

The Weekly Messenger – February 26, 2023

St. John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church

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Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

**Upcoming Events:**

**Feb 26<sup>th</sup>** Forgiveness/Cheesefare Sunday Baptism Edvin Vasiu 12:30 pm

**Feb 27<sup>th</sup>** Great Lent Begins

**Sat. March 4<sup>th</sup>** Women's Day Celebration Dinner & Dancing **Contact Nilda S. for info**

**March 5<sup>th</sup>** Sunday of Orthodoxy Vesper Service @ 4:00 pm - Pan Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Philadelphia. We will host other parishes and prepare a meal.

**Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup>** Parish Council Meeting @ 7:30 pm via ZOOM

**Wednesday, March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, April 5** Presanctified Liturgy **6:00 pm**

**March 12<sup>th</sup>** Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** Veneration of the Cross **Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>** Annunciation

**March 26<sup>th</sup>** St. John Climacus 40- day Memorial Vasilika Mihilli

**April 2<sup>nd</sup>** St Mary of Egypt

**Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup>** Lazarus Saturday

**April 9<sup>th</sup>** Palm Sunday

**April 14<sup>th</sup>** Holy Friday

**April 16<sup>th</sup>** Holy Pascha

**April 23<sup>rd</sup>** St Thomas

**April 30<sup>th</sup>** Myrrh-bearing Women

**Coffee Hour Sponsor:** The 2023 Sign-up sheet is posted in the side vestibule or sign up on our website: [COFFEE HOUR](#)

**Feb 26<sup>th</sup>** Edvin Vasiu & Cindy Kamberaj in honor of Edvin's Baptism

**March 5<sup>th</sup>** Alfred Coni & Margarita Sevi in honor of Fred's Nameday St. Harrallambi

**March 12<sup>th</sup>** Roxane Ghicondey

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** Elvira & Erion Gusho in memory of Vasilika Mihilli

**March 26<sup>th</sup>** Sunday School

**April 2<sup>nd</sup>** **NO SPONSOR**

**April 9<sup>th</sup>** Pancake breakfast

**April 16<sup>th</sup>** Pascha

**Commemorations for the Departed:** Archbishop Nikon, the victims in Ukraine, Thoma, Vasilika Mihilli (Elvira Gusho's mother), Tuta Doko, Paul Costa (Kathie Costa's nephew), Deacon Stephen Stefani & those servicemen & women who have fallen asleep in the Lord in the service of their country.

**Commemorations for the Living:** Archbishop Mark, Locum Tenens of the Albanian Archdiocese, Archimandrite Nikodhim Preston, the victims of the mass shootings in California, the people in Ukraine, Joyce Robert (Christine Dardaris' Mother), Julius, Stephanos Sarris, Virginia Daka, Marie Portway (Nancy Ghicondey's Mother), Evangeline Prifti, and the men and women serving in the Armed Forces. *If you have a name to add to the Commemorations for the departed or the living, please email [info@stjcaoc.org](mailto:info@stjcaoc.org)*

**Sunday of Cheesefare: Expulsion of Adam from Paradise / Forgiveness Sunday**

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 descendants 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.

At Forgiveness Vespers we sing: "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...."

**Great Lent Begins Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>,** the season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man's entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors. In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to "anoint our faces" and to "cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls." The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

*Let us begin the lenten time with delight . . . let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.*

*Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vespers Hymns).*

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ's Resurrection and our own.

**Sunday March 5<sup>th</sup> @ 4:00 pm TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY VESPER SERVICE**

sponsored by the Pan-Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Philadelphia. We are honored to host this very important service. Following the service, we will host a light Lenten dinner in the church hall. If you are able to prepare and donate a dish for this light dinner, please let us know!

