

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church



100th Anniversary

## THE FORERUNNER

**St John the Baptist Orthodox Church**

211 Cable Avenue – East Pittsburgh, PA 15112

**HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN GREGORY OF NYSSA**

American Carpatho-Russian Diocese-Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Joseph Fester

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Subdeacon Gary Grysiak, Cantor; Reader Justin Rosco, Choir Director;

Robert Pervuznik, Jr., Parish Council President

| 29 Sunday                                | 30 Monday | 31 Tuesday | 1 Wednesday                                    | 2 Thurs | 3 Friday                                       | 4 Saturday                                      |
|--|-----------|------------|--|---------|--|---|
| 9:00 Divine Liturgy<br>Live Stream on FB |           |            | 7pm Presanctified Liturgy<br>Live Stream on FB |         | 9am Presanctified Liturgy<br>Live Stream on FB | 9am April Memorial Liturgy<br>Live Stream on FB |

**WE SAY-** to all who are with us today at St. John's for the first time, ***you are welcome here!*** We pray that you will consider making St. John's your spiritual home. Please join us after Liturgy downstairs for fellowship.

**WEEKLY-**Presanctified Liturgies on Wednesday at 7pm and Friday at 9am and Sunday Divine Liturgy at 9am will be live streamed via Facebook (joseph.fester). If you don't have a Facebook page, it is easy to get one (free). Go <https://www.facebook.com/joseph.fester> and set up a new account. Once the account is created then make a "friend's request" for Joseph Fester and Father will add you.

**OUR GIFTS TO THE LORD-** Sometimes we miss a Sunday and the opportunity to offer our financial gift to the Lord. If we do, please catch up with your gifts. Whether we are here or not, our parish bills continue. Thanks, and God bless!

**Sunday, March 22, 2020 – Attendance 4 – Weekly Offering, \$787 – Building Fund, \$90 – Membership Dues, \$144 – Patriarchal Pence, \$165 – Needy Envelopes, \$15 – Easter Flowers, \$5 – Vigil Candles, \$165 – Total \$1371**

**IT WILL BE IMPORTANT-**for us to keep our weekly donations to St. John's going while we all practice social distancing and follow the rules set forth by our Metropolitan Gregory and local government officials to limit direct participation in the Divine services to only essential persons. Please mail your offerings to the church address. You can also call the rectory with your Vigil intentions or mail in your requests.

**OUR CCE-** class will suspend meeting in person until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However you can still participate ONLINE at: <http://www.agape-restoration-society.org/plugins/athanasius/Lessons-index.htm>

We are studying "The Incarnation" using the very important text of St. Athanasius of Alexandria who stood up against Arius who preached the heresy that Christ was a created being and not the Immortal Son of God.

*O Master Who loves mankind, illuminate our hearts with the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our mind to understand the teachings of Your Gospel. Instill in us also the fear of Your blessed commandments, that we may overcome all carnal desires, entering upon a spiritual life and understanding and acting in all things according to Your holy will. For You are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies, O Christ God, and to You we give glory together with Your eternal Father an Your all-holy, gracious and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.*

### DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

|           |                   |              |                   |                                     |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Monday    | Isaiah 37:33-38:6 | Gen 13:12-18 | Prov. 14:27-15:4  | Ven. Alexis, Man of God, in Rome    |
| Tuesday   | Isaiah 40:18-31   | Gen 15:1-15  | Prov. 15:7-19     | St Cyril Archbishop of Jerusalem    |
| Wednesday | Isaiah 41:4-14    | Gen 17:1-9   | Prov. 15:20-16:9  | Martyr Daria of Rome                |
| Thursday  | Isaiah 42:5-16    | Gen 18:20-33 | Prov. 16:17-17:17 | Martyr Photina, Samaritan woman     |
| Friday    | Isaiah 45:11-17   | Gen 22: 1-18 | Prov. 17:17-18:5  | St Edna monk of Ireland             |
| Saturday  | Hebrews 9:24-28   |              | Mark 8:27-31      | Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra         |
| Sunday    | Hebrews 9:11-14   |              | Mark 10:32-45     | 5th Sunday of Lent St Mary of Egypt |

**PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS** –Adrienne Harms, Thomas Planiczki, Josephine Sofelkanik, Michael Sterchak, John Edward Stagon, Kathryn Rogulin, Cathy Pervuznik, Fr. Michael and Matushka Susanne Senyo, Wally Perkins, Fr Lawrence Barriger, Gina Marie Gaspard, Dannette Wargo, Pani Marie Brancho, Rose Hollis, Marti and Cathilynn Baran, Aubrey Welch, Kalina Walker and the child, Malachi, born of her, Ashley Yeagers and the child to be born of her. Fr. John Dixon, Fr. Jonathan Tobias, Fr Daniel Prez (Joe Monde's brother), Michelle Clayton, Nicholas Hollisf and all healthcare workers. Please keep Father Joseph informed on changes to anyone's health status so he can minister to them.

**March Memorial – Newly Departed,** Paul Haruilesko, Michael Fitzurka, Milos Konjevich.

**Perpetual:** Metropolitan Nicholas, John Suvak, Rosella Lapato, Helen Marchak, Pauline and Michael Sabo, Darrel Weiss, Julia and Frank Kranik, Michael Sabo, George Wazso, Anna Bergel, Michael Seredich.

Pauline Dyakon, Helen Bloom, John Lillicotch, Andrew Kasenchak, Anna Gaydos, John Kokojko, Anna Lopovich, Michael Stripay, George Rela, Anna Suvak, Peter Danchik, Veronica Sterchak, Mary Zwisdak, Michael Orange, Helen Kosarich, Margaret Papinchak, Anna Ressatar, Paul Kobasa, Sr., Rose Plichta, Anna Rosenbayger, George Golofsky, Mary Gezzer, Joseph Papinchak, William Varhula, Mary Uram, Gregory Papinchak, Emma Evashavik, Eugene Brancho, John Begey.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 4-** we will offer the April Memorial Liturgy at 9am. It will be broadcasted via Facebook.

## DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

In a week that was full of so much sad news, more people infected with the COVID-19 virus around the world and here in the USA and Pennsylvania and, even more sad, the rising death rate, our parish had some wonderful good news.

We welcome our newest member, Malachi Asa Walker, born on March 25<sup>th</sup> to Kalina and Sean Walker. Mila's new brother weighed in at 8lbs 10 oz. Mother and son are doing fine.

Well, we survived another week of physical distancing and only venturing out for essential tasks. For those of you who have access to the internet, we are glad that so many of you are taking advantage of participating in the Divine services via the less than ideal method of FB streaming. It is a poor substitute for being there but at the moment it is the best we can offer to keep us connected with the liturgical life of the parish.

Many thanks to Subdeacon Gary and Denny for singing and serving. If you have tuned in, you may have heard another voice chanting, that is Fr. Prepelka who has been also helping with the singing.

This week I delivered food to the Neighborhood Resilience Project (formerly FOCUS Pittsburgh) as part of our parish commitment to provide lunches for the homeless and hungry. Although we were not able to assemble the lunches this time due to physical distancing requirements, we were able to purchase all the necessary items and deliver them so that the good people at NRP could put the lunches together for distribution yesterday at their location. Many thanks to Nancy Sabeh who made trips to the store to buy the items.

Although it has been reported in some media sources that the social (physical) distancing requirements might be lifted by western Easter, the medical reality appears to be entirely different. Sadly, I think there is little chance, short of a miracle, which is always possible, that we won't be able to gather as a worshipping community until May, if not later. We have not reached the peak of the outbreak in the USA and Pennsylvania. There are now reports that medical personnel who were infected and have recovered have been re-infected by the virus. This is a worrisome development. As testing increases more cases will be reported, but we must assume that the actual number of people infected by the COVID-19 virus will be higher than reported since there are many who are already infected but show no symptoms but can spread the virus unknowingly.

