

ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

Vol. 5 No. 2.4

ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH

505 Jefferson Avenue, Scranton, Pa. 18510

Fr. Nicholas Ferencz, Ph.D., Pastor
Rectory: 621 Vine St., Scranton, PA 18510
Rectory: 570-344-5917
Cell: 724-953-6046
nferencz35@gmail.com
www.stnicholasorthodoxscranton.org
Madelyn Hodanich, Choir Director
Parish Hall: 570-344-1522

Jane Togher, Board President
570-842-3311

jctogher@gmail.com

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

FEBRUARY 28, 2016

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

PARISH CALENDAR

Sun., Feb. 28 **Sunday of the Prodigal Son.** Apostle Onesimus of the 70.

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets.
Church School meets

Wed., Mar. 2 Bishop Leo the Great of Rome.
8:00 AM *Pirohi Prep*

Thu., Mar. 3 Apostle Archippus et al of the 70.
8:00 AM *Pirohi Making*

Fri., Mar. 4 Bishop Leo of Catania
10 AM – 3 PM *Pirohi Sale*

SAT., MAR. 5 1ST ALL SOULS SATURDAY
9 AM Divine Liturgy & Reading of Hramoty.

Sun., Mar. 6 **Meat-Fare Sunday.** Martyrs of Eugenia.
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets

Wed., Mar. 9 **Archbishop Tarasius of Constantinople**
8:00 AM *Special Pirohi Prep*

Thu., Mar. 10 **Bishop Porphyrius**
8:00 AM *Special Pirohi Making*

There is no pirohi sale on Fri., Mar. 11

Sun. Mar. 13 **Cheese-Fare Sunday (Forgiveness Sunday).** Monk John Cassian.

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets
Men's Club regular monthly meeting.
Church School meets.
Regular Social Hour

11:30 AM Forgiveness Vespers
Confessions.

Confessions are available before Lenten services. See Parish Calendar for times.

LENTEN SERVICES

ALL SOULS SATURDAYS: Sat., Mar. 5. The first All-Souls Saturday, when we pray for our deceased loved ones is next week. If you would like to have your deceased loved ones remembered, or if you have changes from last year, please write down your list and get it to me by next Saturday.

All Souls Services: Last year, I changed the services celebrated for the deceased for the 5 All Souls Saturdays. Because of lack of attendance, I was forced to replace Saturday Divine Liturgy with Friday night Vespers for the Deceased for some of those Saturdays. The Hramoty (List) of the deceased is read at every service. The Vespers for the Deceased is an old, traditional service created specifically for the All-Souls Saturdays during Lent, which is why we are using it. This is

the list of All-Souls Saturdays and services:

- 1st All-Souls: Sat., 3/5, 9 AM Divine Liturgy
- 2nd: All-Souls: Fri., 3/25, 6 PM Vespers for Deceased.
- 3rd All-Souls: Fri., 4/ 1, 6 PM Vespers for Deceased.
- 4th All-Souls: Fri., 4/8, 6 PM Vespers for Deceased.
- 5th All-Souls: Sat., 6/18, 9 AM Divine Liturgy.

FASTING

Meat-Fare Sunday (March 6) is traditionally the last day that we eat meat. The following week (3/7–3/12) we ease into the Great Fast by starting with abstinence all week from all meat. Dairy products are still permitted.

Diocesan rules require no more than the usual Wednesday & Friday fast.

Great Lent begins Monday, March 14. This day is known as *Clean Monday*. The minimum fast for this day for everyone is a *Strict Fast*: no meat, dairy, wine, oil.

PEOPLE STUFF

Please remember in your prayers:

Living: Fr. George Dursa. Fr. Donald Valasek. Stephanie Bonk. Owen Bonn. Gloria Bracey. Bob Chalk. Susan Danchak. Ricky, Rick & Sarah. Michael Danchak. Jada Eiden. Tammy Hall. Heather Harris. Robert Hawley. Madelyn Hodanich. Johnny Huniyack. Lorraine Kacaba. Anna Mae Kuklis. John Lange. Dee Lositski. Peggy Majcher. Rose Markiewicz. Theresa Niester. Mary Phillips. John Polanichka. Karen Rolka. JoyAnn Scarnato. Amy Shimo. Faye Snell. Russell Spilka. Jeff Thomas. Ann Marie Tigue. Gary Wassel.

