

# SOBORNOST

## St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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*American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese*

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

## SERVICES

**Wednesday in Lent: Liturgy of  
Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

**Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM**

**Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM**

**Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM**

**Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM**

**Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**

**February 18, 2018 – Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare)**

### St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome

Our Holy Fathers appointed this commemoration before the Holy Fast, as if to show in actual fact how beneficial the medicine of fasting is to human nature, and also how great is the shame of gluttony and disobedience. Passing over all the individual sins committed in the world on account of him, as being without number, the Fathers set forth how much evil Adam, the first-formed man, suffered from not fasting even for a brief time, and how much evil he thereby brought upon our race, clearly pointing out also that the virtue of fasting was the first commandment that God gave to mankind. Not keeping this commandment, but yielding to his belly, or rather, through Eve, to the deceitful serpent, Adam not only did not become God, but also incurred death and transmitted corruption to the whole human race. Because of the self-indulgence of the first Adam, the Lord fasted for forty days and was obedient.

For this reason, the present Holy Fast was designed by the Holy Apostles, in order that we might enjoy incorruption, through fasting, by keeping the commandment which he did not keep, thereby suffering the loss of incorruption. Furthermore, as



we said previously, the aim of the Saints is to encompass in brief the works wrought by God from the beginning to the end. Since Adam's transgression and his expulsion from the Paradise of delight were the cause of all our woes, for this reason they now set this transgression before us, so that, remembering it, we might avoid it and not in any way emulate his incontinence.

Adam was fashioned by the hand of God on the sixth day, being honored with His image through the Divine breath and at once receiving the commandment, concerning which fruits he should eat and which he should not, and he spent up to six days in Paradise; then, when he transgressed this commandment, he was driven out thence. Philo the Hebrew says that Adam spent a hundred years in Paradise; others say that he was there for seven days or seven years, because the number seven is accorded special honor. But that Adam stretched out his hands and touched the fruit at the sixth hour is shown by Christ, the New Adam, Who stretched out His hands on the Cross at the sixth hour and on the sixth day, remedying Adam's destructive action.

Adam was created in between corruption and incorruption in order that, in whichever direction he should incline by his choice, he might gain the object of his desire. Now, it was possible for God to make him sinless; but in order that he might achieve this by his own choice, God gave him a law that he could touch all of the plants except one. By this we may perhaps understand the knowledge of Divine power that derives from all created things, but in no way knowledge of God's nature, as does Saint Gregory the Theologian, who reasons that the former are the Divine conceptions, while the latter is the vision of God. That is, God allowed Adam to meditate on all the other elements and the other qualities, to recall them to mind, and to glorify God thereby—for this is what constitutes delight—and perhaps also to meditate on his own nature, but in no way to inquire into God, Who He is by nature, where He is, and how He brought the universe into existence from non-being. But Adam, leaving all the rest aside, inquired rather into God and scrutinized precisely the Divine nature, though he was still imperfect and very simple, and an infant in such matters; he fell after Satan suggested to him, through Eve, fantasies of deification. The great and Divine Chrysostomos says that that tree had a twofold power and that Paradise was on earth; he reasons that it was both noetic and sensible, just as Adam was, midway between corruption and incorruption, at the same time preserving the meaning of Scripture and not adhering to the letter.

Some say that that tree of disobedience was a fig-tree, and that, immediately becoming aware of their nakedness, Adam and Eve used its leaves to cover themselves. For this reason, Christ cursed the fig-tree as being the cause of their transgression. For the fig bears some resemblance to sin: first, it is sweet;

secondly, its leaves feel rough; and thirdly, it is viscous on account of its juice. There are others who have understood – though incorrectly – that the tree represents Adam’s intercourse with Eve. After transgressing, then, Adam clothed himself in mortal flesh and received the curse, and was cast out of Paradise, and the Cherubim were assigned to guard its gate with a fiery sword. Adam sat before Paradise and bewailed how many good things he had been deprived of because he had not fasted for a time, and the entire race that sprang from him was subject to the same misery, until He Who created us, taking pity on our nature which Satan had corrupted and being born of the Holy Virgin, by His excellent way of life showed us the true way, through virtues that are contrary to Satan, namely, fasting and humility, and, having artfully overcome the one who had deceived us, led us back to our ancient dignity.

