

HOLY SPIRIT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Cantor: Julia Revilak & Family

Sub-Deacon: Raphael Ruggiero

March 9, 2025

Sunday of the Great Fast – Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebaste

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

Sunday, Mar 9: 1st Sunday of the Great Fast – Triumph of Orthodoxy & Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebaste

10:25am Rosary, 11:00 am Divine Liturgy

IHO the Stanich Family & all Pilgrims on the “Camino de Santiago” or “Way of St. James the Apostle” Pilgrimage by Casey Dudek

Penitential Vespers 4pm John the Baptist Cathedral, Munhall

Monday, Mar 10: 6:00 pm Confessions, 7:00 pm Akathist to Our Lady of the Searcher for the Lost

Wednesday, Mar 12: 6:00 pm Confessions, 7:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Doe Nibler & Family by Casey Dudek

Friday, Mar 14: 6:00 pm Confessions, 7:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy

IHO Gale Berry by Casey Dudek

Saturday, Mar 15: 2nd All Souls Saturday

11:00 am Divine Liturgy with Panachida, 5:00 pm Confessions 6:00 pm Great Vespers

Sunday, Mar 16: 2nd Sunday of the Great Fast- Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

10:25am Rosary, 11:00 am Divine Liturgy

IMO Deborah Vestovich by Mary Dzurichko

Plenty of Divine Liturgies are open for intentions for this new year. If you would like to make an intention for a Liturgy, please call the office or fill out request form in the back of the church and give it to Fr. Michael.

OUR LADY SEARCHER FOR THE LOST: Starts tomorrow **Monday, Mar 10** we will be hosting the **Akathist to Our Lady of the Searcher for the Lost** to pray for all those who are searching, struggling and in need of God’s mercy and help. **There will be candles available for purchase for \$10 each.** These services will take place every Monday during Lent.

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS: If you are interested in learning to lead Matins as a Reader’s Service on Sunday before Liturgy, please see Father Michael. Matins is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month unless otherwise noted.

PALM CROSS FUNDRAISER: The Revilak Family will once again be taking orders for **palm crosses at \$10 each.** These beautiful handmade crosses have been a special fundraiser for our parish. We hope you will support this project.

SAVE THE DATES:

*In preparation for Easter - we will have **two parish clean up days** INDOORS: **Sat. Mar 29** and OUTDOORS: **Sat. Apr 5.**

***Sat. Mar 22** there will be a joint parish meeting with St. Pius X Byzantine Catholic Church after the morning 10 AM Liturgy with Panachida here at Holy Spirit to discuss the summer Sunday Liturgy schedule. PLEASE BE PRESENT!!!!

DEANERY PENITENTIAL VESPERS: Every Sunday afternoon during the Great Fast, clergy and laity from all over the Deanery come together in a different parish to participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation at 3:30 pm and to pray the Vespers, the evening prayer for Sundays during this penitential season at 4:00 pm.

Each Vespers is followed by a meager meal of meatless soup. This is a wonderful opportunity for prayer, penance, self-denial, and fellowship. The schedule for this year is as follows:

Mar 9: St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Munhall PA with Homilist Fr. David Bosnich

Mar 16: Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Tarentum PA with Homilist Fr. Radko Blichar

Mar 23: St. Gregory Church, Upper St. Clair PA with Homilist Fr. Tyler Wisniewski

Mar 30: Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Duquesne PA with Homilist Fr. Frank Firko

Apr 6: St. Andrew Church, Gibsonia PA with Homilist Fr. Michael Kunitz

COFFEE SOCIAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: In addition to attending services together, it is important that we spend time in conversation with one another. To make it truly a time of sharing – we ask everyone to sign up to host a Sunday. We look forward to seeing you!

ICONS AVAILABLE: There are several blessed icons in the church hall, there is no charge to take these home, though a free will offering for the benefit of the parish is welcome.

