

HOLY SPIRIT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2023 THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

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

Monday, March 20: 10am Confessions through Campus Ministry
4:30pm Confessions, 5:30pm Daily Vespers

Wednesday, March 22: 11am Terce-Sext ~ 3pm-4pm Confessions through Campus Ministry
5:30pm Presanctified Liturgy for the health of Alexandria Bacasa by Theresa Carr

Saturday, March 25: The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Theotokos
11:45am Akathist and Divine Liturgy
4:30pm Confession, 5:30pm Great Vespers

Sunday, March 26: 10:20am Rosary, 10:45am 3rd Hour, 11:00am Divine Liturgy
for the deceased Michael and Hedwig Bacasa, by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bacasa
4pm Confessions and 5pm Divine Liturgy through Campus Ministry

Lenten Vespers continue this week. The service will be at 4pm at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Duquesne, 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.

AT THE DIVINE LITURGY TODAY..... The Hebrew Christians are told that Jesus is preparing a place for them in His Kingdom. So today's theme of ENCOURAGEMENT should bolster our own resolve to complete this greatfast ascetical journey in order to be part of that Kingdom. With Saint John Climacus as our ideal, we continue to pray and fast, yet as our gospel says, we need to implore Jesus for increased faith: "Lord, help me to believe more!"

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: **(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 6:13-20

When God made the promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, “he swore by himself,” and said, “I will indeed bless you and multiply” you. And so, after patient waiting, he obtained the promise.

Human beings swear by someone greater than themselves; for them an oath serves as a guarantee and puts an end to all argument. So when God wanted to give the heirs of his promise an even clearer demonstration of the immutability of his purpose, he intervened with an oath, so that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil, where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner, becoming high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

~~~~~On this fourth greatfast Sunday, the holy epistle lesson which is taken from the letter to the early community of Jewish Christians, provides us with ENCOURAGEMENT so that we would trust and hope in the various promises that God has revealed concerning our salvation. All of these promises are fulfilled in the person of Jesus, our High Priest. God has given His assurance that those who faithfully trust in Him for redemption definitely will receive His promise of eternal life. This should give us confidence as we continue with this last portion of the journey of the Holy Forty-Days Fast. As our High Priest Who has been sacrificed upon the sacred cross, Jesus has gone ahead to plead with God for each of us (His followers) so that we also could be assured of a place in the “New Life” of His heavenly Kingdom.

## **GOSPEL: Mark 9:17-31**

Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so.”

He said to them in reply, “O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him to me.” They brought the boy to him. And when he saw him, the spirit immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground, he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. Then he questioned his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

He replied, “Since childhood. It has often thrown him into fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

Jesus said to him, “If you can!” Everything is possible to one who has faith.”

Then the boy’s father cried out, “I do believe, help my unbelief!”

Jesus, on seeing a crowd rapidly gathering, rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it, “Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!” Shouting and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out. He became like a corpse, which caused many to say, “He is dead!” But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up.

When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, “Why could we not drive it out?” He said to them, “This kind can only come out through prayer.”

They left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death he will rise.”

~~~~~We confidently hope and trust that salvation will be given by Jesus Christ to each of us who follow after Him. We can be certain of this! Today’s holy gospel pericope offers us such ENCOURAGEMENT so that we could manifest hope and belief like the man who was introduced in this scriptural account. The Holy Evangelist Mark presents us with the desperate father of an epileptic boy who besought Jesus, saying: “*If you can, let Your heart be moved with pity, and help us.*” Jesus replied that everything is possible for those who believe in Him as the Son of God. The father retorted, saying that He had faith, that he did believe. However he added, “*Help me to believe more!*” This also must be our constant prayer, for although we do believe, we need divine help to increase our faith. As we continue with the journey of the Great Fast, we must pray and fast just as Jesus commands the apostles in this passage. Our reward for keeping to this task will be the right to participate in His eternal “New Life.” We must not be distracted from attaining this goal!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

There are a number of Liturgical and social events on the horizon, and we are looking for volunteers. If you are interested please speak with or contact Fr. Michael and/or sign up in the back of the church:

Lazarus Saturday Church Cleaning: April 1st after the Noon Divine Liturgy

Great and Holy Friday Vigil: April 7th, shifts between 7pm and Midnight (between Burial Vespers / Procession and Jerusalem Matins)

Archeparchial Choir Concert Reception: April 16th, concert at 2pm, with reception to follow

Thank you!

