

GENERAL & SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION

Regarding the Temple: In our tradition, the church temple is a house of prayer. Upon entering it, please refrain from unnecessary conversation before, during and after church services, most especially during the Divine Liturgy. Prior to divine services, or during coffee hour in the Church Hall is the appropriate place to exchange personal greetings and converse with one another. May God bless your reverence and piety!

Sick/Emergency Calls/Institutional Visitations: are answered as requests are received. All visitations are by request. Call to schedule an appointment.

Confessions: Are heard one half-hour before every service at Holy Assumption, and once a month at Ss. Peter & Paul. Special arrangements by necessity, and thereby, appointment only.

Sacraments of Illumination: In the case of infants, Baptism, Chrismation, & Eucharist are administered on ordinary Sundays of the church year, preferably in the context of Divine Liturgy. At least one sponsor must be of the Orthodox Faith and in good sacramental standing. The newly baptized must have one name that is Biblical or Christian in its origin.

What is Church Membership? By regulation, active membership in the church consists not merely in the payment of a set sum, or by fulfilling a *minimum* sacramental obligation, but rather in participation in the life of the church (commensurate with your physical ability). This includes entering into the spirit of the faith through regular and frequent attendance, participation in the divine mysteries, sustained financial support (at a percentage that reflects your ability), and adherence to the parish, diocesan, and national church statutes.

Receiving Communion: while all are welcome to pray with us, we politely offer a reminder that the Orthodox Church maintains a closed communion. All are welcome to Antidoron bread following the Divine Liturgy, but only prepared Orthodox Christians may receive the Eucharist. Orthodox Christians do not commune in non-Orthodox churches, and the non-Orthodox are not communed in an Orthodox Church. Thank you!

Lapsed Members: You are always welcome home, and we need you! Generally speaking, sincere Confession, Communion, and regular attendance are all that is required to begin parish life anew! See Fr. Elijah for specific details.

New Members/Adult Chrismation: new members are always welcome. In the case of interested adults seeking Chrismation, a period of catechesis prescribed by the pastor is necessary before the administration of Holy Mysteries. An Orthodox sponsor is required.

Weddings: A minimum six-month notice is requested. Either Bride or Bride-groom must be an Orthodox Christian, and a parishioner in good standing. Dispensations may be required for inter-faith marriages (the marriage of an Orthodox & any non-Orthodox person). Banns of matrimony published 3 weeks before ceremony. No Weddings performed during fasting seasons!!!

Burial in Church Cemetery: Burial in consecrated ground is reserved for the Orthodox and their spouses/children. Charity burials, or odd circumstances are at the rector's discretion. It is strongly encouraged to hold viewings and visitation of the reposed in the church.

Our Stewardship of the Church: "Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the good steward, who redeemed Adam and Eve of their failed stewardship by offering Thyself for the life of the world. Thou didst teach us in the feeding of the multitudes that whatever we give to God is returned to us multiplied. Thou didst praise those good and faithful servants in the parable of the talents who returned to the Master their gifts. So help us to learn the joy of stewardship, remembering that everything we have comes from Thee and belongs to Thee. We know, Lord, that we often live in fear of the future and insecurity. Help us to remember the lilies of the field and so to trust in Thy providence. Grant to us a cheerful and generous spirit. Enkindle in the hearts of all Thy people a zealous love for Thee. For Thou art the Good Steward, and to Thee we give thanks, praise and glory, together with Thy Father who is from everlasting and Thine all holy good and life-giving Spirit now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Prayer When Lighting A Candle: "Set our hearts on fire with love for Thee, O Christ our God, so that in this flame we may love Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, so that by keeping Thy commandments we may glorify Thee, the giver of all good gifts. Amen."

