

March 15, 2020
Third Sunday of the Great Fast
 Veneration of the Holy Cross



SAINT GEORGE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Fighting the Good Fight with Faith

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever! ~ Slava Isusu Christu! Slava Na Viki!

Proprs for this Sunday: Resurrectional Tone: 7, pg. 156, Third Sunday of the Fast, pp. 223-225, and St. Basil melodies pg. 96

Divine Services Schedule:

SUN., MAR. 15 **THIRD SUNDAY of LENT, Veneration of the Holy Cross**
 8:00 A.M. *Holy Rosary*
 8:30 A.M. **DIVINE LITURGY of St. Basil, Blessing of crosses**
 + In loving memory of son **Paul Kasper**, offered by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Ozimok
 5:00 P.M. **Bible Study and Soup Supper**

(At St. Mary: Wednesday, March 18, 6:00 P.M., Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts)

FRI., MAR. 20 **FOURTH FRIDAY OF LENT**
 6:00 P.M. **LITURGY of the PRE-SANCTIFIED GIFTS**

SAT., MAR. 21 **FOURTH ALL-SOULS SATURDAY**
 9:00 A.M. **DIVINE LITURGY, Panachida, Hramoty, Koliva**

SUN., MAR. 22 **FOURTH SUNDAY of LENT, St. John Climacus**
 8:00 A.M. *Holy Rosary*
 8:30 A.M. **DIVINE LITURGY of St. Basil**
 + **Frank Polas**, offered by daughter Betty
 5:00 P.M. **Bible Study and Soup Supper**



We fly to your patronage, O Virgin Mother of God. Despise not our prayers in our necessities, but you, who alone are pure and blessed, deliver us from all danger.

Happy Birthday Greetings this Week:

March 21: Mary Ann Popovich

Wedding Anniversaries this Week:

None for the week

Let us remember in our prayers all of our friends and parish family members who are sick at home or in a nursing facility and for all those who are in need of our prayers:

HOME – Eileen Batcha, Natalie Jugan-Diaz, Rebecca Dickun, Marianne Dove, Jean Herdt, Rebecca Hutcheon, Kevin Joray, Mary Ann Jugan, Neil Jugan, Josephine Maruhnich, Mary Salamon, John Simunick, Bonnie Taylor

Hunter's Care Home (1916 Main St, Aliquippa, PA 15001) – Mary Poiarkoff

West Hills Health & Rehab Center (951 Brodhead Road, Coraopolis, PA 15108) – Alice Haber, Margaret Klacik

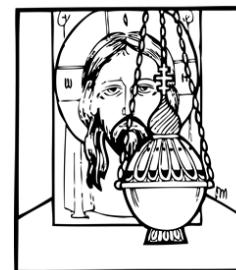
Beaver Meadows (5130 Tuscarawas Rd, Beaver, PA 15009) - Angie Yuhasz

Brighton Rehabilitation and Wellness Center (246 Friendship Cir, Beaver, PA 15009) - Carole Panella

Epistle Readers: March 15: Louisa Hersh – March 22: Jo Ann Hersh

Ushers: March 8: March 15: F. Hersh/M. Bobanic – March 22: E. Maruhnich/J. Yurosky

Troica Holders: March 15: R. Dzumba – March 22: F. Hersh



THE SANCTUARY LAMP

March 15 - 21, 2020

Burns before the real presence of our Lord for:

Mary Salamon
(Health & God's Blessings)

Offered By:
 A friend



PRAYER OF SAINT EPHREM

To be said daily during the Great Fast

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter.

(Prostration)

Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love.

