



The Trophy Bearer

March 2020

Volume 1, Issue 7

St. George Orthodox Church

2 Nottingham Terrace

Buffalo, NY 14216

Very Rev. Jason Vansuch, Parish Priest

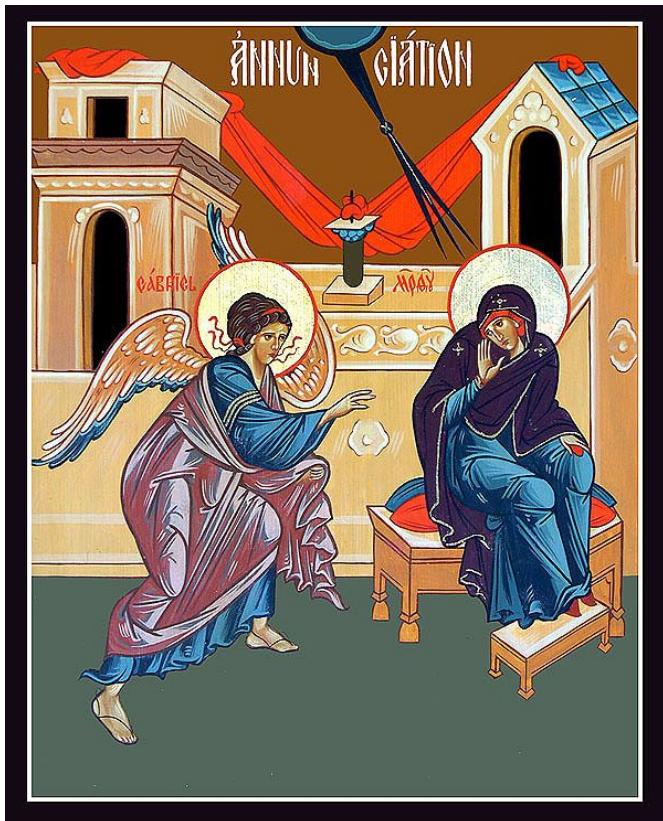
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Mr. Amil Slaiman, Parish Council President

This newsletter is published monthly in the interest of the parishioners and friends of St. George Orthodox Church in Buffalo, a parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and The Orthodox Church in America.



THE GREAT FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

March 25

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. There is a painting of the Annunciation in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome dating from the second century. The Council of Toledo in 656 mentions the Feast, and the Council in Trullo in 692 says that the Annunciation was celebrated during Great Lent.

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as "good tidings." This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of St Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the "beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the

eternal mystery," for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God's promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel." The Fathers of the Church understand "her seed" to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

We see this echoed in the Liturgy of St Basil, as well: "When man disobeyed Thee, the only true God who had created him, and was deceived by the guile of the serpent, becoming subject to death by his own transgressions, Thou, O God, in Thy righteous judgment, didst send him forth from Paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Thy Christ Himself."

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin who was betrothed to St Joseph: "Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel's message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but could not understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature.

Then said Mary unto the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34).

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.' And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1: 35-38)."

In his Sermon 23 on the day of the Annunciation, St Philaret of Moscow boldly stated that "the word of the creature brought the Creator down into the world." He explains that salvation is not merely an act of God's will, but also involves the Virgin's free will. She could have refused, but she accepted God's will and chose to cooperate without complaint or further questions.

The icon of the Feast shows the Archangel with a staff in his left hand, indicating his role as a messenger. Sometimes one wing is upraised, as if to show his swift descent from heaven. His right hand is stretched toward the holy Virgin as he delivers his message.

The Virgin is depicted either standing or sitting, usually holding yarn in her left hand. Sometimes she is shown holding a scroll. Her right hand may be raised to indicate her surprise at the message she is hearing. Her head is bowed, showing her consent and obedience. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is depicted by a ray of light issuing from a small sphere at the top of the icon, which symbolizes heaven. In a famous icon from Sinai, a white dove is shown in the ray of light.

