



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

714 Westmoreland Avenue

PO Box 3

Slickville, PA 15684-0003

[724] 468-5581

www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org

Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor

23 Station Street

Carnegie, PA 15106-3014

[412] 279-5640 home

[412] 956-6626 cell

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Bishop Robert, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Michael Mihalick [MS], Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Anthony Dimitri, Father Cuthbert Jack, Father Elias Warnke, Archimandrite Lev, Father Taras Naumenko, Father Nestor Kowal, Father Gabriel Rochell, Father Bill & Pani-Matka Sonia Diakiw, Pani-Matka Linda Oryhon, Father Paul Bigelow, Protodeacon Mykola Dilendorf, Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Mike Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—an 8-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 4-year-old with a brain tumor, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Michael Miller, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Gloria Prymak [Liz's niece], Robert Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, George & Mika Rocknage, Robert McKivitz, Tom Marriott, Joe Farkas, Liz Obradovich, Liz, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Peter Natishan, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Brandi Thomas, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Peter & Karen Special, Doris Artman, Maureen Sams, Nancy Barylak, Henry & Shirley Tkacik, Martin Golofski, Anthony Yerace, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier [3-year-old with cancer], Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Jean Stutchell, Bonnie Blair [Pani Gina's mother], Charles & Esther Holupka, Wanda Mefford, Lynn (Bush) Gill, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Betty O'Masta, Julie Eiler, Glenn Miller, Vince Ferro, Michael Pawlyshyn, Dorothy Lednovich, Kristin Batch Vaughn, Bob C.,

Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Pete Dimperio, Jane Wartinbee, Steven Sheakley [Pani Gina's cousin], Carmen Talmonti, Matthew—20-year-old with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuzniak, Michael Woloschak, Michael Pryhodzenko, Joseph Mollica, Sonia Luciw, Nellie Patsko, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Donna Tickerhoof, David Buchholz, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Pete Niederberger, Jasmine Walker, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, and Daria Masur. ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Steve Sakal, Homer Paul Kline, and Steve Ostaffy. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our March Babies: John Paouncic on the 2nd, Sonia Luciw on the 3rd, Walter Anthony Burlack on the 7th, Mary Shirley on the 9th, Judy Previc on the 12th, and Mike Holupka on the 25th. May God grant them all Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years!

Please remember James John Logue George Senita, John Kirkowski, Matthew Machak, Michael Repasky, and ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR “BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION” AND CAMPBELL’S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex’s Eighth Grade and Matt’s Sixth Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! Love, *Alex and Matt*

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday, March 6 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM
CHEESEFARE SUNDAY—FORGIVENESS SUNDAY
SAINT TIMOTHY OF SYMBOLA IN BITHYNIA; SAINT EUSTATHIUS-ARCHBISHOP OF ANTIOCH; SAINT GEORGE-BISHOP OF AMASTRIS ON THE BLACK SEA

Tone 8

Romans 13:11-14:4

Matthew 6:14-21

Litany in Blessed Memory of John Metrick, Mary Smith, Andrew Hanczar, Anna Lawrence, Michael Cicio, Joseph Vangrin, & Frank Riznow—Fr. Bob Parastas in Blessed Memory of Maxine Kitch—Evelyn Burlack

**FORGIVENESS SUNDAY VESPERS 4:00 PM
Saint Vladimir Parish, South Side, Pittsburgh**

Monday, March 7 GREAT LENT BEGINS

**Sunday, March 13 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM
FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT—SUNDAY OF THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY
SAINT BASIL THE CONFESSOR-COMPANION OF SAINT PROCOPIUS AT DECAPOLIS;
SAINT CASSIAN THE ROMAN-ABBOT; HIEROMARTYR NESTOR-BISHOP OF MAGYDOS
IN PAMPHYLIA; SAINTS MARANA, CYANNA, AND DOMINICA-NUNS OF SYRIA;
HIEROMARTYR PROTERIUS-PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA-AND 6 COMPANIONS**