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 FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST.....

We have already passed the halfway mark of the Great Forty-Days Fast, and as we continue on this second half of the Holy Fast, the theme of encouragement is placed before us so that we would strive to complete our ascetical and penitential goals. On this fourth greatfast Sunday, we have a commemoration of Saint John Climacus (525-606 A.D.), the author of The Ladder of Divine Ascent. He was the Hegumen of the famous Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. He was one of the greatest ascetics of the Byzantine Church, practicing complete self-control, strict self-denial, and firm restraint. It was the custom to read aloud the book of Saint John Climacus in Byzantine monasteries on this fourth Sunday as a stimulus to persevere with one's ascetical practices. Saint John Climacus is well-worthy of being presented today with his book and his "divine ladder" as an exemplary model to be emulated by the faithful. He is an outstanding prototype of the life of fasting from which we can draw encouragement during these last two weeks of the greatfast season. He is our guide impelling us to the heights of a spiritual life that can be attained during the Great Fast.

CELEBRATION OF THE AMAZING FEAST OF THE WONDROUS ANNUNCIATION

On Saturday, March 25th, we shall observe solemnly The Feast of the Astonishing Annunciation of the Most Holy Godbearer. This is one of the most prominent Marian holy days of the liturgical year, and in this year of 2023 it falls on Akathist Saturday, the fifth Saturday of the Holy Great Fast. In commemorating the annunciation event, we celebrate that most sublime moment in salvation history when the Holy Archangel Gabriel greeted the Most Pure Virgin Mary with the joyous news that she was to give birth to the long-awaited Messiah. At that very instant, the incarnation took place, and the Son of God took-on flesh in human form in her holy womb. Thus the miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus signals the actual initiation of salvation history. Without the positive cooperation of this faithful, young Jewish maiden—the Holy Virgin MARY—the salvation achieved through all of the redemptive acts performed by her divine Son could never have been obtained for fallen humanity. Even now during this most penitential time of the Great Fast, the Church pauses for one day and exhorts us to rejoice festively, for through Mary's compliance with God's holy will, her Son Jesus would save us from our sins. By His supreme sacrifice offered on Great Friday upon the desolate tree of the sacred Cross, He has granted us eternal life. Let us honor the Holy Virgin Mary this week, as we recognize the essential role that God had given her to fulfill in His plan for our salvation.

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

Holy Week Schedule 2023

Holy Tuesday ~ April 4

6pm: Confessions

7pm: Bridegroom Matins

Holy Wednesday ~ April 5

6pm: Confessions

7pm: Presanctified Liturgy with Anointing

Holy Thursday ~ April 6

6pm: Confessions

7pm: Vespersal Divine Liturgy

Last chance for Confessions before Easter Sunday.

Great and Holy Friday ~ April 7

9am: Strasti Matins

11am: Royal Hours

7pm: Burial Vespers with Procession followed buy Vigil before the Tomb until Midnight

Great and Holy Saturday ~ April 8

Midnight: Jerusalem Matins

10am: Vespersal Divine Liturgy for Holy Saturday

7pm: Resurrection Matins

Followed by the first opportunity for the Blessing of Baskets in the Hall

Great and Holy Pascha (Easter Sunday) ~ April 9

11am: Paschal Divine Liturgy

Followed by the second opportunity for the Blessing of Baskets in the Hall