There are several famous icons of the Annunciation. One is in the Moscow Kremlin in the church of the Annunciation. This icon appeared in connection with the rescue of a prisoner by the Mother of God during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. Another is to be found in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow.

It was originally located in Ustiug, and was the icon before which St Procopius the fool (July 8) prayed to save the city from destruction in 1290. One of the most highly revered icons in Greece is the Tinos icon of the Annunciation (January 30).

A Message From Fr. Jason

THE 2020 GREAT LENTEN SEASON:

The Journey to Holy Pascha

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

GLORY FOREVER!

"While fasting in body, O brothers, let us also fast in spirit! Let us loose the bonds of iniquity! Let us undo the chains of injustice! Let us break the yoke of oppression! Let us give food to the hungry! Let us shelter the poor and homeless,// so that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God! "
(Wednesday of the First Week of Great Lent)

I greet all of you with these words of praise as we begin The Great Lenten Journey. These words remind each of us about the importance of Great Lent and how this period in the Life of the Church is a time for repentance, forgiveness, and growth.

Every year we make this spiritual journey through Great Lent during which we gather together to pray at the various services. We gather together to seek God's love and repentance. We gather together to seek guidance and salvation. We gather together as brothers and sisters in Christ as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the Great Feast of Holy Pascha! It is during this time, as such, that it would be beneficial for us, as Christians, to choose a goal that is

appropriate for our own spirituality. Perhaps we need to attend the weekly services that are offered on a more regular basis, pray a little more each day, read the Bible all the way through, fast more often or more strictly, extend our time, talents, and efforts a little more. Whatever we need to do to grow spiritually, we need to start today!

The Great Lenten Season and Journey, itself, reminds us of the constant need to re-evaluate and recapture that which is central to our lives as Orthodox Christians, to restore balance in all we do, and in repentance to make an earnest attempt to set aside a portion—the "first portion"—of our time to acquire the peace of the Holy Spirit. This can be seen and fulfilled by way of our stewardship or commitment to Christ and His Holy Church. Stewardship is understood to be a spiritual exercise whereby we, as God's Children, express our love and faithfulness in tangible ways through the giving of our time, talents and treasures for the building up of the Body of Christ as best expressed in our Parish life. For truly as Christ has taught, all things belong to God, and He has gifted them to us during our time on earth. As Christians, we are called to share these gifts with those around us. During this Great Lenten Season, I encourage all of us to support the good work being done by our parish by making a donation of our time, talents, or treasures as this would be a good way for all of us to set aside the "first portion" God has given to us.

By entering the Season of Great Lent we discover -- perhaps for the first time -- the mercy and love of God revealed in the services, which open to us the great acts of salvation. In these services, culminating in the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, the celebration of Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, and the many other services that are celebrated during Great Lent, the body of Christians is made into the body of Christ. In these celebrations, the Kingdom of God is being proclaimed and revealed. With the proclamation of the Gospel we are given the opportunity to receive the living Word of God which renews and illumines those seeking "to run the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). By embracing this Word we are invited to draw near and receive from the table of the Kingdom the bread of life and the fountain of immortality.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, a great and awesome gift has been entrusted to us. By entering the Great Lenten Season, we are given the opportunity to proclaim, in word and deed, the Gospel of new and eternal life. Let us draw near together, as a parish family, and enter with great joy into the mystery of the spiritual and liturgical life of our Church. And let us proclaim to the world the saving acts of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by fulfilling and proclaiming His Beloved Gospel.

