

SS Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

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Sunday of Forgiveness/ Martyr Agatha of Palermo in Sicily

Sunday February 18, 2018

Romans 13:11-14:4, Matthew 6:14-21

Tropars and Kondaks Tone 4 and p. 178

Welcome! We welcome to our church this morning all visitors, guests, relatives, and friends of Saints Peter and Paul Church. We pray your visit with us is spiritually rewarding, holy and life-giving. Visit often!

There will be a Ladies Altar Society meeting after the liturgy today.

At sundown we begin the Great Fast!

Monday (Clean Monday – Strict Fast) 9:00 AM – Selections from the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete service

Wednesday – 6:00 PM Moleban to the Cross with Bible Study and discussion afterward.

Friday – 6:00 PM Pre-Sanctified Liturgy - Confessions ½ hour before services during lent or arranged as needed.

Thank you to those who helped with Holupki making this Thursday and Friday. Your help is greatly appreciated.

“The beginning of contrition and repentance is to flee from sin and to abstain from passions. Let us hasten, then, to cut off our evil works.”
— Ode I, First Canon of Cheesefare Monday

“The gateway to divine repentance has been opened: let us enter eagerly, purified in our bodies and observing abstinence from food and passions, as obedient servants of Christ who has called the world into the heavenly Kingdom. Let us offer to the King of all a tenth part of the whole year, that we may look with love upon His Resurrection.”
— Sessional hymn, Matins, Cheesefare Monday

Upcoming Services

The **Sunday of Orthodoxy** will be held at Christ The Saviour Cathedral on Sunday, February 25 at 3:00 PM.

Annual Women’s retreat at Christ the Savior Seminary – Saturday March 10th. Please see the flier downstairs.

Please see the Lenten Retreat information posted downstairs. Our region is Saturday March 17th from 9 AM to 5 PM. Bishop Gregory is the presenter. Registration forms are also downstairs.

Lenten services – We will have the Moleban to Cross on Wednesdays during lent and a bible study immediately following the service (bring your own bible - old and new testament). We will be studying the scriptural readings of lent, especially the Sunday readings. On Fridays, we will have the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and will be rotating some of these services with the other local Orthodox parishes. All services start a 6:00 PM with the host parish providing a light meal afterward. Below is the rotation schedule.

3/2 – St. John the Baptist in Blacklick

3/9 – SS Peter and Paul in Urey

3/16- SS Peter and Paul in Homer City

3/23 – St. John’s in Dixonville

The letter from Bishop Gregory that was read at the liturgy today is also available in copy form downstairs.

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org> Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>
You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>



FASTING. . . Fr. Nik Ferencz

. . . Guidelines:

This First Week of Lent: On weekdays in the First Week [often called “Clean Week”], fasting is particularly severe. According to the strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and one on Friday, in both cases after the Liturgy of the Presanctified. On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if possible, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water, or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal. It should be added at once that in practice today these rules are commonly relaxed. At the meals on Wednesday and Friday ‘xerophagy’ [what we call *Strict Fast*] is prescribed. Literally this means ‘dry eating.’ Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice [in *Mediterranean countries*] octopus and shell-fish are also allowed on days of xerophagy [NOTE: *this probably comes from a time when shell-fish were not considered delicacies as such, but rather were ‘poor man’s food.’ Also, shell-fish were not considered to be animals since they did not have a backbone.*]; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil, not made from olives [are allowed]. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded:

1) meat; 2) Animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, etc.). 3) fish (i.e., fish with backbones)
4) oil (i.e. olive oil) and wine (i.e. all alcoholic drinks).

Diocesan Rules: Diocesan Regulations merely require *Strict Fast* on Clean Monday. Wednesday and Friday one must fast from meat, and preferably eat one meal a day.

Exceptions to Fasting: Personal factors need to be taken into account, as for example the situation of an isolated Orthodox living in the same household as non-Orthodox, or obliged to take meals in a factory or a school cafeteria. There are other exceptions to the rules which are built into the rule of the Church. Some common ones:

1. *Pregnancy:* Pregnant women are not permitted to fast, since their obligation to care for the welfare of their child far outweighs their efforts for personal spiritual growth (they must sacrifice their good for that of the child).
2. *Illness or Infirmary.* Likewise, those who are infirm or have specific medical needs must take care of their bodies by following their doctor’s prescribed diet.
3. *Age:* Sometimes the elderly or the very young may be exempted from some fasting because of physical weakness, although I have known 80 year olds who regularly fast more strictly than most and remain in very good health! Age therefore can be a factor in mitigating (lessening) the fast, but it is not a blanket free pass.

Looking Forward: When fasting we are called to remember that **fasting, worship, praying, almsgiving (charity) and reception of the Holy Eucharist** all go hand in hand. Each is as important as the other. Finally, in practice, most people have not yet been able to follow the strict rules noted here in their everyday life. Everyone is at a different spiritual level and therefore can do more or less. This is why the Church makes only *very minimal requirements* that all people must follow. It allows each of us to find our own level of fasting, while encouraging us to try a little harder each year, hopefully doing more than we have done in the past as we continue to grow spiritually. The Church calls us to perfection in Jesus Christ. Perhaps we will compare our own practices of fasting against the traditional guidelines and be encouraged to ‘raise the bar’ for ourselves this Lent. Perhaps it will stimulate some thought and conversation about the true meaning of living our Faith. May it at least help us to strive a little harder to “be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Fasting for Holy Communion: For morning Divine Liturgy (Saturday or Sunday), the usual midnight fast is still in effect. For evening Holy Communion (Presanctified, etc.), we are called to fast completely at least 3 hours before the beginning of the service (i.e., starting at 3 PM). This is the Diocesan minimum. A stricter observance calls for fasting from at least the end of lunch.

SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE: EXPULSION OF ADAM FROM PARADISE

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....”