HOLY ASSUMPTION ORTHODOX CHURCH

629 Sunshine Avenue • Central City, Pa. 15926

SS. PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

Tipple Road • Goodtown, Pa. 15530



Very Rev. Archpriest Elijah J. Bremer, Rector
412 Short Cut Road • Alum Bank, Pa 15521
814-977-7397 • otets.ilya@yahoo.com

31st Sunday Post-Pentecost, 26 January 2025

*"What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."
(Luke 18: 41)*

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE: 26 JANUARY – 2 FEBRUARY 2025

Sunday
26 January
Tone 6

31st Sunday Post-Pentecost

Epistle: 1 Timothy 1: 15-17

Gospel 1: Luke 18: 35-43

Gospel 2: Matthew 4: 12-17

8:40 am, Hours of Prayer (PH)

9:00 am, Divine Liturgy (PH)

Sanctification of Water

Panakhya: John Slifco & Jerry Klotz, req. by Sue Slifco-Klotz, and Matushka Susanne Senyo, req. by our parishes

Sunday
2 February
Tone 7

32nd Sunday Post-Pentecost

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4: 9-15

Gospel: Luke 19: 1-10

8:40 am, Hours (CC)

9:00 am, Liturgy (CC)

~Important Considerations ~

All persons are present at their own risk. Please refrain from attending if you are currently sick, or if you were exposed to a contagious disease. Also understand that if you do not attend Church for more than three weeks without just cause, according to canon law you must go to confession prior to receiving Holy Communion.

SAD NEWS

Late in the day last Saturday, we received news that Matushka Susanne Senyo, beloved wife of Archpriest Michael Senyo, and spiritual daughter of Holy Assumption Orthodox Church, Central City, reposed in the Lord, following a decade long battle with cancer.

Unfortunately, the news was received too late to include in the printed, weekly bulletin. An announcement was added to the website. Funeral services were held at Ss. Cyril & Methodius Orthodox Church in Jeannette, Pa. Fr. Elijah and family were able to attend the evening Parastas, representing our own parishes, and expressing the greatest fraternal care and concern for Fr. Michael and his family.

Here at Holy Assumption, the black bunting was placed around the cross, and will remain until the 40th day (28 February). A 40th Day Panakhya will be held on 2

March. Also, Holy Assumption and Ss. Peter & Paul Parishes will make a contribution to Ss. Cyril & Methodius Orthodox Church in memory of Matushka Susanne, and out of gratitude for all that Fr. Mike and Matushka Sue contributed to us over the last thirteen years. Whatever is collected this Sunday and next will be offset by the churches and rounded up to no less than \$500.00. It is the least our parishes can do to express brotherly love and gratitude for this life well-lived, and this Matushka well-loved.

Memory Eternal, Matushka Susanne +

Вечная Память, Матушка Сюзанна +

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Nativity Greeting: for the 40 days of the Nativity Season, we use the greeting “Christ is Born, Glorify Him! Христосъ раждаетсѧ, славите его! Christos razhdayetsya! Slavite Yego!”

The Winter Weather: please exercise caution during periods of foul weather. No one will ever tell you it’s ok to “skip” church, but use your best judgment when traveling in poor conditions. The same is true of parking and entering/exiting the church. Please do so with caution, and at your own risk.

Fr. Elijah’s Schedule and House Blessing: please note that my semester doctoral intensive begins on 1/20, and runs for two weeks. This encompasses Monday through Friday from 11 am through 9 pm (the professors for this semester are all on Pacific Time). House blessings will occur once the intensive is over (so, beginning in February). In the meantime, in the event of an emergency from 1/20 through 1/31, please contact Fr. George Johnson @ 814-539-8613, or Fr. Dragan Vokovic @ 814 244-4063. Thank you for your consideration.

Upcoming Archdiocesan Youth Event: there will be a skating party at PPG Place on Sunday, 2 February from 3:00 pm to 4:45 pm. All are invited, not just children. Contact Fr. Alexander Cadman to register, or for more information: alexandercadman@outlook.com. Cost is \$17 per person, and must be pre-paid by 27 January.

