

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Proclaiming Peace, Good Will Toward Men



Children share the Christmas story at coffee hour on December 18th.

Strict Fasting and the Eucharist

Recently, upon receiving his very first St. Tikhon’s Press Lectionary Wall Calendar, an inquirer at our parish asked me to provide him with a bit of an introduction on how to read the many layers of color and symbol and abbreviation one finds in the calendar. One of his questions concerned fasting days and the subject of “strict fasts,” as there is a strict fast very early in the year: on January 5th, the Eve of Theophany. “What,” the inquirer asked, “makes a strict fast day different from a typical fasting day?”

The answer to this question is something that, as Orthodox Christians, we probably ought to know. Properly, a “strict fast” is a day of total abstinence from everything apart from water, and this fast is considered obligatory for those who have the physical health and strength to undertake it.

There are five “strict fast” days in the year, all of which relate to great humility in some way. To rank them in terms of their importance, there is Holy Friday (Western “Good Friday”), the Eve of Theophany (January 5th), the Eve of Nativity (December 24th), the Feast of the Holy Cross (September 14th), and the Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29th). Many Orthodox Christians also observe other days such as the weekdays of the first week of Lent, the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, or the first three days of Holy Week as strict fasts in practice. But these days are not directly named “strict fasts” by the Church the way the others are.

Of the five strict fasts, by far the most important is Holy Friday, which recalls Jesus’ voluntary crucifixion and death on our behalf. Just as Holy Pascha

(continued, see FASTING, following page)

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
119 S. Sparks Street
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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
January 1	New Year - Potluck	J. Houser & A. Stickle	G. Cattell & C. Johnson
January 8	A. Stickle & M. Leathers	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	G. Cattell & M. Stickle
January 15	Russian Ladies	J. Johnson & D. Swisher	K. Cattell & H. Torbic
January 22	OCF Students	J. Houser & Mka. K. Oleynik	M. Fiori & M. Stickle
January 29	L. Gerogiou & Mka. K. Oleynik	A. Stickle & J. Johnson	G. Cattell & M. Fedkin
February 5	H. Torbic & A.T. Pelikan	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	H. Torbic & M. Stickle



Deacon Mark Barna and his wife Elizabeth, authors of “A Christian Ending,” will be presenting a workshop at St. John’s, as part of a weekend retreat. The Barnas will be talking about practical things that we can do to prepare for our departure from this life and how we can offer funerals that are fully Orthodox, much more personal and significantly less expensive than most modern funeral services.

There will be a Moleben at 9:15am preceding the Event. We will have a short break for lunch and an afternoon break as well.

WINTER RETREAT Sat. January 28th, 2023

NOTE: There is an encouraged \$20 per person event fee, to help with associated costs. Please contact Parkerthepriest@gmail.com or frdavidvernak@verizon.net for any questions.

Tentative Workshop Schedule

9:15am Moleben

Introduction (10-am- Noon)

Understanding Death - Understanding life

The cremation fallacy

Why is proper respect for the body important?

Legal issues

Estate and funeral planning paper work

Lunch (Noon)

Afternoon Sessions (1-5pm)

Elder care

End of life issues and End of life care

How to prepare and Organize

Dealing with Funeral Directors

Dealing with Governments – State and local

What to expect when preparing a body for burial

Break

The Preparation Kit and its contents.

Preparation of a body for burial.

The Vigil

The Funeral

A Patristic understanding of Grief

-All are invited to stay following the event for Great Vespers at 5pm.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

150 Elmtree Rd.

New Kensington , Pa. 15068

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH NEW KENSINGTON

■ NEWS & NOTES

Splashing With the Sunday School

To get rid of those cold weather blues, all children and parents are invited to join the Sunday School for a pool party on Sunday January 15th. The party will be held at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Center on South Atherton Ave from 5-7 PM and will include pizza and snacks. Bring your suit and join in the fun!

Adult Education

It is our great joy to once again welcome Fr. Theodore Petrides, rector of Ss. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Reading, PA to Holy Trinity. Fr. Theodore, the host of the popular Ancient Faith podcast "Signs in Our Times: Miracles for the Modern Age" spoke with us in May on the subject of contemporary miracles. On Wednesday, January 25th at 7 pm he returns with a different set of accounts that are sure to encourage, edify, and inspire. Come join us to hear of the wonderful works of God in our time.

Blessing Bags

As a charity activity during the Nativity fast, the Sunday school prepared "blessing bags". The bags have some basic supplies such as socks, gloves, water, food, etc. and are great to keep on hand in your car or back pack so that you are ready to give them out when you encounter someone in need on a street corner or some other place in your travels. The bags are in the parish hall and all parishioners are encouraged to take and use them.