How will this impact our celebration of Holy Week and Pascha? I don't know exactly except to prepare for the almost certain fact that we will have to celebrate "virtually" this year. How we can adjust so that palms and pussy willows and Paschal baskets can be blessed, is under review. Maybe a "drive by" blessing is one option. Another is scheduled pickups and blessings. To be honest, we never had this course in Seminary, so we are all figuring this out "on the fly!" Your prayers and patience are needed and appreciated.

Another important thing that is needed and appreciated is your continued financial support of St. John's. We still have regular obligations to be paid, utilities, taxes, Diocesan and Patriarchal obligations, as well as salaries and stipends. So, please, mail in your envelopes, either weekly, every

other week, or monthly. You can mail them to the church address and George Stagon will pick them up and count them weekly so we can make bank deposits.

Finally, many thanks to all of you who are reaching out to each other with cards and phone calls, keeping up the spirits of your fellow parishioners in these strange times. My prayer continues to be that once this is all over, we will be an even closer community that appreciates more the great and beautiful gift we have been given by God to be brothers and sisters in Christ and to steward this blessed parish of St. John's.

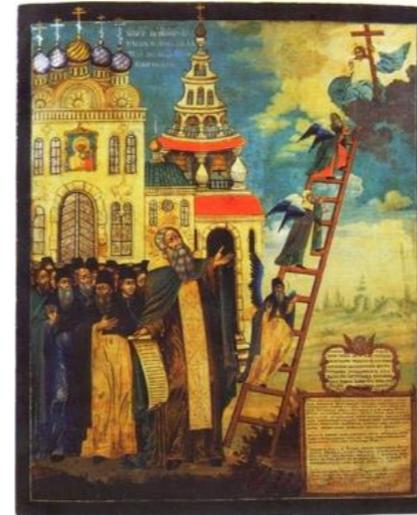
Pray for one another and for me as I pray for all of you. Make the most of these solitary days by increasing your prayers to God and appreciating each other more. And, don't forget, wash your hands!

Yours in Christ,

Father Joseph

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## Sundays of Great Lent – The Sunday of the Ladder



In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Lent is a time of repentance, a time when our heart of stone must be made by the power of God into a heart of flesh, from insensitive to become perceptive, from cold and hard to become warm and open to others, and indeed, to God Himself.

Lent is a time of renewal when like spring, everything become new again; when our life that had gone into a twilight becomes alive with all the intensity which God can communicate to us, humans, by making us partakers of His Holy Spirit, by making us partakers, through the Holy Sacraments and the direct gift of God, of the Divine nature.

It is a time of reconciliation, and reconciliation is a joy: it is God's joy, and it is our joy; it's a new beginning.

Today is the day of Saint John of the Ladder, and I want to read to you a few phrases of his which are relevant to the particular time of the year in which we live:

"Repentance, that is our return to God is renewal of our baptism; it is our effort to renew our covenant with God, our promise to change our life. It is a time when we can acquire humility, that is peace; peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with all the created world. Repentance is born of hope and rejection of despair. And one who repents, is one who deserves condemnation - and yet, goes away from the tribunal without shame, because repentance is our peace with God. And this is

achieved through a worthy life, alien to the sins we committed in the past. Repentance is cleansing of our conscience. Repentance implies carrying off all sadness and pain.”

And if we ask ourselves how we can achieve it, how we can come to this, how we can respond to God Who receives us as the father received the prodigal son, a God Who has waited for us, longingly, Who, rejected, never turned away from us - how can we respond to Him? Here is a short word about prayer :

“Don't use in prayer falsely wise words; because it is often the simple and uncomplicated whispering of children that rejoices our heavenly Father. Don't try to say much when you speak to God, because otherwise your mind in search of words will be lost in them. One word spoken by the publican brought Divine mercy upon him; one word filled with faith saved the thief on the cross. The use of the multiplicity of words when we pray disperses our mind and fill it with imaginations. One word spoken to God collects the mind in His presence. And if a word, in thy prayer, reaches you deeply, if you perceive it profoundly - dwell in it, dwell in it, because at such moments our Angel guardian prays with us because we are true to ourselves and to God”.