As we begin this Great Lenten Season, I encourage all of us to participate in the Liturgical and Spiritual Life of our parish. We will be offering the services to allow everyone the opportunity to grow in their spiritual life as well as to become apart of the Liturgical Life of our parish. We will also be continuing Educational Sessions for both the children and the adults of our parish to allow the opportunity for all of us to grow in our faith. We also have Lenten Pot-Luck Dinners on Wednesday Evenings following

Pre-Sanctified Liturgy to allow more time for us to gather together as a family for Christian Fellowship and discussion. Through these services and activities, we will allow ourselves the opportunity of coming together as a parish family to pray and enjoy Christian fellowship with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

As we begin Great Lent, I encourage all of us to continue our love and support for one another. I encourage all of us to continue praying for one another. For through these efforts on everyone's part, not only will our beloved parish family continue to grow in faith and in love, but more so we will become what God has intended us to be: A Thriving and Living Body of Christ proclaiming and living the Gospel of His Beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ!

As we begin Great Lent, I humbly ask for your forgiveness if I have failed you as your spiritual father, as your shepherd, as your priest. If I have sinned against you or caused you to sin through my words, my thoughts, my actions, I humbly ask for your forgiveness and for your continued love and prayers that God will continue to strengthen me so that together, through the Prayers of Our Heavenly Patron, Holy Great-Martyr and Wonderworker George the Victorious, GOD may continue to bless us and protect us as we minister and proclaim the Gospel of His Beloved Son, Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ.

As always, be assured of my continued love and prayers for you, your families, and our entire parish family.

Have a Blessed, Peaceful, and Prayerful Great Lenten Journey!

I remain with Love in Christ

Your Humble Servant, Fr. Jason

Parish Activities

PARISH COUNCIL

The next meeting will be held on March 14 at 5:00 PM.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Sunday, March 1 : Youth Sunday

Sunday March 8: Church School Q&A with Fr. Jay (Holy Hierarchs of Our Church)

PARISH FAMILY NIGHT - FRIDAY, March 6 from 6:30 - 9:00 pm

The entire parish is invited to attend and make an icon of one's patron saint. Please bring a print out of your saint. If you need assistance, please contact Fr. Jason. We will also be making prayer beads as well.

Akathist to the Theotoko with Canon to St. Theodore at 6:00 PM followed dinner and activity in the Parish Fellowship Hall

ADULT EDUCATION/BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study: We will be having a Bible Study class two Wednesdays each month. This month we will meet on **March 11** at 10:00 am and **March 25** following Vespers with Divine Liturgy. There will also be classes on Saturday **March 14** and Saturday **March 28** from 2:30 to 3:45 pm prior to Great Vespers which will be served at 4 pm. The topic will be The Holy Gospels. Come engage with the Holy Fathers and their commentaries as we learn and come to understand The Holy Gospels by reading, discussing, and reviewing The Holy Gospels!

Book Club: Join us Every Wednesday evening for Pre-Sanctified Liturgy beginning at 6:15 pm. Following Liturgy, please join us in the Parish Fellowship Hall for a Pot-Luck Lenten Meal we read and discuss "For the Life of the World" by Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann. If you would like to order the book, please see or contact Dave and Andrea Chmiel (St. George Bookstore Coordinators) as they can order these books for us through our

bookstore account with St. Tikhon's Monastery Press.

If anyone has any questions, please do not hesitate to see or contact Fr. Jason. Looking forward to coming together for Christian fellowship, learning and discussion.

SISTERHOOD OF ST. GEORGE

SEMINARIAN SPONSORSHIP

Sbdn. Maximos, Michelle, and their daughter Madeline Gibson are being sponsored by the Parish. He is a 1st Year Seminarian at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary. The parish has committed to a monthly stipend. We also would like to send gift cards to them periodically. Local stores are Wegmans, Target, Walmart, Kohls.

If anyone would like to contribute to our "Adopt a Seminarian Fund", please see or contact Fr. Jason or Barbara Kuvshinoff.

