinking
- * Collective decision making in the parish.

I would encourage each parishioner to consider these five factors, and bring any suggestions to the collective decision making body (church council) so that we may try to incorporate them into our parish life.

Our Lenten Journey

As we approach the Great Lent to prepare us for Holy Pascha, let us see how we came to this point and where we will go from here. There are four Sundays leading up to Great Lent.

The First Sunday before Lent is **Zaccheus Sunday**. It demonstrates that man is filled with desires, which he must control. Zaccheus desires to see our Lord Jesus, and goes to great lengths to do so. *Do we also have that desire as we enter the Great Lent?*

The Second Sunday before Lent is the **Publican and the Pharisee**. The Publican humbles himself before God and this humility justifies him before our humble God. *Have we humbled ourselves before God on our way to Lent?*

The Third Sunday before Lent is the story of the **Prodigal Son**, who returns from exile from a far country to ask for repentance from his father. *Have we repentantly returned to our Father?*

The Fourth Sunday before Lent is **Meat-Fare Sunday** or the **Last Judgment Sunday**. We are called on to follow the "new commandment" and love one another, as we will be judged by the love we have given to each other at the Last Judgment. *Have we loved one another?*

The last Sunday before Lent, which begins on **Cheese-Fare Sunday**, which is also known as **Forgiveness Sunday**. We ask God's forgiveness for all our transgressions, and forgiveness from our fellow Church members we may have offended.

Each of the Sundays of Great Lent has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the **Feast of the Triumph** of Orthodoxy. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (*1 Jn 5:4*). Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, "created in the image and likeness of God" (*Gen 1:26*), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God's living image.

The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of **St Gregory Palamas**. It was St. Gregory (*d.1359*) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the **Veneration of the Cross**. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (*Mt 10:38*). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved (*1 Cor 1:24*).

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to **St John of the Ladder (Climacus)**, the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (*Mt 10: 12*). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, "not against flesh and blood, but against... the rulers of the present darkness... the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places..." (*Eph 6:12*). Saint John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (*Mt 24:13*).

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of **Saint Mary of Egypt**, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come "to call sinners to repentance" and to save them from their sins (*Lk 5:32*). In addition, Saint Mary tells us that it is never too late in life—or in Lent—to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.

Question: How can I better prepare for Lent this year?

Answer: You have no idea what God has in store for you this Lent (but God does, and he is looking forward to it!). On the other hand, you do know that God has chosen to work in our souls through the Liturgy, and that includes the liturgical seasons. So preparing for Lent means getting ready to hear and heed what God wants to say to you during those days. The Church gives us three general directives in this regard.

First, intensify our prayer life

Start thinking now about how you can do this. It's a good topic to talk about in spiritual direction. Do you need to increase your Eucharistic life, give more discipline to your personal prayer time, inculcate family prayer time, go on a retreat? God will put something on your heart. But be realistic. Don't let your eyes be bigger than your stomach (in the spiritual sense).

Second, embrace the Cross

Lent is a penitential season, a time when we remember how self-centered we have been and tend to be, and renew our commitment and efforts at repenting and growing in Christian love. This is the origin of the tradition of "giving something up for Lent." The idea is to make a sacrifice, denying our naturally self-indulgent tendencies in some way in order to unite ourselves more fully to Christ's redeeming sacrifice on Calvary. This is not merely a self-help kind of resolution. It is a self-offering to God: "Lord, many times I have chosen to do my own will instead of yours. By offering this sacrifice I want to learn to take up my cross, to say "yes" to you and your will, following in Jesus' footsteps." Whatever we give up (e.g. watching sports, eating desert) or take on as our Lenten sacrifice (again, be realistic), the key is to give it that truly Christ-centered meaning.

Third, the practice Christian charity

Lent is a time to prepare for the fruitful celebration of the Lord's Passion, Death, and Resurrection during Holy Week. That Paschal Mystery was God's unfathomable and amazing testimony of love for us sinners. There is no better way to get in tune with that self-forgetful and self-sacrificial love than by imitating it. During Lent we should make a special point of serving our neighbors – but here again, be realistic.

Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God

Something in the air of spring brings out new buds, new branches, new life. The word "Lent" has its etymological roots in an Old English word meaning "spring." Something in the air of Lent will bring out new buds, new branches, new life in our relationship with Christ; we just have to open up some windows.

The Hanging Vigil above the Royal Doors of the iconostasis is supported by Irene Pollock in loving memory of her sister and brother-in-law Margaret and Robert Stefanko.

The Vigils on the Tetrapod are supported by Irene Pollock in loving memory of her parents, sisters, brothers, husband, nephew and stepfather.

The votives in front of the iconostasis, on the candle stands and in front of the icons in the nave are supported by Andrew & Louise Tocimak in loving memory of George Tocimak.