



From The Ambvon

ST MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 8.

The Righteous Gideon. Ven. Alypius the Stylite of Adrianopolis (7th c.). Dedication of the Church of the Greatmartyr George at Kiev (1051-54). Repose of St. Innocent, first Bishop of Irkutsk (1731). Ven. James the Solitary of Syria (457).

Birthdays & Anniversaries for November

Birthdays: Emily Krenitsky (11/5); Beverly Elko (11/19)

Nameday: Michael Keklak (11/8); Michael Jadick (11/8); Fr Michael Shepherd (11/8); Philip Pecuch Jr. (11/14);

Anniversary: Philip Pecuch Jr. (11/7)

Baptism:

Travelers:

Prosphora Schedule: We need families to start baking prosphora at home. Please sign up. We are out. *The Church has a prosphora kit if you would like to borrow it.*

19Nov - Marie Pasternak

26Nov -

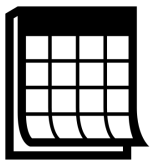
Counting: Thank you Tammy Wytovich for assisting in counting today's offerings. Please sign up and help our Treasurer count. As my Matushka Emilia is away we will now need two volunteers to assist in counting the offerings.

19Nov - Tammy Wytovich

26Nov -

Visitors: *PLEASE JOIN US FOR DOWNSTAIRS for an Agape Meal. Thank you to everyone who donated. Please donate what you would spend for a cup of coffee at the agape meal to replenish our supplies.*

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: *A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive themselves by prayer, fasting, and a recent (monthly) confession. If you have questions please ask Fr Michael! Visitors, if you did not introduce yourself to Fr Michael at Vespers, please refrain from Holy Communion.*



Service Schedule

SAT, Dec 2nd: @ 4:50 PM 9th Hour - Great Vespers. Confession following
SUN, Dec 3rd: Hours @ 9:10 AM Hours - Divine Liturgy 26th SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST — Tone 1. Prophet Zephaniah

TUES, Dec 5th: @ 4:50 PM 9th Hour - Great Vespers w/Litya
WED, Dec 6th: Hours @ 9:00 AM Hours - Divine Liturgy
St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

NATIVITY SCHEDULE

FRI, Dec 22nd: @ 9AM Nativity Royal Hours

SAT, Dec 23rd: @ 4:50 PM 9th Hour - Great Vespers. Confession following

SUN, Dec 24th: Hours @ 9:10 AM Hours - Divine Liturgy Eve of the Nativity of Christ
Compline and Matins w/Litya @ 5:00PM

MON, Dec 25th: Divine Liturgy @ 9:00 AM - Nativity of Christ



Announcements

Upcoming Parish & Diocesan Events

Silent Prayers and Confession: Every Wednesday 11:00AM - 1:30PM or you can make an appt for confession.

Catechumen/Inquirers/Continuing ED Class: Every Saturday 3:30pm-4:30pm. COME AND LEARN ABOUT YOUR FAITH!

Bible Study: Every Thursday 11am - Noon. Bring a sack Lunch. I am working my way through Romans if you want to join me.

Church Work Day: Every Friday is Church Maintenance day. Come help! Please come and help maintain the Church and its grounds.

Parish Council Meeting: 03DEC23 All are invited. (Every first Sunday of the Month) Please come and see the great things our parish council is doing and the vision we have.

Registration - Please continue to sign up on the website to receive the weekly emails. We are going live with our services! Please go to the website to register for our youtube channel.

FINAL CALL: Dec 2, Wilkes-Barre Deanery Retreat at All Saints Orthodox Church, Olyphant, PA: Saturday, December 2nd the parishes of the Wilkes-Barre Deanery will gather together for a time of worship and retreat at All Saints Orthodox Church in Olyphant, PA. The event will begin at 9AM with Divine Liturgy, followed by a light Lenten brunch and lecture from the OCMC's longest serving field missionary, Nathan Hoppe. Mr. Hoppe will talk about the importance of the mission mindset in the parish, and reflect on his international missionary labors over the years. The lecture will begin at noon, followed by Q&A, and ending by 2 PM. All Deanery Clergy are invited to serve. Choir members from the Deanery are also invited to participate. Please sign up at your parish by November 26th so our hosts at All Saints can plan for the day. We look forward to gathering once again with our brothers and sisters throughout the Wilkes-Barre Deanery.

Nativity Church Decorating: Next Saturday, DEC 2nd, Please come to Vespers and plan to stay afterwards and help decorate the Church for Nativity! Please See Tammy Wytovich for further details.

16DEC23 Potluck Dinner: 6PM-8PM Nativity Saints Display from our youth and Talent Contest.