Upcoming Events:

March 1: Forgiveness Sunday

St. George Meet & Greet in the fellowship hall immediately following forgiveness Sunday Vespers. Note time change: The Hours - 9:10 AM Divine Liturgy followed by Forgiveness Sunday Vespers - 9:30 AM Please join us on Sunday March 1 for a Special Lenten Coffee Hour during which we will get to know our parish family a little better as we begin The Great Lenten Season! Great Food ~~~~ Great Fellowship ~~~~ Great Fun for All! Let us come together as a parish family, as brothers and sisters in Christ and enjoy Christian Fellowship as begin The Great Lenten Season!

Please see or contact Fr. Jason, Amil Slaiman, or Mat. Katia if you would like to help out or bring a Lenten (dairy but no

meat) covered dish to share with everyone!!

March 7: Council of Orthodox Churches on the Niagara Frontier Lenten Retreat. Speaker is Fr. Constantine Nassr. 11-4 pm with vespers following. The retreat will be held at the Family Life Center on Genesee Street in Lancaster.

March 17: Movie Night. Join us as we travel to the Regal on Elmwood Avenue to view "I am Patrick: The Life of St. Patrick". Movie starts at 7 pm.

March 21: Parish Retreat 1-3:30 pm

March 22: Do you know about the lots of socks initiative? Those with Down syndrome have a 3rd copy of chromosome 21, so on 3/21 (March 21) the world celebrates World Down Syndrome Day. The idea behind lots of socks is that everyone wears two different colorful socks to highlight the uniqueness of these individuals and show their support for the Down syndrome community. We will be celebrating this on Sunday March 22. So get your mismatched socks ready and be prepared to display them on Sunday. Last year we raised close to \$300 and donated the money to the local Down Syndrome Society.

Lenten Public Service Announcements:

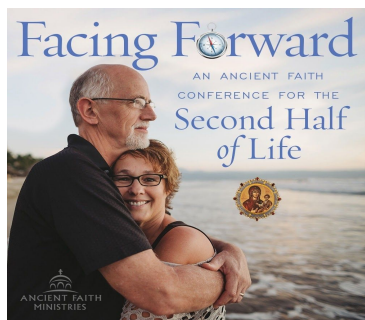
- ❑ During Great Lent, we will continue with our on-going collections for The Buffalo City Mission, Hearts for Homeless, Mats for Mission, HomeSpace as well as the OCMC Coin Boxes and Health Kits for The Buffalo City Mission.
- ❑ The first week of Great Lent brings us the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete at being celebrated on

Monday-Tuesday-Thursday at 6:00 PM

- ❑ On Wednesdays at 6:00 PM and Fridays at 9:30 AM of Great Lent, Fr. Jason will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts. We can find the service starting on **page 175** of the black Divine Liturgy book.
- ❑ Starting Sunday, March 8, Fr. Jason and every Orthodox Priest will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. We can find the Liturgy of St. Basil on **page 97** of the black Divine Liturgy book.
- ❑ Sunday Evening Lenten Vespers Services will be celebrated and sponsored by The Council of Orthodox Christian Churches on the Niagara Frontier. Join your fellow Orthodox Christians as we jointly celebrate Vespers followed by food, fellowship, and discussion. Vespers start at 5 pm
 - ❑ March 8: Ss. Peter and Paul OCA Church
 - ❑ March 15: St. Stephen's Serbian Church
 - ❑ March 22: St. George Antiochian Church, Lewiston
 - ❑ March 29: St. George OCA Church, Buffalo
 - ❑ April 5: Hellenic Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

Retreats in 2020

Facing Forward: An Ancient Faith Conference for the Second Half of Life



May 28-31, 2020 at Antiochian Village in Bolivar, PA (140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA. About 4 miles north of Ligonier, PA on Route 711)

The middle season of life marks itself in our experiences as an ending and a beginning. It is a season of change and realization, and can be a time of great joy and great suffering. There are many questions to ask as we seek to reinvent ourselves, to stay connected with grown children, to care for aging parents, and to think practically about the end of natural life. We invite you to a weekend of thought-provoking conversation, worship, and good fellowship as we study the joys and trials that come to us as God grants us many years.