At Home: Michael Andreosky. Elizabeth Basalyga. Anna Senich.

Assisted Living Homes: Julie Roberts. Marion Sosnowski. Kathryn Stocoski. Dolores Naglak. Mary Kneiss.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Breadbasket of NEPA: Donation boxes are in the hall.

PARISH FUND RAISERS

Pirohi Sales: *Thanks* to all who helped out this past week. Next sale is this Friday, March 4, with the usual workdays of Wednesday, March 2 and Thursday, March 3. See Parish Calendar.

SPECIAL PIROHI MAKING: To keep up with pirohi orders coming in, we are going to have an extra week of pirohi making. This will be on **Mar. 9 & 10**. There will be no sale that week, just making. We could use all the help we can get. Thanks!

Easter Kolači Sale! The Men’s Club is now taking orders for their famous Kolači. Rolls are only \$8.00 each. Available flavors: Nut, Poppypeed, Lekvar, Apricot, Raspberry Coconut. *Pick-up Date:* Friday, March 18, 10 AM to 3 PM. To order, call 570-344-1522 and leave a message with your order. Order soon!!!

Altar Society News: The Altar Society is having a prepackaged cookie sale/bake sale on Friday March 18th along with the Men's Club nut roll sale. We are asking for baked good donations from all parishioners, including fudge, candy, Pascha Breads, Easter type cookies, etc.

PARISH STUFF

Please contact Carol Pugh (toots638@comcast.net, 489-2321) with your donation. Cookies will be \$9.00 a container.

Church School meets today.

YOUR GIFTS TO GOD AND OUR CHURCH	
	February 21, 2016
\$ 512.00	General Collection
\$ 85.00	7 Day Light
\$1208.00	Pirohi
\$ 14.00	Holy Days
\$ 744.00	Church Dues
\$ 86.00	Maintenance & Repairs
\$ 11.00	Taper Candles
\$2660.00	Total Collection
<i>Renovation Donations to date: \$1000.</i>	

Diocesan Constitution and Bylaws: We ran out last week, so we printed about 6 more copies for folks to take. If these run out, we will continue making copies.

FROM THE DIOCESE & OTHER STUFF

Orthodox Speaking Series: presenting *Metropolitan Kallistos Ware* who will be giving a lecture on "The Unchanging Gospel in an Ever-Changing Culture." **Streaming Live on Saturday, March 5, 2016,** from North Park University of Chicago, IL.

The schedule for this 1st Annual Event: 10 AM to Noon 1st Session. Noon Lunch. 1 PM to 3 PM 2nd

Session.

There will be 3 respondents to the lecture:

Father John Behr, Dean, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary; Dr. Hauna Ondrey, North Park University; Dr. Marcus Pleasted, Marquette University. Moderator is Professor Nassif, Professor of Biblical Studies North Park University (Main planner for event)

Please note that this event will be "live streamed" for all who are not able to come, but wish to see the event live, and to *possibly be part of the audience during the Q/A session* with Metropolitan Kallistos.

Deacon Peter Sodini of St Michael's Church in Niles, IL is a member of the steering committee at North Park University of Chicago, IL for the Orthodox Speaking Series which is funded by the Kulis Foundation.

All are encouraged to tune in. Further information can be found here: <http://www.northpark.edu/orthodox>. Please feel free to contact Fr. Deacon Peter directly (pesodini@msn.com).

DIOCESAN WEBSITES

The Diocese has worked hard to provide a great number of resources for use and benefit of our faithful. In order to encourage all to use them, I will be keeping a list of addresses for Diocesan websites and social media in the bulletin.