Parish Prayer List

Newly Departed: *Alexander Horek (11/14)*

Departed: *Leo Howanetz 11/6; Archpriest Joseph Martin (11/9); Joseph Elko (11/10); Helen Chesniak 11/14; John Wansacz (11/15); Mary Krenitsky (11/16); Harold Krenitsky (11/22); Archbishop David Mahaffey (11/27)*

Please remember in your prayers LIVING

Ill-afflicted *Archpriests Michael Evans, John Nightingale, & Theodore Orzolek*

All those caring for the sick and suffering at this time throughout the world, especially our families and friends: *Christine Sevensky, Mike Jadick, Margaret Pregmon, Daniel Jones, Matushka Paula Soucek; The child of God Abigail and Nathan.*

Servants of God *Emily Krenitsky, Gregory Krenitsky, Barbara Sevensky, Bernie & Beverly Elko, Sandra Condon, Marie Pasternak, Ann Tyrpak, Sandy & Danny Pregmon, Walter Pritchyk, Michael & Euphemia Keklak; Elizabeth Jackson; Justin Kane; Maria & Vitaliy Rakovsky; Ekaterina & Anna; Joe & Kelly Cigna; George, Natasha (and her unborn child), & Rosa Coyoy; Paul & Ann Newmeyer; Mat. Emilia, Blaise, Maximus, Rodion, Savina Shepherd; Joseph, Emilia, Judah, Nadezda, & Silas Hart; Eli & Paula Stavisky, Helen Wytovich, Tammy Wytovich, Charissa & Debra, Nadia Macheska, Paulette Ezbiansky, Maura Elko*

Catechumen - *Jason Vo, Santo Joseph Cerminaro, Mikayla Brown*

How Much is my tithe

Weekly	2%	4%	5%	10%
\$200	\$4	\$8	\$10	\$20
\$500	\$10	\$20	\$25	\$50
\$750	\$15	\$30	\$37	\$75
\$1000	\$20	\$40	\$50	\$100
\$1500	\$30	\$60	\$75	\$150

WEEKLY GIVING UPDATE: We thank you for your continued giving in gratitude for all that our loving God does for each of us, for His Holy Church, **and** all the blessings we receive through her.

November Income: \$9,217.00

Expenditures: \$3,359.02

Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$3,225.62

Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$12,902.49



Words of Wisdom

From the Saints & Teachers

Today Readings

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-6

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Ephesians 4:2: Lowliness, Meekness, Patience

Forbear One Another. St. Jerome: Anyone who understands what it is “forbear one another in love” will understand that this is a precept appropriate to the faithful. It is not indeed saints who have any need to “forbear one another.” Rather it is those in the earlier stages of Christian life, who being human are still under the control of some passion. Nor is it strange that this should be said to the Ephesians. Among them there were surely some who still had to bear patiently with others. **Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.2.**

Luke 13:10–13 The Infirm Woman Like a Vine. St. Ambrose: The members of the church are similar to this vine. They are planted with the root of faith and held in check by the shoots of humility.... He placed in the church a tower of apostles, prophets and doctors who are ready to defend the peace of the church. He dug around it when he had freed it from the burden of earthly anxieties. Nothing burdens the mind more than concern for the world and lust for either wealth or power.

An example of this is in the Gospel. We can read the story of the woman “who had sickness caused by a spirit, and she was bent over so that she was unable to look upwards.” In fact, her soul was bent over. It inclined to earthly rewards and did not possess heavenly grace. Jesus saw her and addressed her. She immediately laid aside her earthly burdens. These people also were burdened with lusts. He addressed them in these words, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” The soul of that woman breathed once more and stood up like a vine around which the soil has been dug and cleared. **Six Days of Creation 3.50.**

PREPARING FOR NATIVITY: THE TRUE MIRACLE OF THE NATIVITY

The Nativity of Christ is incredibly important to Orthodox Christians. So important, in fact, that we spend 40 days preparing for this feast and celebrate it for two full weeks! The only feast day we celebrate longer than the Nativity is the Resurrection itself. Why does this feast day hold such a special place in the hearts of the Orthodox? The Prophet Isaiah answers that question for us: *Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel.* Isaiah 7:14

With these words, the Prophet Isaiah anticipated the coming of the Savior. This prophecy embodies the longings, hopes, and desires of God’s people as we prepare to receive the One

who comes to grant us new life. During the Nativity Fast (called Advent in the West) in the Orthodox Church, we are just like those who, in Old Testament times, anticipated and prepared for the Savior's birth.

Orthodox icon, The Adoration of the Magi

The joy we experience on the feast of Christ's birth ultimately depends on how well we've prepared ourselves to receive Him. We all spend a great deal of time getting ready for Christmas, Orthodox or no. Families devote countless hours to shopping, decorating, and menu planning. They also slave in the kitchen to prepare food for their families and stay up late wrapping gifts their loved ones will find nestled beneath the tree. Important as these matters are, our spiritual preparation is far more critical if we are to catch the *true* Christmas spirit. During the Nativity Fast, we must challenge ourselves to think more seriously about our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on our humanity in order to reveal God's love for us.

HOW SHOULD WE PERSONALLY PREPARE?