At the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," Thou hast come, O Lord, taking the form of a servant, and Thou who knowest not sin dost ask for baptism. The waters saw Thee and were afraid; The Forerunner was seized with trembling and cried aloud, saying: "How shall the lamp illuminate the Light? How shall the servant set his hand upon the Master? O Savior who takest away the sin of the world sanctify both me and the waters." – Great Blessing of the Waters, Theophany

Sign Up For A House Blessing Today

It's house blessing season again and Fr. Ignatius is very excited about the opportunity to "get on the road" and bless houses throughout the month of January. While certainly not anywhere near the level of a Church "sacrament," the house blessing is a profound annual reminder that all of our life belongs to God. When we have our house blessed, we remember our own personal baptism and reclaim it. And further, we proclaim its implications: that all our life - our possessions, our interactions with those we live with or with our guests, our work, our free time - all of it belongs to God. So let us not neglect this opportunity to reclaim Christ and to be filled with His grace!

Sign-up sheets with time slotting will be available in the narthex and also online starting on Sunday, January 1. For any questions, any coordination matters, or to schedule a blessing for a day and time that is not listed, please contact Anna Stickles at anna@grtbooks.com.

NB: College students – you are more than welcome to sign up to get your dorm room/apartment blessed! If you don't know what you need or how to set things up, don't worry; Father will come with everything he needs and show you!

■ RECTOR'S REPORT

Fasting (con't)

Holy Communion at the Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil that marks the beginning of the feast day itself.

With that being said, we now make mention of the Church's understanding of the interaction of strict fasting and the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist marks the end of strict fasting in a given day. Once one has received communion, one should continue to observe the fast day by abstinence from non-Lenten foods, but one ought to eat after one receives Communion, for it is written, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" and again "can the wedding guests fast while the Bridegroom is with them" (Mt 6:33; Mk 2:19)?

The distinction shows how great the chasm is between Holy Friday and even Theophany or Nativity, which are preparations for Christ's Great Sacrifice, but are not yet the thing itself. In the ideal mind of the Church, on Theophany we receive Communion at vespers, eat some food, keep vigil in prayer, and only then begin another pre-eucharistic fast in preparation for the main festal liturgy.

Christmas follows an identical ideal pattern to that of Theophany. The Eastern European custom of "Holy Supper" assumes fasting throughout the day, receiving communion at the vesperal liturgy, taking a Lenten meal with one's family (which is set in the evening, as one begins by looking for a star in the early night sky), and then returning to church to keep vigil and prepare for the main festal liturgy.

The final two strict fast days, the Feast of the Cross and the Feast of the Beheading, work somewhat differently, but the general pattern is the same. In the ideal mind of the Church, one comes to Church in the morning, receives communion, and then keeps the day as a typical vegan fasting day. In the case of the Feast of the Beheading, there are even a great number of folk traditions surrounding how one eats on this day (e.g. not eating from a round plate, not cutting things with knives, not eating anything shaped like a head, etc.). Although the days are marked out as "strict fasts," for the ideal

Christian they basically function as additional simple fast days, because by receiving communion one's total fasting for the day has ended. These holy days are therefore necessarily much less serious than either Holy Friday, Nativity, or Theophany. If one does not have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion on these days, one ought to strictly fast until the evening, but probably not extend the fast to the full 24 hours.

Similarly, outside of the ideal world it is appropriate for even non-communicants to end their strict fasting on Christmas and Theophany Eves around sundown. While these days are justly observed as strict fasts in honor of Christ, who "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," their severity should not be seen as equal to that of Holy Friday (Phil 2:7).

With all of that being said, we should make one final note about the present practices of our parish on the Eves of Nativity and Theophany, and how our customs impact strict fasting. At present, due to various considerations such as work schedules, choir fatigue, server fatigue, etc. we celebrate the Vesperal Liturgies of Nativity and Theophany in the morning. Although in the ideal world we would prefer to be able to provide the service of "Royal Hours" on each of these days in the morning as is called for in the service books, combining vesperal liturgies in the early evening with vigils later in the evening is far too much for us at the present time. Since something needs to be omitted, we are presently omitting the Royal Hours. In practice, for those who commune in the morning at the vesperal liturgies, this eliminates the "strict fast" nature of Nativity and Theophany Eves as well. In prior times, facing the same pressures, Fr. John Reeves of blessed memory omitted the vesperal liturgies but served the Royal Hours, preserving the fast.

May God grant us such great growth in numbers, in fervor, in talent, and in piety that in the future we will not have to make such "either-or" decisions about the celebration of these most radiant and august feasts! ■

— Fr. Ignatius

■ SITE PLANNING

Site Planning – The Cemetery Question

When we met at our annual meeting in November and discussed the results of the K&W Site Survey, a number of things were clear: we were not sure if we wanted to stay at 119 S. Sparks or go elsewhere, we were not sure if we wanted to stay in town or if a solution outside of town might be acceptable, and we weren't collectively sure if we wanted a dedicated Orthodox cemetery or not. At that time, Fr. Ignatius proposed that we should first discern the cemetery issue, since if we wanted a cemetery we would then need to acquire a second parcel of land, regardless of whether or not we want to stay on Sparks St. or relocate.

