



THE FORERUNNER

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

Orthodox Church o.c.a.

420 Laura Street

Philipsburg, PA 16866

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<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>

Very Rev. John Horosky - Priest

John Conkey - Council President

February 2015

Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

Service Schedule

February 1 *Publican & Pharisee*

General Confession @ 9:30 AM
Hours @ 9:45 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Coffee Hour following Liturgy

February 8 *Prodigal Son*

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

February 15 *Meatfare Sunday*

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

February 22 *Cheesefare Sunday/ Forgiveness Sunday*

Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Forgiveness Vespers (following Liturgy)
Pot Luck following Liturgy

Reader's Schedule

Hours

2/1 Tom Demchak
2/8 John Conkey
2/15 Doug Donovan
2/22 Jan Brennish

Epistle

Tom Demchak
John Conkey
Doug Donovan
George Sura

Feast & Saints

2/1 Publican & Pharisee Sunday
2/2 Meeting of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Temple
2/6 St. Christina
2/6 St. Dorothy
2/8 Prodigal Son Sunday
2/8 St. Theodore Tiron & 2/9 St. Theodore Stratelates
2/15 Meatfare Sunday (Last Judgment)
2/22 Cheesefare Sunday (Forgiveness)



Birthdays

Dorian Batchko 2/1
Mary Ann Conkey 2/2
George Sura 2/2
Emily Demchak 2/4
Julia Batchko 2/15

Anniversaries

(none)

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.

Remember in your prayers: Archbishop MELCHISEDEK, Father John, Father Adam, Father Ted, Father Paul, Father Michael, Matushka Judy Horosky, Matushka Ksenia Batchko, Larry Ammerman, Mary Ann Ammerman, Jen Ammerman and Victor, Karen Blackburn, Matthew Boroughf, Chris 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, Eugene Minarich, Evan Morgan, Richard Nakles, Gloria Rice, Mary Sura Saupp, Harry Socie, Alexandra Stine, Karen Stine, 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

From the Desk of Father John:

The Feast of the Meeting of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple occurs on February 2nd. At the end of the month on February 22nd we start Great Lent, when we will begin to prepare ourselves for the Resurrection of Our Lord. Lent is a time of fasting from certain foods but also a time for fasting from sin. We begin to question our how can we live without some of the foods that we enjoy and how we can keep from sinning.

Question: Why do we fast, and from what do we fast, before Pascha?

Answer: We fast before the Feast of Feasts, the Resurrection of Christ, to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Our Lord's eternal victory over sin, corruption, and death, and in anticipation of our own resurrection. Hence, Great Lent is a time of preparation, during which we focus on and anticipate the Resurrection of Our Savior by fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

When we fast, we "shift our focus " from ourselves to God and others, spending less time worrying about what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, and so on in order to use our time for increased prayer and caring for the poor. We learn through fasting that we indeed can gain control over those things that we too often allow to have control over us--and for many people, food is a controlling factor. We live in the only society in which an entire TV network is devoted to food. While fasting from food, however, we are also challenged to fast from sin, from gossip, from jealousy, from anger, and from those other things, which, while well within our control, we all too often allow to control us.

Furthermore, just as we would refrain from over eating before going to an expensive restaurant for dinner--if we "ruin our appetite" we will hardly enjoy our dinner--so too we fast before Holy Pascha in order to more fully feast and celebrate the Feast itself. During the Great Fast--and all lenten seasons--we are called upon to refrain from meat, dairy, fish, wine, and olive oil. At the same time, we are challenged, within this framework, to fast to the best of our ability, and to do so consistently. If we must modify the extent to which we fast within this framework, it is of course possible, but in every instance our fasting should be consistent and regular, for Christ does not see fasting as an option, but as a "must". In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Our Lord says, "*When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites,*" not "IF YOU FAST" or " IF YOU CHOOSE to fast, but WHEN you fast." Therefore, fast as you are able and with love for our Lord in anticipation of His Glorious Resurrection.

A PRAYER FOR LENT

The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian is traditionally said many times throughout each day during Great Lent, in addition to our daily prayers.

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faintheartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. (+)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to your servant. (+)

Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sin and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed from all ages to all ages. Amen. (+)

(The “(+)” indicates that those praying make a deep bow or prostration at this point.)

From the Desk of Your Council President:

The annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, ~~February 8~~ March 1, 2015, after Liturgy in the Parish Hall. This can be considered the ten-day written notice required by the Church By-Laws. All members in good standing are requested to attend and voice their input for the operation and maintenance of our Parish.

For the past several years, we have run a deficit in our annual budget. We cannot sustain this in the future or the Parish risks not being able to maintain its schedule of services, maintenance of real property, and utilities to keep the church running. Please insure you obtain a copy of the financial report and proposed budget for 2015 (located on the tetrapod), review it, and if you have any suggestions for balancing the budget, bring your suggestions to the meeting. The Council is proposing three fundraisers to help alleviate the deficit: The annual Chicken Barbecue, scheduled for May 16th, a pieroghi and nut roll sale in late March/early April for Lent, and a nut roll sale prior to Christmas. We will consider any other fundraising ideas, including an additional barbecue to defray our costs.