Who's Invited: Fighting the Good Fight is a pan-Orthodox event for adults. If you are not Orthodox, you are still very welcome to attend. This is an openly Orthodox event, but if you're comfortable with us, we're comfortable with you.

Speakers and sessions include:

- Fr. Gregory and Kh. Frederica Mathewes-Green -- *A Conversation for Parents of Adult Children*
- Steve and Peggy Robinson -- *Parenting Your Parents*
- Bill Marianes -- *Why Are You Here? How Do You Discover Your Calling And Live A Life Of Greater Significance?*
- Steve Kellar -- *Managing Risk in Retirement*

To register, go to

<https://store.ancientfaith.com/facing-forward-2020/>

Fighting the Good Fight: A Conference for Orthodox Men



August 20-23, 2020 at Antiochian Village (140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA. About 4 miles north of Ligonier, PA on Route 711)

Led by Fr. Evan Armatas, Fr. Andrew Damick, Fr. Stephen Freeman, and Fr. Barnabas Powell, this first-ever conference will invite Orthodox men to reflect on the battle to tame the passions and run the race that is set before us. The conference will include daily worship, sessions, panel discussions, a live-audience radio event, fellowship, and good food.

Who's Invited: Fighting the Good Fight is a pan-Orthodox event for adults. If you are not Orthodox, you are still very welcome to attend. This is an openly Orthodox event, but if you're comfortable with us, we're comfortable with you.

To register, go to

<https://store.ancientfaith.com/good-fight-2020/>

Ancient Faith Women's Retreat 2020

November 12-15, 2020 at Antiochian Village (140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA. About 4 miles north of Ligonier, PA on Route 711) Speakers to be announced; registration is not yet open. But the 2019 retreat presentations are available at <https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/the-ancient-faith-womens-retreat-20>

Parish Shut-ins

As we say our daily prayers, let us also take time out to remember our loved ones who are homebound, who are in hospitals and who are in nursing homes. Let us remember them that GOD will continue to watch over them and protect them. Also, during the Year, let us take to either send them a card,

give them a call, or visit them to let them know how much we love them, how much we remember them, and how much we pray for them.

If anyone has any questions or would like to add someone to our List of Parish Shut-Ins, please see or contact Fr. Jason.

Mr. Albert Fadell
317.376.2562

Mr. Miro Gergoff
508 Massachusetts Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14213
716.881.1162

Mrs. Luba Japadjief
189 Tremaine Ave.
Kenmore, NY 14217
716.876.6823

Mrs. Mary Massey
3192 Amsdell Road
Hamburg, NY 14075
716.649.4029

Mrs. Diane Salvamoser
147 West Hazeltine Avenue
Kenmore, NY 14217
716.875.9503

Reader Victor Shanchuk
495 Lafayette Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.881.3096

Mrs. Catherine Tony
274 Wadsworth Ave.
Tonawanda, NY 14150
716.695.3068

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH BOOKSTORE

When you are in the Parish Fellowship Hall for coffee hour, don't forget to check out our Bookstore. We have some new items that just arrived. These items include icon ornaments, jewelry, icons, prayer books, prayer ropes, and much more. If you need a gift, come check out the bookstore.... you may find something you like!! We are also offering gift certificates for our bookstore. Please speak with Dave or Andrea for more details/information. We thank David and Andrea who are managing our bookstore for us. If you have any questions or if you would like to order something that you do not see, please see or contact Dave or

Andrea and they will be able to assist you. You may also email them at bookstore@stgeorgebuffalo.com. May God continue to bless and guide all of you.

Our Parish Outreach Missions:

Hearts for the Homeless There are over 400 red bins located throughout the area. The organization collects items to sell in the thrift store as well as items that can be recycled. With the money earned, they provide meals for the homeless of Buffalo from their mobile soup kitchen as well as a food pantry open to local families. They also are in need of donations of food for the soup

kitchen and food pantry. The website is <http://heartsforthehomeless.org>

Homespace The mission of Homespace is to provide not only transitional housing, but also provide support programs to help families in need break away from dependency and begin a new life of personal growth and economic independence. Homespace provides affordable housing for young (ages 16 - 21), homeless, single parent families.

To see what kind of donations they need, see their website which is <http://www.homespacecorp.org>

Buffalo City Mission: This organization provides meals, shelter, and services to the homeless. They are looking for donations of canned goods and other non-perishable food. The website is www.buffalocitymission.org

Mats for Mission: This organization collects grocery store bags which they cut into strips and after looping the strips together, crochet mats for the homeless. The

Diocesan Ministries

AN INVITATION TO SUPPORT THE STEWARDS OF THE OCA

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) set the direction for expanding our apostolic work in North America at the 18th All-American Council. The foundation for this work is Jesus Christ, Whom we encounter in our spiritual lives, stewardship, evangelism and outreach, and relations with others as we engage the world. Being a steward of the OCA goes beyond the financial gifts which support the work of our church. Being a steward is about caring for and knowing the history of the mission of the Orthodox Church here in North America and finding your place in that history. Having received this great gift of our Orthodox Faith, we bear the responsibility to continue the legacy of Saint Herman and Saint Tikhon; Saint Innocent and Saint Alexis and all the other saints known and unknown who have

homeless put the mats on the ground under their blankets. The mats provide a dry warm base for sleeping on. There is a bin in the social hall to place your grocery bags in. We meet monthly on the second Tuesday of the month to sort and cut bags. Dinner is provided. Come and join us.

Please bring these items to church and place them in the collection bins located in the Parish Fellowship Hall. Once a month, we will take these items down to the Hearts for Homeless, HomeSpace, and Buffalo City Mission.

Kevin Guest House Once a month we provide dinner, conversation, and prayer for the residents of the Kevin Guest House. The residents are patients and their caregivers who are under treatment at local hospitals. If you would like to get involved, dinner is served the second Tuesday of the month. Bring something to share (see Fr. Jason) or just come to share in the conversation and prayer.

worked to build up and expand Christ's Church here in North America. Please consider being a part of that mission today by giving to the Stewards of the OCA. For more information, please visit The OCA Website: <https://oca.org/become-a-steward>

AN INVITATION TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF THE DDB

In order to fund necessary ministries and fulfill the work of the Church in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors** generously contribute financial support. To learn more about the DDB, please go to the following link: <http://vimeo.com/71021182> and watch a 60 second video inviting you to join the ever-growing list of Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey who joyfully support the on-going work of our diocese. Their support allows us to provide assistance to new mission parishes, scholarships to seminarians, support the departments of The Diocese, and much-needed

encouragement to older struggling parishes. How about you? Our parish is a member of the DDB. If anyone would like to join, please see Fr. Jason as well as take a pamphlet from the table in the back of the church. May God continue to bless and guide you for your continued support.

MONTHLY PUBLICATIONS

The Diocese of New York and New Jersey has three quarterly newsletters: ***"First Fruits"***, ***"Koinonia"*** and ***"Beyond the Plateau."*** The goal, as expressed by Archbishop Michael, is to increase communication and grow the communal spirit of diocesan fellowship in the building-up and strengthening of our parish communities. To learn more about these monthly diocesan publications, please refer to the diocesan website: <http://www.nynjoca.org/newsletters.html>.

"LESSONS IN OUR FAITH" VIDEO PRESENTED BY HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

His Eminence Archbishop Michael presents a series of talks on matters of faith, belief, and the teachings of the Church. These instructional videos are concise and to the point, offering Orthodox Christians much-needed information, helpful advice for their spiritual journey, and assistance in answering questions that may come from non-Orthodox friends or acquaintances. The goal is that we might better know and better live our faith. These instructional videos can be found at the Diocesan Website: <http://www.nynjoca.org>! **There are 14 videos! Be sure to check them out!**

COMMENTARY ON GREAT LENT

As we begin the Great Fast, the Church reminds us of Adam's expulsion from Paradise. God commanded Adam to fast (Gen. 2:16), but he did not obey. Because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden and lost the life of blessedness, knowledge of God, and communion with Him, for which they were created. Both they and their descendants became heirs of death and corruption.