Tone 1

Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

John 1:43-51

**TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY 4:00 PM
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH, CANONSBURG, PA**

**Sunday, March 20 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom 10:30 AM
SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT—SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS
SYNAXIS OF ALL VENERABLE FATHERS OF THE PERCHEVSKY LAVRA; HOLY
HIEROMARTYRS OF CHERSON-BASIL, EPHRAIM, CAPITO, EUGENE, AETHERIS,
ELPIDIUS, & AGATHODORUS; SAINT PAUL THE SIMPLE OF EGYPT-DISCIPLE OF
SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT; SAINT PAUL THE CONFESSOR-BISHOP OF PRUSIAS IN
BITHYNIA; SAINT EMELIAN OF ROME**

Tone 2

Hebrew-7:26-8:2

John 10:9-16

Parastas in Blessed Memory of Tillie Kuzman—Debbie & John Paouncic

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 06 MARCH 2011

**CHEESEFARE SUNDAY—FORGIVENESS SUNDAY
SAINT TIMOTHY OF SYMBOLA IN BITHYNIA; SAINT EUSTATHIUS-
ARCHBISHOP OF ANTIOCH; SAINT GEORGE-BISHOP OF AMASTRIS
ON THE BLACK SEA**

TROPARION—TONE 8

Thou didst descent from on high, O Merciful One!
Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings!
Our Lord, our Life and Resurrection, Glory to Thee

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 8

By rising from the tomb,
Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam.
Eve exults in Thy Resurrection,
And the world celebrates Thy Rising from the dead,
O greatly Merciful One!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 8

READER: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

PEOPLE: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

READER: In Judah, God is known; His name is great in Israel!

PEOPLE: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

READER: Pray and make your vows.

PEOPLE: Before the Lord our God!

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 8

Come let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!

Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with psalms.

Abba Elias said, **“Men turn their minds either to their sins, or to Jesus, or to men.”**

He also said, **“If the spirit does not sing with the body, labor is in vain. Whoever loves tribulation will obtain joy and peace late on.”**

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

8-10 East 79th St. New York, NY 10075-0106

Tel: (212) 570-3530 Fax: (212) 774-0237

Web: <http://www.goarch.org> - Email: communications@goarch.org

Protocol 16/11

March 7, 2011

Holy and Great Lent

For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance... (Matthew 25:29)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day,

Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are truly blessed and filled with anticipation as we enter into the holy and reflective season of Great Lent. It is blessed because it is an intense time of prayer, fasting, worship and service, which leads us into greater communion with our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. It is also a time of reflection when we examine our entire being—mind, body, and soul—and seek spiritual victory through the power and grace of God over anything that separates us from Him.

Holy and Great Lent is also a time of spiritual preparation and growth. During the Triodion period we have heard the words of our Lord in the parables of the Publican and Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, and the Last Judgment. Through this focus on repentance, grace, and forgiveness, we have been challenged to consider the spiritual state of our lives and our readiness to stand before our Lord when He comes in His glory.

Now, we enter into a quiet and contemplative time that helps us to grow from where we are into a deeper relationship with God, toward a greater understanding of His wisdom and truth, to heights of joy and peace that we have not known, and into an unhindered awareness of the needs of others. This is a time of spiritual prosperity.

It is a time, as in the parable of the talents in the Gospel of Matthew, when we take the treasure of our lives and souls given to us by our God, and labor diligently to strengthen our spiritual well-being. As good and faithful servants we strive through worship and prayer to attain higher levels of spiritual maturity in the kingdom of God. It is a time when we deny our selfish desires through fasting, overcoming the danger of following the attitude of the lazy and unprofitable servant, and heed the words of our Lord, "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29).

The days of Great Lent which are before us have been given to us by our Lord for our spiritual prosperity. We have the opportunity for a tremendous investment of prayer, contemplation, and service which will lead us to an abundant harvest of spiritual gifts and blessings. Use this time through the services of Great Lent to open the spiritual eyes of your hearts and minds, to be watching and ready to receive the Bridegroom and enter into the great feast. Cultivate and nurture your lives through daily prayer and engagement with the resources of our faith, so that when the Master returns He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (25:23). In offering and service to the needs of others, be a living witness of the love of Christ, so that when the Lord comes in His glory He will say to each of us, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (25:34).