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

Lenten Pizza and Soup Sale: St. Michael's Byzantine Catholic Church, 205 N. Main St. Pittston, Pa. 18640 is having a "PIZZA & SOUP SALE" for Lent. We will offer Old Forge Style Baked (\$12) or Unbaked (\$10). Add \$1 extra for onions. Each week we will offer a soup of the week at \$8.00 per qt. Pre-order by Tues. Feb. 10 for Ash Wednesday or by Thursday at 570-905-7387 - Pick up will be from 4-7pm on Ash Wednesday and the following Fridays during Lent. Soup of the week is Homemade (Manhattan) Clam Chowder. All proceeds will benefit the Church.

Ham Bingo The parishioners of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church are sponsoring their annual

Ham Bingo on March 13, 2016 at 1 p.m. The event will be held in the church hall at 320 Vine St, Old Forge PA. Theme baskets, door prizes, and various bingo specials will be available throughout the afternoon. The kitchen opens at 11am. A variety of food items and refreshments will be available. The church will also sponsor a bake sale during the bingo. Admission is \$3.00

EASTERN REGION DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREAT

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2016

9:00 AM TO 5:00 PM

AT

**THE CONFERENCE CENTER AT VALLEY
FORGE**

**1485 VALLEY FORGE ROAD
PHOENIXVILLE, PA**

COST TO ATTEND (INCLUDES LUNCH):

\$20.00 ADULTS / TEENS

\$7.00 (AGES 6 TO 12)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

APRIL 2, 2016

CONTACT

TRACEY BILANIN

tbilanin@yahoo.com

(484) 624-4664

**SPONSORED BY THE
NATIONAL A.C.R.Y**

Sign Up Sheet is in the hall. Please sign up and we will send in one form for everyone.

All are encouraged to attend.

Meatless Meal for Lent: *A Baked Haddock Fish Dinner* at SS. Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church, Olyphant, PA., on Friday, March 18, 2016 being held at the Regal Room (216 Lackawanna Ave.) in Olyphant, PA from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., "sit down or take out" Call 580-383-9487 for reservations, Pre-sold dinners are \$13.00 per ticket. Web site: stcyrls.weconnect.com Rev. Nestor Iwasiw, Pastor (570-489-2271)

TRIP TO UKRAINE! St. Vladimir Ukrainian Greek Catholic Parish of Scranton is sponsoring a trip to Ukraine from September 8 to 20, 2016. The 13 day itinerary will include Kyiv, Lviv, Yaremche in the heart of the Carpathian Mountains, Ivano Frankivsk,

Chernivtsi, Podilsky, Zarvanytsia [the Lourdes of Western Ukraine] and Ternopil. Included are visits to centuries old sacred sites such as the Pecherska Lavra/Monastery of the Caves, Sunday Divine Liturgy at the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv and St. George Ukrainian Greek Catholic Cathedral in Lviv, the Maidan Memorial, Dnister riverboat cruise, Lviv Opera House, etc.

Tour land cost twin per person is \$2,290. Air fare is estimated to be approximately \$990. For full details contact Jean Staszyn Pedley at 570 698-6838 or Scope Travel at 201 463-4656.

Open House: St. Mary's Villa, One Pioneer Place, Elmhurst Twp., 18444, will be hosting an Open House on Saturday, 3/5 8am - 4pm. Details are on the poster in the hall.

International Dinner: St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church, 320 Mifflin Ave., Scranton, Pa. is honoring the "Irish" on Thursday March 10, 2016. Seatings are 5:30 and 6:30pm. Reservations can be made by March 7 at 570.343.5151. The price for this culinary delight is only \$20.00 per person. The menu will start with a Emerald Isle Spring Mix Salad with tomato, craisins, candied almonds, feta cheese and topped with a raspberry vinaigrette. The Entree will be County Cork Ham & Cabbage served with Parsley Broiled Spuds and side vegetable. Irish Soda bread will accompany the meal and there will be a Special Irish Dessert Surprise. Enjoy a cold Guinness or a delicious, hot Irish Coffee for only \$5.00. Coffee, Tea, Water, Soda are included and a cash bar is available.