Preliminary Announcement,
Archdiocesan Retreat: for clergy and laity to be held on Saturday, March 1, 2025. Guest speaker is Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk, Dean of St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Philadelphia, who will be speaking on the topic: “The Book of Job: Suffering and Victory of Christ over Satan.” Plans call for the event to begin at 10 AM with prayer, two sessions and lunch, and conclusion by 3 PM. More information, including an event flier, will be forthcoming soon.

From the Archdiocesan
Chancery: please keep Matushka Sophie Daniels, wife of retired Archpriest Lawrence Daniels, in your prayers - Fr. Lawrence has informed us that Matushka is currently battling significant health issues that have included several hospitalizations.



PREPARING FOR A HOUSE BLESSING

From: All Saints of North America Orthodox Church, Ontario

The yearly blessing of homes at the Feast of the Theophany touches our daily lives with the sanctifying waters of the Jordan in which Our Lord was baptized. In blessing a home, the Church asks God to drive away every evil influence from our home and those who live in it, and to renew with extra vigor the influence of the Holy Spirit in our domestic lives. The Church Fathers speak of the home as a small church, and just as we must chase away the influences of the Evil One from our parishes and parish families, so too must we do so - at least annually - in our domestic family. In preparing for a house blessing, the following should be noted:

- A QUIET AND HOLY ENVIRONMENT:** Turn off the television and radio before the priest arrives. Assemble all the family and friends in the home around the icon corner, or at an icon prepared for the occasion. Take the phone off the hook.
- PREPARE THE TABLE:** For the house blessing, the priest will require the following:- a table covered with a clear white cloth- an icon with a candle in front of it- a censer (yes, sometimes the faithful have a small censer in their home), with incense and charcoal- matches- a small, clean bowl that will not be used for any future purpose(i.e. just for holy water)- a sprig of basil or cedar
- CLEAR A PATH:** Clear away objects and furniture to allow a clear path for the priest to walk as he moves throughout the house at the sprinkling of the holy water. Secure pets away from the area. If it is dark, turn on the lights throughout the house, and make sure all doors - including closets - are open or ajar.
- FOOD AND DRINK:** It is not necessary to provide food and drink for the priest at a house blessing. Often, if the priest is blessing many homes, it is better to save hospitality for another occasion, and to make special arrangements with the priest in advance of his visit. The faithful are reminded that the priest endeavors to the best of his ability to keep the fast days of the Church, and the support of the priest by the faithful in this regard is much appreciated.

SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY (TODAY)

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon has designated Sunday, January 26, 2025, as Sanctity of Life Sunday to be observed in the parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. His Beatitude has also released a statement, included as an insert in this bulletin.

Sanctity of Life Sunday falls two days after the annual March for Life, scheduled for Friday, January 24, 2025. This date marks the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion in the United States. Other participants in this year's march will be members of the Holy Synod of Bishops, representatives from the stavropegial seminaries, and Orthodox Christians from
For more information, including location addresses and a full schedule of events, please visit the Orthodox Christians for Life website: <https://www.oclife.org/march>



Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

And the prayer of faith shall save him, the Lord shall raise him up”