Wishing to present all these things to us, therefore, the God-bearing Fathers, through the entire Triodion, set forth the events of the Old Testament. First of these is the creation, and Adam’s fall from Paradise, which we are now commemorating, and then they set forth the rest, through the books of Moses and the Prophets and the words of David, and then, in order, the events of the New Testament, that of Grace. First of these is the Annunciation, which took place by God’s ineffable Economy, and which almost always falls within the Holy Fast. They continue with Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday, and Holy and Great Week, when the Holy Gospels are read, and the Holy and saving Passion of Christ, which is the subject of exquisite hymns; and then, with the Resurrection and the other Feasts, until the descent of the Holy Spirit, concerning which the Book of Acts relates how the Gospel was proclaimed and how the Spirit gathered all the Saints together; for the Acts of the Apostles confirms the Resurrection through the miracles worked by the Apostles. Since we have suffered such misery on account of Adam’s failure to fast just once, his commemoration is assigned to the beginning of the Holy Fast, in order that, remembering how much evil was brought about by not fasting, we might be eager to welcome the Fast with exceeding joy and to keep it, so that we might thereby gain what Adam missed, that is, deification, by lamenting, fasting, and humbling ourselves until God visits us; for without these things, it is not easy for us to gain what we lost.

It should be known that this Holy and Great Fast constitutes a tenth of the entire year; for since, out of slothfulness, we do not choose always to fast and to refrain from evildoing, the Apostles and the Divine Fathers handed down this Fast as a time of spiritual harvest, in order that, humbling ourselves now through contrition and fasting, we may blot out whatever wicked deeds we have committed during the course of the year, and we ought to keep this Fast more strictly than the others. But we should also keep the three other Fasts, those of the Apostles, the

Theotokos, and the Nativity, which the Divine Fathers have bequeathed to us. We accord greater honor to this Fast on account of the Holy Passion, and because Christ fasted for forty days and, overcoming the Tempter, was glorified, and Moses, after fasting for forty days, received the Law, as did Elias and Daniel and all of the others who found favor with God. That fasting is a good practice is shown by the contrary example of Adam. For this reason, therefore, Adam's banishment from Paradise was placed here by the Holy Fathers. In Your ineffable compassion, O Christ our God, vouchsafe us the delight of Paradise, and have mercy on us, You Who alone love mankind. Amen.

– from the Synaxarion

## St. Leo the Great the Pope of Rome



Saint Leo I the Great, Pope of Rome (440-461), received a fine and diverse education, which opened for him the possibility of an excellent worldly career. He yearned for the spiritual life, however, and so he chose the path of becoming an archdeacon under holy Pope Sixtus III (432-440), after whose death Saint Leo was chosen as Bishop of Rome in September 440.

These were difficult times for the Church, when heretics assaulted Orthodoxy with their false teachings. Saint Leo combined pastoral solicitude and goodness with an unshakable firmness in the confession of the Faith. He was in particular one of the basic defenders of Orthodoxy against the heresies of Eutyches and Dioscorus, who taught that there was only one nature in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was also a defender against the heresy of Nestorius.

He exerted all his influence to put an end to the unrest by the heretics in the Church, and by his letters to the holy emperors Theodosius II (408-450) and Marcian (450-457), he actively promoted the convening of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, at Chalcedon in 451, to condemn the heresy of the Monophysites.

At the Council at Chalcedon, at which 630 bishops were present, a letter of Saint Leo to the deceased Saint Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople (447-449) was read. Saint Flavian had suffered for Orthodoxy under the “Robber Council” of Ephesus in the year 449. In the letter of Saint Leo the Orthodox teaching about the two natures [the divine and the human] in the Lord Jesus Christ was set forth. All the

bishops present at the Council were in agreement with this teaching, and so the heretics Eutyches and Dioscorus were excommunicated from the Church.

Saint Leo was also a defender of his country against the incursions of barbarians. In 452, by the persuasive power of his words, he stopped Attila the Hun from pillaging Italy. Again in the year 455, when the leader of the Vandals, Henzerich, turned towards Rome, he persuaded him not to pillage the city, burn buildings, nor to spill blood.

He knew the time of his death beforehand, and he prepared himself, with forty days of fasting and prayer, to pass from this world into eternity. He died in the year 461 and was buried at Rome. His literary and theological legacy is comprised of 96 sermons and 143 letters, of which the best known is his Epistle to Saint Flavian. (*from oca.org*)

### **Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14:4**

Brethren, *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.

### **Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 25:31-46**

The Lord said, " 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 the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 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."



*Office of the Bishop*  
312 Garfield Street  
Johnstown, PA 15906

## **GREAT LENT 2018**

### **Protocol No. 3/2018**

My Beloved Faithful Clergy and Laity of Our God-Protected Diocese:

As we begin Holy and Great Lent this year on February 19<sup>th</sup>, I wanted to share with you a few thoughts so that we may journey through the season and arrive safely at the Great Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha with the proper frame of mind.

Holy and Great Lent is a truly beautiful period of time filled with moments in which we can focus our hearts and our minds on the grace of God. Through daily prayer, fasting, worship, and giving to others and by the grace of God our lives will continue to be transformed by Him and our souls will be drawn closer and closer to our Lord Jesus Christ!

In the hymns and services of the Triodion period and at the entrance of this holy season of Great Lent, we are called to repentance. We are invited to come before God in the humility of the Publican. We are beckoned to return to His dwelling and His compassionate embrace as the Prodigal Son. We are confronted with the causes of our separation from God and our need for His great mercy. It is truly a time of repentance as we prepare to commemorate and contemplate all that has been done for us through Christ our Lord.

This solemn and reflective journey is not one of despair. This is not a time of inconsolable grief or deep anguish and anxiety. Holy and Great Lent is a time of spiritual renewal in which repentance finds forgiveness and grace, engenders hope, strengthens our faith and leads us to abundant and eternal life.

We know through the Gospel that genuine repentance receives forgiveness and grace. The sincerity of the Publican expressed in his cry, “God, be merciful to me a sinner” was recognized

by God, and his sins were forgiven (Luke 18:13 – 14). We also know that repentance nurtures hope. God’s grace transforms us, as we see the blessedness of life restored to communion with Him, we experience the joy of hope. For the Prodigal Son it was the journey to return to the house of his father, hoping that something better awaited. As through repentance we receive forgiveness and grace and our hearts are filled with hope, our faith is strengthened. As we prepare to celebrate the fulfillment of God’s promise to defeat death, restore us to life, and lead us to the Resurrection, our faith in Him grows.

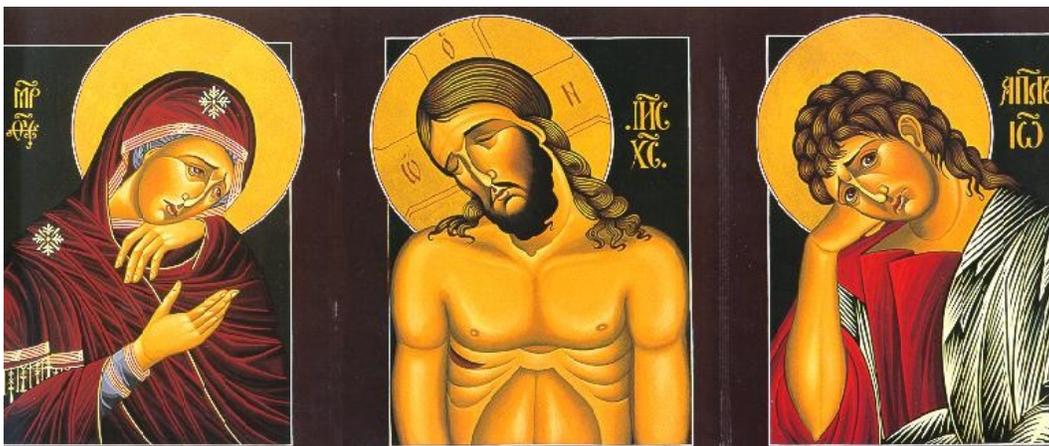
At the beginning of Great Lent, let us contemplate the power of repentance and take this opportunity to examine our hearts and minds. Let us pray for humility in seeking the forgiveness and grace of God, returning to communion with Him. Let us find renewed hope in the light, peace and joy that comes from our Crucified and Risen Christ.

I pray that this Holy and Great Lent season is a spiritually uplifting time for all of us.

