

The Promise

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

WESTFIELD ✦ NEW JERSEY



March 2024 ✦ Volume 48, Issue 3

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Sundays Leading up to Great Lent

Four Sundays precede Great Lent. Each Gospel lesson on these Sundays collectively illustrate the various conditions of fallen humanity caused by sin and the necessity of God's intervention. The Gospel portrayal of intervention does not constitute merely a simple cure from some terrible sickness or the correction of aberrant behavior these interventions show Christ as the pathway to eternal life.

Eternity is the concept of an abundant life that has no end. This unending gift is offered to those who commune with Christ, who is the Giver of Life. As God, Christ can never die. Yet paradoxically, the mysteries of faith teach us that as a man He did in fact die. In this death as man, the transformative energy of the Godhead was unleashed on death to utterly annihilate it once



and for all. The glory of Christ's victory means that every person can now participate in eternity being that this gift is extended to all who believe in Him.

Continued on page 3 ⇨

Great Lent Begins March 18

Στις 18 Μαρτίου ξεκινάει
η Αγία και Μεγάλη
Τεσσαρακοστή

GREAT LENT

Journey to Pascha



Great Lent begins on Monday, March 18. This forty-day period is also known as the Season of Repentance. With its arrival, we hear again the Church's clarion call to repentance before our Creator. Our Church invites us to nurture and tend to our spiritual well-being by seeking an ever-increasing communion with our good and loving God.

Continued on page 3 ⇨

Wait for the promise of the Father



Dates in the Life of Our Church

March–April 2024

MARCH

- 2** Sights & Sounds

- 3** 8:15 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 5** 11:00 AM Trinity Circle

- 4:00 PM Greek School

- 7** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 9** Saturday of Souls/Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste

- 8:30 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 10** Daylight Savings Begins

- 8:15 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 12:00 PM Sights & Sounds Showcase

- 12** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 7:00 PM Philoptochos General Mtg

- 7:30 PM Parish Council Mtg

- 13** 9:30 AM TOTs

- 14** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 16** 9:00 AM Saturday of Souls

- 17** 8:15 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 18** Great Lent Begins

- 5:00 PM Great Compline

- 19** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 5:00 PM Lenten Vespers

- 8:00 PM NNJYC State Mtg

- 20** 6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy

- 8:00 PM Theosis

- 21** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 4:30 PM March 25th Program

- 22** 6:30 PM Akathist Hymn

- 7:45 PM Lenten Meal

- 23** 9:00 AM Saturday of Souls

- 11:00 AM Baptism

- 24** Sunday of Orthodoxy

- 8:15 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 25** Annunciation

- 8:30 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 26** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 27** 9:30 AM TOTs

- 6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy

- 8:00 PM Theosis

- 28** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 29** 6:30 PM Akathist Hymn

- 7:45 PM Lenten Meal

- 31** 8:15 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 12:00 PM Oratorical Festival

APRIL

- 2** 11:00 AM Trinity Circle

- 4:00 PM Greek School

- 7:00 PM Marriage Prep

- 5:00 PM Lenten Vespers

- 3** 6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy

- 8:00 PM Theosis

- 4** 4:00 PM Greek School

- 5** 6:30 PM Akathist Hymn

- 7:45 PM Lenten Meal

- 7** Veneration of the Holy Cross

- 8:15 AM Orthros

- 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

- 8** 5:00 PM Great Compline

- 9** Metropolis Clergy/Laity

- 4:00 PM Greek School

- 7:00 PM Philoptochos Board Mtg

Let us mourn the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, since we too are their children.



Knowing and celebrating this victory is important as we embark on the forty-day fast. On the Sunday before the start of Great Lent (March 17) we commemorate the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise - the symbolic eternal kingdom. On the first day of lent, we are already certain that this dreaded expulsion will end in the regaining of Paradise. Lent is a period for us to mourn the event of the banishment, since we too are the children of Adam and Eve, but from its onset our mourning is mixed with joy knowing already that through the brilliance of Christ's Resurrection the gates of heaven have been open to us.