THE LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN

From *Great Lent* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, lust for power and idle talk. *Prostration*

But give to me, your servant, the spirit of purity, humility, patience and love. *Prostration*

Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother, for blessed are You unto ages of ages and ever. Amen. *Prostration*

Why does this short and simple prayer occupy such an important position in the entire lenten

worship? Because it enumerates in a unique way all the negative and positive elements of repentance and constitutes, so to speak, a "check list" for our individual lenten effort. This effort is aimed first at our liberation from some fundamental spiritual diseases which shape our life and make it virtually impossible for us even to start turning ourselves to God.

The basic disease is **laziness** or *sloth*. It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us "down" rather than "up"-which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism which to every spiritual challenge responds "what for?" and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste. It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its very source.

The result of sloth is **despair** or *faintheartedness*. It is the state of despondency which all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for man to see anything good or positive; it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism. It is truly a demonic power in us because the Devil is fundamentally a liar. He lies to man about God and about the world; he fills life with darkness and negation. Despondency is the suicide of the soul because when man is possessed by it he is absolutely unable to see the light and to desire it.

Lust of power! Strange as it may seem, it is precisely sloth and despondency that fill our life with lust of power. By vitiating the entire attitude toward life and making it meaningless and empty, they force us to seek compensation in a radically wrong attitude toward other persons. If my life is not oriented toward God, not aimed at eternal values, it will inevitably become selfish and self-centered and this means that all other beings will become means of my own self-satisfaction. If God is not the Lord and Master of my life, then I become my own lord and master-the absolute center of my own world, and I begin to evaluate everything in terms of my needs, my ideas, my desires, and my judgments. The lust of power is thus a fundamental depravity in my relationship to other beings, a search for their subordination to me. It is not necessarily expressed in the actual urge to command and to dominate "others." It may result as well in indifference, contempt, lack of interest,

consideration, and respect. It is indeed sloth and despondency directed this time at others; it completes spiritual suicide with spiritual murder.

Finally, **idle talk**. Of all created beings, man alone has been endowed with the gift of speech. All Fathers see in it the very "seal" of the Divine Image in man because God Himself is revealed as Word (John I :1). But being the supreme gift, it is by the same token the supreme danger. Being the very expression of man, the means of his self-fulfillment, it is for this very reason the means of his fall and self-destruction, of betrayal and sin. The word saves and the word kills; the word inspires and the word poisons. The word is the means of Truth and it is the means of demonic Lie It "enforces" sloth, despondency, and lust of power, and transforms life into hell. It becomes the very power of sin.

These four are thus the negative "objects" of repentance. They are the obstacles to be removed. But God alone can remove them. Hence, the first part of the lenten prayer—this cry from the bottom of human helplessness. Then the prayer moves to the positive aims of repentance which also are four.

Purity or *Chastity*! If one does not reduce this term, as is so often and erroneously done, only to its sexual connotations, it is understood as the positive counterpart of sloth. The exact and full translation of the Greek *sofrosini* and the Russian *tselomudrye* ought to be whole-mindedness. Sloth is, first of all, dissipation, the brokenness of our vision and energy, the inability to see the whole. Its opposite then is precisely wholeness.

The first and wonderful of this wholeness or chastity is **humility**. It is above everything else the victory of truth in us, the elimination of all lies in which we usually live. Humility alone is capable of truth, of seeing and accepting things as they are and therefore of seeing God's majesty and goodness and love in everything. This is why we are told that God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud.

Chastity and humility are naturally followed by **patience**. The "natural" or "fallen" man is impatient, for being blind to himself he is quick to judge and to condemn others. Having but a broken, incomplete, and distorted knowledge of everything, he measures all things by his tastes and his ideas. Being indifferent to everyone except himself, he wants life to be successful right here and now. Patience, however,

is truly a divine virtue. God is patient not because He is "indulgent," but because He sees the depth of all that exists, because the inner reality of things, which in our blindness we do not see, is open to Him. The closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more we reflect that infinite respect for all beings which is the proper quality of God.

Finally, the crown and fruit of all virtues, of all growth and effort, is **love**—that love which, as we have already said, can be given by God alone—the gift which is the goal of all spiritual preparation and practice.