– James, 5: 14-15

Abp. Nathaniel	Abp. Melchisedek Mat. Sasha	Abp. Michael Mat. Laryssa	Fr. Michael Fr. Jim	Mat. Valeria	
Allison	Elaine	Charles	Bernadette	Janet	Katie
Sandi	Stephanie	Sophie	Nancy	Chrystyna	Damian
Noah	Emma	Henry	Natalia	Peter	Ashley
Mary-Evelyn	Bryan	Gregory	Debbie	Nancy	Mike
Donna	Kevin	Nick	Anne	Nick	Agnes
Robert	Mary Etta	Cory	Sharon	Kara	Michelle M.
Helen	Sandy	Kenneth	Jaida	Scott	Jon
Bill	Sam	Betty	Jerry	Allan	Julie
Charles	Dakota	Kathy	Sue	Debbie	Ruth
Mary-Elizabeth	Darcel	Jennifer	Mary	Karis	Jeremiah
Lisa	Thelma	Shane	Mary Ann	Peter	Lawrence
Jonathan	Tammy	Kathie	Chris	Larry	Matthew Julie
Betty Lou	Renée	Alexandra	Roxanne	Alexis	Gordon
Izzy	James	Curtis	Lita	Suzanne	Shirley-Ruth
George	Jean	Dale	Allen	Steven	Jim
Mitch	Johnnie	Charles	Nancy	Annette	Darren
Johnnie-Mac	David	Agnes	Barbara	Katherine	Joseph
Jan	Larry	Daniel	Monica	Dwain	Michael
Magdalena	Dorothy	Francesca	Kara	Andrew	Tim
Taissia	Daniel	Barbara	Mary Ann	Dave	Ashley
James	Eric	Mary-Louise	Barbara	Denise	Rachelle
Andy	Andrea	Amanda	John, Jr.	Mike	Jean
Ann	Mark	Samantha	Susan	Mary	Maria
Robert	Tim	Don	Mary Ann	Judith	Roxanne
Phyllis	George	Mary	Heidi	Dee Ann	Christine
Jeanne	Tim	Samantha	Bernie	Gene	Kim
Eleanor	John	Dave	Chuck	Anna-Sophie	Betty
Ray	Helen	Maryann	Julia	Jim	Antoinette
Shirley	Greg	Megan	Bob	Ann-Marie	Marie
Walt	Edward	Shaun	Hayes	Sue Y.	Donna
Betty	Robert	Jennifer	Ron	Linda	Gloria
Judy	Richie	Ray	McKenzie	Brady	Betty
Richard	Josephine	Shirley	Sandy	Karl	Gail
Janet	Tammy	Donna	John S.	Paige	Michelle B.
Pastor Dave	Keith	Johannes	Marcella	Linda	Gladys
Tammy	Jodi	Nancy K.	Rod	Larry	Ansley
Marsha	George	Louise	Jessica	Rob	Matthew
Michelle N.	Mike	Hannah	Mike	Lubomyr	

Do you have prayer intentions? Remember you may add or remove intentions at any time. You do not have to be members of our parish, or even Orthodox to be placed on the list!



RECEIVING CHRIST'S PEACE WITH THE HUMILITY OF A BLIND BEGGAR

From: Fr. Philip LeMasters



Since so much in our culture distorts this season into a celebration of materialism and self-centered indulgence, we must remain focused on pursuing a very different path that leads to a Kingdom that is not of this world.

In today's gospel lesson, Jesus Christ restored the sight of the blind beggar identified as Bartimaeus in Mark 10: 46-52. He persistently called out for mercy as the Savior passed by, even though others told him to be quiet. Because of his bold and persistent faith, Christ restored his ability to see. Think for a moment of the humility and weakness of a blind beggar in that time and place. He was completely dependent upon the generosity and good will of others. He knew quite well what it meant to live in darkness without realistic hope for a better life. When Christ passed by,

however, he took what little chance he had by calling out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" despite strong criticism from others.

Bartimaeus took a risk in doing so, for he might have alienated the very neighbors upon whom he was dependent. He certainly drew attention to himself and his need for healing, when the safe and easy thing would have been to remain silent. He was not afraid to cause a scene because he so desperately wanted to be able to see. Bartimaeus used a Jewish term for the Messiah, Son of David, when he called out for Christ's mercy. He likely viewed the Savior as a righteous person blessed by God to perform miraculous healings. Like the rest of Christ's followers, he surely lacked a full understanding of what it meant for Him to be the Son of God. Nonetheless, the Savior had mercy on him and restored his sight.

