

## 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

**Sunday of the Last Judgment/Meatfare**

**22 February 2025**

*"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me."  
And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."  
(Matthew 25: 45-46)*

**LITURGICAL SCHEDULE: 23 FEBRUARY – 2 MARCH 2025**

<b>Sunday 23 February Tone 2</b>	<b>Last Judgment/Meatfare</b> Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8: 8 - 9: 2 Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46	<b>8:40 am</b> , Hours of Prayer (CC) <b>9:00 am</b> , Divine Liturgy* (CC) * Meatfare Dinner to Follow Liturgy
<b>Sunday 2 March Tone 3</b>	<b>Forgiveness/Cheesefare Sunday</b> Epistle: Romans 13: 11 – 14: 4 Gospel: Matthew 6: 14-21	<b>8:40 am</b> , Hours (CC) <b>9:00 am</b> , Liturgy (CC) * The Great Lent Begins at Sunset! Clean Week is observed this week!

**~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.

**OUR FASTING DURING GREAT LENT**

**by:** Fr. Hopko

We should begin by reminding ourselves of the basics of the Church's traditional discipline of fasting. During Great Lent, the strictest levels of fasting are prescribed, with certain exceptions allowed for weekends and feast days. The traditional norm, as developed and followed over many centuries in the Orthodox Church, is that we would abstain from the following items (listed here in order, beginning with those items that are eliminated first and then on down to those items that may be permissible at some times):

- meat & meat products (must be restricted)
- milk & egg products (often referred to as "dairy.")
- fish (permissible on certain feasts during Great Lent)
- olive oil (permissible on weekends and certain feasts during Great Lent)
- wine

So then, generally speaking, during Great Lent we are to make do with the following types of food:

- shellfish (shrimp, clams, etc.)
- vegetables
- vegetable products
- legumes
- fruit, grains (breads, pasta, rice, etc.), nuts, etc.
- nonalcoholic, dairy-free beverages

Having laid out the traditional guidelines for fasting, certain points must be made in reference to them. First of all, each of us must make an honest, prayerful assessment of how well we can maintain the fasting discipline. If we are unable - due to age, illness, or some other weakness - to follow the traditional order of fasting completely, we must then make a decision about what we are going to do. Being overly scrupulous in this regard will not save us but neither will any rationalizing away of the need to fast. Each and every person, usually together with the other members of his or her family and, if necessary in consultation with his or her parish priest, needs to make an honest and prayerful decision about how he or she is going to keep the fast.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Schedule Adjustments:** thank you for your patience and flexibility during schedule changes caused by the recent winter weather. Every effort is being made to provide services, and we will continue to adjust only in the event of truly dangerous conditions. Attendance last week in Central City was seven (7) individuals (excluding the clergy family).

**Meatfare Dinner Today:** the meal today is prepared and offered for our faithful, their families, and our friends, in the spirit of fellowship and out of love for all in attendance. It will be what you make it. Only two (2) people offered an RSVP as requested, and many friends had other commitments. Enough food is prepared for 20 persons in the hope there will be mouths to feed. We want to see you there! At this point, all free-will donations will be used to cover expenses. If there are additional funds, they will be applied to the roof renovation project.

**Archdiocesan Announcement #1, Archdiocesan Lenten Vespers Service:** is scheduled at the Allison Park Cathedral on March 23 at 5 PM. All are welcome.

**Archdiocesan Announcement #2, Upcoming Retreat, Last Call:** Please continue to announce the March 1 Archdiocesan retreat being held at the Allison Park Cathedral. Reminder: FEBRUARY 24 is the deadline to register. 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." Contact Fr. David Vernak to RSVP, [frdavidvernak@verizon.net](mailto:frdavidvernak@verizon.net).

**Archdiocesan Announcement #3, All-American Council:** We thank the diocesan parishes that have already sent in their parish All-American council assessment payment. We ask all the parishes to kindly take care of this ASAP. Please call or email the Chancery if your parish needs this form re-sent (it was sent via the USPS weeks ago). Reminder: AAC registrations for clergy/laity are now being accepted at the link from: [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)

**Lenten Mission Vespers:** there will be a finalized schedule for Lenten vespers forthcoming. This is the first time in many years we will observe deanery vespers on the Sundays of the Great Fast. Please stay tuned.

**Meeting of Officers:** the officers of Holy Assumption will meet during coffee social on 2 March. This will be our first quarterly meeting of 2025.



## LENTEN FASTING

**Source:** OCA. Org, *The Orthodox Faith, Volume II, Worship*



A special word must be said about fasting during lent. Generally speaking, fasting is an essential element of the Christian life. Christ fasted and taught men to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, without ostentation or accusation of others (Mt 6.16; Rom 14). It has as its goal the purification of our lives, the liberation of our souls and bodies from sin, the strengthening of our human powers of love for God and man, the enlightening of our entire being for communion with the Blessed Trinity.

The Orthodox rules for Lenten fasting are the monastic rules. No meat is allowed after Meatfare Sunday, and no eggs or dairy

products after Cheesefare Sunday. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic “burden too hard to bear” (Lk 11.46), but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to spiritual perfection crowned in love. The Lenten services themselves continually remind us of this.

*Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This is the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lusts, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable* (Monday Vespers of the First Week).

The Lenten services also make the undeniable point that we should not pride ourselves with external fasting since the devil also never eats!

The ascetic fast of Great Lent continues from Meatfare Sunday to Easter Sunday, and is broken only after the Paschal Divine Liturgy. Knowing the great effort to which they are called, Christians should make every effort to fast as well as they can, in secret, so that God would see and bless them openly with a holy life. Each person must do his best in the light of the given ideal.

In addition to the ascetic fasting of the Lenten season, the Orthodox alone among Christians also practice what is known as Eucharistic or liturgical fasting. This fasting does not refer to the normal abstinence in preparation for receiving the holy Eucharist; it means fasting from the holy Eucharist itself.

During the week days of Great Lent the regular Eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in Orthodox churches since the Divine Liturgy is always a paschal celebration of communion with the Risen Lord. Because the Lenten season is one of preparation for the Lord’s Resurrection through the remembrance of sin and separation from God, the liturgical order of the Church eliminates the Eucharistic service on the weekdays of lent. Instead the non-Eucharistic services are extended with additional scripture readings and hymnology of a Lenten character. In order that the faithful would not be entirely deprived of Holy Communion on the Lenten days, however, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

Even during Great Lent, Saturday (the Sabbath Day) and Sunday (the Lord’s Day) remain Eucharistic days, and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. On Saturdays it is the normal Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, usually with prayers for the dead. On Sundays it is the longer Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.

The well-known teaching that Saturdays and Sundays are never days of fasting in the Orthodox Church, an issue emphasized centuries ago when controversy arose with the Latin Church, refers only to this Eucharistic-liturgical fast. During Great Lent, even though the Eucharistic fast is broken on Saturdays and Sundays, the ascetical fast continues through the weekends since this fasting is an extended effort made from Meatfare Sunday right to Easter itself.

*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

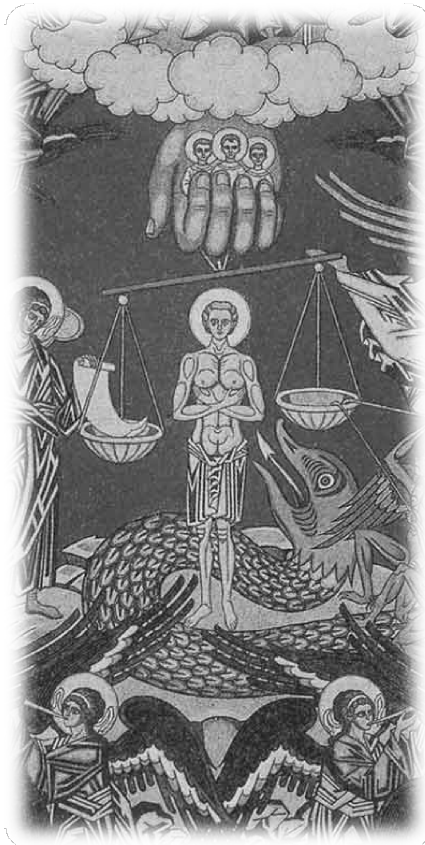
Abp. Nathaniel Mat. Sasha	Abp. Melchisedek Mat. Laryssa	Abp. Michael Fr. Jim	Fr. Michael Mat. Sarah	Mat. Valeria
Allison	Elaine	Charles	Katie	
Sandi	Stephanie	Sophie	Nancy	Chrystyna
Noah	Emma	Henry	Natalia	Peter
Mary-Evelyn	Bryan	Gregory	Debbie	Nancy
Donna	Kevin	Nick	Anne	Nick
Robert	Mary Etta	Cory	Sharon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

**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!



## DO WE REALLY BELIEVE?

*by: Fr. James Guirguis*



Our Christian faith requires conviction. One of the reasons that we celebrate and often remember the martyrs, those who die for their faith in Jesus Christ, is because of their courage and conviction. They believe in Jesus Christ with unshakeable belief. They have conviction in their faith. They believe firmly that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He was crucified and that He defeated death itself and rose again from the dead. That is part of the Christian faith. We have to have this as a firm conviction. Likewise, as Christians we must also have a strong and unshakeable belief that this same Lord Jesus Christ will come again and will be seated on the throne to judge all nations and all people.

The One who descended to us in lowly human form will come again as the radiant and victorious King of kings. The One whose victory began on the wood of the cross. This One comes again to judge all, the living and the dead. Today we find ourselves being reminded of these things that we often take for granted. The Church is a loving mother who doesn't desire to see her children lost forever. She doesn't want to see us confused and disoriented in life. She doesn't want to see us drowned in the sorrows and cares of this life because there is more to life than this. This life is a beginning for us.

The Holy Orthodox Church doesn't want her children to be unprepared or caught off guard. So she prepares us. As we are now about one week from the start of Great and Holy Lent, we are reminded that the king and judge of all is indeed coming

and we will encounter Him. So in order to properly prepare us, the Church acts like a good tutor and gives us all of the questions for the upcoming final exam. But she goes a step further by also giving us the answers. The answers actually come directly from our Lord Jesus Christ. He tells us who will be numbered among His sheep and who will be numbered among the goats. He separates them. But what are the criteria for being sorted into the two groups? Only this: How do we treat those in need? The hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick and the prisoners. In other words, those who are in the worst position in life. What do we do for those folks, how do we serve them, how do we love them? That's it. It is elegantly and painfully simple. We won't be judged by our bank accounts, or our titles or our social media reach or our beauty or our physical strength, but we will be judged on the beauty of our souls and the strength of our character as demonstrated through our service to those in need.

Listen to one of the hymns for this day:

"I think upon that day and hour when we shall all stand naked, like men condemned, before the Judge who accepts no man's person. Then shall the trumpet sound aloud and the foundations of the earth

shall quake, the dead shall rise from the tombs and all shall be gathered together from every generation. Then each man's secrets will be manifest before thee: and those that have never repented shall weep and lament, departing to the outer fire; but with gladness and rejoicing the company of the righteous shall enter into the heavenly bridal chamber.

How shall it be in that hour and fearful day, when the Judge shall sit on his dread throne! The books shall be opened and men's actions shall be examined, and the secrets of darkness shall be made public. Angels shall hasten to and fro, gathering all the nations. Come ye and hearken, kings and princes, slaves and free, sinners and righteous, rich and poor: for the Judge comes to pass sentence on the whole inhabited earth. And who shall bear to stand before his face in the presence of the angels, as they call us to account for our actions and our thoughts, whether by night or by day? How shall it be then in that hour! But before the end is here, make haste, my soul, and cry: O God who only art compassionate, turn me back and save me." -Four Stichera at praises, Matins, Meatfare Sunday

We hear these things and we might say to ourselves, it seems a bit dark and foreboding. That is true, but only if we hear these things and remain unchanged. They are not given to scare you but to warn you of another reality that is more real than anything you think you can comprehend. When we are in the presence of God nothing can help us but the love we have acquired and shown to others. Love is what makes us able to stand in the presence of God because God is love.

Why should you wait until tomorrow to change or take your life more seriously? How do you know that tomorrow will come? Today is the day of salvation if you hear difficult and good words and you apply them to yourself with faith and conviction. Today is the day to receive new life and boldness before the throne of Christ. But we receive this by going out of our way to serve others whenever and in whatever way that we can. We can do this anywhere can't we? We can practice by serving our families, our spouses, our brothers and sisters, our church community with great joy and enthusiasm. And then this joy will overwhelm us and energize us to go further out of our comfort zone to serve others is greater need. This is our path, my beloved. This path starts with self-denial. We start fasting for many reasons and one of them is in order to develop the ability to deny ourselves. The ability to give up our attachments and to think nothing of them.

St. John Chrysostom tells us that not only can we be saved but we can become equals to the apostles themselves through self-denial. He writes,

"The saying is not mine, but the blessed Paul's. For when he had said, *"Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I will show you a more excellent way;"* [1 Corinthians 12:31] he did not speak next of a sign, but of charity, the root of all our good things. If then we practice this, and all the self-denial that flows from it, we shall have no need of signs; even as on the other hand, if we do not practice it, we shall gain nothing by the signs.

Bearing in mind then all this, let us imitate those things whereby the apostles became great... From all worldly things, therefore, let us withdraw ourselves, and dedicate ourselves to Christ, that we may both be made equal to the apostles according to His declaration, and may enjoy eternal life; unto which may we all attain, by the grace and love towards man of our Lord Jesus Christ to whom be glory and might forever and ever. Amen."

+ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 46*