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (Feb. 25)



This lesson teaches us to flee all vainglory and hold fast to humility. All virtues of Christian life stem from humility. Vainglory is an attitude of excessive pride. An ostentatious display of self-worth leads us to think that we are better than those around us. We are shown that boasting strips every ounce of heavenly rewards the soul might otherwise enjoy. Through humility, we win God's blessing. The warning to flee pride is given to us not only in words, but also in practice. On the Wednesday and Friday of this week, we do not fast, reminding us that fasting should never be reduced to mere ritual. Fasting done mechanically or dogmatically cannot offer spiritual edification or growth. Only with spirit of humility can our fasting be beneficial.

Sunday of the Prodigal Son (March 3)



This lesson describes to the faithful the condition of repentance, the central theme of Great Lent. Repentance is nothing more than fleeing the debilitating condition of sin and returning to the embrace of God. This is perfectly described in the passage, "Your brother was dead and is now alive; he was lost, and now found!" This day reminds us not to squander, through selfish desire; the divine gifts, opportunities, and riches that God has given. Instead, we are to embrace the goodness of God by recognizing our sins and finding salvation in Him.

Lent promotes prayer, fasting, and almsgiving because these disciplines deepen our awareness of God's infinite love and abundant mercy. These three Lenten elements also equip us with the tools necessary for repentance. They focus our hearts and minds on God's eternal kingdom and help us remember that in this earthly existence our obedience to Christ is the way to salvation.



Is the door of your heart open to the Gospel message?

Spending more time in church is the obvious way to open your heart to Christ. The door of your heart can either be opened or locked to the Gospel message. By passing through an open door, we gain access to a greater and far better place. A clear sign of a locked heart is allowing Lent to slip by without engaging in the mysteries of faith. Now the heart is a barrier instead of an open field. Surely, it must be inconceivable for an Orthodox

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Judgment is a terrifying prospect to those who do not repent.

Judgement Sunday (March 10)



This day is also known as Meatfare Sunday because this is the last day on which we eat meat. Judgment is a terrifying prospect to those who do not repent. To live persistently in sin is to live in disharmony with nature and our own self. Struggling against natural law is useless unless our intent is to pervert it with contrarian “self-made” laws. Without repentance, every perversion becomes a pathology that grows fierce

developing into a sickness. And where sickness thrives, bad things will follow. Unrestricted pathologies damage all relationships, close and afar. They disconnect us from God and neighbor, and from this, all the calamities of the world befall us. The only effective counterattack to sin is love. Love is the criteria of judgement. The definition of love given to us on this Sunday describes a divine gift that connects all people. This is a practical and real love that is manifest in deeds and in sacrifice. It is a love that is neither timid nor cowardly. It is a love that dares to take steps beyond feelings, emotions, or sentimentality. It is a movement of divine energy connecting us to God and our neighbor, allowing goodness and compassion to flow. This love exists in God, and to avoid judgment we are expected to harness and use it for the welfare of humankind.

“If you wish to be called wise, intelligent, and a child of God, strive to present your soul to the Lord in the same state as you received it from Him: pure, innocent, completely undefiled. Then you will be crowned in heaven and the angels will call you blessed.” – St. John of Karpathos

Forgiveness Sunday (March 17)



This day is also known as Cheesefare Sunday because this is the last day on which we eat dairy and eggs. The Lord instructs us to forgive one another. In exchange for this, God the Father will forgive us. The Lord also speaks to us directly about fasting, since Great Lent and our fasting effort begins the next day. In His encouragement to



Presanctified Liturgy; The Gift of Lent

6:30 PM

Every Wednesday night throughout Great Lent, the solemn Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated at 6:30 PM. This beautiful and powerful Liturgy prepares us spiritually for the Paschal celebration. Please be reminded that fasting is required before receiving Holy Communion. Since this is an evening service, if you plan to receive Holy Communion, eat a very light luncheon and keep a strict fast thereafter. After the Liturgy, you are invited to a light Lenten meal followed by the Theosis Program at 8:00 PM in Room 101. This year Theosis will examine the Gospel According to St. John. Bring your Orthodox Study Bible or other bible that you have. ❖

fast, He instructs us to hide our fasting from others. We are to fulfill this godly obligation but not in a hypocritical or noticeable way. Abstaining from certain foods is the first and most obvious form of fasting. Yet there exists a second form as well, whose benefits reach far beyond the first. The second way to fast is the most perfect way because as followers of Christ we are to abstain completely from every form of sin. Both fasts are necessary. The first teaches us in an elementary way how to control bodily impulses. The second fast teaches us how to extend this and offer our whole body and soul to God, that we may be temples of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil the Great offers a summary and importance of the two forms of fasting by saying, “What good is your fasting and abstaining from meat when you continue to devour your brother’s flesh through Gossip.”

Examining these four Gospel lessons leading up to the start of the Lenten season, will increase our spiritual formation as lovers and believers in Christ. They will help make the season of Great Lent a vehicle of certain spiritual prosperity. ❖



A Lenten Prayer

by St. Ephraim the Syrian

O Lord and Master of my life,
take from me the spirit of sloth,
faint-heartedness, lust of power,
and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of
chastity, humility, patience, and
love to Thy servant.

Yea, Lord and King, grant me
to see my own errors and not to
judge my brother, for Thou art
blessed unto ages of ages.

Amen.

❧ Kali Sarakosti ❧
Have a blessed Lent

Friday night Potluck after Akathist Hymn (March 22 & 29, April 5 & 12)

Honoring the three pillars of Lent which are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, Holy Trinity parishioners are invited to a parish Lenten Potluck Dinner following each Akathist Service on Friday nights during Great Lent. First, as a parish, we will gather in church for prayer honoring with grateful hearts the Theotokos with the Salutation Service. Afterwards, united by God’s grace and as one family we will break bread together.

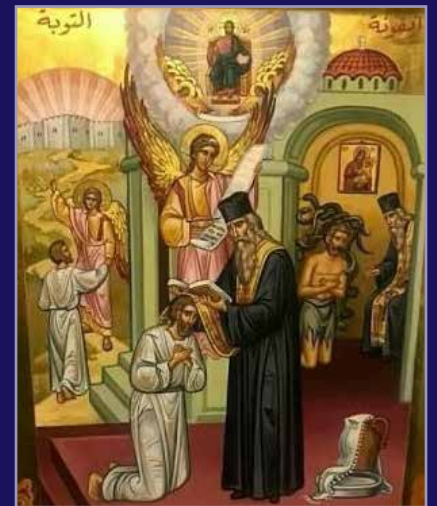
This is the first time since COVID that we are able to return to this beautiful practice. Each parishioner is asked (if possible) to bring a Lenten cover-dish. Since we practice the complete rule of the Lenten fast, please do not bring items with meat, cheese, dairy, eggs, or fish. Shellfish and oil are permitted. ❖

⇐ Continued from page 3

Christian to pass the entire forty-day period without attending a single Lenten service. Over this seven-week period, the Church offers multiple services every week. Do we have no time for Christ, not even to offer a single hour to come into the beauty of His house?

Great Lent is another chance for us to grow in Christ’s life. It is the way for us to open the door of repentance to the Giver of Life. This article closes with one of the most beautiful and transcendent hymns of lent. It is chanted every Sunday morning during orthros. In my opinion, it is perhaps the most defining principle of this sacred period. ❖

Open to me the door
of repentance, O Giver
of Life, for early in the
morning my spirit has-
tens to Your holy temple,
bringing the temple of
my body all defiled. But
as one compassionate,
cleanse me, I pray,
by Your loving-
kindness and mercy.