Let us consider the benefits of fasting, the consequences of disobedience, and recall our fallen state. Today we are invited to cleanse ourselves of evil through fasting and obedience to God. Our fasting should not be a negative thing, a mere abstention from certain foods. It is an opportunity to free ourselves from the sinful desires and urges of our fallen nature, and to nourish our souls with prayer, repentance, to participate in church services, and partake of the life-giving Mysteries of Christ.

At Forgiveness Vespers we sing: "Let us begin the time of fasting in light, preparing ourselves for spiritual efforts. Let us purify our soul, let us purify our body. As we abstain from food, let us abstain from all passion and enjoy the virtues of the spirit...."

Finally, on the eve of Great Lent, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing of Adam's exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin.

We also hear on this day the Lord's teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us. If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.

The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ, It is the living symbol of man's entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings.

It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to "anoint our faces" and to "cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls." The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

Let us begin the lenten time with delight ... let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.

Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vesper Hymns).

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ's Resurrection and our own.

Self Preservation

Many things have been done - or words were said

That pierced the heart - like a bullet of lead

And though the event came - and soon was gone

The sting of it all - lingered on and on.

Dwelling on the past - though time has marched on

Will make us miserable - no mood for a song,

Because peace and joy - Satan is stealing

Thus, he alone prospers - if we hold an ill-feeling.

We must forgive others - in a way that is right:

Leaving their flaws - for only God's sight.

Sometimes it's impossible - to humanly do
So we call on the Holy Spirit - to see us through.
When the Lord forgives us - our slate is wiped clean.
God doesn't hold grudges - or see us as mean.
Yes, He gives us a chance - for a whole new start.
He holds no memory - of our mistakes in his heart.
If we can't forgive - like the Lord intended
We have a miserable life - which can't be mended.
Because an unforgiving heart - is real devastation
And forgiving completely - is self-preservation.

The Council of Orthodox Christian Churches on the Niagara Frontier

2020 Schedule of Sunday Lenten Vespers Services:

Parish Revitalization

Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 8 Ss. Peter and Paul, 45 Ideal Str, Buffalo, NY 14206 Fr. Constantine Nasr – Parish Revitalization

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas, March 15 St. Stephen SOC, 177 Weber Rd, Lackawanna, NY 14218 Fr. John Boddecker – Stewardship

Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross, March 22 St. George Orthodox Church, 1073 Saunders Settlement Rd, Niagara Falls, NY 14305 Fr. Jason Vansuch - Outreach

Sunday of St. John of the Ladder, March 29 St. George Orthodox Church, 2 Nottingham Terrace, Buffalo, NY 14216 Fr. Nenad Ilic – Culture and Parish Life

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt, April 4 Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, 146 W. Utica Str, Buffalo, NY 14222 Fr. Raphael Barberg - Hospitality

