

HOLY SPIRIT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2023 THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY (TRUE WORSHIP) FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

Sunday, February 26: 10:20am Rosary, 10:45am 3rd Hour, 11:00am Divine Liturgy
for the deceased Charles and Ruth Bacasa, by Joseph Bacasa
4pm Confessions and 5pm Divine Liturgy through Campus Ministry

Monday, February 27: 10am Confessions through Campus Ministry 11am Terce-Sext Midday Office
4:30pm Confessions, 5:30pm Daily Vespers

Wednesday, March 1: 3pm-4pm Confessions through Campus Ministry, 5:30pm Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, March 4: 12:00 Noon Divine Liturgy with Panachida 2nd All Souls Saturday,
4:30pm Confession, 5:30pm Great Vespers

Sunday, March 5: 10:20am Rosary, 10:45am 3rd Hour, 11:00am Divine Liturgy
for the deceased Ruth Bacasa on her birthday, by Gerald and Alexandria Bacasa
4pm Confessions and 5pm Divine Liturgy through Campus Ministry

Lenten Vespers begin this week. The first service will be at 4pm at St. Pius X in Carrick, 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..... The first Sunday of the Great Fast commemorates the defeat of the iconoclastic controversy and the solemn restoration of holy icons. This represents the TRUE WORSHIP of the Church of Christ. Our holy gospel account echoes the call to follow Jesus and to share the True Faith with others, while we are reminded in the epistle lesson to maintain the True Worship that has been transmitted to us as our religious patrimony.

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: **(1) February 26, 2023 — St. Pius X Church, Carrick, PA – Homilist: Very Reverend Fr. Andrew Deskevich;** (2) March 5 – Saint John Cathedral, Munhall, PA – Homilist: Fr. Valerian Michlik; (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 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 greatfast 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.

WE SHALL OBSERVE THE SECOND 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