



# Saint Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church

146 Third Avenue, Rankin, PA 15104  
Pastor: Very Reverend Nicholas Ferencz, PhD  
Cantor: Professor Jerry Jumba  
Parish President : Carole Bushak



Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!  
Slava Isusu Christu! Slava vo v'iki!

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FEBRUARY 3, 2019

## 36<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**Sun., Feb. 3** 9:00 AM **36<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.** Monk Maximos the Confessor. Virgin-martyr Agnes of Rome. Divine Liturgy.

*Epistle and Gospel Readings are from the 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*, which we had to skip in September: 2 Corinthians 6:16b – 7:1, Matthew 15:21-28

*Oath of Office of the Newly Elected Parish Council*

Mon., Feb. 4 9:00 AM Apostle Timothy of the 70  
*Perpetual: Peter Belinsky (resch)*

**Sun., Feb. 10** 9:00 AM **Zacchaeus Sunday.** Monk Ephraim the Syrian. Bishop-Monk Isaac the Syrian  
Divine Liturgy

*Panachida: Helen Ferencz, 40-day Memorial. Also, Madalynn Allshouse, 40-day Memorial*

**Holy Mystery of Confession:** Before Divine Liturgy. After Divine Liturgy or any other time, just ask.

## PEOPLE STUFF

**Prayer List:** *Deceased:* Helen Ferencz. Madalynn Allshouse. Mary Jane Alm. Fr. Nicholas Palun. Pañi Patricia Patrick.

*Living:* Fr. Joseph Cervo. Pani Donna Smoley, Dana Andrade. Gloria Andrade. Michael Artim. Gregory Michael Aurilio. Barbara Banosky. Jane Barclay. Donald Bodnar. Charlene Borsic. Jaime Budes. Barbara Chappie. Steve Bournius. Rebecca, David & Bradley Noah Cozad. Mary Ann Crouse. George & Margaret Dorogy. Christina Duranko. Breanne Glass. Dorothy Glass. Eddie Gombos. Jennifer Hartrick. Shirley Hrubic. Kevin Ianni. Gary Ingelido. Alisha Krass. Carson Krass. Savanna Lee Krass. Joan Martell. Brian Masterovsky. Michael Mehalik. Zoe Mehalik. Helen Mihalik. Bill & Patti Novotnak. Frank Palmieri. Diane Phillips. Millie and Edward Phillips. Michael Platt. Anna Senich. Bernice Sindak. Terry Slezak. Margaret Stemler. Milton and Thelma Supak. Diana Terezis. Paul & Valerie Yednak. Jeanne Zajac. *Prospora Bakers:* Trudy Trifanoff. Delores Cubakovic, and their intentions.

**Eternal memory! Pañi Patricia Patrick** fell asleep in the Lord on January 26. We will celebrate a 40-day Memorial on Saturday, March 16, when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of Lent. Please pray for the repose of the soul of God's servant **Pañi Patty**, and also please keep Fr. George and his family in your prayers during this difficult time. *Blessed Repose!*

**Welcome!** We welcome to our church this morning all visitors, guests, relatives, and friends of Saint Michael Church. We pray your visit with us is spiritually rewarding, holy and life-giving. Visit often!

## F(E)ASTING

*The Three Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom*, on Tues. Feb. 12. Divine Liturgy at 9 AM.

**THE ENCOUNTER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH SIMEON AND ANNA IN THE TEMPLE**, on Fri., Feb. 15. Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Candles at 9 AM.

## PARISH STUFF

**Reminder!** Our Parish Website is *finally!* back on line! Just click on the website address in the header above, or type the address in your browser and you are in!

**New! The Parish Annual Meeting** took place last Sunday. Highlights include:

- *Election of Parish Council and Officers.* The following will take the **Oath of Office** during the Divine Liturgy: Carole Bushak, George Hrabchak, Arlene Cubakovic, Barbara Simonoff, Jeanne Zajac, Joan Martel, Christina Duranko, Alan Bache, Anna Zamule, Dennis Baron, Janet Alm, Dolores Cubakovic, Elsie Ingelido, Sharon Mascilak, Tina Mazza, Denise Mihalik, Suzanne Mehalik, Sharon Stemler, Trudy Trifanoff, John Varoscak, James Zajac. Please pray for those who have accepted the responsibility of leading our parish.
- *Birthday Celebrations:* In the past we acknowledged the Birthdays of our parishioners et al. We will put their names in the Bulletin along with birthdays on the first Sunday of the Month, and recognize them in church on that Sunday. If you would prefer to not be recognized, please let me know. *Also*, if I do not have your birthday (especially if you never took the parish census), please let me know what your birthday is. *And, last but not least*, if I have your birthdate wrong, please let me know so that I can fix it.
- *Bring a Friend Sunday:* We are promoting the idea that it is a good thing to invite someone to pray with us at the Divine Liturgy. We are asking that on *Sunday, May 19, everyone (which means, Everyone!)* Bring someone to church with you. It can be anyone: family, friend, Orthodox, non-Orthodox, someone who hasn't been here for a long while, anyone! We will have a brunch that day and take the opportunity to get to know each other. More on this later, but NOW is the time to start thinking about who you would like to bring!
- *Income drop:* It was noted that our total income in 2018 was \$9400 less than in 2017. There seems to be no obvious reason for the drop in income. Had income stayed the same, we would have almost been in the black for 2018. As it is, we ran a deficit of \$11,500. Anybody have any thoughts on this?
- *Perpetual Memorial Fund:* The parishioners at the meeting discussed the issue of the Perpetual Memorial Fund. The extra handout available to the parishioners explains the issue in detail, but the sum of it is this: The Perpetual Fund cannot maintain itself as promised when it was established, because interest rates are so low. Up until now the General Fund has been used to cover the expenses of Perpetual Memorials, so that the Perpetual Fund would not be depleted. So, in order to keep the Perpetual Fund going as long as possible, without taking Perpetual expenses from the General Fund, the following practice will be the norm here, until such time as the Fund can pay for itself:
  - All Perpetual Memorials will be celebrated together at a Panachida on a Sunday during that month. I cannot yet guarantee it will be the same Sunday every month. However, it will be advertised in advance in the Bulletin. The donation for this service will be for one service, ie., \$10. *Exception to this rule:*

## Our Gifts to God and our Church

January 27, 2019

Attendance	31
Communions	18

### Collections

Monthly	775.00
Sunday	1392.00
All Candles	173.00
Christmas	235.00
Building Maintenance	195.00
Diocesan Membership	458.00
Adult Beverage Donations	21.00

**Total Offerings: 3249.00**

*Building and Repairs Donations to Date  
\$2601! God bless your generosity!*

- Anyone who wishes to have the commemoration for their loved one celebrated separately *must* commit themselves to attending and participating in the Memorial Service for their loved one on the designated day. You *must let me know ahead of time*. I will then schedule that service separately.
- All Perpetual Memorials will be paid for by the Perpetual Fund itself and *not* from the General Fund, even if that means tapping into the Principal of the Fund. Doing it this way, however, will minimize any withdrawals from the Fund and enable it to be maintained for a long time.
- At this time, there is a **moratorium on new** additions to the Fund. We cannot guarantee that the Fund will function as originally advertised. So, we will not accept new additions to the Fund until such time as it can be maintained as originally planned.

**New! Birthdays in January:** Sharon Stemler 1/4. Becky Nesbitt 1/9. Jeanne Zajac 1/9. Bethanne Mascilak 1/10. Briana Nesbitt 1/11. Trey (Paul) Fedak 1/23. Denise Mihalik 1/26. **Birthdays in February:** Mary Eileen Peterson 2/8. Milan Trifanoff 2/15. Lois Liberman 2/18. Robert Triffanoff, Jr. 2/21. John Steele 2/24. Trudy Trifanoff 2/28. Bobby Triffanoff 2/26. *May God grant them many years! Mnohaja i blahaja l'ita!*

**Re-New!** The *Lottery Jackpot* at the Parish Bazaar last October went so well that we would like to run another one on March 3, 2019, (before Lent begins) as a Fund-raiser. Here is how you can help:

- We are asking folks to help us out by donating lottery tickets again from now until March, just like you did for the Bazaar drawing.. Each time you go to buy lottery tickets, please consider buying one for the Parish.
- We are now selling the raffle tickets for the *Lottery Jackpot* soon. Tickets will again be \$5 each. Please do not hesitate to sell chances to your friends, family neighbors, postman, postwoman, people on the street...
- Thanks in advance for your support of this project.

**Reminder! For Sale!** We have for sale the following items. Please see Carole Bushak to order yours.

- Orthodox License Plate frames. These are really nice. There are 3 different styles. They are only \$5.00 each.
- Holy Water Bottles: as in the past, we are selling Holy Water bottles for \$2.00 each.

**Update! House Blessings:** As you may have figured, the weather this past week was not the best for traipsing around the countryside blessing homes. I hope to be making calls this week to arrange house blessings.

**Update! Agape Offerings:** No one is signed up yet for any Sunday coming up.

**Church Repairs:** *We thank all of our parishioners* for your ongoing, active interest in the well-being of our parish. God bless us every one! **Donations toward Repairs:** So far, we have **\$2601** donated toward this new work. Total cost of this work was **\$3800**. *We thank you for your generosity. God bless!*

### **DIocese, DEANERY AND ADDITIONAL STUFF**

**Reminder! Orthodoxy on Tap!** Join us for Pens Hockey and Orthodoxy Tuesday, Feb. 5, 7 PM at Primanti Bros., 1539 Washington Road, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228

**Reminder! Symposium 2019:** The topic for this year's symposium is "Orthodoxy and the Scriptures," with presentations by Fr. Bogdan Bucur, Dr. Edith Humphrey, and Andrew Weaver. Sat., Feb. 16, 2:00 PM, at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, 320 Munson Ave., MeKees Rocks. More info at [orthodoxpittsburgh.org](http://orthodoxpittsburgh.org).

**IOCC Upcoming Events!** Soup Tasting and Youth Emergency Kit Assembly - Saturday, February 9, 2019 - Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church (Mt Lebanon).

**2019 Diocesan Events Now Being Scheduled!** Don't miss out! Check it out!

- **Diocesan Parenting Workshop Series Launches** - The title of the series is "Raising Believing Children". The first Workshop in the Series will be hosted by Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Rockaway, NJ on March 2, 2019. For info, visit our Diocesan Website- [acrod.org](http://acrod.org).

- **Second Annual Senior Retreat at Camp Nazareth!** From May 13-16, 2019. Online Registration begins February 1, 2019. For more information, contact Camp Nazareth: (1) visit [acrod.org](http://acrod.org); (2) call 724-662-4840; (3) email [campnazareth@acrod.org](mailto:campnazareth@acrod.org).
- **DIOCESAN LENTEN RETREAT**, sponsored by the National ACRY. St Nicholas Church, Homestead, PA, Sat April 6, 2019, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. *Presenters will be* Metropolitan Gregory, “Focusing on the Ladder of Divine Ascent and Our Spiritual Journey One Step at a Time”, and Fr. David Urban, “Windows to Heaven – Icon of Divine Ascent and the Feasts of the Church.”. *Registration Deadline is* March 31, 2019.

## PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

The discussion we had at the Annual Meeting last week about the Perpetual Memorial Fund was interesting and enlightening. Unfortunately, it also exposed some misunderstandings about death and the afterlife. So, I decided this might be a good opportunity to review what the Orthodox Church believes about the afterlife.

What the Church actually professes to believe as a matter of Faith is surprisingly minimal. Or, perhaps it should not be surprising since, as the Rich Man in Our Lord’s parable found out, no one can come back from the dead to tell us about it. This is a brief summary of the Statements of Faith which the Orthodox Church as a whole believes:

1. *Death* is usually defined as the *separation* of the body and the soul. Physical signs of death (no heartbeat, no brainwaves, etc.) are not the definition of death, but merely are signals that death is occurring. *Everyone* must die. There are no exceptions. Note that even Our Lord and his Holy Mother died. If that is so, then it for sure will happen to all of us.
2. *Particular Judgment*: After death, the soul is judged by Our Lord as good or evil.
3. *Heaven*: a name given to the Blessings that the soul which is good receives.
4. *Hell*: a name given to the Pains that the soul which is evil receives.
5. *Prayer for the Dead*: It is good and is valuable *to the deceased* to pray for them.
6. *End of the World*:
  - a. *Resurrection from the dead Body and Soul to everlasting life*: The Church states categorically that at the end of the world, we will all rise from the dead as complete persons (see the Nicene Creed!). The soul is not the person, nor is the body, but *together* they make up a person. Everlasting life of the soul only would be meaningless, since it would not be I who live eternally (hopefully with God) but only my soul.
  - b. *General Judgment*: At the End of the World, at our resurrection, we as whole persons will be judged by Our Lord to receive the just rewards of our life on earth. As Our Lord says, “[The Father] has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth: those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:26–29)

*This is IT! This is all we know!* Everything else that people say, or that many or even most Orthodox believe, is not part of the actual doctrine (statements of Faith) of the Orthodox Church. So, here are some common understandings of what goes on at death and after. These explanations can be valuable when they help us understand what our life on earth is supposed to be like. They are only explanations, though, even if some have been around for centuries.

1. *Death*: What actually happens in death? How does a person die? How long does it take? Today, medical necessity has led us to believe that death is instantaneous – one moment you are alive, the next you are dead. The Church has usually taken a broader view of death, not specifying any length of time. Death is the ultimate act of violence to the person; we were not meant to die, but to live. Often people have envisioned death as the soul being *torn* from the body, with great difficulty. From this has come the tradition that it

takes up to 40 days to finalize death. You can find various descriptions of what happens to the soul on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after death, the 9<sup>th</sup> day and the 40<sup>th</sup> day, which for many people is a useful way of envisioning what will happen to *me* when I die. Does death actually take 40 days? This we do not *know*.

2. *Particular Judgment*: When does this take place? At the moment of death? Later? Church thinkers and theologians point to the 40-day moment as the time when it is traditionally thought that the soul receives its Judgment from Our Lord. A good question to ask here is, “What does *time* have to do with the Afterlife? Does *time* exist apart from the created world?”
3. *Heaven*: Usually spoken and thought of as a *place* – complete with clouds, pearly gates, etc. Many great writers and thinkers have envisioned heaven in many different ways. C. S. Lewis, Dante, and even J. K. Rowling have tried to describe what Heaven is like. Many people like to envision their own version of Heaven: that is, to think, “What do *I* think would be the happiest, best place to live forever? In Orthodox prayer, heaven is somehow a place of “light, joy and peace, where there is no pain, sorrow nor lamentation,” to quote the Orthodox Prayer for the Dead. Is it a *place*? Once again, can a *place* exist apart from the created world? Today Heaven is more typically talked about as a “state of being” rather than a place. In this case, it is a State of Being *with God*, from Whom we receive all love and joy. What does this mean? How will I feel? Once again, we don’t really know. Here is another good question: Will heaven be different after the End of the World? Now it accommodates souls, but then it will accommodate persons, body and soul. Will it change? How? Good questions, all.
4. *Hell*: Ditto with Heaven, but the opposite: thought of as a *place* of torment, with fire, brimstone, pain, etc. Great artists have generally (in my opinion) done a much better job depicting Hell than depicting Heaven. If you look at Icons of the Last Judgment, or have seen Michaelangelo’s Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, you may think the same thing. C. S. Lewis, Dante, and many others have tried to describe Hell. Today Hell is talked about usually as a “State of Being” *without God, separated from God*, for eternity. That loss is a greater punishment than any torture or pain that we can envision. *However*, Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, a modern author who is a great theologian and thinker, says that there can be nowhere that God is not, and so we cannot live separated from God. His idea is that those in Hell are also *with God*, except that contact with God creates tremendous pain, hurt and turmoil for those who have rejected Him. Is one idea better than the other? Is one “right” and one “wrong”?
5. *Prayer for the Dead*: This is a topic which was wrongly presented during the Annual Meeting and requires some correction. The Church has always believed “as a statement of Faith” that Prayer for the Dead is a good thing because it has *value for the deceased person always*, not just for 1 or 3 or 40 days. The idea that Prayer for the Dead ceases to have value for that person after 40 days is a half-baked, semi-Protestant understanding of the after-life. Prayer for the Dead is not just a comfort and consolation for us who pray, but is worth doing for the sake of the deceased. How? How does prayer help the deceased? That is a *really* good question. Unfortunately, there is no definitive answer. Here are some thoughts about that:
  - a. First, think about praying for the living. We do this all the time, and no one questions it. But *how* is praying for someone, say that they recover from illness, worthwhile and effective? Is there a lock-step connection between prayer and recovery (you know, pray a certain amount and the person is bound to be cured)? Clearly not. Is prayer then ineffective? How many of us have felt the power of prayer, even from those we do not know. Prayer for the living (those living on earth) and prayer for the dead (those living after this life) are equally not understood, but this ‘mystery’ does not mean prayer is worthless. It just means we don’t understand how it works, yet.
  - b. Second, the value of prayer for the dead has been envisioned in many different ways over the centuries. In the Western Church (Roman Catholic), the primary vision of how prayer for the dead works has been the idea of *Purgatory*. *Purgatory* (a place of purging, or cleansing) is a hell-like place where souls go which are not evil enough for final damnation but not yet worthy of the Vision of God. Our prayers aid those persons in their cleansing (*How? Don’t really know.*) In Orthodoxy, the concept of the *Toll Houses*

is just as ingrained in the thought and prayer of the Church. *Toll houses* are stops on the road to Heaven, where the soul is required to ‘pay’ for its sins and impurities before it can move on toward ultimate Union with God. Again, our prayers strengthen the deceased as she/he is put to the test at each of these stops. (*How? Don’t really know.*) How long does it take to go through the Toll houses? Don’t know, although it is often talked about in terms of 40 days. What happens? Don’t really know, although there are descriptions of the soul encountering both angels and demons, who ‘fight’ over the soul.

- c. There are other concepts of how prayer for the dead works, but the question remains: “Do any of these descriptions actually represent what is actually ‘real’?” Traditions in the Church favor one or another understanding of how it all works, but the Church has never endorsed any of them as a definitive explanation of the afterlife. The Church recognizes that ‘eye has not seen nor ear heard’ the actual afterlife. It is beyond our understanding and knowledge, for now (see St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2-6).
6. Finally, the *End of the World*, the *Resurrection of Body and Soul*, and the *General Judgment*. There is much less discussion about this moment than about the afterlife before the World ends. Many people reject the

resurrection of the Body, even though St. Paul tells us the Body will be different from our current physical bodies. See St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, where he tries to explain what that means (1 Cor 15:35–58) and how we know that is so (Christ’s resurrected Body is not the same as it was before He rose: 1 Cor: 15:1–35). Some have tried to envision what this must be like, but this is even more difficult than thinking about Heaven/Hell before the End.

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**SO**, that is a short summary of the Church’s belief in everlasting life. Since all these descriptions are visionary thinking and not actually *doctrine*, do they have any value? Certainly. We do not live in a purely spiritual plane, and so our understanding of *anything*, in this life or the afterlife, is informed by our body as well as by our mind, or our soul. Shall we pray for a good “State of Being” for our loved one, or rather that they should dwell in a land of “light, joy and peace”? The second description will, for most of us, be much more meaningful, and so our prayer will mean more, and so, I think, be more valuable for the one for whom we pray.

*Prayer Services for the Deceased: one or many?* A last word about *how* we pray is in order. When we pray, especially in community worship, we usually pray for many as often as for one. The Divine Liturgy mentions, both by name and by general reference, many different people for whom we pray at every Liturgy. The Power and grace of God in the Divine Liturgy cannot be confined or restricted to the good of only one person. The fullness of God’s grace in the Divine Liturgy, and in any other prayer, cannot be divided like a pie. *Everyone* mentioned in prayer receives *all* of God’s grace and blessings, whether it is only one person mentioned, or thousands of people mentioned. So, it is good to pray for one person, alive here or alive after-here, and it is also good to pray for many people, alive here or alive after-here. God hears our prayers and offers his blessing to all, “for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20).

