

HOLY SPIRIT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2023

THE VENERATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

Sunday, March 12: 10:20am Rosary, 10:45am 3rd Hour, 11:00am Divine Liturgy
for the deceased Gerald John Bacasa, Jr., by his loving parents Gerald and Alexandria
4pm Confessions and 5pm Divine Liturgy through Campus Ministry

Monday, March 13: 10am Confessions through Campus Ministry
4:30pm Confessions, 5:30pm Daily Vespers

Wednesday, March 15: 11am Terce-Sext ~ 3pm-4pm Confessions through Campus Ministry
5:30pm Presanctified Liturgy for the health of Joseph Bacasa by Theresa Carr

Saturday, March 18: 12:00 Noon Divine Liturgy with Panachida, 4th All Souls Saturday,
4:30pm Confession, 5:30pm Great Vespers

Sunday, March 19: 10:20am Rosary, 10:45am 3rd Hour, 11:00am Divine Liturgy
for the health of Gerald Bacasa, by Theresa Carr
4pm Confessions and 5pm Divine Liturgy through Campus Ministry

Lenten Vespers continue this week. The service will be at 4pm at St. Andrew Church in Gibsonia, with
confessions at 3:30pm, and a simple meal to follow.

Confessions are available before Divine Liturgy. All divine liturgies are open for intentions. Call the office
or fill out the request form in the back of church and leave it in the sacristy.

Please note: During Great Lent, weekday Liturgies are on Wednesday evening.

AT THE DIVINE LITURGY TODAY..... In the very middle of the Great Fast, the Church bids us to focus our eyes,
to center our thoughts, to set our hearts, and to fix our lives upon the estimable CROSS of Christ—the noble symbol of
our salvation. The Jewish Christians are told that redemption comes through Jesus' supreme sacrifice upon this salutary
wood, and our Lord's invitation to discipleship demands our being crossbearers in imitation of Himself.

SCHEDULE OF THE DEANERY PENITENTIAL VESPERS — The Great Fast Deanery Vespers will be celebrated,
each Sunday during The Great Fast Season at 4:00 p.m. preceded by The Holy Mystery of Reconciliation @ 3:30 p.m.
The following churches have been selected to host a week: **(3) March 12 – St. Andrew Church, Gibsonia, PA –**
Homilist: Fr. Myron Kerul-Kmec; (4) March 19 – Saints Peter & Paul Church, Duquesne, PA – Homilist: Fr. Michael
Kunitz; and (5) March 26 – Saints Peter & Paul Church, Tarentum, PA – Homilist: Very Reverend Fr. Frank A. Firko.
This will be a great penitential practice of prayer & self-denial if you wish to take it upon yourselves. Please make an
effort to join us.

HOUSE BLESSINGS: Fr. Michael is blessing homes as part of our Theophany Season tradition. Please sign up in the
back of the church (narthex). This blessing can be done every year!

Important note regarding Liturgy intentions: If you are requesting a Divine Liturgy for the deceased, please note if the
date requested is the anniversary of their death. If for the living, please specify if it is for a birthday, anniversary, etc. This
will help schedule the Liturgy as accurately as possible, and will let Father know which setting to use. Thank you.

EPISTLE: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: "You are my son; this day I have begotten you"; just as he says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

~~~~~As we arrive at the midpoint of the Great Fast, this epistle lesson taken from the letter to the Jewish Christians of antiquity, accentuates the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, is our divinely appointed and duly qualified High Priest. God the Father sent His Son to earth so that as a Man, the Son of God would be the Mediator to the Father in behalf of the entire human race. God's Son Himself then would offer THE consummate sacrifice to His Father for the expiation of mankind's sins. As our great High Priest, Jesus knew the totality of our human condition. He was like us in every respect except sin. He became humanity's representative before God in making *the* ultimate sacrifice upon the sacred wood of the venerable CROSS. Jesus is THE High Priest, and only He could offer this definitive sacrifice: His very life upon that lonely and desolate tree—the true *CROSS* on which reparation was made for the sin of the whole world.

## **GOSPEL: Mark 8:34-9:1**

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

He also said to them, "Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come in power."

~~~~~The theme for this third greatfast Sunday is the doctrine of the life-giving CROSS, and it will be amplified during this fourth week of the Great Forty-Days. In today's gospel account, the Holy Evangelist Mark tells us how Jesus spoke of the cost of discipleship—of following after Him. "*If anyone wants to follow in My footsteps, he must give-up all right to himself, take-up his specific cross, and follow Me!*" It is readily evident that Jesus' true followers must have an actual *cross*; it must be carried *willingly*; and it must be shouldered *for the sake* of Jesus, our Master. This is no easy task! This invitation is a most difficult challenge, and it is only with God's help that it can be done. The requisites as set forth by Jesus are stiff; but the rewards are *magnificent*! If we desire to be a committed follower of the Lord Jesus, then we cannot avoid carrying the honorable *CROSS* as the Supreme Crossbearer Himself willingly did in our behalf.