Philoptochos

Philoptochos Stewardship

■ ELLEN MANOS-ATHENSON, MEMBERSHIP CO-CHAIR

Our History: The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society Inc., established in 1931, is the philanthropic arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America that has offered over 90 years of philanthropy through a multitude of programs that make a difference in the lives of people in the United States and throughout the world. Today Philoptochos has 26,000 members and more than 400 active chapters nationwide.

Our Mission: To promote charitable, benevolent and philanthropic outreach; to preserve the sanctity of life and family; and to perpetuate and promote our Orthodox faith and traditions.

Our Holy Trinity Philoptochos: The Ladies Philoptochos of Holy Trinity executes on our mission in all the work our chapter undertakes. The commitment of our capable, generous and dedicated community of women put their faith in action. We support many worthy organizations, provide educational scholarships, meet our annual National and Metropolis commitments, support our church community and respond promptly and generously to individuals and families that are in great need. Our efforts are made possible through the funds we are able to raise at our events, donations and through our annual stewardship offerings.

Call to Action: We sincerely urge and invite every woman 18 years or older to become a Philoptochos member. Being part of this dedicated group provides a rewarding opportunity to connect with our church community through a vibrant sisterhood of Philanthropy. We must continue to build the strength and stewardship of our chapter, infuse new ideas and embrace new generations of women to carry on our mission. ❖

2024 Journal Business Ad Contract

Dear Friend of The Ladies Philoptochos,

Our ANNUAL SPRING FASHION SHOW will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at Brooklake Country Club in Florham Park, NJ. It is a popular and major fundraising event that assists us in our mission:

"To aid the widowed, the poor, the aged, the sick, the orphaned, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, and more."

Please support our efforts and place a BUSINESS AD in our 2024 Journal! Place your Business Ad by sending us the following no later than April 10, 2024:

- Email:** Send PDF file of your Ad creative unit to alexandra.mavridis@yahoo.com. If you want to repeat your identical ad from last year or want to make minor changes, please email us stating so.
- U.S. Mail:** Complete the tear-off below and mail with payment and copy of your creative ad to address below. Please make checks payable to "The Ladies Philoptochos – HTGOC."

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Attn: The Ladies Philoptochos - Ad Journal Committee
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THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF ADVERTISEMENTS IS APRIL 10, 2024.

IF YOU PLACED AN AD IN 2023 AD JOURNAL, A COPY IS AT TACHED.

The Ladies Philoptochos Society reserves the right to modify creative in order to conform to Journal specifications.

Thank you for your generous support! Alexandra Mavridis - Ad Journal Chairperson

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Spring and lent are just a few weeks away! GOYA spent much of February preparing for Sights & Sounds. We are proud of everyone's hard work and motivation that allowed us to do our very best in the play, band, monologues, Greek dance, and so much more. We would also like to thank our parents and volunteers for ensuring that this day would be special and memorable.

The Sights & Sounds Post Show will be held on Sunday, March 10 after church. The GOYAnS look forward to showcasing their talents to the parish.

Thank you to everyone who donated to our SOUPer Bowl of Caring; the food items were donated to the food pantry at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Westfield. The money that was collected will help support the efforts of I.O.C.C. A few GOYAn's attended a

Bridge's sandwich making event at St. John in Tenaffly, and enjoyed interacting with other GOYAnS while actively engaging in a good cause.

Many of our GOYAnS are preparing speeches to participate in the annual Oratorical Festival to be held on Sunday, March 31. We are all anticipating future events with the entirety of New Jersey GOYA, including the Olympics. ❖

Communion Breakfast

The Annual Communion Breakfast held on February 11 was a total success. Over 150 people attended this lovely gathering, making it the most attended in recent years. Our chairs, Ron and Andrea Cerini, did an amazing job. We salute their effort and all those who helped decorate and cook. The following businesses donated to the luncheon - Stop & Shop in Watchung, Shop Rite in Garwood, Bagel Chateau in Westfield. The committee thanks the Ladies of Philotochos for decorating and the many parishioners who also offered financial donations. ❖