During this season of Advent, we must all learn to see ourselves in this persistent blind beggar. He did not relate to Christ as someone who had solved, or even could solve, all his problems by himself. He did not approach Him as someone who thought he had earned or deserved anything. He did not present himself as a member of a privileged group who expected to get his own way. Instead, he honestly called out for the Lord's mercy simply as he was: a blind and poor man completely dependent upon the generosity of others. The only way to clarify our spiritual vision is to approach the Savior with precisely such honest humility. Perhaps we can fool others or even ourselves, but we cannot fool Him. If we embrace the spiritual disciplines of Advent with integrity, they will reveal our own spiritual blindness and need for His healing mercy. When our minds wander in prayer and we come up with every excuse imaginable not even to attempt to pray, we will learn how little enthusiasm we have for opening ourselves to the presence of God.

When even small changes in our diet seem unbearably severe and we easily rationalize not fasting at all, we will learn how enslaved we are to our taste buds and ultimately to our own will. When we become so insensitive to the needs of others that we refuse to share even a small portion of our resources with them,

we will learn how addicted we are to serving ourselves to the exclusion of serving the Lord Who is present to us in every needy neighbor.

Nothing could be more profitable for us in the weeks of the Nativity Fast than to gain the spiritual clarity to see that we must all cry out, with the urgency of Bartimaeus, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." When our own thoughts encourage us not to do so for whatever reason, we must persist and refuse to be distracted from opening our souls to the healing mercy of the Savior with brutal honesty. That is how the blind beggar received his sight, and it is how we will cultivate the humble attitude necessary to embrace the salvation of the human person that He was born to bring to the world.

We must not, however, fall prey to the common temptation to view the life in Christ as a self-centered individualistic undertaking, as though our faith were simply a way for us to advance spiritually all by ourselves. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the Lord as "our peace" Who has united Jew and Gentile "reconcil[ing] us both to God in one body through the Cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end." Because of the reconciliation worked in Christ, we Gentiles "are no longer strangers and sojourners, but...fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.'

Reconciliation between enemies is an intrinsic dimension of sharing in the life of Christ. He is the Jewish Messiah in Whom the promises to the descendants of Abraham are fulfilled and extended to the entire world. The more we unite ourselves to the Savior in holiness, the more we will display the peace of His Kingdom, especially in relation to those whom we view as enemies for whatever reason. If hatred, anger, resentment, and refusal to forgive remain characteristic of us, then we are very far from finding the healing of our souls. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are not merely tools for enhancing our personal piety, but for opening ourselves to receive the strength to manifest His peace in relation to those we are tempted to hate and condemn.

We probably do not have to look far for those we consider our enemies. There are tensions within our marriages, families, friendships, and work places. Our political and media cultures seem to thrive on encouraging people to hate and fear one another. Too often, we view ourselves as the innocent victims of injustice done by people whose failings we can identify with complete clarity. The vast majority of the time, however, no one is purely innocent in a broken relationship with someone else, and every social system reflects our common brokenness. Surely our insight into the souls of people we consider our enemies is far less than accurate. If we embrace Christ's reconciliation of humankind to God, then we must manifest His reconciliation, His peace, in relation to those from whom we have become estranged. Otherwise, we will be in the false position of wanting a blessing for ourselves that we will not extend to others.

When we struggle to forgive our enemies and otherwise to mend broken relationships, we must use our weakness to grow in our dependence upon the Lord's mercy. That means focusing our minds on the words of the Jesus Prayer when we are tempted to dwell on the faults of others or to fuel our fears of them. That means praying for God to bless our enemies and to forgive our sins by their prayers. That means growing in the humility necessary to accept that we are members of the Body of Christ purely due to the Lord's reconciling mercy for sinners and strangers, not as a reward for anything that we have done, whether individually or collectively.

Christ came to restore sight to the blind beggars of the world. Let us embrace the disciplines and spirit of the Nativity Fast in ways that will help us see that that is precisely who we are. Let us acquire the humility necessary to receive and share the peace that He was born to bring to the world. That is how we must all prepare to welcome Him into our hearts and lives at Christmas.