SACRAMENTAL RECONCILIATION WITH GOD: GREATFAST CONFESSIONS.....In her wisdom, the Church requires all faithful to make a sacramental confession during the Great Fast, as we commemorate the redemptive acts of Christ. Let us all approach the loving Lord Jesus during this penitential greatfast season, seeking His merciful forgiveness through sacramental confession. In the Holy Mystery of Penance, we unburden ourselves of sin, and we reconcile ourselves with God as we receive His true peace. During the Great Forty-Days, remember to make your confession!

THE SUNDAY OF THE VICTORIOUS VENERATION OF THE GLORIOUS CROSS..... We have reached today the midpoint in our observance of the Holy Forty-Days Fast. Three weeks have passed, and three weeks still remain. The third greatfast Sunday acquires a special significance and is known as Cross-Veneration Sunday. The Church is very cognizant of the fact that we often begin things with the best of intentions, but because of our lax human nature and the mundane distractions that we encounter daily, we are quick to weaken in our efforts; and as time passes, we then tend to become disinterested and/or discouraged. Therefore, our Byzantine Catholic Church triumphantly displays the majestic cross of the Lord in the very middle of the Great Forty-Days Fast as a glorious symbol of victory to weakening humanity in order that we might draw strength as we continue with our penitential practices and our ascetical efforts during the remainder of the Great Fast. Throughout Cross-Veneration Week, each time that we enter or leave the Church, we always make our way to the Golgotha of the tetrapod to venerate the honored wood of the meritorious cross. We venerate the worthy cross of Christ by approaching the tetrapod; making two metanies (a deep bow, lowering the hand to touch the floor and then making the sign of the cross); kissing the holy cross; and then again making another metany. Each time that we make these three metanies, we repeat silently to ourselves: "O God, cleanse me, a sinner!" In visual commemoration of the passion of our Lord signified by His life-creating cross and the divine Blood which Jesus poured forth during His redemptive sacrifice upon the salvific tree of His august cross, red vestments are used today as well as on all of the weekdays throughout the greatfast season. The faithful should wear something RED on Cross-Veneration Sunday and during Cross-Veneration Week in symbolic tribute to the praiseworthy cross, the laudable passion, and the sanctifying Blood of Jesus. The splendorous cross is the esteemed emblem of our salvation and the sign of Christ's victory over Satan and human passions. It is precisely from this wondrous tree—Jesus' admirable cross—that we draw our spiritual strength. Christians must carry their own real crosses daily if they aspire to be genuine followers of the crucified Lord Jesus and thereby save their immortal souls!

WE SHALL OBSERVE THE FOURTH ALL-SOULS SATURDAY THIS WEEK As part of our Great Fast preparation for the Feast of the Holy Resurrection, we call to memory all of our faithful departed and pray for their repose, for it is through Jesus' victory over death that we have a "New Life." Three of the five All-Souls Saturdays are observed during the Holy Forty-Days Fast. Not only should we offer our prayers and be mindful of all the departed of our human family and of all those who had been closest to us, but we should above all endeavor to pray especially for those "poor souls" who have not fully atoned for past transgressions and have no one to remember them or to pray for their eternal repose. The sacrifice to attend the requiem services in honor of our faithful departed and to pray for their immortal souls is an additional way of our observing the season of the Holy Great Fast.

Please pray for the causes of our four Sainly Bishops and ask them to intercede for your specific intentions: O Almighty God, our Lord, we bless You, we praise You, and we thank you for all the graces which You, in Your infinite mercy have bestowed upon us. We are especially grateful for giving us four saintly and heroic Bishops: Bishop Theodore G. Romzha, Bishop Paul P. Gojdich OBSM, Bishop Basil Hopko, and Bishop Alexander Chira, who, by their courage, charity, and intrepid faith, inspired our Ruthenian people in the darkest moments of their history. By their great sufferings, humiliating imprisonment, and violent death they gave living witness to their Catholic faith and glorified Your exalted name. Therefore, O Gracious Lord, glorify them in return by Your divine power and inscribe their names in the book of Your Saints. For you are holy, our God, and we render glory to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever, Amen. With Ecclesiastical Approbation Acknowledgment of answered prayers: Postulator's office, 54 Riverview Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15214, U.S.A.

PRAYER FOR SEMINARIANS: Saints Cyril and Methodius, Venerable Apostles of the Slavs and Patrons of our Byzantine Catholic Seminary, we place our Seminarians in your loving care. Help them to grow in humility, meekness and prudence. Enkindle in them a burning zeal for souls. May their hearts be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and may they learn to know and love the church so that they may always and everywhere think, speak and act with Her, the Glorious Spouse of Christ. May they become exemplars of generosity and detachment from the things of this world. But above all, O Venerable Patrons, help them to truly know, love and serve the Eternal High Priest, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose priests they aspire to be. Amen. St. Michael the Archangel, Defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, By the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen