

THE FORERUNNER

weekly bulletin of

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

Orthodox Church in America (OCA) - Archdiocese of Pittsburgh

His Eminence, Most Rev. Melchisedek

601 Boone Avenue, Canonsburg, PA 15317

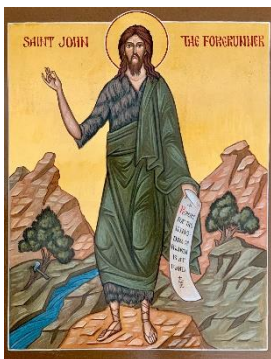
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*Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Canonsburg,
the Chartiers Valley, Washington, and Beyond!*

April 9th, AD 2023

PALM SUNDAY:

The Triumphal Entry of our Lord into Jerusalem



Home Parish of the Ever-Memorable **Met. Theodosius**, (+10/19)

May his memory be eternal! Вѣчная память!

Rector, **Fr. John Joseph Kotalik**

425-503-2891 - frjohnkotalik@gmail.com

Attached Clergy:

Protodeacon John Oleynik, 724-366-0678

Deacon Theodosius Onest, 724-809-3491

Readers: Michael Galis & John Thompson

Choir Director, *Vacant & Looking*; Interim, **Mrs. Diane Yarosh**

*The Orthodox Church humbly claims to be the One Church of Jesus Christ,
founded on the Apostolic Witness to our Lord, born on the day of Pentecost, and for 2,000 years making
known to men, women, and children the path to salvation through repentance and faith in Christ.*

Services are Live-Streamed Online on our YouTube Channel:

www.youtube.com/c/StJohntheBaptistOrthodoxChurchCanonsburg/live

Upcoming Schedule

Confession is available after most evening services, and by appointment (including before Liturgy)

Holy Communion is available by appointment for those cautious about COVID

April 9, PALM SUNDAY:

-12:30 PM, Holy Friday/Paschal Procession Rehearsal – See list below!

-6:30 PM, Bridegroom Matins

April 10, Monday (HOLY MONDAY):

-9:00 AM, 9th Hour, Typica, & Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

-6:30 PM, Bridegroom Matins of Holy Tuesday

April 11, Tuesday (HOLY TUESDAY):

-4:30 PM, Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

-6:00 PM, Lenten Meal

-7:00 PM, Bridegroom Matins of Holy Wednesday w/ Hymn of St. Cassia

April 12, Wednesday (HOLY WEDNESDAY):

-9:00 AM, 9th Hour, Typica, & Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

w/ Last Use of the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

-6:30 PM, Matins of Holy Thursday

April 13, Thursday (HOLY THURSDAY):

-9:00 AM, **Vespertal Liturgy of the Lord's Supper**

-6:30 PM, **Matins of Holy Friday** w/ Twelve Passion Gospels

April 14, Friday (HOLY FRIDAY):

-9:00 AM, Royal Hours of Holy Friday

-1:00 PM, Set-Up for Paschal Picnic/BBQ (Sunday) – See note below.

-3:00 PM, **Vespertal of Holy Friday** w/ Rite of Deposition of Christ from the Cross

-7:00 PM, **Matins of Holy Saturday** w/ Lamentations before the Tomb of Christ

April 15, Saturday (HOLY SATURDAY):

-1:00 PM, **Vespertal Liturgy of Holy Saturday**, followed by Basket Blessing

-11:30 PM, **Paschal Nocturne**

April 16, Sunday (HOLY PASCHA: THE FEAST OF FEASTS):

-12:00 AM, **Paschal Matins & Liturgy**, followed by Basket Blessing & Agape Feast

-1:00 PM, **Agape Vespertal**, followed by Basket Blessing

-1:30 PM, Paschal Picnic, BBQ, and Easter Egg Hunt (Weather Permitting)

(Will be in parish hall if bad weather, but Fr. John will still make his Tri-Tip!)

April 17, Monday (BRIGHT MONDAY):

-10:00 AM, Paschal Liturgy w/ Procession (Weather Permitting)

April 18, Tuesday (BRIGHT TUESDAY):

-9:30 AM, Paschal Liturgy & Meal

@ Monastery of the Transfiguration, 321 Monastery Lane, Ellwood City, PA

-6:00 PM, Paschal Vespers

April 19, Wednesday (BRIGHT WEDNESDAY):

-9:00 AM, Paschal Matins

-5:00 PM, Paschal Vespers

-5:30 PM, Paschal BBQ & Yard Game Night

(If weather is bad, we'll gather in the parish hall instead!)

April 20, Thursday (BRIGHT THURSDAY):

-6:00 PM, Paschal Vespers

-7:00 PM, Parish Council Meeting

April 21, Friday (BRIGHT FRIDAY):

-9:00 AM, Paschal Matins & Liturgy

-5:00 PM, Paschal Vespers

April 22, Saturday (BRIGHT SATURDAY):

-10:00 AM, Paschal Liturgy

-6:00 PM, Vespers, followed by Confession

-7:00 PM, Rectory Bonfire

April 23, Sunday (St. Thomas Sunday):

-8:00 AM, Matins

-9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy

~12:30 PM, Grave Blessing @ Parish Cemetery (Weather Permitting)

~1:15 PM, Grave Blessing @ Oak Spring Cemetery (Weather Permitting)

April 24, Monday:

-6:00 PM, Vespers – *Join us afterwards for wing night at Primanti's in Washington!*

April 26, Wednesday:

-6:00 PM, Vespers, followed by Confession

April 29, Saturday:

-6:00 PM, Vespers, followed by Confession

-7:00 PM, Rectory Bonfire

April 30, Sunday (Myrrhbearing Women – Mother's Day in many Orthodox lands):

-8:00 AM, Matins

-9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy

-12:30 PM, Talk with Investment Banker: Tax Strategies for the Upcoming Landscape

Fr. John would be more than happy to speak with you after today's service!

Please note that the reception of Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and recent Confession.

Hymns at the Entrance with the Gospel

First Festal Antiphon: *℟̅. 1. I love the Lord / because He has heard the voice of my supplication. ℞ Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Saviour, save us. ℣. 2. Because He inclined His ear to me, / therefore will I call on Him as long as I live. ℣. 3. The snares of death encompassed me, / the pangs of hell laid hold on me. ℣. 4. I suffered distress and anguish, / then I called upon the Name of the Lord. ℣. 5. I will walk in the presence of the Lord, / in the land of the living. ℣. 6. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; / now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. ℞ Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Saviour, save us.*

Second Festal Antiphon: *℣. 1. I kept my faith even when I said, / I am greatly afflicted. ℞ O Son of God, seated upon the colt of an ass, / save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia. ℣. 2. What shall I render to the Lord, / for all the things he has given me? ℣. 3. I will receive the cup of salvation / and call upon the Name of the Lord. ℣. 4. I will pay my vows to the Lord / in the presence of all His people. ℞ O Son of God, seated upon the colt of an ass, / save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia.*

And the conclusion of the 2nd Antiphon, St. Justinian's Hymn of the Incarnation: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. / Only-begotten Son and Immortal Word of God, / who for our salvation didst will to be incarnate / of the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, / who without change didst become man and wast crucified, / O Christ our God, trampling down death by death, / who art one of the Holy Trinity, / glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, / save us.

Third Festal Antiphon: *℣. 1. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. ℞ By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion, / Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God. / Like the children with the palms of victory, / we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: / Hosanna in the highest; // blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord. ℣. 2. Let the house of Israel now say that He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. ℣. 3. Let the house of Aaron now say that He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. ℣. 4. Let all those who fear the Lord now say that He is good; for His mercy endureth forever.*
Introit Verse (Deacon): Wisdom. Stand aright. Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. God is the Lord and have revealed Himself to us.

And the entrance hymns:

Troparion of the Feast of Palms, Tone 1: By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion, / Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God. / Like the children with the palms of victory, / we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: / Hosanna in the highest; // blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Troparion of Palm Sunday, Tone 4: When we were buried with thee in baptism, O Christ God, / we were made *worthy* of eternal life by Thy Resurrection. / Now we praise thee and sing: // Hosanna in the highest. // Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion of Palm Sunday, Tone 6: Sitting on Thy throne in heaven, / and carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God, / accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing: // Blessed is he that comes to recall Adam.

Scriptural Lessons:

Preparing us to hear the Scriptures, the Prokeimenon, Tone 4

Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us.

✠ O give thanks unto the Lord for His is good;
for His mercy endureth for ever.

Epistle Reading:

§247, Phil. 4:4-9 (Palm Sunday)

BRETHREN, rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Alleluia before the Gospel, Tone 5:

✠ O sing unto the Lord a new song, for the Lord hath done marvellous things.

✠ All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Gospel Reading:

John §41, 12:1-18 (Palm Sunday)

SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER, JESUS came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on the colt of an ass.

These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

Festal Magnification of the Theotokos, Tone 4

(Instead of 'It is Truly Meet')

God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself to us. Celebrate the feast, and come with gladness: let us magnify Christ with palms and branches, singing: blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord, our Saviour.

Communion Hymns:

Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord. /

God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us. //

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Prayer before the Ambo for Palm Sunday

Priest: We sing Thy praises, O Christ our God, for Thine ineffable condescension: for, having heaven as Thy throne and earth as Thy footstool, Thou didst not disdain to become incarnate of the Holy Virgin and to be born as man and to recline in the manger of irrational beasts as a new-born babe, and Thou didst sit on a foal and didst come to endure Thy voluntary Passion for us. O Thou art praised by the ceaseless hymns of the heavenly powers, as befits God, and didst wisely instruct the innocent multitudes to sing a new hymn on earth, fashioning praise from the mouths of babes and infants, and teaching inarticulate tongues to proclaim glory in heaven and peace on earth, accept us unworthy servants with them, as we offer triumphant songs to Thee, the Victor over death, and proclaim Thee blessed in coming in the Name of God, not being separated from the glory of the Father, and as coming again to judge the world in righteousness. And grant us Thine own access and acceptance, having adorned us with victorious struggles against the passions, and having crowned us with the beauty of the virtues instead of palms and branches, so that we might joyfully go to meet Thee, coming on the clouds in glory, and be made heirs of Thy kingdom; grant victories to Orthodox Christians over their adversaries, for Thou lovest mankind and art glorified, together with Thine unoriginate Father and Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. *Choir:* **℞** Amen.

Holy Week - April 10-15 - Intense Fasting

- On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, we fast as strictly as we can without sickness or endangering ourselves & others.
- We should eat as simply as possible on these days: many people practice Xerophagy, like during Clean Week (*xerophagy*, which means 'dry-eating', means eating foods which require little-to-no preparation, like nuts, raw vegetables, fruits, bread, etc.). This helps us spend less time on food prep.
- Easier food prep means more time for prayer and worship!
- On Holy Thursday, a Wine & Oil day, our fasting is lessened and we may eat more, cook with oil, and celebrate our Lord's Supper by consuming wine and liquor.
- Holy Friday, when our Lord died upon the Cross, should be our strictest day of fasting throughout the year. We should struggle to fast completely until after the afternoon Vespers service, and then eating as simply and as little as possible.
- On Holy Saturday, we should fast from midnight until receiving Communion at the Vesperal Liturgy, and then from 6 PM for the midnight Paschal Service.
- For our meal on Holy Saturday after the Vesperal Liturgy, the Typikon (the book which lays out all our fasting and feasting rules) appoints a large piece of bread, six figs or dates, and a cup of wine. Following the spirit of this, many people limit this meal to bread, fruits, and wine, though in less austere quantities.

Eucharistic Fasting Guidelines

- If a Liturgy is earlier than noon, we fast from midnight on.
- If a Liturgy is in the afternoon or evening, we should fast from midnight, if possible, but we **MUST** fast completely from food and water from noon or for 6 hours (whichever is longer) before receiving Holy Communion.
- If we arrive late to an evening Presanctified because of work or traffic, but have prepared yourself by fasting, prayer, and recent Confession, we may receive Holy Communion despite arriving late.

Children should be included in lenten meals. Parents may need to supplement the lenten meals with non-lenten foods, but our children **can and should** participate in the lifestyle changes that Lent brings, so that might learn from an early age. If in doubt about how to modify these guidelines, see the priest.

Preparing for Holy Week - April 8-15

On Lazarus Saturday (April 8), we enter into the special and sacred time of Holy Week and Pascha. Holy Week is a single unbroken Liturgy that over ten days, from Lazarus Saturday to Pascha, which invites us to participate in the saving love of Jesus Christ in the here and now. The love which Jesus shows is real, it is now, and we are invited through worship to receive it and to unite ourselves to Christ, entering into His saving work in a special and solemn way.

During Holy Week, each and every one of us is called to truly “lay aside all earthly cares,” i.e., all activities and concerns that distract from the great mystery which is happening for us and to us. For us to properly lay aside all earthly cares, experience shows that prayerful preparation is helpful. Some questions we might want to ask ourselves:

- Have I marked up my personal and work calendars so that I won’t accidentally schedule a conflict between my family, work, and church commitments?
- Have I finished my taxes and other big projects that compete for my mental space?
- Have I made peace with anyone that I’ve offended?
- Can I do extra chores around my home or projects at work to give a little extra space to Holy Week? Especially for the Great Sabbath (Holy Saturday, April 15), when – like with Holy Friday – we should abstain from all work not pertaining to Pascha.
- Have I remembered to formally request Great and Holy Friday (April 14) off work? Have I remembered that Orthodox Christians aren’t supposed to work on that most solemn day? Even in today’s secular age, every employer understands and has a policy to accommodate this sentence: “Hi, Orthodox Good Friday is April 14th this year. I’d like to take a day off for religious reasons.” You’ll be glad you did!

Consider Writing Pascha Cards to our Homebound

Eric Bell

333 East Beau Street,
Washington, PA 15301

Shirley Brookman

Hawthorne Woods Assisted Living
791 Locust Ave, Washington, PA 15301

Eva Chupinsky

Hawthorne Woods Assisted Living
791 Locust Ave, Washington, PA 15301

Lillian Janousek

322 Fawcett Church Road
Bridgeville, PA 15017

Maria Jacobs

Country Meadows Retirement Communities
3570 Washington Pike, Bridgeville, PA 15017

Grace Matyuf

Chartiers Bend Retirement Resort
1001 Hastings Park Dr, Bridgeville, PA 15017

Olga Mikus

1100 Main Street, Unit 304
Canonsburg, PA 15317

Florence Petrosky (Metro’s Widow)

20 High Street,
Monessen, PA 15062

Kathryn Podany

Strabane Woods Assisted Living
319 Wellness Way, Washington, PA 15301

Linda Povich

311 Bow Street,
Canonsburg, PA 15317

Gregory Sakovich

103 White Way
Canonsburg, PA 15317

Eleanor Simko

1053 Maplewood Drive
Canonsburg, PA 15317

Cirio & Kathleen Signorini

243 McDowell Lane, Apt. #220
Canonsburg, PA 15317

Joseph Zupancic

155 DiCio Street,
Canonsburg, PA 15317

Candles for Holy Week & Pascha

- On the evenings of Holy Thursday (Passion Gospels), Holy Friday (Lamentations), and Holy Pascha itself, candles with wax guards will be available for the faithful to hold during the services and in procession. While these are provided by our parish, please consider a donation of \$2 per candle to offset the cost of these candles.
- For Pascha baskets, beeswax tapers are available for \$2, or candles decorated with a ribbon and a wax three-bar cross for \$15.
- As in past years, our parish will be lighting 14-day Vigils to burn brightly for our intentions from Pascha through Bright Week and the week of St. Thomas Sunday. If you'd like to have one lit for you on Pascha night, please see Carol Sweda or Tony Cario. The cost is \$15.

Procession with Burial Shroud (Friday Night)

If you are unable to fulfill your assignment, please find someone else.

Processional Candle: Altar Server

Processional Cross: Altar Server

Banner of Christ: David Stockman + **Banner of Theotokos:** Mike Pazuchanics

Altar Server Candles: Altar Servers

Fans (2): Altar Servers

Burial Shroud: Rd. Michael Galis, John Oleynik, Kiprian Yarosh, David Alpaugh

Paschal Procession (Sat/Sun Midnight)

If you are unable to fulfill your assignment, please find someone else.

Processional Candle: Altar Server (Roberto Thompson)

Processional Cross: Altar Server (Nathan Stockman)

Banner of Christ: Mark White + **Banner of Theotokos:** David Alpaugh

Altar Server Candles: Katie Pazuchanics & Anastasia Rudolph

Icon of the Resurrection: Vincent Wise

--with Fans (2): Altar Servers

Icon of Christ: Aaron Carson + **Icon of the Theotokos:** Emily Thacker

Altar Server Candles: Chelsea Geer & Megan Geer

Icon of St. John: Paula Phillis + **Icon of St. Job:** Leah Stockman

Altar Server Candles: Bridget Onest & Nina Onest

Icon of St. Herman: Mat. Paemla Onest + **Icon of St. Theodosius:** Gregory Oleynik

Icon of St. Alexis: Daniel Thacker

Altar Server Candles: Lilah & Annabelle Ruffing

Artos: Mat. Myra Oleynik

Altar Server Candles: Layla Killmeyer & Melina Killmeyer

Gospel: Colton-Dismas Ingram

Triple Candles (Troitsi): David Stockmn, Steve Simko, Jerry Strennen

Additional Altar Server Candles: Altar Servers

Grave Watch

Holy Friday and Saturday are two of the most solemn days within the life of the Orthodox Church, on which we witness our Lord willingly give His life for our sake, descending even to hell in order to redeem us from sin and death. We watch our Lord's crucifixion by the hands of those He came to save, and contemplate the mystery of God's descent to hell, awaiting in joy His glorious Resurrection from the dead. A venerable tradition in the Church – especially among the Carpatho-Russians who founded our parish – is the Vigil at the Tomb of Christ, commonly referred to as the 'Grave Watch.' After our Lord died on the Cross, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus, bound it in linen cloths with spices, and buried it in a new tomb. Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" (the Theotokos) sat opposite the tomb, watching as their Lord was buried. The Church has joined with these two women in keeping watch over Jesus' tomb for centuries, and the Grave Watch Vigil is our opportunity join these two women, and generations of our forebears in the Faith, by helping to keep watch over our Lord's body as He descends into Hell to loosen the bonds of death. What better way to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus than to participate in the Vigil by His tomb?

The Church has given us this opportunity to watch and wait with the countless saints and myriads of angels as our Lord conquers death. In many parishes, this custom has died out due to lack of volunteers, but let us struggle to offer this small sacrifice of time and energy to Christ and join the faithful Mary Magdalene and Our Lady Theotokos in awaiting the Resurrection of her Son. If you can, please join us in this effort! You may sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084FADA929ABF94-grave2> and, closer to Pascha, on Sundays in the narthex.

When we keep watch over the tomb from Friday through Saturday morning, we most commonly see the Psalter read, but many read the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles; others sing hymns, while yet others simply pray in silence. Regardless, it is almost universal to read the Acts of the Apostles from the Vespertal Liturgy on Saturday through the Midnight Paschal Service, as historically the newly-baptized Christians would sit and hear these words as the conclusion of their catechetical preparation for life in the Church. Finally, it is customary for the Grave Watch to conclude, just before the Paschal Vigil, with the reading of the conclusion of the Book of Revelation (20:11 – 22:21).

Paschal BBQ/Picnic Set-Up - April 14

On Holy Friday, April 14, at 1:00 PM. Michael Galis will be leading our volunteers in setting up the back of the rectory for our Sunday afternoon barbecue and picnic, as in years past. Once again, we'll be setting up a tent to protect against the sun and – God forbid – rain, as well as several tables and enough chairs to seat them. If we get five or six able-bodied adults, we should have plenty of time to sit down and have a quick rest before Holy Friday Vespers at 3:00 PM.

Paschal Agape Feast

The midnight service concludes with each parish community's Agape Feast, where we gather together in order grow in love (*agápe* means 'love' in Greek) for each other as brothers and sisters who have been redeemed by Christ, our Passover, and brought into his household by His Blood. This harkens back to the earliest days of the Church, when the Eucharist was the conclusion of the Christian community's Agape (Love) Feast. The Christians would come to gather and grow in love by eating a supper together, which climaxed with the celebration and reception of the Eucharist, Christ's Body and Blood. However, this soon proved untenable, as many were more focused on filling their stomachs and drinking wine to excess than on the whole purpose of the feast: the Holy Eucharist. So, by the year 100 in some places, and universally by around the year 250, the Eucharist began to be celebrated in the morning, preceded by complete fasting (thus putting hope in the food of heaven, Christ's Body and Blood, rather than on the food of this earth), and the Christians would then return to gather for the Agape Feast in the evening, in order to give thanks to God and to eat supper together, growing in love.

While many Christians eat together after Sunday morning Liturgy, the Sunday evening Agape Feast ceased to be part of the Church's normal liturgical life by the 8th Century. The one exception to this, however, is Pascha, when we still keep this ancient element of the Church's liturgical life. Our celebration of Pascha, which climaxes with our reception of the Eucharist early on Sunday morning, having begun our Vigil at midnight, is immediately followed by the only Agape Feast we still celebrate. Our baskets are blessed, and the Paschal Liturgy then truly continues as we gather together as a parish community and grow in love. We will have been journeying and fasting together for seven weeks, and then gone through Christ's Passion, Death, and glorious Resurrection together. Now, finally breaking the fast, the Church calls us to do so together in love, so that we might grow in the bonds of friendship and love for one another. This is not just a normal "coffee hour" or "fellowship meal", but is the continuation of our Paschal liturgy, and something the Church calls us to participate in if at all possible. We have had people celebrating the Agape together until 6 AM and beyond. Let's all try to be there for as long as we can, so that we can grow in love not just as isolated families, but as a parish family, eating and drinking in joy!

Agape Vespers/Easter Egg Hunt - 1 PM on Pascha Sunday

Our Paschal celebration doesn't conclude with the end of the Paschal Service, or even when we are too tired to continue feasting together. Like with the ancient practice, the Church calls us to come back in the "evening" to continue our celebration. We serve the thus-called "Agape Vespers" together, by which we continue, or rather renew, our celebration of the Agape Feast. Agape Vespers will be followed by a picnic/barbecue, hosted in the back of the rectory, together with an Easter Egg hunt for the kids. Please bring your Pascha Basket or a dish to share, and meat to grill if you'd like. If the weather is bad, Fr. John will still cook his tri-tip roasts at the pit, but we'll gather in the hall.

Pascha Basket Blessings – April 15/16

Baskets will be blessed at three times: after the Holy Saturday Vespertal Liturgy (~ 3:00 PM on Saturday), after the midnight Paschal Service (~2:30 AM on Sunday), and after Agape Vespers (~1:30 on Sunday). Please place your basket downstairs in the hall, where they will be blessed after these services. However, please do not bring your Pascha baskets into the nave of the church, where no meat is ever supposed to be.

Fr. John's Paschal Plea

The parish's Agape – beginning after the midnight Paschal Service and continuing throughout the end of the day after a brief sleep before Agape Vespers – is an integral part of our parish's Paschal celebration. We are redeemed *together* by Christ's Passover, and the Church thus calls us to rejoice together in that redemption, in and through which we are bound together in Christ. If we seek to build up a Christ-centered parish community, we should strive to keep this ancient tradition. As such, I entreat you all to perhaps stay a bit longer after Pascha this year (last year the Agape went until 7a!), or show up to the Pascha party which Matushka and I host after Agape Vespers. Even if you can't make it to Vespers, we usually keep going until well after sunset!

Bright Tuesday at the Monastery – April 18

Clergy and faithful from throughout Western Pennsylvania are invited to join the Sisterhood of the Monastery of the Transfiguration (321 Monastery Lane, Ellwood City) for Bright Tuesday Liturgy at 9:30 AM, followed by a Paschal meal. Pilgrims are encouraged to bring Paschal foods to share, to alleviate the burden on the sisters. You could simply bring your Pascha basket with any leftovers or meaty additions! If you have never been a monastery before, this would be a great way to make your first visit, rejoicing together with the sisters and pilgrims from throughout our region!

Bright Wednesday Barbecue & Yard Game Night – April 19

Weather permitting, we'll have a second outdoor gathering and barbecue on Bright Wednesday, after 5:00 PM Vespers. Please bring a dish to share, something to grill, or a yard game to play. If the weather is inclement, we'll gather in the parish hall instead for a board game night, as we had to do last year.

St. Constantine School Presentations – April 21

The Saint Constantine School – an Orthodox classical school – is coming to Pittsburgh and, with it, a vision for Christian education in our city. Come join the discussion with the newly-appointed head-of-school, Jesse Cone, as well as leadership and interested clergy and laity, at two events on Bright Friday: a breakfast meeting, 9-11a, at St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral, 8290 Thompson Run Rd, Allison Park, and at 7p for a prayer service and meeting at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 419 S Dithridge St. If attending the breakfast, RSVP to pittsburgh@saintconstantine.org

St. Thomas Sunday Special Collection – April 23

We will be having a special collection on Sunday, April 17, to benefit and maintain our parish cemetery in Strabane. Donations may be made through Tithe.ly or an envelope available in the narthex.

St. Thomas Sunday Grave Blessing – April 23

As is the long-standing custom of our parish, the grave blessings appointed for Radonitsa (the ‘Day of Rejoicing’: the Tuesday after St. Thomas Sunday, when the Church historically brings the Good News of the Resurrection to the deceased) is scheduled to be transferred to St. Thomas Sunday. As usual, we will be blessing the Parish Cemetery in Strabane first, followed by our parish’s section at Oak Spring. For those with family buried in other cemeteries, please see Fr. John to make arrangements. Generally, these will be scheduled for a later date during the Paschal season.

Tax Strategies for the Upcoming Landscape – April 30

Our parish’s investment banker, Ed Harris, is willing to offer our parishioners a free post-Liturgy seminar on Sunday, April 30, on how to best utilize our income tax deductions to better support charitable causes, including our parish. More details will be coming soon!

The Carpatho-Russians & the Return from the Unia – May 7

As a companion piece to John Righetti’s lecture on May 9, and in honour of St. Alexis Toth, whom we celebrate on May 7, Fr. John will be offering a lesson after coffee hour on the broader history of the Carpatho-Russian people, their forced subjection to the Unia (union with the Roman Catholic Church, under the Pope of Rome), and the return which many undertook once politically free as immigrants in America. While a generation after the initial exodus led by St. Alexis, our parish was founded by Carpatho-Russian immigrants from Galicia who participated in this return to the faith of their forefathers. Fr. John hopes this will provide helpful context to understand the lecture on May 9.

Met. Theo. Lecture: The Rusyns who Founded St. John’s – May 9

At the start of the 20th Century, scores of Carpatho-Rusyns – then usually known as “Carpatho-Russians” – immigrated to the Canonsburg area from Austria-Hungary. They founded two churches in Canonsburg: one Byzantine/Greek-Catholic (St. Michael’s) and one Orthodox (St. John the Baptist). Why did the Rusyns – known as Lemkos, overwhelmingly from Western Galicia – found a Russian Orthodox Church? On May 9, we’ll be joined by John Righetti, the president of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, who will speak to us about the immigrant Rusyns who founded our parish, and their motivations for doing so. The evening begins with Vespers at 6 PM, followed by a light reception; we hope to begin the lecture at 7 PM. Consider bringing a friend, or a family member who has fallen away from the Faith, as it might draw them back!

Palm Sunday – Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

We forget so often that the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated and that on the day of our baptism we were made citizens of it, and we promised to put our loyalty to it above all else. We must always remember that for a few hours, Christ was indeed King on earth, in this world of ours. For a few hours only and in one city. But, as in Lazarus we have recognized the image of each man, in this one city [Jerusalem] we acknowledge the mystical center of the world and indeed of the whole creation. For such is the Biblical meaning of Jerusalem, the focal point of the whole history of salvation and redemption, the holy city of God's advent. Therefore, the Kingdom inaugurated in Jerusalem is a universal Kingdom, embracing in its perspective all men and the totality of creation...

For a few hours – yet these were the decisive time, the ultimate hour of Jesus, the hour of fulfillment by God of all His promises, of all His decisions. It came at the end of the entire process of preparation, revealed in the Bible, it was the end of all that God did for men. And thus, this short hour of Christ's earthly triumph acquires an eternal meaning. It introduces the reality of the Kingdom into our time, into all hours, makes this Kingdom the meaning of time and its ultimate goal. The Kingdom was revealed in this world and from that hour; its presence judges and transforms human history...

And when at the most solemn moment of our Liturgical celebration, we receive from the priest a palm branch, we renew our oath to our King, we confess His Kingdom as the ultimate meaning and content of our life. We confess that everything in our life and in the world belongs to Christ and nothing can be taken away from its sole real Owner, that there is no area of life in which He is not to rule, to save and to redeem. We proclaim the universal and total responsibility of the Church for human history and uphold her universal mission. The branches in our hands signify, therefore, our readiness and willingness to follow Him on this sacrificial way, our acceptance of sacrifice and self-denial as the only royal way to the Kingdom. And finally, these branches, this celebration, proclaim our faith in the final victory of Christ. His Kingdom is yet hidden and the world ignores it. It lives it as if the decisive event had not taken place, as if God had not died on the Cross and Man in Him was not risen from the dead. But we, Christians, believe in the coming of the Kingdom in which God will be all in all and Christ the only King. In our liturgical celebrations, we remember events of the past. But the whole meaning and power of Liturgy is that it transforms remembrance into reality. On Palm Sunday this reality is our own involvement, our responsibility to, the Kingdom of God. Christ does not enter into Jerusalem anymore, He did it once and for all. And He does not need any "symbols," for He did not die on the Cross that we may eternally "symbolize" His life. He wants from us a real acceptance of the Kingdom which He brought to us... And if we are not ready to stand by the solemn oath, which we renew every year on Palm Sunday, if we do not mean to make the Kingdom of God the measure of our whole life, meaningless is our commemoration, and vain are the branches we take home from the Church.

Memory Eternal! – Вѣчная память! – Вѣснаја памјат!

Newly Departed (Parishioners in Bold):

Serge Daniels (3/17) **Michael Povich** (3/26) **Virginia Danyo** (3/28)

Anniversaries of the Departed:

Julia Pali (4/9/1945) Maria Klemm (4/10/1926) Makary Troshkin (4/10/1934) Lukeria Monavasky (4/10/1966)
Barbara Harris (4/10/1974) William Lazorchak (4/10/2000) Juliana Minenok (4/11/1940)
Julia Sweda (4/12/1941) Joseph Gigac (4/12/1946) Paul Zaken (4/12/2013) Andrew Matlaga (4/13/1971)
Stephen Carrick (4/13/1988) Elizabeth Ermakov (4/14/1926) Anna Warholak (4/14/1941)
Rosalia Leninsky (4/14/1950) Andrew Zubenko (4/14/2011) George Blanock (4/15/1948)
Charles Skarupa (4/15/2015) Simon Ridosh (4/16/1935) Peter Vodiauose (4/17/1964) Joseph Maffio (4/17/1982)
Mary Mandus (4/17/1988) Michael Levkulich (4/18/1957) Michael Wussick (4/18/1988)
John Yarosh (4/18/1995) John Horosky (4/18/1995) Josephine Horosky (4/18/2001) Stephen Vujcich (4/19/1926)
Maria Tavchik (4/19/1933) Simeon Klus (4/19/1936) Alexy Lazor (4/19/1942) John Hoholak (4/19/1963)
Nicholas Dunda (4/19/1987) Mary Schimansky (4/19/1993) Anna Dunda (4/21/1963)
Kenneth Rice (4/21/1987) Susan Dano (4/21/1987) Michael White (4/22/1953) George Moravosky (4/22/1972)
Anna Polorishak (4/23/1924)

Many Years! – Многая лѣта! – Многаја і благаја лѣта!

Birthdays:

Dr. John Chupinsky (4/9) Steve Udodow (4/11) Melina Killmeyer (4/14) Roberto Thompson (4/15)
Gregory Shamitko (4/18) Leah Stockman (4/19) Dr. Rodney Fedorchak (4/22)

We pray for the health and salvation of:

Abp. Melchisedek (Pleska)	Todd (Geer)	Mary Kay (Weber)
Abp. Benjamin (Peterson)	Chelsea (Geer)	Joseph (Zupancic)
Igumen Patrick (Carpenter)	Terry (Guthrie)	Marina
Apr. Anthony (Carbo)	Harry (Horosky)	Christopher & Briana Marie, and the child Adrianna
Apr. Michael (Carney)	Maria (Jacobs)	Sophie born of her (Fontana)
Pr. Matthew & M. Rebekah (Markewich)	Gregory (Kachmarsky)	Boris, Amanda, & the child to be born of her (Mezhinsky)
Rd. Gregory, Susanna, & Elizabeth (Soloviev)	Alexy (Listvinsky)	Rd. Michael, Ilariana, & the child to be born of her (Galis)
Mat. Susanne (Senyo)	Tamara (Marsico)	Douglas, Alexandra, & the child to be born of her (Helmick)
Diane (Arcoletti)	Albert (Maruskin)	
Dorothy (Barich)	Grace (Matyuf)	
Pierre (Barrera)	Olga (Mikus)	
Deborah (Battaglia)	Gregg (Nescott)	
Nicholas (Berg)	Francis (Onest)	
Gregory & Gwen (Bushko)	Zoran (Pejović)	
Shirley (Brookman)	Margaret Ann (Peyton)	
Gideon (Brasowski)	Marian (Pirih)	Catechumens/Inquirers:
Katherine & Charles (Caligiuri)	Mary (Pirih)	William, Xela, Aielee, Sophie, William, James, Bobbie, Elyse, Sara, Jason, Brandon, Paul, Robert, Amanda, Michael, Jason, Sidian, Dale, Jaime, & Nicholas
Eva (Chupinsky)	Peter (Rebn)	
Marilyn (Cummings)	Mary Ann (Reck)	
John, Nicole, & Tatiana (Dankovchik)	Kira & Anastasia (Rudolph)	
Mark (Emerson)	Gregory (Sakovich)	
	Eleanor (Simko)	
	Carol (Sweda)	
	Luis (Thompson)	
	Richard & Joan (Trombetta)	