As we approach the Nativity, we should reflect on where we are spiritually, and where we would like to be. We must prepare ourselves for the coming of our Savior. We must consider just how important the Nativity truly is to us as Orthodox Christians. The Church maintains the teachings of the Fathers, who stress the importance of five activities when preparing oneself spiritually for the coming of any liturgical Feast: Prayer; Repentance; Fasting; Reading of Scripture; Helping Others. Let's take a look at each of these in a bit more depth. Then, we'll touch on some things you can do as a family with your children.

PRAYER

When we pray, we commune directly with God and His Saints. Prayer – whether it is *private* (by yourself/with your family) or *corporate* (with others in the Divine services) – helps us cope with the stress of our daily lives. And it is the perfect way to thank God and glorify Him for the many blessings He has given us. The Nativity Fast is a time for us to focus more on prayer and devote more time to communing with God. We should especially reflect on and give thanks for the gift of eternal life made possible by the birth of Jesus Christ.

REPENTANCE

Repentance is the conscious effort to change our lives and turn from those things which create barriers between us, God, and others. During the Nativity Fast, we are offered yet another opportunity to devote time to self-reflection and confess our sins to our spiritual father. This allows us to reassess our relationships with God and others, and reconcile and reunite with those from whom we've grown apart. Our thoughts should turn to the miracle of God's love and forgiveness which Jesus Christ proclaims and to the new life He offers.

FASTING

When we fast, we not only avoid certain foods and entertainments, but also anything that tends to control us in our day-to-day lives. Fasting is a means of spiritual discipline, a tool to help us put into proper perspective the things we receive from God. To gain control of those things and put them in their proper place, rather than allowing them to control us and become idols. It reminds us of the purpose of our lives: to attain perfect communion with God and enter into the joy of our Lord. Following the Fasts prescribed by the Church in Her wisdom also provides amazing benefits to our health, allowing us to rebuild our immune system and reduce our risk of disease.

READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

The Holy Bible is the written word of God Himself, which reveals Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Because it records the story of God's plan for the salvation of His people, the Bible is essential reading for Christians. Especially in preparation for the Nativity! This is not to say it is the *only* thing you should read, but it is an essential piece. The Nativity Fast provides an ideal opportunity to read and study the Bible, as well as the lives of the Saints, writings of the Church Fathers, and other spiritually edifying texts, on a daily basis.

HELPING OTHERS

While we fast and repent, it is equally important to share our time, our talent, and our treasures with those around us, especially the poor, needy, hungry, and lonely. By being born as a little child in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ shares His love with us; by reaching out to others, we in turn share His love with the least of these, His brethren.

THINGS TO DO AS A FAMILY

While personal spiritual preparation is most definitely important during the Nativity Fast, it is equally important to do things to help your spouse and children spiritually prepare along with you. Here are some things you can do as a family to prepare for this beautiful Feast:

- Display an icon of the Nativity of Christ in your home icon corner. Ask your children what they see in the icon and what those things mean (the cave, the animals, the Holy Spirit coming down from Heaven as light, etc.).
- Set up a Nativity scene that your children can keep in their rooms or in the family room. As you put the scene together, talk about the story of the Nativity and what happened.
- During your morning, mealtime, and evening prayers on Christmas Day, sing or chant the Troparion and Kontakion for the Feast. You can continue to chant these hymns for the Afterfeast as well (the eight days following the Feast).
- Read the Nativity Gospel lesson (Luke 2:1-20). If you have younger children, you can try telling a version from a Bible Storybook. If you have a Nativity scene nearby, consider using it with your children to illustrate the story. You can read this Gospel several times throughout the Nativity Fast, on Christmas Day itself, and during the Afterfeast.

- Attend the Vespereal Liturgy on Christmas Eve or the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day as a family. This will keep the focus of this Holy Day on Christ's birth and its importance in our life and salvation.
- After Liturgy, visit a shut-in parishioner or friend. Plan ahead so you can bring Antidoron, the Blessed Bread from the Liturgy, and a bulletin. You could also include a homemade gift from the children.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Christ is the food and drink that alone can satisfy our real hunger. Every time we receive the Eucharist, we receive Him not just figuratively, but literally. He abides in us. He gives us the power to bear Him to a hungry and thirsty world. What greater thing can we do than prepare to welcome our God, who comes to us as one of us, in meekness and love? During this time of preparation, read and reflect on these prophecies concerning the coming of the Savior:

- *Isaiah 7:14-15; 9:1-5; 61:1-3*
- *Daniel 9:25*
- *Micah 5:2,3*
- *Malachi 3:1*

And consider setting aside time to reflect upon the following:

1. What does the birth of Jesus Christ mean to you? How does this Feast affect your life as an Orthodox Christian?
2. Where do you presently stand in your relationship with God? with yourself? with others? How have you fallen short of being the person God calls you to be? What steps might you take to change the things that need to be changed?
3. How might you become a sign of God's love and presence among those who surround you?
4. How might you draw closer to God? In what ways could this improve your relationships with others?
5. Who might benefit from your concern and help during this Advent season? during the remainder of the year? What can you do to reach out to others in love?

May we all find the renewal that awaits us during this Nativity Fast. It is a time for a journey of rebirth. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen!