

St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance
820 South Linden Avenue, Alliance, Ohio
(at St. Theodore Romanian Byzantine Catholic Church)
Divine Liturgy, 9:30

Right Rev. Bishop Alexander, Bulgarian Diocese, Orthodox Church in America
Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (Bulgarian Diocese OCA)
February 22, 2015: Cheesefare Sunday / Sunday of Forgiveness/ Adam & Eve's expulsion from
Paradise/Transferred feast of findings of Head of St John the Baptist



Welcome to Visitors. Thank you for coming and praying with us today. In the Orthodox Church, Holy Communion is reserved only for Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and confession during the Church fasting seasons. We invite you to introduce yourself to Father Joe and Deacon James at the end of the Liturgy and receive a piece of the blessed bread and join us for fellowship and Christian education at the Jonathan Casteel hall, directly through the alley way behind the church. We look forward to seeing you again and encourage you to learn more about the Orthodox Faith.

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women Disciples of the Lord
learned from the Angel the joyous message of the Resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the Apostles:
“Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen, // granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 4 Troparion (for St John the Baptist)

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.

Tone 4 Troparion (St. Nikolai)

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you. Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

Tone 2 Kontakion (for St John the Baptist)

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

Tone 6 Kontakion (from the Lenten Triodion)

O Master, Teacher of wisdom, Bestower of virtue,
Who teaches the thoughtless and protects the poor, strengthen and enlighten my heart!
O Word of the Father, let me not restrain my mouth from crying to You:
“Have mercy on me, a transgressor, // O merciful Lord!”

Tone 8 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)

Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!
v: In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4

Tone 6 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

v. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Your Name, O Most High.
v. to declare Your mercy in the morning, and Your truth by night.

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest!
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance! He shall not fear evil tidings!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



THE RITE OF FORGIVENESS

As an accommodation, instead of having Vespers in the evening, at the conclusion of Liturgy the priest standing in front of the Ambon, as the faithful come up one by one and venerate the cross on the analogion, and addressing the priest, say, "*Father, Forgive me, a sinner.*" The priest says in response; "*Forgive me my brother (sister)(child); may God forgive us and have mercy on us.*" The person responds, "*God forgives,*" and receives a blessing from the priest.

After receiving the priest's blessing, the faithful form a line and also ask forgiveness of each other saying, "*Forgive me my brother (sister) (child), a sinner;*" Concluding with, "*God forgives.*"

While the Rite of Forgiveness is done, the choir sings the initial verse of each Ode of the Paschal Canon, or else the Paschal Stichera.



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 we 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, during Lent, of evil through fasting and obedience to God. Our fasting should not be a negative thing, a mere abstention from certain foods. This is the last day that traditionally Orthodox Christians eat dairy products (having given up meat the previous week) until Pascha. 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 is sung: "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...."

In today's Gospel reading we hear the Lord's teaching about fasting and forgiveness and enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us. "*If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses* (Matthew 6:14).

The Gospel also gives advice on fasting. *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 openly.* (Matthew 6:16-18).

THE VALUE OF FASTING: In his commentary, **St. John Chrysostom** focuses on the value of fasting. Or rather, he asks his people to just to begin by refraining from luxurious living, rich foods and excessive drinking. He gives some pointed spiritual counsel to both women and men.

Do you see what a great thing fasting is?... A great, yes a great good is fasting: it is restricted by no limits. When need was to ordain, then they fast: and to them while fasting, the Spirit spoke. Thus much only do I ask: I don't say to fast, but to abstain from luxury. Let us seek foods to nourish, not things to ruin us; seek meals for food, not occasions of diseases, of diseases both of soul and body: seek food which has comfort, not luxury which is full of discomfort: the one is luxury, the other mischief; the one is pleasure, the other pain; the one is agreeable to nature, the other contrary to nature... And first, let us address ourselves to the women. There is nothing uglier than a woman given to luxury, nothing uglier than a woman given to drink. The bloom of her complexion is faded: the calm and mild expression of the eyes is rendered turbid, as when a cloud intercepts the rays of the sunshine. It is a vulgar, slave-like, thoroughly low-lived habit. How disgusting is a woman when from her breath you catch sour whiffs of fetid wine: a woman belching, giving out a fume of decomposing meats; herself weighed down, unable to keep upright; her face flushed with an unnatural red; yawning incessantly, and everything swimming in a mist before her eyes! But not such, she that abstains from luxurious living: no, this abstinence makes her look a more beautiful, well-bred woman. For even to the body, the composure of the soul imparts a beauty of its own. Do not imagine that the impression of beauty results only from the bodily features. Give me a handsome girl, but turbulent, talkative, railing, given to drink, extravagant, and tell me if she is not worse-looking than any ugly woman? But if she were bashful, if she would hold her peace, if she learned to blush, if to speak modestly, if to find time for fasting; her beauty would be twice as great, her freshness would be heightened, her look more engaging, filled with modesty and good breeding.

Now then, shall we speak of men? What can be uglier than a man in drink? He is an object of ridicule to his servants, of ridicule to his enemies, of pity to his friends; deserving condemnation without end: a wild beast rather than a human being; for to devour much food is proper to panther, and lion, and bear. No wonder that they do so, for those creatures have not a reasonable soul. And yet even they, if they be gorged with food more than they need, and beyond the measure appointed them by nature, get their whole body ruined by it: how much more we? Therefore has God contracted our stomach into a small compass; therefore has He marked out a small measure of sustenance, that He may instruct us to attend to the soul...

Would you enjoy a real luxury? Give to the poor; invite Christ, so that even after the table is removed, you may still have this luxury to enjoy. For now, indeed, you have it not, and no wonder: but then you will have it. Would you taste a real luxury? Nourish your soul, give to your soul that food to which the soul is used: do not kill the soul by starvation... Christ is yearning through hunger, and are you frittering yourself away with gluttony?

Then let us not endure to see our soul wronged because of the body, but let us make the soul more clear-sighted, let us make the soul's wing light, bonds looser: let us feed the soul with discourse, with frugality, feeding the body only so much that it may be healthy, that it may be vigorous, that it may rejoice and not be in pain: that having in this way well ordered our concerns, we may be enabled to lay hold upon the highest virtue, and to attain unto the eternal good things by the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, to the Father and Holy Spirit together, be glory, dominion, honor, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Stark County Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood Pan-Orthodox Pre-Sanctified Liturgy schedule for the first 3 weeks of Lent is as follows:

1. Feb. 25, St. George Greek, Massillon
 2. March 4, St. George Antiochian, Canton
 3. March 11, Holy Assumption OCA, Canton
- (All services are @ 6:30 pm, followed by a Lenten Dinner)

After the clock moves forward and nightfall is later, we will schedule Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy at St. Theodore Church.

PRAYERS requested

For The Health and Salvation of:

Mother Ana

Family of Nanci Stradley

Patricia Kosivich, friend of and helper to Mother Ana

Father Joe Cervo

Doreen Wishnok (friend of the Krupko's who is battling breast cancer)

George Ralich, (Dan's father)

Katie (Granddaughter of Father Stevo Rocknage, St. Sava Church in McKeesport, who is battling a rare genetic disease)

Stefanie Waseman

Metodija Damljanovic (4 year old child who fell ill suddenly and grandson of Prota Vasko Sokolovic)

Roland Augspurger (friend of the Krupko's who is battling cancer)

Joe Novak

Kerri Baugher (friend of the Krupko's who has cancer)

The Knoll Family

Margaret (Deacon James' Mother)

Eddie, Nancy, John and Alisha (Friends of Father David)

Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

Protopresbyter George Livanos

Jenifer Codrea

Mildred (Peggy) and Walter Borojevich (Wally's Parents)

Stephanie (Father David's Cousin), who suffered a mild heart attack

For The Repose of the Souls of:

Deacon +Basil Frenchek (a deacon from within our diocese) – 01/15

+Violet (Father Joe's Godmother)

Matushka +Mildred Klutchko (friend of Frs. Joe & Dragan)

+Despina Poulos (the mother of Steve Poulos and Bishop Andonios - Greek Archdiocese Chancellor)

+Mary Rossi (parishioner of Christ the Savior OCA Church, Byesville, Oh.)

+Dr. Gregory Spohn, Canton Area Pediatrician and doctor to Tillman Children

(Please update prayer requests at the beginning of each month. We will remove names if the request is not renewed.)

MISSION ANNIVERSARY:

Thank You to Deacon James and Heidi for hosting our Mission 2nd anniversary dinner last Sunday under some very challenging weather conditions. Also thanks to Georgie Washington and her committee for organizing a very enjoyable celebration. And last but not least, thank you to everyone who braved the extreme cold and hazardous driving conditions to gather together with our bishops and one another, to mark this special milestone in the life of our community.

COFFEE HOUR:

February 1 - Larry and Deanna Dordea
February 8 - Novak Family
February 15 - 2nd Anniversary of Mission – Dinner at the Gresh's
February 22 - Corbin and Georgie Washington

March 1 - Jaga Radosevic
March 8 -
March 15 - Dan Ralich
March 22 - Gresh Family
March 29 - Dan Ralich

We have received several suggestions that we go to a simpler coffee hour. Please try to keep it to bagels, donuts, coffee cake, etc.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE HOSTED COFFEE HOUR!!!!

Please see Deanna and Larry Dordea if you are interested in hosting a Coffee Hour. There are plenty of dates available. Thank you to Deanna, Larry and Georgie for chairing our Coffee Hours.

DONATIONS:

Please note, any special donations will be added directly to our building fund unless otherwise specified by the donor. God bless all who have generously donated to and support our mission.

BUILDING PROJECT:

We are finalizing plans to begin phase one construction of our mission building project. If you have not made a commitment and would like to, please discuss this with either Father Joe or Deacon James by email or phone and/or by making your check payable to St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance. May God Bless all donors for their support of our Mission and purpose in celebrating Orthodoxy.

CHOIR PRACTICES:

Choir Practice will be held on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm at the Gresh Home. Please see Heidi for details

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES:

George and Helen Blebea – 18th

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS:

Jake Krupko – 24th

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