The last item for the Annual meeting is replacement of Church Council members. Any one interested in being on the Council, please let me know before the meeting.

Yours in Christ,
John

GREAT LENT

<http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-year/great-lent>

The season of **Great Lent** is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ, It is the living symbol of man's entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to "anoint our faces" and to "cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls." The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

Let us begin the lenten time with delight ... let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.

Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vesper Hymns).

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ's Resurrection and our own.

THE PRELENTEN WEEKS

<http://www.antiochian.org/fasting-great-lent>

Before Great Lent begins, four Sunday lessons prepare us for the Fast. Humility is the theme of the first Sunday, called the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. The Lord's parable in Luke 18:10-14 teaches that fasting with pride is rejected by God. For this reason, there is no fasting the week following this Sunday. This includes no fasting on Wednesday and Friday that week. (Wednesdays and Fridays are usually fast days throughout the year—Wednesday's Fast recalls the betrayal of Christ by Judas; Friday's Fast commemorates the Lord's Crucifixion.)

Repentance is the theme of the second Pre-Lenten Sunday, called the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Before we can return to God, we need to recognize that we are far from God because of sin. Like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), we are in a self-imposed exile. Will we come to our senses as did the Prodigal Son and return to our Father?

The next Sunday is called both Meatfare Sunday and the Sunday of the Last Judgment. The second name refers to the Gospel lesson (Matthew 25:31-46) read on this day. The Lord tells us we will be judged at the end according to the love we have shown for our brother. "I was hungry...thirsty...naked...a stranger...in prison...sick... What-ever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine you did for Me." Almsgiving goes hand in hand with fast-ing. This Sunday is called Meatfare because it is the last day meat, fish or poultry is eaten before Easter, for those keep-ing the Lenten Fast.

The last Pre-Lenten Sunday is called both Cheesefare Sunday and the Sunday of Forgiveness. This is the last day dairy products are eaten before the Fast. The Gospel lesson (Matthew 6:14-21) read on this day tells us that our fast must not be hypocritical or "for show." Our work and our appearance are to continue as usual and our extra efforts are to be

known only by God. The Gospel reading also reminds us that God the Father will forgive us in the same manner as we forgive our brother. With this promise of forgiveness, Great Lent begins on the next day, which is called Clean Monday. Clean Monday is a total fast day, except for a little water. No other beverages or food are taken.

LENTEN SUGGESTIONS

<http://xcthesavior.org/parishoners.html>

Zacchaeus strove to see Jesus Christ from a “unique vantage point”. If we approach our Lenten efforts in a similar manner it is possible that we too will see Christ as clearly as did Zacchaeus. If we see the time of Great Lent as an opportunity to offer ourselves to God, then perhaps we also will be invited into His presence. Below are some suggestions for Great Lent, that may help limit the distractions of life that keep us from seeing Christ clearly, while quieting our being during the time of Great Lent.

Participate in as many of the liturgical services as possible.

Look over the liturgical calendar and plan for the upcoming services.

Start your Lenten journey on the right foot by attending the Vespers of Forgiveness on the evening of Cheese-fare Sunday.

Come to the Canon of St Andrew during clean week. It is an amazing and beautiful service that makes repentance so clear to us and it is great exercise as well!

Although the Liturgy is not served during weekdays of Great Lent, the Presanctified Liturgy is available and offers us an opportunity to be strengthened by the Holy Eucharist through the week.

Do some studying of the liturgical services- Where does the service of Vespers come from? What are the different parts of the Divine Liturgy? What exactly are the “secret prayers” and why are they secret? When did the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts come into being? Take some time to do this and a whole new understanding of your faith and appreciation for the services will be opened to you.

Take the day off of work and keep your children home from school on Holy Friday. Come to the services and do your best to keep this day holy by dedicating the day to prayer and silence.

Make a good confession.

We have 40 days to focus on our repentance. Confess your sins and unburden your heart.

See a good article on preparing children for confession.

Strive to keep the fast as the church directs us to keep it.

Don't make concessions or bargains with yourself or with the Church on how you will keep it. That being said, talk with your spouse and children about your expectations and decide as a family what you will do and what your expectations are.

Talk with your kids about the fast. Educate them and let them participate in the fast as well.

Give to those in need.

Almsgiving, along with prayer and fasting make up the three-stranded cord that I refer to as the “Lenten rope”. These three combined strands, when practiced together, will give us a strong rope to hold onto during the time of the fast when things may get shaky.

I know of someone who fasted from eating lunch during Great Lent. The money that was saved by not going out for lunch each day was set aside. At the end of the fast, the money that was set aside each day was given to a family in need.

You can also give to the parish and direct that money be used toward our charitable offerings.

Get up early.

Do this as an offering to God by giving yourself time to pray and to listen for Him. Give yourself a few minutes to read the holy scriptures and contemplate the coming day before setting off to work and school.

Pick a spiritual book to read.

The parish library is a great resource and so is our bookstore. Read the lives of the saints, the Psalter (psalms), or a book on prayer. I have put together a list of suggested Lenten reading material at the end of this list.

More suggestions will be included in March's Bulletin.