Working in His Vineyard with much love for all of you,

*+ Bishop Gregory*

+Bishop Gregory of Nyssa



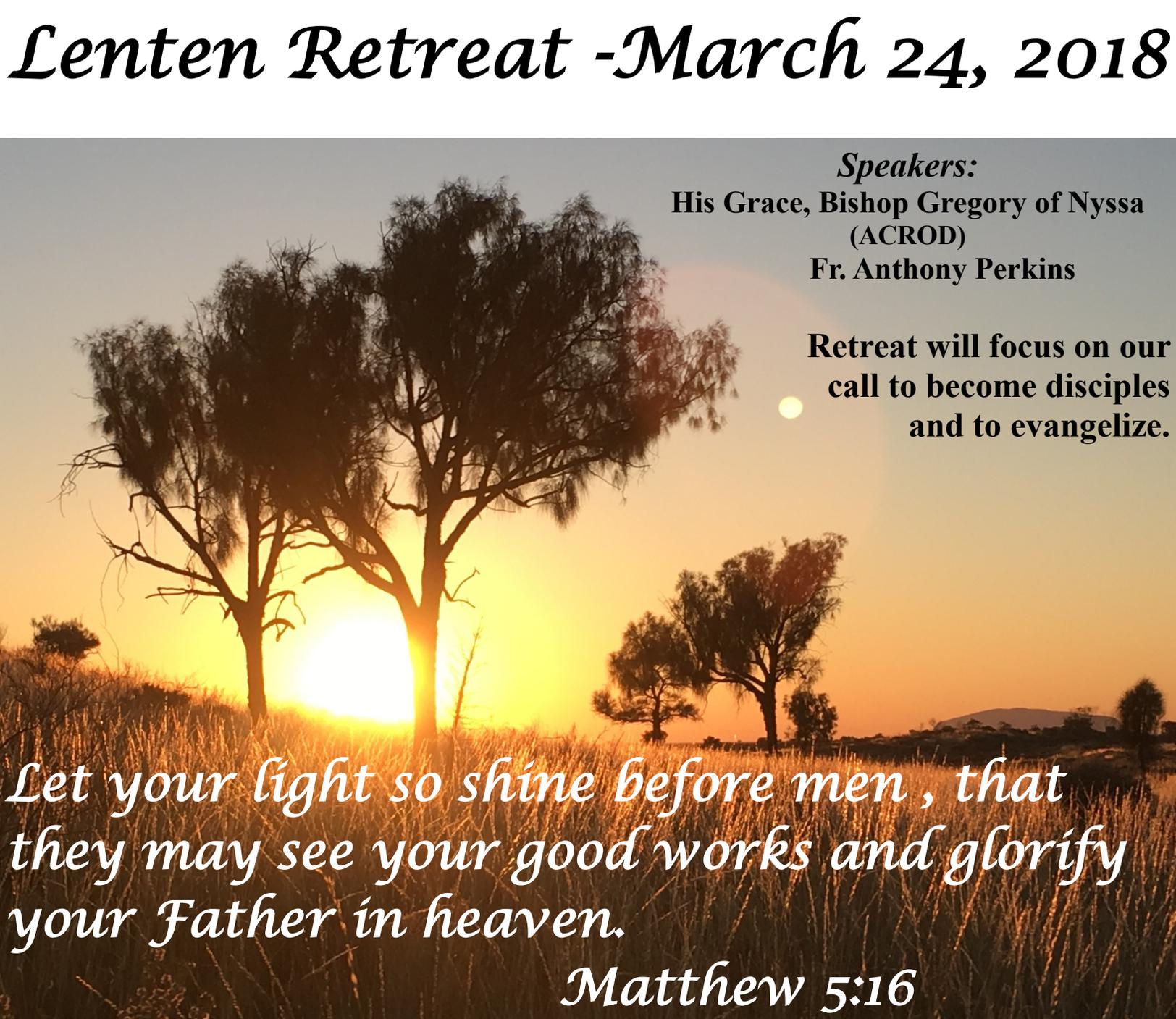
# *Lenten Retreat - March 24, 2018*

## *Speakers:*

**His Grace, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa  
(ACROD)**

**Fr. Anthony Perkins**

**Retreat will focus on our  
call to become disciples  
and to evangelize.**



*Let your light so shine before men, that  
they may see your good works and glorify  
your Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:16*

***St. Francis Center for Renewal  
395 Bridle Path Road  
Bethlehem, PA***

***Retreat registration: Adults ACROD \$35 (late fee \$20)***

***Adolescents \$20 (late fee \$10)***

***Children (under 12) \$7***

***Registration includes all meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner.  
For more information contact: Oleh or Natalie Bilynsky at  
nsufler@aol.com call - 610-892-7315***

**LENTEN RETREAT**  
**SATURDAY, March 24, 2018**

9:00 AM TO 6:30 PM

ST. FRANCIS CENTER FOR RENEWAL  
395 BRIDLE PATH ROAD BETHLEHEM, PA

**REGISTRATION FORM**

**– To Be Filled Out For Each Participant –**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Age (Youth ages 7-18 only) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent(s)/Adult Chaperone Attending With \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone of Parent/Adult Chaperone \_\_\_\_\_

\$35 for adults ACROD (prior to deadline)

\$20 for adolescents (aged 13 to 18)

\$7 for children 7 to 12

Appropriate Registration fee is enclosed: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ \*Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Check made for total of all family members to: Ukrainian Orthodox League of the USA.

Return registration w/payment to: Oleh Bilynsky 703 Pine Ridge Rd. Media, PA 19063

Please submit registration by March 14, 2018. After this deadline late fees of \$20 for adults and \$10 adolescents is applied.

Pictures from the Retreat can be used for publicity. Please indicate if you do not want pictures of you and/or your child used.

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# **CAMP NAZARETH SUMMER CAMP 2018**

*The time for Summer Camp is Rapidly Approaching!!! The clock is ticking!!*

***REGISTER ONLINE STARTING MAR. 1, 2018!!!***

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## Dates for the Summer Camping Program

**Week 1 -- July 15 - 21, 2018**

New England, NY, NJ, Florida and Canada Deaneries

**Week 2 -- July 22 - July 28, 2018**

Johnstown, Pocono, Southern Tier, Youngstown and Chicago Deaneries

**Week 3 -- July 29 - August 4, 2018**

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## **Register Online Starting March 1, 2018**

**Register at – *campnazareth.org***

From the Home Page, From the 2018 Summer Camp Icon, or From the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Summer Camp Tab and look for Camper Registration.

If you are Clergy or a Volunteer go to the 2018 Summer Camp Icon on the Home Page or the Diocesan Summer Camp Tab found under the Summer Camp Tab and look for the paper forms under Clergy/Volunteers.

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## **\$20 Early Bird Discount Per Child!!!!**

(one-time only, not per week)

## **Register & pay by May 15, 2018!!!!**

**Online Registration MUST be complete AND payment must be submitted by May 15 in order to qualify for the Early Bird Discount.**

**Registrations after June 15 will incur an additional \$20 late fee.**

- ❑ When you register online please note that **you will still need to submit a paper copy of the Medical Examination Form (i.e. Camper Physical)** which must be filled out and signed by a licensed medical professional (licensed physician or physician's assistant). This form will be emailed to you after you complete the online registration process.
- ❑ **Payment by check, money order, or credit card is accepted.** Checks and Money Orders are to be made payable to *Camp Nazareth* and sent to *Camp Nazareth at 339 Pew Road, Mercer, PA 16137.*

## *A Word From the Holy Fathers*

1. All you who by your baptism into salvation have been, as it were, born of one womb and enrolled as brothers of one another, and you whom the judgment of the children in the Lord has assigned to the clergy, let us make the beginning of the fast a beginning of virtue, so that we may confirm in works our sharing in spiritual travail, and preserve unadulterated the dignity of the adoption, and so that we may reap the fruit of our cultivation at the time of the recompense, and not, while we deprive the body of food, fill the soul with incurable passions, nor contrive to treat a disease with a disease, taking license of evil practice at our own expense, nor hide sin with sin, covering up our blindness with foul tatters, but let us wipe off illness with health, and wash off our trespasses with righteousness.

