



The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

The 37th Sunday after Pentecost + February 22, 2026 + Expulsion from Paradise + Forgiveness Sunday + Cheesefare Sunday



Hymns for Today

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: "Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy!"

The head of the Forerunner has shone from the earth, sending forth rays of incorruption and healings to the faithful. It gathers together a multitude of angels above and summons the human race below to send up glory with one voice to Christ our God.

O Prophet of God and Forerunner of Grace, we have found thy head as a sacred rose. Therefore we always receive healings from it, and, as in times past, now thou preachest repentance to the world.

O Master, Teacher of wisdom, Bestower of virtue, Who teachest the thoughtless and protectest the poor, strengthen and enlighten my heart! O Word of the Father, let me not restrain my mouth from crying to Thee: "Have mercy on me, a transgressor, O merciful Lord!"

Please Sing Along!

Singing the hymns and responses to the litanies along with the choir throughout the Divine Liturgy is encouraged!

Epistle Reading - Romans 13:11-14:4

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 6:14-21

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting. Speak w/ Fr. Innocent if you would like to learn more!

the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



This Week's Schedule Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

THIS WEEKEND

Saturday, February 21st

Great Vespers @ 5 PM, Confessions

Sunday, February 22nd - Forgiveness Sunday/Cheesefare

Matins @ 8 AM, Hours @ 8:40 AM

Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM, Forgiveness Vespers @ 10:30 AM

Cheesefare Potluck

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THIS WEEK

THIS WEEK - 1st Week of Great Lent

Sun @ 10:30 AM: Forgiveness Sunday Vespers

Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs @ 6:30 PM: Great Compline w/ the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

Wed, 9 AM-10:30 AM: Presanctified Divine Liturgy

Fri @ 6:30 PM: Canon to St. Theodore

w/ Memorial Service for the Departed (*bring names*)

Sat @ 9 AM: St. Theodore Saturday Divine Liturgy
w/ Blessing of Koliva

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NEXT WEEKEND

Saturday, February 28th

Great Vespers @ 5 PM, Confessions

Sunday, March 1st - Sunday of Orthodoxy

Matins @ 8 AM, Hours @ 8:40 AM

Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM, Church School, Coffee Hour

Orthodoxy 101 @ Noon

Upstairs in the Church (Nave)

Note New Day & Time

Wilkes-Barre Deanery Mission Vespers - March 1st

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Stroudsburg, PA

Vespers @ 4 PM, followed by a Lenten Meal



ANNOUNCEMENTS

& Upcoming Parish Events

+++ Weekly / Monthly +++

Bible Study Wednesdays at 10 AM. We are reading through the Epistle to the Romans with discussions. NO Bible Study 2/25

NEW DAY & TIME - ORTHODOXY 101 Sundays @ Noon.

Orthodoxy 101 is for visitors, inquirers, catechumens or anyone interested in learning more about the foundations of our faith.

Parish Potlucks are usually the last Sunday of each month. Our next potluck is **Sun, Feb 22nd (Cheesefare)**

Friends of the Poor is usually the second Saturday of each month. The next FOP is **Saturday, March 14th**

Holy Trinity Parish Council is usually the second Sunday of each month. The next Parish Council is **Sunday, March 15th**

WANTED: Coffee Hour Teams - Sponsor a Sunday Coffee Hour with a friend. Speak with Joanne Dutko or Fr. Innocent to learn more and sign up.

2025 Giving Statements: Anyone who wishes to receive a formal statement of giving for the year 2024 please provide your name on the sign-up sheet in the Church vestibule.

Great Lent Mission Vespers Schedule:

Sunday of Orthodoxy (March 1 @ 4 PM):

- Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Stroudsburg, PA

Sunday of the Cross (March 15 @ 4 PM)

- St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Jermyn PA

Sunday of Mary of Egypt (March 29 @ 4 PM)

- St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Olyphant PA
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Birthdays & Anniversaries

February Birthdays: Mary Gurka (2/1), Cassandra Mahaffey (2/2), Amelia Stankiewicz (2/3), Subdeacon Thomas Donlick (2/5), Sebastian Neal (2/6), Emma Sofrenovic (2/7), Paul Tumavitch (2/9), Mitchell Rivera (2/14), David Mills (2/19), Jeremiah Haugh (2/21), Sandy Serafin (2/23), Alexanne Conklin (2/24), Andrew Rivera (2/28) **Anniversaries:** Brian & Kristi Benczkowski

This Week: Birthdays: Sandy Serafin (2/23), Alexanne Conklin (2/24), Andrew Rivera (2/28) **Anniversaries:** N/A



Words of Wisdom From the Saints & Teachers

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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 descendents 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.