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

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. He considered the reproach of the Anointed greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the recompense. What more shall I say? I have not time to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, did what was righteous, obtained the promises; they closed the mouths of lions, put out raging fires, escaped the devouring sword; out of weakness they were made powerful, became strong in battle, and turned back foreign invaders. Women received back their dead through resurrection. Some were tortured and would not accept deliverance, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's point; they went about in skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, in caves and in crevices in the earth. Yet all these, though approved because of their faith, did not receive what had been promised. God had foreseen something better for us, so that without us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.

~Various examples of faith as illustrated by several persons from the Old Testament are brought forth in this epistle lesson which is addressed to the early community of Jewish Christians. These old-testament exemplars were firm in the profession of their true faith, and they were devoted to the true form of worship that was given by God to their forefathers. These early Hebrew Christians are told that Moses passed-on to the posterity of Israel the ritual for the Passover—the TRUE WORSHIP that God Himself required from His chosen people. Similarly, we too stand fast in the True Worship that has been entrusted to us by God through our own forebears as we now prepare for the celebration of Jesus' new and perfect Passover. On this first Great Fast Sunday, the Church instructs us through this holy epistle lesson as we read: "Since we are surrounded by so many witnesses (*these old-testament people*), let's strip off everything that hinders us as well as the sins that cling to us, and let us persevere in running the race (*the Great Fast*) that lies before us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus" (*and His radiant resurrection: the precious goal that we all seek!*).

GOSPEL: John 1:43-51

The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

~Our gospel reflection presents us with the Holy Evangelist John's account of the call of the apostles Philip and Nathanael. When Jesus told Philip "Follow Me!" he went immediately to his friend Nathanael and told him about the Lord Jesus. These two men professed Jesus to be "the Son of God," and the Lord promised them that they would see "His glory." As Christian people, we have received this same promise by virtue of Jesus' radiant resurrection for which we now prepare during the Great Forty-Days Fast. Like the Holy Apostle Philip, we must extend Jesus' invitation to our own friends so that they could perceive the joy of being called to follow our Lord. Especially during the Great Fast season, we have the opportunity to increase our faith through various ascetic acts and to profess this true faith in Jesus as God's Son by demonstrating our loyalty to Him through acts of that TRUE WORSHIP which has been entrusted by God to our forefathers and, through them, to us. We must worship the Lord with that faith which has been given freely to us so that like these two holy apostles, we might be worthy of seeing the Son of God in "all His glory!"

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST: The first Sunday of the Great Forty-Days Fast is called The Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, in this case referring to True Worship, for today we commemorate the victory of the Byzantine Catholic Church over the heresy known as iconoclasm. This eighth-century heresy held that the veneration of sacred images known as icons was unlawful. It began in 726 A.D. with an edict issued by the Byzantine Emperor Leo II, the Isaurian, which led to the destruction of all icons and the persecution of their defenders. This heresy continued to rage throughout the Church for more than one hundred years. The Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicea, which was held in 787 A.D., declared that icons were to be placed in the churches and that the honor paid them was only relative, that is given for the sake of what they represent, and not for the sake of the images themselves. The final defeat of iconoclasm, that is the destroying of holy images, came under the Byzantine Empress Theodora in 842 A.D. On the first Sunday of the Great Fast in that particular year, the sacred images or icons were restored solemnly to the churches. During the iconoclastic controversy, the principal defenders of the Church's form of True Worship were Saint John Damascene and Saint Theodore the Studite. On this first great fast Sunday, our Byzantine Catholic Church tells us that our souls are "icons" of the Divine Image of God, and we are exhorted to purify this sacred "image" of our soul with various penitential acts of true sorrow and sincere repentance.

ON-LINE GIVING IS HERE! If you wish to make a monetary donation to our parish – you can do so on our website or by using this QR code. Remember every dollar helps support the mission of our parish community. Thank you.



PRAYER FOR OUR FOUR SAINTLY BISHOPS: Please pray for the causes of our four Saintly 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 Avenue, 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