2. For there are, truly, there are some who, while they practice fasting, destroy their grace by man-pleasing, and miserably scatter the profit of their toils which they ought to keep, acting like some insane merchants who, after traversing the immense deep of sea and ocean and escaping unharmed the storms and tempests of the passage, yet, when they put in at the very edge of the shore, sink all their merchandise at the landing pier, no differently than if they had done it in the sea itself. Such is the plight of those who look up to human esteem while undergoing the toil of the fast. Some again, while they emaciate their appearance through lack of food, swell and inflame it with the puffing of vainglory, having fattened themselves thoroughly on this evil regimen and striven to hide the first passion, that of gluttony, with a worse passion, that of conceit. Others again ennoble their body with abstention from food, while they grievously devour the flesh of their neighbors with their tongue and ridicule. It would be better for them to be possessed of the devil and gnaw on their own limbs, rather than consume the lives of their neighbors with slanders, and be forever meddling and fault-finding at their expense. For madness, being as it is an involuntary and grievous plight, is, I believe, capable of moving to pity those who encounter it, and it does not bar divine favor at the time when our lives are examined; whereas the man who willingly commits an insane, devilish and inhuman act draws upon himself with good reason the stigma and hatred of his fellow-countrymen, and makes divine judgment implacable and terrible for himself.

3. Why do you leave aside your own affairs, O man, and examining your neighbor's? Why, while bearing the beam that is in the pupil of your eye, do you consider the motes of your brother? Why do you not hearken to the law of the Lord which enjoins, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged" (Lk 6:37)?....

4. For, whereas we ought to mourn for our own transgressions, and repent, and punish sin with fasting, and, by not judging our brother, anticipate beforehand the goodwill of the common Judge, and obtain His mercy, we pay to all of this no sort

of attention; we leave our own sores unattended, but set ourselves up as severe investigators into those of others, which are of no concern of ours.... If this is the study of our life, if this is what we dwell on, how can we but draw upon ourselves the misery of the ultimate punishment, from which there is no release? For, by lying in ambush with our shameless words against other men's lives with the purpose of destroying them, we have maltreated our own life with various evils by having degraded it to the depravity of the slanderers, and, lifted up to judge others, we fall ourselves into the pit of the condemned. And then, who are those who do these things? The worthless condemn the good, the wicked condemn the gently, not to mention other matters more preposterous still.... Fasting results in no benefit when the incontinence of judging and condemning others is not punished.

5. This is the foul deed of the Evil one's craft. This is the artifice of that envious and malicious nature. This is the device of the man-hating Devil: to blunt virtue with evil, to trouble the calm of the fast with the tempests of envy, and, on the storm of garrulousness, to blow man into a sea of passions, and sink him together with his helmsman, the mind. What is the benefit of fasting when calumny acts wantonly in your lips? What is the emaciation of your body, when your tongue is fattened and takes delight in reviling your neighbor? Why do you need to keep a face clear of the intoxication of wine, when your thoughts are drunk with slanders of others, and infuse the red dye of murder in the very depths of your soul?

Jezebel too once set up a fast as a veil for an abomination, as she enacted the death of the righteous Naboth. For Scripture says of her: "And she sent the letter to the elders and to the freemen who dwelt with Naboth. And it was written in the letters saying, Keep a fast, and set Naboth in a chief place among the people. And set two men, sons of transgressors before him, and let them testify against him ... and let them lead him forth, and stone him, and let him die." Thereafter it says, "And she proclaimed a fast, and they set Naboth in a chief place among the people... and the men of the defection from Naboth bore witness against him, and they led him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, and he died." (3 Kings 20:8-10,12-13)

Do you see how this fast, when greed and calumny were combined with it, not only was of no benefit, but became the veil behind which the murder of the righteous man was enacted? How then could a man, while pursuing sinful actions, think that fasting will be reckoned to him for righteousness? For considering, as it is plain to see, that when greed met calumny, the fast permitted their secret union to be accomplished, and to beget so great an abomination, it is indeed a zealous admirer of that wicked and wretched woman, or rather an executor of her command, who, without the other virtues and righteous deeds, hide under the mask of fasting. For he too proclaims the fast on his face until the secret drama of wickedness, which he has in mind, reaches the climax of lawlessness. "I have not chosen this fast," says

the Lord Almighty. (Is. 58:5-6) To those who masquerade with such a fast, He cries out in wrath, "Your fasting and rest from work, your new moons also, and your feasts my soul hates." (Is. 1:13-14)