At the inception of this holy and blessed season, I offer to you my prayers and deepest wishes for a time of spiritual growth, illumination, and abundant blessings through the presence and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America

FASTING AND GREAT LENT

THE TRIODION

Great Lent is the 40-day season of spiritual preparation that comes before the most important Feast of the Christian year, Holy Pascha (which means "Passover" and is commonly called "Easter",). It is the central part of a larger time of preparation called the Triodion season.

The Triodion begins ten weeks before Easter and is divided into three main parts: three Pre-Lenten weeks of preparing our hearts, the six weeks of Lent, and Holy Week. The main theme of the Triodion is repentance-mankind's return to God, our loving Father.

This annual season of repentance is a spiritual journey with our Savior. Our goal is to meet the risen Lord Jesus, Who reunites us with God the Father.

The Father is always waiting to greet us with outstretched hands. We must ask ourselves the question, "Are we willing to turn to Him?"

During Great Lent, the Church teaches us how to re-ceive Him by using the two great means of repentance- prayer and fasting.

THE LENTEN FAST

The word "fast" means not eating all or certain foods. As Orthodox Faithful, we can fast completely at certain times of great importance, and especially each time before receiving Holy Communion. Usually, fasting means limiting the number of meals and/or the type of food eaten.

The purpose of fasting is to remind us of the Scriptural teaching, "Man does not live by bread alone." The needs of the body are nothing compared to the needs of the soul. Above all else, we need God, Who provides everything for both the body and the soul. Fasting teaches us to depend on God more fully.

The first sin of our parents, Adam and Eve, was eating from the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:1-19). We fast from food, or a food item, as a reminder that we are to fast from sinning and doing evil.

There are several benefits of fasting. Fasting helps us pray more easily. Our spirit is lighter when we are not weighed down by too much food or food that is too rich. Through fasting, we also learn to feel compassion for the poor and hungry and to save our own resources so that we can help those in need.

Fasting is more than not eating food. Saint John Chrysostom teaches that it is more important to fast from sin. For example, besides controlling what goes into our mouths, we must control what comes out of our mouths as well.

Are our words pleasing to God, or do we curse God or our brother?

The other members of the body also need to fast: our eyes from seeing evil, our ears from hearing evil, our limbs from participating in anything that is not of God. Most important of all, we need to control our thoughts, for thoughts are the source of our actions, whether good or evil.

Fasting is not an end in itself. Our goal is an inner change of heart. The Lenten Fast is called "ascetic." This refers to a ctions of self-denial and spiritual training which are central to fasting.

Fasting is a spiritual exercise. It is not imposed or forced upon us. In the same way that true repentance cannot be forced upon anyone, each of us makes the choice to turn away from our sinful ways and go toward our loving, for giving Father in Heaven.

THE PRELENTEN WEEKS

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.

GENERAL RULES OF THE LENTEN FAST

The Lenten Fast rules that we observe today were established within the monasteries of the Orthodox Church during the sixth through eleventh centuries. These rules are intended for all Orthodox Christians, not just monks and nuns.

The first week of Lent is especially strict. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, a total fast is kept. In practice, very few people are able to do this. Some find it necessary to eat a little each day after sunset. Many Faithful do fast completely on Monday and then eat only uncooked food (bread, fruit, nuts) on Tuesday evening. On Wednesday, the fast is kept until after the Presanctified Liturgy.

From the second through the sixth weeks of Lent, the general rules for fasting are practiced. Meat, animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard), fish (meaning fish with backbones), olive oil and wine (all alcoholic drinks) are not consumed during the weekdays of Great Lent. Octopus and shell-fish are allowed, as is vegetable oil. On weekends, olive oil and wine are permitted.