(Prostration)

Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

(Prostration)



Upcoming Calendar of Events

Today **Lenten Study Group and Soup Supper, 5:00 P.M.** (info in bulletin)
February 24 – April 5 **Lenten Almsgiving Collection**
March 18 **Mid-Lent**
March 20 **Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts, 6:00 P.M.**
March 21 **Fourth All-Souls Saturday, Liturgy, Hramoty 9:00 A.M.**
March 22 **Lenten Study Group and Soup Supper continues, 5:00 P.M.**
March 24 **6:00 P.M. Vespers Divine Liturgy for the Annunciation**
March 25 **Feast of the Annunciation**

Church Library

Our Church Library is here to help you with your spiritual reading needs. Be sure to utilize this important Ministry of our Church.

Borrow a spiritual book to help you in this trying time.



“Completely have trust in God, leave everything in His hands, and believe that His love will act for your own benefit. Then God will take care of everything, because there is nothing He cannot do; everything is easy for Him. The difficult thing is for man to decide to humble himself and leave everything to God’s providence and love.”

Elder Paisios of Mt Athos

Prayer For Those Who Are Ill

O Lord our God, Who by a word alone did heal all diseases, who did cure the kinswoman of Peter, You who chastise with pity and heal according to Your goodness; Who are able to put aside every sickness and infirmity, do You Yourself, the same Lord, grant aid to Your servants and handmaids and cure them of every sickness of which they are grieved; and send down upon them Your great mercy, and if it be Your will, give to them health and a complete recovery; for You are the Physician of our souls and bodies, and to You do we send up glory: to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, both now and ever and forever. Amen.

The Holy Eucharist dispels diseases and heals the sick

St. Cyril of Alexandria

The more days of fasting there are, the better the healing is; the longer the period of abstinence, the more abundant the gain of salvation is.

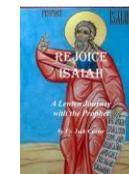
Blessed Augustine

Important Announcement

Please provide your email address to the Church (if you have one) in the event that mass communication is needed. Also provide your cell phone number. There is a sign-up list in the narthex and Center. Examples of mass communication are not limited to the current corona virus situation but also include any weather announcements and the like. Thank you.

Lenten Study Group and Soup Suppers!

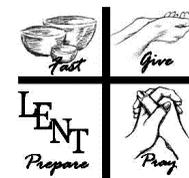
Our Lenten Study Group along with a soup supper, continues **TODAY** and following **Sundays** during the Great Fast, at **5:00 P.M.** We are reflecting on the book **Rejoice Isaiah, Spiritual Reflections on the Readings from Isaiah during the Great Fast.**



The Library and Church Store will be open at this time too.

This Bible study is the ideal companion for our spiritual journey through the Great Fast.

Spiritual reflection, fasting supper, and fellowship



Parish Lenten Almsgiving Collection

Our very important Parish Lenten Almsgiving collection is going on now through April 5. Non-perishable food items are being collected for the St. Vincent De Paul Society Food Bank in Aliquippa. A donation area is set up in the Parish Center and in the narthex of the Church. **Let's fill up the boxes!**

Parish Lenten Prayer Project

Are you participating?

During this Lenten Season, remember to pray for those who have fallen away from the Catholic Church and for their return to the fullness of the faith through the intercession of the *Mother of God, Searcher for the Lost.*



The *Searcher for the Lost* Icon and prayers are set up in the front of the Church. **Take copies home to pray daily. Pray here, pray at home.**

It's never too late to participate in the Great Fast!

The Cross Room - A young man was at the end of his rope. Seeing no way out, he dropped to his knees in prayer. "Lord, I can't go on," he said. "I have too heavy a cross to bear. The Lord replied, "My son, if you can't bear its weight, just place your cross inside this room. Then open that other door and pick out any cross you wish." The young man was filled with relief. "Thank you Lord," he sighed, and he did what he was told. Upon entering the other door, he saw many other crosses, some so large the tops weren't even visible. Then he spotted a tiny cross leaning against the far wall. "I'd like that one Lord," he whispered. And the Lord replied, "My son that is the cross you just brought in."



Third Sunday of the Great Fast

Veneration of the Holy Cross

On this Sunday we commemorate the venerable Cross and the Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross as such takes on meaning and adoration because of the Crucifixion of Christ upon it. Therefore, whether it is in Church hymns or prayers, it is understood that the Cross without Christ has no meaning or place in Christianity. The adoration of the Cross in the middle of the Great Fast-Lent is to remind the faithful in advance of the Crucifixion of Christ.



Therefore, the readings and the hymnology refer to the Passions, the sufferings, of Our Savior: The passages read this day repeat the calling of the Christian by Christ to dedicate his life, for “If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me (Christ)”. This verse clearly indicates the kind of dedication which is needed by the Christian in three steps: To renounce his arrogance and disobedience to God’s Plan. The second decision is to lift up his personal cross (the difficulties of life) with patience, faith and the full acceptance of the Will of God without complaint that the burden is too heavy. Having denied himself and lifted up his cross leads him to the third decision, and that is to follow Christ.

These three voluntary steps are three links which cannot be separated from each other, because the main power to accomplish them is the Grace of God, which man always invokes. The Adoration/Veneration of the Cross is expressed by the faithful through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the forgiveness of the trespasses of others. On this Sunday the Veneration of the Cross is commemorated with a special service in the beginning of the Divine Liturgy in which the significance of the Cross is that it leads to the Resurrection of Christ.

We bow to Your Cross, O Lord, and we glorify Your Holy Resurrection!



Self-Denial and Sure-Footedness – One who claims to abide in Christ ought to walk as He walked. Would you follow Christ? Then be humble as he was humble. Do not scorn his lowliness if you want to reach his exaltation. Human sin made the road rough. Christ’s resurrection leveled it. By passing over it Himself, He transformed the narrowest of tracks into a royal highway. Two feet are needed to run along this highway; they are humility and charity. Everyone wants to get to the top – well, the first step to take is humility. Why take strides that are too big for you – do you want to fall instead of going up? Begin with the first step, humility, and you will already be climbing.

(Saint Caesarius of Arles)

Excerpt from Christ Our Pascha

Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. The Church proclaims to the human race the presence of the Risen Christ within history, and manifests this presence in her liturgical prayer. This happens when the faithful remember the historical events of the Passion and Resurrection and thus become witnesses and communicants of the new life in Christ: “[Historical] truth and the solemnity [celebration of it] are not at variance.” In the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the Church shows herself to be the one Body of Christ (see Eph 1:23). (#6)



Having Come to the Midpoint of the Forty Day Great and Holy Fast... Let Me Reflect...

Have I accepted the Great Fast- Lent as a “gift” from God, with thanksgiving? - Have I spent the last three weeks in a meaningfully different way? - Have I participated in the Lenten services that are held during the week, especially Wednesday and Friday evenings? - Have I used the Lenten prayer of Saint Ephraim in my morning and evening prayers, and at other times throughout the day? – Have I prayed for those who have fallen away from the Church? (Our Lenten Prayer project) - In addition to the Holy Scriptures, what kind of spiritual reading have I done? Have I learned more about my Faith? Have I read spiritual works which can help me in my prayers, dealing with others, and spiritual faults and needs? - Am I preparing myself to make a good, honest, and humble Confession? Do I really believe that I am confessing my sins to Jesus Christ? Am I aware that the Lord sees my inner heart and will know if I only recite my sins, instead of being truly sorrowful and deeply committed to avoid repeating them? - In what ways will I struggle in the second part of the Great Fast that I have so far left unattended? - What price am I willing to pay in order to die and live in Christ? - Am I willing to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Him to His heavenly Kingdom? –**It’s never too late to participate in the Great Fast!**



Candle offerings for Easter sign-up sheets are in the Center

SAINT GEORGE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1001 Clinton Street- Aliquippa, PA 15001