All Vespers Services begin at 5 PM followed by presentation and discussion

ALL ARE WELCOME

St. George Orthodox Church March Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Forgiveness Sunday/ Cheese fare Sunday 9:10 am The Hours 9:30 am Divine Liturgy & Forgiveness Sunday Vespers Memorial Litia for Sbdn. Thomas Slaiman Followed by Church School & Cheese fare Sunday Pot-Luck Luncheon Fellowship	2 Great Lent Begins 6:00 pm Great Compline with Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	3 6:00 pm Great Compline with Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	4 6:15 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Pot Luck Lenten Dinner/ Discussion in Parish Hall following Liturgy	5 6:00 pm Great Compline with Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	6 9:30 am Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm Akathist to the Theotokos with Canon to St. Theodore 6:45-9:00 pm Parish Family Night	7 St. Theodore Saturday 9 am Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Koliva 11:00 am to 4:00 pm COCCNF Retreat at Annunciation Family Life Center 4:00pm Great Vespers (Annunciation Family Life Center)
8 1st Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of Orthodoxy 9:40 am Hours 10:00 am Divine Liturgy followed by Q&A with Fr. Jay & Coffee Hour Fellowship 5:00 pm COCCNF Vespers Ss Peter and Paul Church	9	10 9:00 am Daily Lenten Matins 6:30-8:00 pm Mats for Missions	11 10:00 am Bible Study Monthly Dinner at Kevin's Guest House - Drop off only 6:15pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Pot Luck Lenten Dinner/ Discussion in Parish Hall	12 9:00 am Akathist Service to Our Lord Jesus Christ	13 9:30 am Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm Akathist to the Theotokos	14 Memorial Saturday 9:30 am Full Panahyda Memorial Service 4:00 pm Great Vespers 5:00 pm Parish Council Mtg

			following Liturgy			
15 2nd Sunday of Great Lent: St. Gregory Palamas 9:00am Matins 10:00 am Divine Liturgy followed by Church School & Coffee Hour Fellowship 5:00 pm COCCNF Vespers St. Stephen Church	16 6:30 pm Monthly community Healing Prayer Service	17 9:00 am Daily Lenten Matins 7:00 pm Parish Night at The Movies: "I am Patrick" Regal Theater on Elmwood	18 5:30 -7:30 pm Monthly Dinner at Kevin Guest House 6:15 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Pot Luck Lenten Dinner/ Discussion in Parish Hall following Liturgy	19 9:00 am Akathist Service to Our Lord Jesus Christ	20 9:30 am Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm Akathist to the Theotokos	21 Memorial Saturday 9:30 am Full Panahyda Memorial Service 4:00 pm Great Vespers with Procession of The Life-Giving Cross of Our Lord
22 3rd Sunday of Great Lent: The Veneration of the Holy Cross 9:40am Hours 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Memorial Litia for Archpriest Eugene Vansuch (12th Anniversary of Falling Asleep) Church School & Coffee Hour Fellowship	23	24 Eve of the Great Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos 6:00 pm Great Compline with Litiya	25 Great Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos 9:30 am Vespers with Divine Liturgy 11:00 am Bible Study	26 9:00 am Akathist Service to Our Lord Jesus Christ	27 9:30 am Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 6:00 pm Akathist to the Theotokos	28 Memorial Saturday 9:30 am Full Panahyda Memorial Service 4:00 pm Great Vespers

5:00 pm COCCNF Vespers St. George Church (Lewiston)						
29 4th Sunday of Great Lent: St. John Climacus 9:00 am Matins 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Church School & Coffee Hour Fellowship 1:00 pm Church School Outing to Fatima Shrine 5:00 pm COCCNF Vespers Our Parish is Hosting!	30	31 Feast of St. Innocent of Moscow, Enlightener of North America 9:00 am Moleben to St. Innocent	April 1 6:15 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy Pot Luck Lenten Dinner/ Discussion in Parish Hall following Liturgy ** AT SS PETER AND PAUL CHURCH**	April 2	April 3 9:30 am Pre-Sanctified Litugry	April 4 Saturday of The Akathist to The Theotokos 9:30 am Akathist to the Theotokos 4:00 pm Great Vespers

****THE CHURCH WILL BE OPEN FOR PRAYER DURING THE WEEK ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS:**

Monday March 2 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Tuesday March 3 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Wednesday March 4 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Thursday March 5 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Friday March 6 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Monday March 9 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Monday March 16 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Wednesday March 11 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Wednesday March 18 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Friday March 13 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Friday March 20 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Monday March 30 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Wednesday April 1 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Friday April 3 - 12:00 to 1:00 PM