The kitchen crew: Evans, Andy, Steve, Ron, Robert, John, Chris & Demetri



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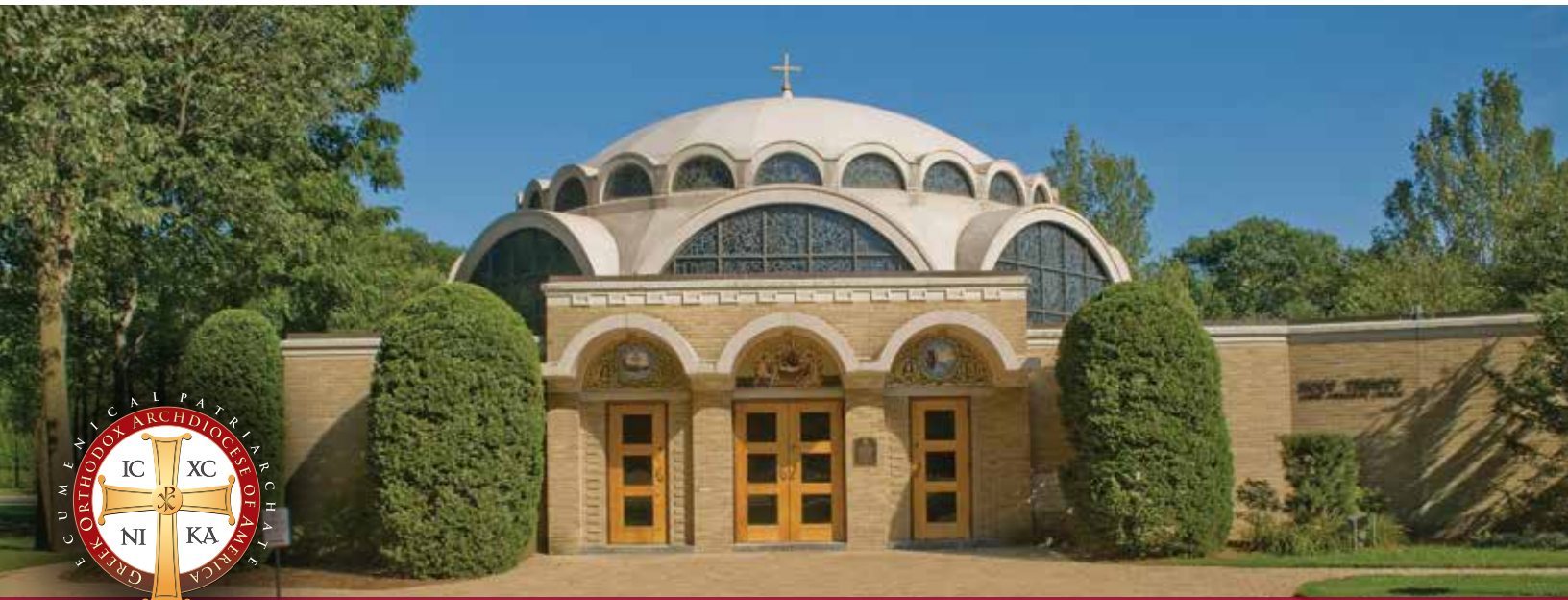
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Organist Phyllis Verenes
Head Acolyte Nicholas Sikellis

MINISTRIES

Parish Council Penny Mavridis Sales
Philoctochos Maria Kanaras
Religious Education Pete Markos
Greek School Stavroula Mergoupis
Greek School PTO Zaharoula Ioannou
Youth (GOYA) Nadia Tarhanidis
JOY/HOPE Kathy Petsinis Paone
TOTS Valerie Comprelli
Bookstore Sandy Mouratoglou
Cultural Celia Kapsomera
Peter Tarhanidis
Trinity Circle Avi Kiriakatis
Fellowship Lauren Karanikolas
Scouting Miriam Kotsonis

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

| | Sundays | Weekdays |
|----------------|---------|----------|
| Orthros | 8:15 AM | 8:30 AM |
| Divine Liturgy | 9:30 AM | 9:30 AM |

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