

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST  
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY



*Icon of the Holy Images*



# Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church

4815 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213-2917  
Parish Office: (412) 687-1220

Monsignor Russell A. Duker, Pastor



## SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017 THE SUNDAY OF THE TRIUMPH OF TRUE WORSHIP (THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST)



### LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR TRUE-WORSHIPPING WEEK

Sunday, March 5:



11:00 a.m. – Sunday Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great

- \* For the Intention of our Holy Spirit Parish
- + Ruth A. Bacasa by Mr. John P. Kepich



4:00 p.m. – Greatfast Vespers (Saint John Chrysostom Church, Greenfield)

Monday, March 6:



9:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy: + Louis G. Ianni by Mrs. Eleanor J. Timko



Tuesday, March 7:



9:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy: + Metropolitan Stephen J. Kocisko (22nd Anniv. – 3/7/95)

Wednesday, March 8:



True-Worshipping Wednesday (Day of Abstinence)



9:00 a.m. – 1st & 6th Greatfast Penitential Hours

7:00 p.m. – Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts



Thursday, March 9:



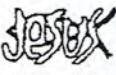
True-Worshipping Thursday: Commemoration of the Forty Holy Martyrs of

9:00 a.m. – Greatfast Matins for the Forty Martyrs Feastday

Sebastia

7:00 p.m. – Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Friday, March 10:



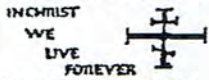
True-Worshipping Friday (Day of Abstinence)



9:00 a.m. – 3rd & 9th Greatfast Penitential Hours

7:00 p.m. – Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 11:



True-Worshipping Saturday: Second All-Souls Saturday



9:00 a.m. – Requiem Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom and Panachida with the reading of the Hramoty



Sunday, March 12:



The Second Sunday Of The Wintertime Forty-Days Fast: The Sunday Of The

11:00 a.m. – Sunday Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great

Palsied Man

- \* For the Intention of our Holy Spirit Parish
- + Irene Beley by Miss Mary Anne Meredith, niece



**AT THE DIVINE LITURGY TODAY.....** The first Sunday of the Great Fast commemorates the defeat of the iconoclastic controversy and the solemn restoration of holy icons. This represents the TRUE WORSHIP of the Church of Christ. Our holy gospel account echoes the call to follow Jesus and to share the True Faith with others, while we are reminded in the epistle lesson to maintain the True Worship that has been transmitted to us as our religious patrimony.

## **SCRIPTURAL LESSONS FOR TODAY'S DIVINE LITURGY**

### **EPISTLE: Hebrews 11:24-12:2 (Section 112)**

Various examples of faith as illustrated by several persons from the Old Testament are brought forth in this epistle lesson which is addressed to the early community of Jewish Christians. These old-testament exemplars were firm in the profession of their true faith, and they were devoted to the true form of worship that was given by God to their forefathers. These early Hebrew Christians are told that Moses passed-on to the posterity of Israel the ritual for the Passover—the TRUE WORSHIP that God Himself required from His chosen people. Similarly, we too stand fast in the True Worship that has been entrusted to us by God through our own forebears as we now prepare for the celebration of Jesus' new and perfect Passover. On this first greatfast Sunday, the Church instructs us through this holy epistle lesson as we read: "Since we are surrounded by so many witnesses (*these old-testament people*), let's strip off everything that hinders us as well as the sins that cling to us, and let us persevere in running the race (*the Great Fast*) that lies before us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus" (*and His radiant resurrection: the precious goal that we all seek!*).

### **GOSPEL: John 1:43-51 (Section 5)**

Our gospel reflection presents us with the Holy Evangelist John's account of the call of the apostles Philip and Nathanael. When Jesus told Philip "Follow Me!" he went immediately to his friend Nathanael and told him about the Lord Jesus. These two men professed Jesus to be "the Son of God," and the Lord promised them that they would see "His glory." As Christian people, we have received this same promise by virtue of Jesus' radiant resurrection for which we now prepare during the Great Forty-Days Fast. Like the Holy Apostle Philip, we must extend Jesus' invitation to our own friends so that they could perceive the joy of being called to follow our Lord. Especially during the greatfast season, we have the opportunity to increase our faith through various ascetical acts and to profess this true faith in Jesus as God's Son by demonstrating our loyalty to Him through acts of that TRUE WORSHIP which has been entrusted by God to our forefathers and, through them, to us. We must worship the Lord with that faith which has been given freely to us so that like these two holy apostles, we might be worthy of seeing the Son of God in "all His glory!"

## **FOR YOUR GREATFAST INFORMATION**

### **THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE HOLY GREAT FAST.....**

The first Sunday of the Great Forty-Days Fast is called **The Sunday of the Triumph of True Worship**, for today we commemorate the victory of the Byzantine Catholic Church over the heresy known as **iconoclasm**. This eighth-century heresy held that the veneration of sacred images known as **icons** was unlawful. It began in 726 A.D. with an edict issued by the Byzantine Emperor Leo II, the Isaurian, which led to the destruction of all icons and the persecution of their defenders. This heresy continued to rage throughout the Church for more than one hundred years. The Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicea, which was held in 787 A.D., declared that icons were to be placed in the churches and that the honor paid them was only relative, that is given for the sake of what they represent, and not for the sake of the images themselves. The final defeat of iconoclasm, that is the destroying of holy images, came under the **Byzantine Empress Theodora** in 842 A.D. On the first Sunday of the Great Fast in that particular year, the sacred images or icons were restored solemnly to the churches. During the iconoclastic controversy, the principal defenders of the Church's form of True Worship were **Saint John Damascene** and **Saint Theodore the Studite**. On this first greatfast Sunday, our Byzantine Catholic Church tells us that our souls are "icons" of the Divine Image of God, and we are exhorted to purify this sacred "image" of our soul with various penitential acts of true sorrow and sincere repentance.