According to what was done in the monasteries, one meal a day is eaten on weekdays and two meals on weekends of

Great Lent. No restriction is placed on the amount of food during the meal, though moderation is always encouraged in all areas of one's life at all times.

Fish, oil and wine are allowed on the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) and on Palm Sunday (one week before Easter). On other feast days, such as the First and Second Finding of the Head of Saint John the Baptist (February 24), the Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (March 9), the Forefeast of the Annunciation (March 24) and the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (March 26), wine and oil are permitted.

HOLY WEEK

The week before Easter, Holy Week, is a special time of fasting separate from Great Lent. Like the first week, a strict fast is kept. Some Orthodox Christians try to keep a total fast on Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday. Most eat a simple Lenten meal at the end of each day before going to the evening Church services.

On Holy Thursday, wine is allowed in remembrance of the Last Supper. Holy Friday is kept as a strict fast day, as is Holy Saturday. Holy Saturday is the only Saturday in the entire year when oil is not permitted.

In short, these are the Lenten rules for fasting. Traditionally, the Church Fathers recommend that someone new to fasting begin by resolving to faithfully do as much as

he or she is able during the Lenten period. Each year as one matures as a Christian, a fuller participation can be under-taken. However, it is not recommended that a person try to create their own rules for fasting, since this would not be obedient or wise. The Faithful are encouraged to consult with their priest or bishop regarding the Fast when possible.

Personal factors such as one's health and living situation need to be considered as well. For example, an isolated Orthodox Christian required to eat meals at their place of employment, school or in prison may not be able to avoid certain foods. The Church understands this and extends leniency.

It is important to keep in mind that fasting is not a law for us-rather, a voluntary way of remembering to not sin and do evil, and to help keep our focus on prayer, repentance and doing acts of kindness, for we "are not under the law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

EASTER, BRIGHT WEEK AND THE PASCHAL SEASON

The Lenten Fast is broken following the midnight Easter service. With the proclamation, "Christ is risen!" the time of feasting begins. The week after Easter is called Bright Week and there is no fasting. For the next 40 days, the Church celebrates the Paschal (Easter) season. Joy and thanksgiving are the fulfillment of our Lenten journey.

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. (+)

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

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

CATECHETICAL HOMILY: On the Opening of Holy and Great Lent

+ BARTHOLOMEW

By God's Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome And Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ With our Prayer, Blessing and Forgiveness

Beloved brothers and children in the Lord,

“The arena of the virtues has opened; those who desire to compete may enter, girding themselves with the good struggle of fasting.” (Triodion, Cheesefare Sunday) Or, better, the arena has always remained open, from the time that the All-Merciful Lord of Glory deemed it worthy to assume our nature. Since then, through His Church, he invites every person to participate in the boundless gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit, particularly during this blessed period of Holy and Great Lent.

Beloved children in the Lord, the boundless goodness of our God, who is truly worshipped in the Trinity, created the human race solely out of love in order to render us human beings – to the degree that is possible for human nature – sharers and participants of the grandeur of His sacred glory. This is the exclusive purpose of life at all times. Indeed, in order to achieve this purpose, the holy and inspired tradition of the Orthodox Church comes to our support, instructing, interpreting and including the entire spectrum of the spiritual life by means of various struggles, with which the faithful must always advance courageously.

Through the holy Sacrament of Baptism, each Christian received the grace of the Holy Spirit. If we begin to love God with all our heart, then this grace transmits to us in an incomprehensible way the wealth of its benefits. Whoever wishes to retain this experience of grace should strive with great joy to renounce from the soul the benefits of the present age in order to acquire the hidden wealth of true life. To the same degree that the soul advances in this spiritual struggle, the sacred gift of divine grace reveals the Lord’s goodness concealed in the depth of the soul in order to become the sure guide in the manifold spiritual struggle. (St. Diadochus of Photike, Century 77)

This spiritual struggle is ongoing for every faithful. Therefore, it requires us to start anew each day, each moment. “The time has come for the beginning of spiritual struggle, the victory of demons, the armor of virtue, the conduct of angels, the boldness before God.” (Lauds, Cheesefare Sunday) Great Lent precisely resembles a constant beginning of spiritual regeneration and renewal. This is why the hymnographer of the Triodion correctly orientates us toward its proper content, stating that bodily fasting by renouncing certain foods cannot result in remedy and is even despised by God as false, unless it is accompanied by purity that results from renouncing the spiritual passions (Lauds, Wednesday of Cheesefare Week).