All this is summarized and brought together in the concluding petition of the lenten prayer in which we ask "to see my own sins and not to judge my brother." For ultimately there is but one danger: pride. Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned into pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety which, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation, can lead to a truly demonic pride. But when we "see our own sins" and "do not judge our brothers," when, in other terms, chastity, humility, patience, and love are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy—pride—will be destroyed in us.

After each petition of the prayer we make a prostration. Prostrations are not limited to the Prayer of St. Ephrem but constitute one of the distinctive characteristics of the entire lenten worship. Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh—the animal, the irrational, the lust in us—over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious, the body is holy, so holy that God Himself "became flesh." Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man—soul and body—repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the "psycho-somatic" sign of repentance

and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the lenten rite par excellence.

THAT'S THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

John Garvey, *Commonweal* June 30, 2014

When I was young I thought the goal of a spiritual life was some form of bliss or contentment. In my pride, I wanted not only to attain this but to be seen to have attained it. Christian mysticism and Buddhism intrigued me, and of course I understood neither of them.

Being a fool for a while is part of the process. It wasn't until many years later that I turned around to look at my life and saw that what had led me to where I really was involved a mix of depression, anger, fear, and anxiety. I had gone through a serious illness as a child, there were deaths in the family that struck me hard, and no doubt these contributed to whatever I had become. I lived as if I were a clenched fist, even as I hoped I was making some sort of progress. But seeing all this more clearly helped me to begin to relax: I learned, among other things, that the problem was not so much with the universe itself, but with me and my perception of it. This discovery came as a great relief since a local and contained wound is better than a universal catastrophe. The rest of reality may indeed be wounded, but all you can deal with at the start is yourself.

I know a man who was ordained a Zen monk, and is now an Orthodox Christian. He teaches meditation and asks his students, "What do you hope to gain from this?" They may say something about having a more whole life, serenity, etc.—the usual clichés that surround the idea of enlightenment. He points out that he is a divorced man, a recovering alcoholic, and has suffered through long periods on unemployment—the point being that nothing, including meditation, can guarantee wholeness or any sense of moral or therapeutic achievement.

It is a common thing for both religious and nonreligious people to think of morality as a major end of the religious life, or some sense of "being right" with God, or of being on the right side of a particular issue. But the need to be right is at best ego-satisfaction and an idolatrous temptation. There are a couple of great lines in Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem" that warn us about fantasies of perfection: "Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack

in everything. That's how the light gets in."

What I didn't see when I was younger was that the common insight of the great religious traditions is that something is wrong. Something about ordinary human consciousness doesn't work, and it only gets worse when we try to put ourselves in control, to fix things. At their start, many religious traditions (for example, Hinduism and Judaism) focus on purity codes, but these become less central: the Bhagavad Gita and the prophets are about so much more, including a loss of control and self-interest. They focus on the transformation of life and on repentance. To know you need help that you cannot somehow conjure up through your own power frees you. You have to turn from yourself to something outside yourself, hoping it will be gracious. You have to accept an interior emptiness.

This is where the Christian story matters so much—we see in Jesus what the God who called us forth from nothingness is like. I know now that I can't be without him. Our brokenness is the beginning of this knowing. We have to know our emptiness and need. In a culture that emphasizes the need for control and autonomy this knowledge is hard to come by. We really are going against the grain of a common cultural yearning.

The people who are the most open to grace are those who know how broken they are. One woman who came to me for confession was so full of shame for a life that involved a great many crimes and serious transgressions that she was shaking with fear when she walked into the church. She had met a monk who made it clear to her that forgiveness and complete reconciliation were still possible. By the time she ended her confession she was completely at peace. It had nothing to do with anything I said or did. It was her honesty and willingness to stand in the face of the truth that brought this about—and God's love for her. This happened many years ago, but it has stayed with me. I have never been so moved by an encounter, or so admired the honesty of a fellow Christian. But the great joy and truth of what we profess is that this sort of joyous liberation happens all the time.