

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

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SS. PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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**2nd Sunday of the Great Fast/St. Gregory Palamas
16 March 2025**

*"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."
(Mark 2: 11)*

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE: 16 - 23 MARCH 2025

“Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord.” (Joel 1: 14)

Sunday 16 March Tone 5	2nd Sunday of Great Fast St. Gregory Palamas Epistle: Hebrews 1: 10 – 2: 3 Gospel: Mark 2: 1-12	8:40 am , Hours (CC) 9:00 am , Liturgy (CC)
Friday 21 March	3rd Friday of Great Fast	6:00 pm , Presanctified Liturgy (CC) (Liturgy of St. Gregory)

Unless otherwise stated, **Presanctified Liturgy** will be celebrated every Friday evening of the Fast.

Sunday 23 March Tone 6	3rd Sunday of Great Fast Adoration of the Cross Epistle: Hebrews 4: 14 – 5: 6 Gospel: John 1:43-51	8:40 am , Hours of Prayer (CC) 9:00 am , Divine Liturgy (CC)
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Important Liturgical Reminders: The text of the Presanctified Liturgy begins on page 181 of the black pew book, while the text of St. Basil's Liturgy begins on page 101 .

~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.

ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

From: The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

He showed that ascesis and prayer are the outcome of the whole mystery of Redemption, and are the way for each person to make the grace given at Baptism blossom within himself. He also defended the authenticity of the methods which the Hesychasts used to fix the intellect in the heart; for since the Incarnation we have to seek the grace of the Holy Spirit in our bodies, which are sanctified by the Sacraments and grafted by the Eucharist into the Body of Christ. This uncreated grace is the very glory of God which, as it sprang forth from the body of Christ on the day of the Transfiguration, overwhelmed the disciples (Matthew 17). Shining now in the heart purified from the passions, it truly unites us to God, illumines us, deifies us and gives us a pledge of that same glory which will shine on the bodies of the Saints after the general Resurrection. In thus affirming the full reality of deification, Gregory was far from denying the absolute transcendence and unknowableness of God in His essence. Following the ancient Fathers, but in a more precise manner, he made a distinction between God's impalpable essence and the eternal, creative and providential energies by which the Lord enables created beings to participate in His being, His life and His light without, however, introducing any division into the unity of the divine Nature. God is not a philosophical concept for Saint Gregory: He is Love, He is Living Person and consuming fire, as Scripture teaches (Deuteronomy 4:24), Who does everything to make us godlike.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lenten Services: the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (also known as the Liturgy of St. Gregory) will be celebrated every Friday evening of the Great Fast at 6 pm unless otherwise noted. All are encouraged to attend. All are welcome, and indeed, encouraged to attend the Liturgy.

Reference Point: there were eight (8) people present for the celebration of Presanctified Liturgy this past Friday (as compared to 10 the previous Friday). Thank you to those who prioritized the Lenten liturgical services, and who also participated in the social! Everyone is welcome!

Lenten Charity Projects: this Lenten Season, we will collect dog and cat treats for the Somerset County Humane Society, and monetary donations (which will be used to purchase supplies) for the Woman's Help Center in Johnstown. The current total is \$92. We will report an ongoing tally. Thank you! Participation is encouraged as a form of Lenten almsgiving. A box for dog and cat treat donations is available in the foyer of the church. Thank you!

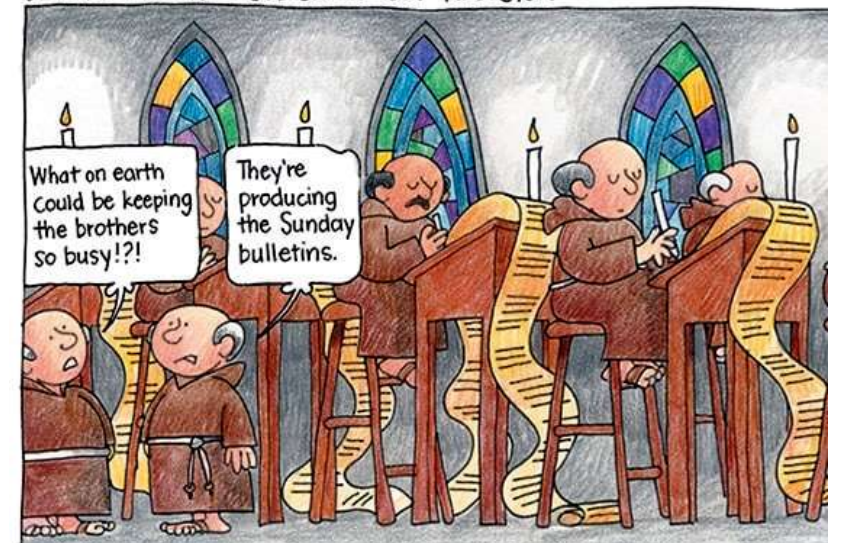
Schedule Change, Lenten Mission Vespers: there is a change in the schedule for Deanery Lenten Vespers. There are no vespers scheduled for today. On 3/23, Vespers will be in St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, at 5pm. On 3/30 Vespers will be at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in DuBois at 5 pm, and on 4/6 at St. Mary's in Madeira at 5pm. All are welcome!

Good News: our Chancellor, Fr. Bill, informed Fr. Elijah that Vladyka Melchisedek will visit Holy Assumption Orthodox Church on Sunday, 6 April (the commemoration of St. Mary of Egypt). We look forward to receiving His Eminence! Vespers will be celebrated on Saturday evening, and there will be a Lenten Social following Divine Liturgy. Schedule and other details will be published as the date approaches. All are invited and encouraged to attend!

More Good News: work will begin on the roof of Holy Assumption Orthodox Church as long as weather permits. The job should be completed within days. Additionally, the contractor quoted \$6,500 for the roof on the church house (using the same material as the church). This will be done at the same time, and ready for our Archepiscopal visit! Thank you for your support!

Polite Request: on Friday evening, when Fr. Elijah arrived at church, both the hall and the church were unlocked. Please make sure that doors are locked, and, in the case of the church proper, make sure Fr. Elijah knows who is there, and for what purpose. The sacred objects must be kept safe at all times, which means keeping the building locked when not used for worship. Thank you for helping us keep the church secure!

BEFORE DESKTOP PUBLISHING GOT RELIGION



THE QUIET MIRACLE OF EVERY MORNING

Source: Fr. Charles Erlandson

It's easy to think of the miracles of Jesus as being ordinary occurrences. After all, we're only halfway through Mark 2, and already we've heard about four specific miracles, as well as references to multiple miracles. The New Testament is so saturated with miracles, especially the Gospels where Jesus lives, that at times I wonder if I live in the same world where Jesus lived. I wonder, "Where are all the miracles in my life?" But such an attitude produces a kind of envy in me, and envy drives out contentment and thanksgiving. What I forget is that most people in Jesus' day, even with Him seemingly performing miracles in every nook and cranny of Israel, never saw one of his miracles, and if they did, they probably only saw *one*.

What I also conveniently forget is the quiet miracle of Christ in me that I wake to every morning. Jesus doesn't need to perform an additional miracle for me because He's already doing one, by the mere fact of His presence in me through the gift of His Holy Spirit. The truth is that when I gaze more intently at this miracle of Jesus healing the paralytic, I am right there, smack dab in the middle of God's wondrous work. I like to think of myself as one of the guys who carried the paralytic to Jesus. As a father and pastor, this is in fact exactly what I do. But it is also true for me simply as a Christian.

Maybe it's less that I see myself in this miracle than that I see this miracle in me, for like the miracle of the leper, this is the story of my life and the story of your life. As in verse two, Jesus preaches the Word to us, and, as in this miracle, there is often an obstruction to my hearing His Word the way I should. In this case, there were so many people around Jesus that the friends of the paralytic couldn't bring him close enough to Jesus to be healed. In our cases, our chief obstacles are the busy-ness of our schedules and the demands we place on our lives that crowd out Jesus and His miracle. We populate our lives with a day crowded by Things I Must Do Today. The funny thing is that "Going to Experience the Miracle of God's Presence" doesn't ever seem to get scheduled in.

Jesus is present in the lives of the paralytic and his friends, as He is in ours, but there is an obstacle. He is ready to breathe out on us His life-giving Word and to touch us with His grace. But something or some things are in our way. What are we to do? We're supposed to do what the friends of the paralytic did, and that is to determine what the obstacle is and find a way around it. The grace of Jesus is near us, through His Word and His presence, but often we are supposed to go and find Jesus and to so order our lives that we overcome whatever it is that is in our way.

In this case, the friends of the paralytic uncovered the roof so that the paralytic could go through it. I think of this as like prayer. Sometimes the heavens seem shut up before us so that God is hidden and we can't get any closer. But in prayer, we uncover the wall of partition that separates us from God, and once again we are able to see God. Like the friends of the paralytic, when we pray, we often "break through" and find God on the other side. The good news is that even a paralytic like me is able to pray. At what point in the story of the paralytic and his friends does Jesus heal the paralytic? It's after they had acted to remove the obstacle that stood in the way of their coming to Jesus. At this point, Jesus says to them, when He *saw their faith*, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

Jesus could obviously see the need of the paralytic, but what He waited for was to see the faith of those who brought him to Jesus. Notice how Jesus *saw* their faith. Their faith was not some invisible force that only the X-ray vision of Jesus could see. Instead, their faith was their faithfulness in taking the necessary action to place themselves before Jesus and His power and grace. How often do we lament the lack of miracles in our lives and the seeming remoteness of Jesus? As often as we refuse to pray and act faithfully to draw near to Him. By the grace of God, sometimes He mercifully descends to us, even when we are not trying very hard to see Him.

But I find that more often He waits to see the faith of His children, a faith that His grace has already made possible but that we often refuse to put to use. Instead of lamenting the absence of God and His miracles in your life, why not seek Him today? Why not investigate the obstacles in your life that keep you from Him and determine to remove them? Uncover the roofs in your life that put a limit on the grace of God, and break through to the presence of God that is the daily miracle in your life.

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	Pat
Sandi	Stephanie	Sophie	Nancy	Damian
Noah	Emma	Henry	Natalia	Ashley
Mary-Evelyn	Bryan	Gregory	Debbie	Mike
Donna	Kevin	Nick	Anne	Agnes
Robert	Mary Etta	Cory	Sharon	Michelle M.
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

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!



THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDS AND A PRAYER ANSWERED IN CHRIST'S WAY

by: Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

There are two important lessons that come from today's Gospel reading. The first involves friendship. A man who was paralyzed wanted to get to Christ so that he could be healed. He had no way of getting to Christ on his own. So, his four friends carried him to Christ. And not only did they carry him. When they got to the house where Jesus was, there was no room to get into the house, they couldn't even get to the door. So they went and cut a hole in the roof of the house and let the man down through the roof. It's hard to imagine what that looked like. Imagine if you wanted to get someone on the roof of your house. There are four people to do it, and one man lying on a mattress who needs to get on the roof. You'd have to lift his weight and the weight of the mattress, hoist all of this at least ten feet in the air, and do it all without your paralyzed friend falling and getting even more hurt. There might have been some ridicule in the crowd as well. The passage doesn't say that a lot of people helped these men. Actually it doesn't say anything about them getting help. The crowd could have helped by just opening the door and making room. The lesson here is that in getting others to Christ, it might not agree with the "crowd" of the day. Thankfully, four friends were undeterred in their efforts to get their friend to Christ.

Which brings us to the second and more powerful lesson of the story: After all of this effort, cutting a hole in the roof, and carefully lowering their friend to Christ (imagine that ingenuity and how hard it must have been to lower a mattress with ropes and have it not fold up or have the man fall off), Christ said to the man *"My son, your sins are forgiven."* (Mark 2:5) Can you imagine the reaction of the friends? Like, "Hey, Jesus, why do you think we all just went through all that trouble, the lifting on the roof, the cutting of the hole, the lowering of our friend, just to see you? We came so he could walk. We didn't come for forgiveness!" Or what the paralyzed man thought "Hey, Jesus, my problem isn't my sins, my problem is that I'm paralyzed." Imagine how upset these people must have been that Jesus didn't do what they wanted. It was obvious to THEM what needed to be done.

However, Jesus doesn't always do exactly what we want, but what HE thinks we need. The man's biggest problem, which is ours as well, is that we are "paralyzed" by sin. The ultimate healing we all need is healing of our spirits, healing of hearts shattered by sins. There are other wounds we all carry as well—for some it might be paralysis of body, or other another sickness. For some it might be something in our minds that doesn't work right. It might be emotional scarring or a material need—like a need for a new job. It might be something long term, like a need for restored

health, or it might be something more immediate like success on a test in school. But the greatest need we all have is for spiritual healing that only the Lord can give. And so Jesus gave the man spiritual healing. And then He healed his paralysis.

Christ is not a vending machine where we put in our requests and He answers them. The goal of prayer isn't to do that. The goal of prayer is to simply be with Christ. He knows our needs, even before we ask Him. The goal of prayer is to share an intimacy with Christ. It is certainly appropriate to lay out our needs and our struggles before God, the same way we tell our friends about our struggles. It is important, however, to remember that things are not always answered in the way we want them answered.

If my son asks me every day, "Can I have French fries?" I'm not going to say yes to that every time. Sometimes the answer is going to be "You are going to get broccoli." And then my son might say "Don't you love me Daddy, why can't I have French fries every day?" And my answer to that would be "Of course I love you, and I know you love French fries, but if I let you eat them every day, you won't be healthy and I wouldn't be a responsible father if I put your health in jeopardy. I want you to have a happy, healthy and long life, so the answer to your request today is broccoli rather than French fries, because what YOU really want is a long and healthy life, not just the good taste of food that isn't good for you." God is our Father, and sometimes the Father knows better than the children. Sometimes God answers prayer in the way that He feels is most beneficial for us, even if it's not what we think is best. And sometimes, as in the case of the Paralytic, He answers both the request we are making as well as the one we are not making.

When I don't let my son have everything he asks for, it doesn't mean I don't love him. In fact, I love him so much that I won't give him whatever he wants, but what I think is best. And sometimes those are the same thing. God loves us so much that He will answer our prayers and give us what He thinks is best. And sometimes those are the same thing as well.

With one accord, we sing your praises, Father Gregory who speaks from God, sonorous trumpet of theology, and divine and sacred organ of holy wisdom. But as intellect that stands before the Intellect, unto Him direct our intellect, so unto you we may cry aloud: Rejoice, O herald of grace. (Kontakion, Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas, Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

Ask God every day for His will to be done in your life. And then trust Him to lead your steps, to what is best for you.