Of course, focusing the intellect on the work of knowing God, in order to return it from passionate dispersion, comprises a toilsome and time-consuming labor. However, it is necessary and definitive for our spiritual wellbeing and social life. The way of virtue appears difficult and extremely unpleasant to those who undertake the journey; yet, not because it is actually like this, but because human nature has become accustomed to the ease of pleasure. For those who have succeeded in reaching the middle of this journey, in fact it appears pleasant and effortless (St. Diadochus of Photike, Century 93).

Frequently, those who cannot understand the great mystery of this piety consider the Orthodox ascetic tradition as negative and as leading to deprivation of creativity, of original initiative, of enjoyment in life's pleasure. Nothing could be further from the truth. All that was created by God was created "very good" and offered to us in order to delight in and enjoy in order for us to give continual glory to our Benefactor. The commandments of God guide us and inform us in the proper use of these divine gifts, so that our body, mind and soul, together with all the material gifts, may be truly joyful and beneficial for our life. On the contrary, the arrogant, independent and contemptuous use of material gifts offered to us by the Creator result in entirely different goals to God's expectations, leading us to depression, anxiety and misfortune, even though appearing to satisfy human pride momentarily.

Our Savior, who is truly divine and truly human, who is incomprehensibly known to the humble and those capable of receiving His uncreated grace, the Lord of glory and Lord of history, who directs our soul and mind, who contains the universe in His divine providence – from the smallest particle of His creation to the most inconceivable aspect of our world, is eternally the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14.6) Just as the hypostatic source of Life could not possibly be held by death, which was crushed through His resurrection, so too there could not possibly be any positive human life without participation in the life-creating Body of the Risen Christ, the Orthodox Church, and the inspired Holy Tradition. In brief, the Lord reigns forever, while the ideas of the proud are proved false. Or, as St. Diadochus so wonderfully says: "There is nothing poorer than a mind endeavoring to philosophize about God without God."

Beloved children in the Lord, upon entering the arena of Holy and Great Lent, we paternally exhort you not to be afraid or lazy in assuming the most important task of your life, namely the spiritual arena of work. Instead, be

courageous and strong, so that you may purify your souls and bodies of all sin in order to reach the Kingdom of God, which is granted already from this life to those who seek it with sincerity and with all their soul.

May the grace of God and His boundless mercy be with you all.
Holy and Great Lent 2011

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople
Fervent supplicant to God for all

Prayer in beginners is like a fire of joy which comes forth from the heart; while in the perfect, it is like an active light giving forth fragrance.
St. Gregory the Sinaite

Some labor and struggle hard to earn forgiveness, but better than these is the man who forgets the wrongs done to him. Forgive quickly and you will be abundantly forgiven. To forget wrongs is to prove oneself truly repentant, but to brood on them and at the same time to imagine one is practicing repentance is to act like the man who is convinced he is running when in fact he is fast asleep.

St. John Climacus, The Ladder of Perfection

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

The choir of the saints has found the Fountain of Life and the Door of Paradise; may I also find the way through repentance. I am the lost sheep: call me back and save me, O Savior.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

O saints and martyrs who preached the Lamb of God and like lambs were slain, who now are translated to the eternal life that knows no age: pray fervently to Him, the He may grant us the forgiveness of our sins.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

“All ye who in this life have trod the narrow way of sorrow, bearing the Cross as a yoke and following Me in faith: come and receive with joy the honors and the heavenly crown that I have prepared for you.”

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

I am an image of Thine ineffable glory, even though I bear the marks of sin. Take pity on Thy creature, O Master, and cleanse me in Thy loving-kindness. Grant me the fatherland for which I long, making me once more a citizen of Paradise.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

Of old Thou has created me from nothing and honored me with Thy divine image; but when I disobeyed Thy commandment, Thou hast returned me to the earth whence I was taken: lead me back again to Thy likeness, refashioning my ancient beauty.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.

Give rest, O God, to Thy servants and establish them in Paradise, where the choirs of the saints and the righteous shine as the stars of heaven. Give rest, O Lord, to Thy servants who have fallen asleep, and overlook all their offences.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: Both now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen.

The Evlogitaria of the Dead, tone five, Matins of Saturday of the Dead

A brother questioned an old man saying, "What good work should I do so that I may live?" The old man said, "God knows what is good. I have heard it said that one of the fathers asked Abba Nisterius the Great, the friend of Abba Anthony, and said to him, 'What good work is there that I could do?'

He said to him, 'Are not all actions equal? Scripture says that Abraham was hospitable and God was with him. David was humble, and God was with him.

Elias loved interior peace, and God was with him. So, do whatever you see that your soul desires according to God, and guard your heart.'"

"Although the universal Church of God is constituted of distinct orders of members, still, in spite of the many parts of its holy body, the Church subsists as an integral whole, just as the Apostle says: we are all one in Christ...

For all, regenerated in Christ, are made kings by the sign of the cross; they are consecrated priests by the oil of the Holy Spirit, so that beyond the special service of our ministry as priests, all spiritual and mature Christians

know that they are a royal race and are sharers in the office of the priesthood. For what is more king-like that to find yourself ruler over your body after having surrendered your soul to God? And what is more priestly than to promise the Lord a pure conscience and to offer him in love unblemished victims on the altar of one's heart?"

St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (440-461)

Love does not depend on time, and the power of love continues always.

There are some who believe that the Lord suffered death for love of man but because they do not attain to this love in their own souls it seems to them that it is an old story of bygone days. But when the soul knows the love of God by the Holy Spirit she feels without a shadow of doubt that the Lord is our Father, the closest, the best and dearest of fathers, and there is no greater happiness than to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our minds, according to the Lord's commandment, and our neighbor as ourself. And when this love is in the soul, everything rejoices her; but when it is lost sight of man cannot find peace, and is troubled, and blames others as if they had done him an injury, and does not realize that he himself is at fault – he has lost his love for God and has accused or conceived a hatred for his brother.

Grace proceeds from brotherly love, and by brotherly love grace is preserved; but if we do not love our brother the grace of God will not come into our souls.

St. Silouan the Athonite

World heritage nod sought for Nativity Church

Feb 7, 11:05 AM (ET)

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) - The Palestinian Authority has asked the U.N.'s cultural agency to designate the church built at the traditional birth site of Jesus as the first world heritage site in the Palestinian territories.

The Palestinians say they asked UNESCO in January to place the Church of the Nativity on its list of the world's most important cultural sites.

No sites under Palestinian control are on the list because Palestinians do not have a state recognized by the U.N.

Palestinian officials say they hope the site's overwhelming cultural significance will sway member states to approve the request. A decision is expected in mid-2012.

Tourism Minister Khouloud Daibes said Monday that the request is part of the Palestinian campaign to build their state.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Pittsburgh Deanery, along with our Eparchial Bishop, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Constantine, will serve our annual Forgiveness Sunday Vespers at Father John Haluszczak's parish— Saint Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 1810 Sidney Street, on Pittsburgh's South Side. Vespers will begin THIS AFTERNOON promptly at 4 PM and will be followed by light Lenten refreshments and fellowship. If your schedule allows, please plan to join us.

The Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh will celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy on Sunday, March 13, at 4 PM. Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church [OCA], 601 Boone Avenue, Canonsburg, PA, 15317, will be the host parish and His Grace, Bishop Melchizidek, will be the speaker. Light Lenten refreshments and fellowship will follow. If your schedule allows, please join us!