### **MIROVANJE FOLLOWING TODAY'S DIVINE LITURGY.....**

In festive observance of *The Sunday of the Triumph of True Worship* celebrated today, there will be **mirovanje** after the Divine Liturgy. As we come forward to venerate the holy icons and to receive this sacramental anointing, we are greeted with the declaration: "**Christ is among us!**" We affirm this truth by responding: "**He is, and He shall be!**"

### **THE FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTIA WILL BE HONORED THIS THURSDAY.....**

On **March 9th**, which is **True-Worshipping Thursday**, we will observe the Feastday of **The Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebastia**. During the reign of the Roman Emperor Licinius, these forty men from Sebastia in Armenia (which today is in Turkey) were condemned to death because of their Christian Faith. Having been discovered to be practicing Christians, these forty Armenian men were to suffer an excruciatingly cruel death. They were exposed naked in frigid temperatures on a frozen lake throughout the night where they were left to die. When they incredibly were found still alive the next day, their legs were cut-off and burned. One of them became terrified, and he subsequently renounced Christ. He was rescued and carried-off to a warm bath where he immediately died. One of the persecutors then took the place of this traitor among the thirty-nine others and thus obtained the crown of martyrdom for the cause of his new-found faith in Jesus. These Armenians were martyred for Christ in 320 A.D. on what was Penitential Wednesday, the third Wednesday of the Great Fast. Thursday's Presanctified Divine Liturgy will laud the Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebastia whose steadfast faith, tenacious perseverance, and exemplary courage are presented to us as greatfast ideals.

### **LITURGICAL SERVICES FOR THE HOLY GREAT FAST.....**

The spirit and the meaning of the Great Forty-Days Fast find their first and most significant expression in **worship**. Throughout the greatfast period, the whole Church acquires a penitential mood. And more than anything else, the beautiful and eloquent services of the Byzantine Catholic Church help us to deepen our spiritual vision. The liturgical services portray and reflect outwardly that inner expression of *repentance* which we are to engender within ourselves as we engage in this annual "desert journey," striving for our spiritual renewal. Red vestments are used daily for all of the services since this is the liturgical color that symbolizes the Savior's precious blood that was poured-forth during His redemptive passion and salutary sufferings that He endured for our salvation. As far as our fasting is concerned, we have two days of **abstinence** from meat during the week that minimally is being asked of us. And, with respect to our public worship, we have the duty to attend **at least one** of the liturgical services that are celebrated throughout the course of the week! During the greatfast period, the Byzantine Catholic Church's foremost liturgical service is the **Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**. This is a eucharistic service that is celebrated only during the winter season's lenten period of the Great Fast. This extremely beautiful eucharistic rite exemplifies most aptly our attitude of repentance through the words of the psalms and the moving, minor-keyed hymns of the Great Fast. This Divine Liturgy finds dramatic expression in the ceremonies, the great metanies (that is the prostrations to the ground), and the somber melodies used in chanting the responses. Thus, all who participate in it are to be influenced toward inner penance and contrition. Furthermore on the five Sundays during the season of the Holy Great Fast, we celebrate the **Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great** for all of our eucharistic services. According to the traditional Ruthenian chant, the anaphora or eucharistic-prayer portion of Saint Basil's Divine Liturgy is sung with very beautiful and solemnly prolonged melodies. These distinct basilian chants remind us that the Fast is upon us. It is through prayerful liturgical worship that we exemplify most vividly our true and deep love for God and our desire to be close to Him!

### **SELF-DENIAL FOLDERS FOR THE GREATFAST SEASON .....**

During the forty-day period of the Holy Great Fast, we are called upon to exhibit generosity in our giving-practices through the process of self-denial. We express our gratitude to Jesus our suffering Savior for having endured the passion, crucifixion, and death in expiation for all of our sins. The greatfast folders represent a token-offering to our merciful and compassionate Lord, and they are to be returned during the wake vigil at the holy tomb on Great Friday.

### ***Let Your Prayer Come from a Humble Heart***

When we pray, our words should be calm, modest and disciplined. Let us reflect that we are standing before God. We should please Him both by our bodily posture and the manner of our speech. It is characteristic of the vulgar to shout and make a noise, not those who are modest. On the contrary, they should employ a quiet tone in their prayer.

Moreover, in the course of His teaching, the Lord instructed us to pray in secret. Hidden and secluded places, even our own rooms, give witness to our belief that God is present everywhere; that He sees and hears all; that in the fullness of His majesty, He penetrates hidden and secret places. This is the teaching of Jeremiah: Am I God when I am near, and not God when I am far away? Can anyone hide in a dark corner without my seeing Him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? Another passage of Scrip-

ture says: The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, observing both good and wicked men.

The same modesty and discipline should characterize our liturgical prayer as well. When we gather to celebrate the divine mysteries with God's priest, we should not express our prayer in unruly words; the petition that should be made to God with moderation is not to be shouted out noisily and verbosely. For God hears our heart not our voice. He sees our thoughts; He is not to be shouted at. The Lord showed us this when He asked: Why do you think evil in your hearts? The Book of Revelation testifies to this also: And all the churches shall know that I am the one who searches the heart and the desires.

*St. Cyprian of Carthage*

Visit [www.ecpubs.com](http://www.ecpubs.com) for more publications.