6. Fasting is acceptable to God when abstention from food is accompanied by refraining from sins, from envy, from hatred, from calumny, from vainglory, from wordiness, from other evils. He who is fasting the true fast that is agreeable to God ought to shun all these things with all his strength and zeal, and remain impregnable and unshakable against all the attacks of the Evil one that are planned from that quarter. On the other hand, he who practices abstention from food, but does not keep self-control in the face of the aforesaid passions, is like one who lays down splendid foundations for a house, yet takes serpents and scorpions and vipers as fellow-dwellers. For just as the establishment of goodly foundations for that house becomes a deadly trap to those who come near, as the lurking reptiles fall upon them unawares with their poison, so also that person who has established his fame among men by means of fasting, while fostering within him the beast-like heads of the passions, is fatal to those who meet him. For his neighbor approaches him as he fawns sweetly in the reputation of his fasting; but he hides within himself his vainglory and hatred of his brother and calumny and creeping envy, and covertly expels his poison, and then, especially if his heart is overflowing with the malice of the plot, bites shrewdly with his words, and injects with all his force into his innocent and perhaps friendly neighbor the ten thousand stings of the wound; but if that neighbor is immune to the attacks, if he refuse to suffer or to imitate his assailant, then his assailant shall see him crowned victor according to the Lord's decrees, while he himself wastes and destroys himself yet worse, as the destructive passions within him rend him body and soul at the sight of the immunity and fair repute of him whom he has envied and assailed. Thus virtues knows how to save him who fortifies himself with her, even if a thousand assailants strike him from without, while evil destroys its possessor, and, even unwilling, submits to what is contrary to his designs, so conferring on him a double tyranny, by showing him the failure of his intended insults and plots, and by filling him with its own perversity and wretchedness.

7. Do you abstain from food? You do well. For this is a weapon against the passions for those who use it rightly. Abstain also from envy, so that your fasting may be considered as fasting by God too, and not be a mask, hiding the other evils as with a veil behind the feigned abstinence from food; but that it should take root in the folds of your soul like a flourishing and many-branched stock, and should propagate the other virtues, and show them, along with itself, fructified with that blessed and truly immortalizing joy of paradise. Abstain, O man, from envy. Envy is the delight of the devil, the crop raised by that evil nature.

Do you abstain from the food proper to men? Much rather you should refrain from the diet of demons. It is good for man to eat the bread of angels, but the bread of demons is fatal. For that proved to be the first and last surfeit, drunkenness, inebriation and ruin of him who had been allotted the first place in heaven; since, having inebriated himself with the pale draught of envy, and cast an envious glance at man, Lucifer wretchedly fell down from the orb of heaven, and dwelt in hell, and from that time breathes murder at our kind. For murder is the offspring of envy, and it is most difficult for those who have once inebriated themselves with it to return to sobriety. Do you abstain from food? Abstain from vainglory. She is the mother of envy, having taken folly to husband. For indeed the envious one is moved to envy those who excel him; while he who imagines about himself vain and great things which do not at all become him strives to outstrip everyone else, and being foolishly lifted up by such thoughts, he falls into the pit of the envious, and when he is surpassed he wastes away, having wretchedly given himself up to folly and vainglory. Abstain from slander and calumny; for they too are the offspring of envy and the firstborn sisters of murder. Since envy, as a rule, first begets those out of us, and thereafter is born murder as a last and fatal offspring both for its begetter and for the ones who are envied, let us avoid, beloved ones, their plague, let us abominate their evil, let us not wish to draw near even to the experience of them. Instead, let us offer God a pure fast that embellishes the soul with brotherly love, that adorns the body with humility, that sanctifies the mind with proper praise-giving, that makes the lips fragrant through decorous speech about one another, and that, by means of an attentive practice of these things, leads us to freedom from passion.

8. If you live in this way and show in actions that you are keeping my exhortations, you will enable me to converse with you more often, sometimes with addresses, sometimes by reading the Holy Writ, and the time of the coming week will provide the proof thereof. As for yourselves, you will win the kingdom of heaven, of which may we all be deemed worthy through the race and mercy of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom is due all glory, honor and veneration, together with the eternal Father, and the co-eternal and co-everlasting Spirit, the consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, now and ever and forever. Amen.

