

If that is true, then all things are possible! Then indeed we can believe the unbelievable! And more than this: we will be shown week after week what God can do. Next week, on the day of St. Gregory of Palamas, we will hear proclaimed by him the fact that God does not only cherish us as it were, from the outside, not but He gives us His grace which like fire pervades us, making us gradually, if we only accept it, to be like the Burning Bush in the desert that burnt without been consumed, because God does not consume, does not destroy, unless we turn against Him. Yes, He is the consuming fire until and unless we accept Him. But accepted, He makes us partakers of His Divine nature, He fills us with His own life, He is life itself in us, and we in Him. These are the two messages that come now; and then we will see that St. John of the Ladder teaches us how to move Godwards, how to overcome the twilight or the darkness which is in us. And we can see the result of this struggle, of this cry of the soul, of this hunger for life and for light in the person of St. Mary of Egypt and of other sinners who received Christ and were transformed, transfigured, saved.

This is the way that leads us step by step to meet Holy Week, a Week so holy when the love of God has been expressed not in words, not in blessings, not in tenderness, but in the vision of the cost of love to God Himself, the cost of our falling away from Him to the Son of God become the Son of Man.

How can we respond to it? What is then the message of this period? In the first period which I have mentioned we were confronted with evil in us, been challenged by it: This is what you are! And this is what is bound to happen. But now we are confronted with this vision of unutterable beauty and hope: how can we respond to it?

By gratitude! Gratitude is the next step; gratitude is what must carry us through all this week: gratitude, a sense of wonder: how can God be as He is? How can He love me as I know myself, and indeed, horror of horrors, as others know me!

And if that is understood by us, then the only answer we can give to God is gratitude. To express our gratitude, is to say, 'Lord, however weak I am, however imperfect, however sinful, however unworthy from the depth of my gratitude for Who You are and what You do, I will do all within my power, however frail my will, however weak my power, I will do all I can to show you that I have understood the message of love, the message of the cross, the message of mercy, that I have understood with all my being and that I want to prove it by living in such a way that would be a proof of my understanding, live in such a way that I should be a joy to You, a joy to God, a consolation to God!

O God! To think that we can do this! Aren't we going to do it? Let us enter into these weeks of Lent really as one begins to live in spring! Enter into newness of life, and throughout, throughout these weeks, in gratitude, to give joy to God. And then we will be able to face Holy Week not as the ultimate horror that condemns the ungrateful, the murderer of Christ no: as a Week that is a full and perfect revelation of a love understood, received, and insofar as we can enacted by us. O, let us gather all our strength, and when our strength will not suffieth, let us remember the promise of Christ: My strength deploys itself in weakness; all things are possible to me as Paul puts it. It is the power of Christ that sustains me. And the words of Christ: What is impossible to men is possible to God. Let us surrender to God to give Him joy! And all will be of God, and all will be well. Amen.

St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Christian Church

108 East Main Street

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Scripture Readings

Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2

John 1:43-51

Commemorations

Martyr Conon of Isauria (1st c.).
Finding of the Relics of Rt. Blv.
Theodore, Prince of Smolensk and
Yaroslavl', and his children Ss.
David and Constantine,
Wonderworkers of
Yaroslavl' (1463). Monk Martyr
Adrian of Poshekhónsk
(Yaroslavl'–1550). Martyr
Onesimus of Isauria (1st c.). Martyr
Conon the Gardener, of Pamphylia
(3rd c.). Virgin martyr Irais (Raïssa)
of Antinoë in Egypt (ca. 308).
Martyr Eulogius, of Palestine.
Martyr Eulampius, of Palestine. St.
Mark the Faster, of Egypt (5th c.).
St. Hesychius the Faster, of
Bithynia (ca. 790).

Information

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Welcome to our Guests

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Please sign our guest card and join us for refreshments and fellowship after the services.

Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Any member of our Council or Congregation are glad to assist you. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found in the narthex (back of the Church).

Our Parish Council Representatives are:

President - Susan Hayes
Vice President - Deborah Bray
Secretary - SubDeacon Joseph Brubaker
Treasurer - Susan Egan
Member at Large - James Pepitone
Member at Large - Demetra Tolis



Please continue to pray for...

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Robert, Olga, Daria, Daria, Dori, John, Evelyn, Alla, June, Nina, Joan, John, Alex, Alan, Luke, Kathryn, Veronica, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Dionysian, Elena, Jevon, Ivan and Joscean.

and for... John, Jennifer, Nicholas, Isabel, Elizabeth, John, Jordan, Michael, Lee, Eva, Neil, Gina, Joey, Michael, Madelyn, Sofie, Katrina, Olena, and Valeriy.

and for our catechumens; Kyle Hollis and Stephen Wexell.

Please keep Anastasia Elliott and Malcolm Littlefield in your prayers as they travel to the Israel.

This week we celebrate...

Kyra Elliott on the occasion of her birthday.

This week's services and events

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

8:30a - Lenten Matins followed
by Bible Study

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

4:30p - Open Doors
6:30p - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Thursday, March 9, 2017

8:30a - Daily Matins
7:00p - Bible Study

Saturday, March 11, 2017

5:30p - Great Vespers

Sunday, March 12, 2017

9:30a - Divine Liturgy
4:00p - Lenten Vespers

Day Light Savings Time Observed

Announcements

We are need for people to sign up to bring food and to help with Lenten Vespers and the meal to follow.

There will be a Lenten Retreat, held at the parish of St Nicholas in Pittsfield, MA on Mar 11th from 11:45a -6pm. This retreat is open to everyone. Please see the online bulletin or the parish calendar for more details.

Girl Scout Week is March 12-18. The week begins with Girl Scout Sunday and our 105th Anniversary on March 12, and ends with Girl Scout Sabbath on March 18.

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

Triumph of Orthodoxy Sunday

4 March 1990

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

Week after week in the period of preparation for Lent, we have been confronted with parables in which our own condition is so clearly, so sharply, so accusingly depicted; and also with stern warnings that there is no middle way between the way of life and the way of death, that we can live on earth in a twilight of unconsciousness, but a moment will come when the full light will shine before us, and then it will become clear whether we, ourselves, have been children of light or prisoners of darkness. And the culminating point of this process is the reading of the Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete in which both sin and repentance are so powerfully depicted.

But now we enter into a new phase of our preparation for Easter; we enter into Lent which is an old word that means 'spring', the beginning of life; a period when we will no longer be confronted with our twilight or the darkness which still has power over us, but with the light of God, the light that dispels darkness, the light that makes all things to shine and to be light itself according to the word of Christ.

And today we remember the day of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the day when the Church recognized in its last Ecumenical Council, in the 9th century, that all that was essential to the Christian faith had been proclaimed. And what had been proclaimed was our hope, our absolute, unshakeable hope, because what it proclaimed was that God had become Man; that God had chosen, in an act of love for us, of solidarity with us, however sinful, however fallen, however darkened we were, had chosen to become a man in our midst, taking responsibility, yes, responsibility! for His act of creation performed without our ascent, and the freedom He gave us that is the absolute condition for our being able to love and to chose life rather than death, but at the same time which is the frightening condition of our fall.

And today we have read the Gospel, in which St. John proclaims, in the words of Nathaniel, that Christ is the Son of God, the King of Israel, that Salvation has come, that God is in our midst, that all things are possible if we only, if we only believe.

We have read or heard today in the Epistle how before us millions of people have believed in the unbelievable: that God can love us in such a way, that God can love each of us and all of us with His life and His death, that God can love us however unlovable we feel within ourselves and seem to others. We are called to believe the unbelievable, to be sure that God has a heart deep and wide enough to contain us; or, if you prefer, that His love is sacrificial; that He not only became a man to share with us all our condition, including the horror of having lost God: My God, My God, why hath Thou forsaken Me? but He is prepared day in day out to seek us out, to take us upon His shoulders as the shepherd takes the lost sheep, or if necessary, to take us upon His shoulder the way He, in Holy Week, took up His cross to walk, to fall under it, to be crucified upon it, and because in His free gift of Himself He could obtain the power to forgive: Forgive them, Father: They don't know what they are doing.

And we are looking now towards the vision of Holy Week, step after step; but this Holy Week is not a Week of horror: we know that this Holy Week is suffused with the glory of the risen Christ, that the Holy Week is a week when we are confronted, each of us, all of us together and singly, with love Divine, with the extent, the depth of Divine Love, a personal love, a love addressed to each of us.