"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...."

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY VESPERS: WHY?

By Protobresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin the Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too

many people, Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a "good deed" required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But, the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says: "In vain do you rejoice in no eating, O soul! For you abstain from food, but from passions you are not purified. If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast."

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, Whom He sends to us, so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for the Lenten season.



The Treasury

"... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. + Jesus Christ

Monthly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$12,305
Weekly Cost to Keep the Church Open: \$2,840
Last Week's Collection (2/15/25): \$2,351
Super Bowl Piggy Sale: \$1,652

PROPORTIONAL GIVING

Assessing our personal giving for the coming new year.

Proportional giving is the practice of returning to the Lord a portion of the financial treasure He has blessed us with in

PARISH PRAYER LIST // Homebound: Evelyn, Vladimir, Jeri, David, Paul, Archpriest Theodore, Mat. Elizabeth, Mary, Patricia, Barbara, Jeri, Joan, Irene, Alice // **Sick & Suffering:** Cynthia Dulsky, Nadine Breisch, Elizabeth Hutz, Mary Hutz, David Lezinsky, Tom Vaskalis, Tom O'Brian, David, Delores Tressa, Sylvia Dreater, Pearl Tutko, Marie Dutko, Elaine & Forrest Hanson, Alexandra, Jody, Michael Noice, Paul Loftus, Santo, Susan Shiposki, Chari Slater, Dn Jerimiah, William, Alan, Tim, Ann, Paul // **Recently Departed:** Eva // **Pray for our Catechumens:** Tom, Gail, Jaqueline, Dejure, Eric, John, Adrienne, Michelle, Jesse, Katie, Lisa // **Inquirers:** James, Raven, Aaric, Tyler, Dom, Steve

this life. We offer our gifts in gratitude for His. This principle is found in both the Old and New Testament scriptures. Because it is proportional, what is returned to Him is different for each family and household. The giving chart below offers a starting point for giving based on a range of weekly incomes along with a range of giving levels beginning at 10%, the ideal for a Christian tithe if one is capable, down to 2%. Our goal as we journey through life is to offer increasingly more of what God has given us back to Him, just as we give more of our heart. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* (Matt 6:21). This, of course, is done freely and out of love for God and His Church, not in response to an outward rule (*Freely you have received, freely give* - Matt 10:8). May this chart be helpful for you in prayerfully determining your level of giving this coming new year, challenging yourself to return to God the good portion of His financial blessings.

Weekly Income	10%	5%	4%	2%
\$200	\$20	\$10	\$8	\$4
\$500	\$50	\$25	\$20	\$10
\$750	\$75	\$37	\$30	\$15
\$1000	\$100	\$50	\$40	\$20
\$1500	\$150	\$75	\$60	\$30
\$2000	\$200	\$100	\$80	\$40

Holy Trinity Lenten Retreat

The Middle Way® Workshop

Saturday, March 7th

Divine Liturgy @ 8 AM

Lenten Brunch & Retreat @ 9:30 AM

The Middle Way workshop is a reflection of the teachings of the Church on how to develop individual virtue and ultimately build strong parish cultures. Through a series of exercises, we will collectively articulate the attributes that make great leaders and growing Orthodox Christians. We will take a deep dive into our personal values and family of origin dynamics, and how these factors fit into a growing parish with many different personalities and backgrounds. We will then unveil the Middle Way paradigm initially described by Aristotle as “virtue” – “the place where human beings are happiest.” These principles were further developed by the Church to help parishioners grow in their faith as articulated by St Gregory the Great in his book, “The Book of Pastoral Rule,” as well as by St Basil the Great when he stated, “The upright in heart have thoughts that are inclined neither to excess nor to deficiency, but are directed towards the mean of virtue” (On the Seventh Psalm, PG 29b.244d). We will uncover the practical applications to happy and healthy parish life. The Middle Way is a Church-based, on-the-ground approach to developing emotional intelligence, for those who study the more modern paradigms of virtuous behavior. You won’t want to miss this workshop experience as it will lay a strong foundation not only for church life, but also for life at home and in everyday relationships. See you there.

“The upright in heart have thoughts that are inclined neither to excess nor to deficiency, but are directed towards the mean of virtue”

St. Basil the Great