PASTOR: FATHER GEOFFREY MACKEY

Fr. Geoffrey's Direct Line: (412) 356-3698

OFFICE PHONE: 724-375-2742

FAX: 724-375-8776

ST. GEORGE CENTER: 724-375-6652

PARISH WEBSITE: www.stgeorgebyzantinecatholicchurch.org



**Cantors: Jo Ann Hersh, David Klacik,
Louisa Hersh**

**E.C.F. coordinator: Jo Ann Hersh
Facilities Supervisor: John Poiarkoff**

Holy Mystery of Reconciliation Before and after Liturgies
Holy Mysteries of Initiation Contact the church office
Holy Mystery of Anointing Ask prior to surgery or serious illness
Holy Mystery of Marriage Contact the church office eight months prior to wedding
Religious Education Classes September through May, following Sunday Divine Liturgy
Pirohi Sales 2nd Friday of each month, Sept. through May
St. George Ladies' Guild & Men's Club Everyone welcome to participate

True fasting lies is rejecting evil, holding one's tongue, suppressing one's hatred, and banishing one's lust, evil words, lying, and betrayal of vows.

St. Basil the Great

GUIDELINES FROM THE ARCHEPARCHY REGARDING THE CORONAVIRUS

The Archeparchy of Pittsburgh issued the following guidelines on March 12:

- If you feel sick, please do not come to church on Sundays, Lenten services, holy days of obligation, or other days. Sick people are not morally obliged to be in church on Sundays, Lenten services and holy days of obligation; you could instead watch or listen to a Liturgy through one of the modern means of the social media, including radio.
- Please avoid handshakes and hugs with your fellow parishioners in church.
- Discontinue venerating icons, or the cross throughout the church until we are through this situation.
- If you need to sneeze or cough in church, including when you are in the confessional, please use a tissue or other appropriate method that would not put those around you at risk.
- Should we avoid receiving Holy Communion? If you believe you are sick, or that you are in danger of death because of weak health, then refrain from approaching the Chalice. If you do approach to receive Holy Communion then please open your mouth as widely as possible and do not touch the spoon with your lips.

FROM FATHER GEOFF

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to spread throughout the world, we find ourselves in a new and unique situation. As information flies at us from a variety of sources, I encourage you to turn to *trustworthy* sources – medical professionals, pathologists, the Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization and the like.

The coronavirus is now being labeled a “pandemic” by the World Health Organization. This does not refer to the severity of a virus or disease, but simply to how *widespread* it is. And it is, indeed, now widespread. It appears now that in China, where it originated, the rates have leveled off and, by God’s grace will perhaps now begin to drop. Italy has been particularly hard-hit. The Catholic Church in Italy has suspended all public Masses and liturgies until at least April 3.

Here in Western Pennsylvania – as of my writing this on Friday – there has not yet been a confirmed case in Allegheny or Beaver counties. But given the spread, it seems that it will be only a matter of time. Many organizations are limiting or canceling meetings and events because it seems that, to prevent the spread, action must be taken *before* an outbreak. Nearby, Geneva College and Trinity School for Ministry have both opted to move their on-campus classes to online classes. The City of Pittsburgh has canceled its St. Patrick’s Day parade. Some places of business are encouraging people, as able, to work from home.

The good news is that, for most people (80%), COVID-19 produces only mild symptoms – fever and cough. However, others are at higher risk for more serious complications. Some may require hospitalization or even critical care. Those who are elderly and have certain pre-existing medical conditions are at the highest risk. Unfortunately, in our context, that means a significant portion of our congregation. Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, high blood pressure, and cancer can all be complicating factors.

If you are elderly or in a high-risk group, you are not obligated to attend the Liturgy. This is not contrary to the law of the Church.

Those who are younger and in good health, however, should not be careless, as we interact with those who are elderly or ill. It is an obligation of charity that we take care to do what we can not to spread this virus which may be dangerous to others.