Let us remember what Saint John of the Ladder says, even if you forget the short comments (which I introduced) to make his text more readily understandable. Let us remember his words because he was a man who knew what it means to turn to God, to *stay* with God, to be God's joy and to rejoice in Him. He is offered us in this time, when we are ascending towards the days of the Passion, he is offered us as an example of what grace Divine can do to transform an ordinary, simple human being into a light to the world.

Let us learn from him, let us follow his example, let us *rejoice* in what God can do by His power in a human being, and let us confidently, with faith, with an exulting and yet serene joy follow the advice, listen to God *begging* us to find a way of life and telling us that with Him, in Him we *will* be alive, because He *is* the Truth but also the Way and also Life eternal. Amen.  
(*Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh SAINT JOHN OF THE LADDER 9 April 1989*)

**“Let your prayer be completely simple. For both the publican and the prodigal son were reconciled to God by a single phrase.”+ St. John Climacus, Step 28.5, Ladder of Divine Ascent**

**“Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly the angel who guards you will honour your patience. While a wound is still fresh and warm it is easy to heal, but old, neglected and infected ones are hard to cure, and require for their care much treatment, cutting, plastering and cauterization. Many from long neglect become incurable. But with God all things are possible [Matthew 19:26].”+ St. John Climacus, Step 5.30**

<http://www.orthodoxchurchquotes.com/category/sayings-from-saints-elders-and-fathers/st-john-climicus-of-the-ladder/>

## March 22, 2020 – Candle Intentions

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| <p><b>Health</b><br/>Babich, Sandy - Family<br/>Babich, Sandy – Ken &amp; Marian Wolf<br/>Babich, Sandy – Fr Joe and Pani Kathy<br/>Bires, Alice – Benjamin<br/>Bires, Alice – Kalina &amp; Unborn Child<br/>Bires, Alice – Pani Illeana &amp; Unborn sons<br/>Bires, Alice – Scott &amp; Sharon<br/>Bires, Alice – Cheryl<br/>Bires, Alice – Wally<br/>Bires, Alice – Ron Raible<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Benjamin<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Luke &amp; Alexis<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Irene &amp; Basil<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Janet<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Deborah<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Burkett Family<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Bob &amp; Miryam Knutson<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary - John E. Stagon<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Josie Sofelkanik<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Kevin Henry<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Marti Baran<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Mitzi Conroy<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Wally Perkins<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Anthony Macchiaroli<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Fr. John Dixon<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Virus Victims<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Healthcare &amp; Grocery Workers<br/>Harms, Denny &amp; Adrienne – Adrienne Harms<br/>Harms, Denny &amp; Adrienne – USA</p> <p><b>Special Intention</b><br/>Babich, Sandy – Health Care Workers<br/>Babich, Sandy – St John Parishioners<br/>Babich, Sandy – All who are ill<br/>Bires, Alice – Special Intention</p> | <p><b>Memory</b><br/>Babich, Sandy – Ron Babich<br/>Bires, Alice – Helen<br/>Bires, Alice – Margie<br/>Bires, Alice – Parents<br/>Bires, Alice – Brother-in-law<br/>Bires, Alice – George Sukal<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Father Charles Grysiak<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Father Edward Barney<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Metropolitan Nicholas<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Mother Helen Grysiak<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary - Mother Irene Barney<br/>Grysiak, Janet &amp; Gary – Virus Victims</p> <p><b>Dues &amp; Diocese</b><br/>Fester</p> <p><i>Vigil Light offerings made this week will be posted in next week's bulletin.</i></p> <p><i>Mail or call in your Vigil light commemorations.</i></p> |
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