– St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Homily 13*

[*This homily was probably delivered on Wednesday of Cheesefare week, 867, from the ambon in the Church of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople. – Ed.*]

## **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers**

Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers will be held at St Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral on Sunday 25 February at 5pm. Guest speaker will be Constantine (Dean) Triantafilou, Executive Director of IOCC.

## *The Rules of Fasting*

On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions both on the *number* of meals taken daily and on the *types of food* permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the *quantity* of food to be eaten. **On weekdays in the first week**, fasting is particularly severe. According to strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. 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... At the meals on Wednesday and Friday *xerophagy* 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, octopus and shellfish are also allowed on days of *xerophagy*; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded: *Meat; animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, drippings); fish (i.e., fish with backbones); oil (i.e., olive oil) and wine (i.e., all alcoholic drinks)*.

**On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks**, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the afternoon following Vespers, and at this one meal *xerophagy* is to be observed. **During Holy Week:** On the first three days there is one meal each day, with *xerophagy*; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week. On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten, with wine and oil. On Great Friday those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast; those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate after [the Burial Service] at Vespers. On Holy Saturday there is one meal after the Liturgy of St. Basil, with wine but not oil.

*[This material is taken from the introduction to The Lenten Triodion. In modern practice, the above rules tend to be somewhat relaxed, and they have always been relaxed for children and the infirm. Fast as you are able, and consult Fr. Joseph as needed. As you eat less physical food, it is important to increase your intake of spiritual food – prayer and reading scripture and the fathers of the Church. Also keep in mind the words of Christ: “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. Amen, 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 the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mat. 6:16-18) – ed.]*

## ~ Wisdom from the Desert Fathers ~

According to St. John Cassian, the fundamental principle is to “take what is required to sustain the body, never enough to satisfy it.” An excess of abstinence is as much to be avoided as an excess of food and drink. In his prologue to the *Lausaic History*, Palladius writes, “it is better to drink wine with discernment than water with pride.” What counts for Christians is neither eating nor abstinence, but rather the work done in charity.

## Parish News

1. Lenten reading – we meet after Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings in Lent to discuss reading material to help deepen our spiritual lives. This year, we will be reading *On Living Simply: The Golden Voice of John Chrysostom* by Robert Van de Weyer. It’s a collection of short extracts from St. John’s homilies. It can be found on Amazon or [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for less than \$10. Copies are also available at the church.

2. We will read the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete together on Monday and Tuesday evening at 7:00 PM.

3. There will be a St. Barbara’s meeting on March 11 during lunch. Ladies, please attend as several topics will be discussed, including cleaning of the house and church, fundraising and use of funds.

4. We had a very productive Annual Parish Meeting last week after social hour. Trustee Dana Dewey reported that our number of active parishioners held steady last year, with a slight uptick in average attendance. We have significantly stepped up our broader stewardship and community outreach, we have started Sunday School again after a long hiatus, and our church website has been given a facelift, complete with a spectacular video. A survey completed last year is serving as the basis for further improvement of our parish life and liturgical experience. Treasurer Kari David reported that we met all our financial obligations on time last year, and reported three projects planned for 2018. Funds permitting, we will build stairs to the choir loft, replace flooring and cabinets in the social hall, and improve the lighting in the church. Officers for the coming year are as follows: Trustee – Kelsey Moore; Treasurer – Josh Moore; Auditor – Phyllis Thomidis; Secretary – Olga Dewey. New positions have been created to assist with various aspects of parish life. These are as follows: Church Support Coordinator – Bernie Vallandingham; Parish Life & Education Coordinator – Anna Connour; Outreach & Communication Coordinator – Richard Wright; Church Steward – Ramius Connour; Liturgical Coordinator – Fr. Joseph (by direction of Bishop Gregory). Congratulations to all those who were

elected! The various coordinators can't do their jobs without your help; please be patient with them as they learn their new duties, and be willing to assist them with what needs to be done. Also, be sure to thank those who have stepped down from their officer positions (namely, Dana Dewey and Subdeacon Karoli David) for their many years of invaluable service for our parish. We wouldn't be where we are today without them!

### Follow Our Diocese On-Line

**Diocesan Website:** <http://www.acrod.org>

**Camp Nazareth:** <http://www.campnazareth.org>

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***In Your Prayers – Please Remember...*** His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)