After this was said, a parishioner very sagely asked for education on the subject, and so this month and next we will endeavor to educate ourselves on cemeteries, funerals, and the like. To start with, on Tuesday, January 24, at 6 pm we will have John and Barbie Daughenbaugh of Daughenbaugh Funeral Home in Centre Hall in to discuss various concerns surrounding "end of life" and funeral planning such as how to establish instructions for funeral services that will be communicated to next-of-kin and followed, the pros and cons of funeral pre-payment, inheritance asset protection, power of attorney, and many other useful and relevant topics.

■ RECTOR'S REPORT

Fasting (con't)

is the "King and Lord" of the festal days of the Church year with its midnight singing and feasting and rejoicing, so too Holy Friday is the first and lord of all fast days. It is therefore also unique beyond all the others, for in it there is no possible exception for eating whatsoever (beyond, of course, the usual things like age or infirmity or pregnancy or the like).

The second ranked strict fast is the Eve of Theophany. By no means as extreme as Holy Friday in its remembrance, the Feast of Theophany recalls Jesus stripping himself and entering the waters of the Jordan

Then, on Saturday, January 28, from 10 am to 5 pm, Fr. Ignatius and parishioners from Holy Trinity will participate in a day-long workshop on the subject of specifically Orthodox funeral practices led by Dn. Mark and Mat. Elizabeth Barna, the authors of *A Christian Ending: a Handbook for Burial in the Ancient Christian Tradition*, which is available in our bookstore. We will also be broadcasting this presentation on our YouTube page. If you would like to attend in person and carpool to the event, please let Fr. Ignatius know. A full schedule of the workshop's topics is listed on the facing page.









Finally, at some point in February, Fr. Timothy Hohnicki of Holy Apostles, Mechanicsburg, and some of his parishioners will join us to present their own recent experience in establishing an Orthodox cemetery and more traditional funerary customs in Mechanicsburg, PA. After this, we should be much better prepared to answer the cemetery question, yea or nay.

Once this important step is complete, as we said during the annual meeting, the parish council will begin the process of forming a property/building committee. May God grant us wisdom, success, and to do His will!

River and receiving baptism at the hands of John. In this feast, we see Christ willingly accepting the identity and fate of a sinner, even though He was "without sin" (Heb 4:15). Thus, as baptism itself symbolizes, Christ is indicating that He is accepting death (prefigured by His submersion in the water) so that He might "fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15). In being baptized, Christ creates a path leading to a marvelous exchange, for it is written that the Father "made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). In the ideal mind of the Church this day is marked with a strict fast that ends around sunset, when one comes to Church and receives

Holy Trinity Calendar

LIVE Please note that at this time, all services at Holy Trinity are being live-streamed. To watch them online, please visit holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
January 1, 2023 Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	2	3	4 Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 Theophany Eve Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil, 9am Vigil of Theophany, 6pm	5 Theophany Divine Liturgy, 9am Great Blessing of Water, following	6 Divine Liturgy, 9am Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
8 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	9	10	 11 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	12 	13	14 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
15 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Sunday School Pool Party, 5pm	16	17 	18 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	19 	20	21 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
22 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	23	24 	25 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Adult Education, "Contemporary Miracles," 7pm	26 	27	28 Winter Retreat – Funerary Practices (New Kensington), 10am Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm
29 Zacchaeus Sunday Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	30	31 	February 1 Confessions, 4pm Vigil of Presentation, 6pm	2 	3	4 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
5 Publican and Pharisee Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	6	7	8 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	9	10	11 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following

Chapel Calendar

All events take place at 145 North Kern Street in Beavertown, unless where noted.

- 12/31/22 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers with Litya followed by Moleben for the New Year
- 1/1/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; coffee/bagels available afterwards
- 1/3/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 1/5/23 6:00 p.m. Theophany Vesperal Divine Liturgy; Great Sanctification of the Waters (indoor) to follow
- 1/7/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 1/8/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; Great Sanctification of the Waters (outdoors) immediately after; fellowship following (the blessing of the waters will take place at the creek near the Beaver Springs Firehouse, Center Ave. @ Spruce St.)
- 1/10/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 1/14/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 1/15/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.
- 1/17/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 1/21/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 1/22/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.
- 1/23/23 6:30 p.m. Knitting/crocheting "Hats and Blankets for Babies"
- 1/24/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 1/28/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 1/29/23 10:00 a.m. Zacchaeus Sunday Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; Fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.
- 1/31/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 2/1/23 6:00 p.m. Meeting of the Lord in the Temple Vesperal Divine Liturgy

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, unless where noted.
Events listed at **Trinity House** take place at 123 South Sparks Street, in State College.

January 2023