Those who attend Liturgies should limit person-to-person contact, as per the Archeparchy’s instructions – avoiding handshakes and hugs. You may also wish to keep distance between yourself and others. According to the CDC the coronavirus spreads person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another and through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.¹ “Social distancing” is being recommended as a way to prevent the further spread of the virus between people. In general, this means avoiding non-essential gatherings of people; but also leaving space (six feet is recommended) between people when possible.

When you cough or sneeze, please cover your mouth and nose with your arm or a tissue. Wash your hands at the earliest convenience. Be assured that before the liturgy and the handling of the sacred things, I will be thoroughly washing my hands.

Regarding Reception of Communion

The Latin Diocese of Pittsburgh has suspended the offering of the sacred chalice to the faithful.ⁱⁱ Because we Byzantines receive both the Body and Blood on the tongue by means of a spoon, it is not so easy to change our method. However, it is my opinion that our method of communion is probably the safest of any in Christendom for a few reasons:

First, communion of bread in the hand or the tongue means that other hands have to touch the bread. Since our bread is placed into the wine, this means that there is a natural antiseptic (alcohol) which has a better chance of killing any germs that might be on the hands.

Even if this were not so: In Christian communities which receive communion by drinking from a common cup, there has been no scientifically documented case of infection being transmitted this way. The CDC explains that there is a “theoretical risk” of infectious diseases being transmitted by common cup, “but the risk is so small that it is undetectable.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In our church we use a spoon, rather than sharing directly from the cup. And we keep our mouths open (not closed around the spoon). Furthermore, the spoon gets plunged back into the chalice after each communicant. So the risk remains very low indeed.

[In our Catholic faith, we believe that the wine and bread become truly the Blood and Body of our Lord. However, they *outwardly* remain the same – which means that the physical properties of bread and wine – including alcohol – remain. This means that the precious Blood retains antiseptic properties.]

Since we receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, “for the healing of soul and body,” I do not think it wise to refrain from reception of Communion for any extended period of time. However, the decision to receive or not to receive at any particular liturgy is a personal one that each congregant should undertake with prayer and discernment.

A Word About Fear and Faith

While I think a little common sense goes a long way, above all, brothers and sisters, I want us to be people who are not driven by fear or anxiety. “Fear not” appears in the Scriptures over 300 times. Our Lord is a Lord of life and hope. He calls us to be people of courage and compassion. Any measures we take to assist in the overcoming of this virus should be done out of a loving desire to see the health and well-being of our brothers and sisters, not out of a fear.

If I need to suffer through illness or quarantine or what-have-you, I am called to do so with patience, with perseverance, with faith, and with love. While we should take precautions, we should also be thinking of creative ways to show our love and support to one another.

In the early Church, one of the ways that the Faith spread throughout the pagan world was that in times of epidemics, Christians were fearless in their serving of each other and of their neighbors. When the plagues ended, pagans saw how courageous and kind the Christians were and were converted to the Faith.^{iv}

We should, in anxious times, be modeling for each other and for our neighbors a trust in the goodness, loving-kindness, and providence of our God. “God is with us,” we sing at Christmastime. And indeed, he is and always will be.

Trusting our Lord (and washing my hands),
Fr. Geoff

DIVINE LITURGY STREAMED AT VARIOUS TIMES

Cathedral of St. John:	Saturday at 5:00 PM Sunday at 9:00 AM www.stjohnsbyzantinecathedral.com
Holy Ghost, McKees Rocks:	Sunday at 9:00 AM WEDO Radio 810 AM
St. John Chrysostom:	Sunday at 10:30 AM www.sjbcc.com
St. Gregory, Upper St. Clair:	Saturday at 5:00 PM Sunday at 9:30 AM www.stgregoryusc.org

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.wtae.com/article/pittsburgh-diocese-announces-mass-precautions-due-to-coronavirus/31197040>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-chalice-is-sacred-but-is-it-safe/article4144794/>

^{iv} See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*. New York: HarperOne, 1997. Chapter 4