

# THE TROPHYBEARER

## *Pastoral Thoughts*

In the cycle of the meteorological year, we are on the swing through winter. The days are getting longer, and as of February, the chance of more bitter cold gets smaller and smaller. Somewhere around the first week of February, we will be as close to the Vernal Equinox as we were to the Winter Solstice. In other words, we will be halfway through astronomical winter.

December 20 or 21 is the shortest day of the year, and March 20 or 21 is the moment when the day is equal between the hours of daytime and nighttime. The sun will rise directly in the East for us and set in the West. In the church calendar, we will be finishing a time of great preparation. In the cycle of the church year, no less than in the astronomical calendar, we have mileposts along the way toward our destination. In the case of the church year, of course, we are headed to the death and resurrection of Our Lord.

In 40 days, we encompass much of our Lord's earthly life. In December, we celebrate our Lord's birth with Christmas. We celebrate with Him with gift-giving. In giving gifts, we also recall the arrival of the Magi, remembered within this time, with their symbolic and sumptuous gifts from the East.

We mark Christ's circumcision, His fulfilling of the Law by doing what the Law requires. Eight days after a Jewish male child's birth, this sign, going back to Abraham, marks males of the Covenant.

Evil takes its first chance at thwarting the plan of salvation in the Slaughter of the Holy Innocents. This horrific event, commemorated on the 29th of the month, marks Herod's attempt to eliminate what he sees as a rival to his shaky rule. We remember those children under the age of two who were killed then.

On Theophany, January 6th, we remember Christ's baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The birth was known to a handful; the circumcision was a routine religious practice, and the slaughter of the innocents only indicates an earthly power play.

The Theophany shows forth God incarnate to the world, making this unique intrusion into time and history well known. It is not only a revelation of Christ's divinity but a revelation of the Trinity, something generally unforeseen.

Finally, we celebrate the Presentation in the Temple on February 2nd. This not only fulfills the Jewish Law but is also a revelation of Christ's messianic nature to Simon and Anna. They get a special revelation that the Law is now fulfilled, somehow, in the person of this 40-day old infant.

All of this prepares us for the journey on which we embark at the end of the month as we head toward Great Lent. We are preparing ourselves for the journey to the Cross and the Empty Tomb. Christ has established his bona fides, as it were, and we are aware of Who it is we are following. It is a journey that is a challenge, with some hardship, and with demands on our time and resources.

We have been prepared. The time is now. Let us join, having fully prepared, on this great journey.



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# PARISH NEWS

## Epistle Readers

Anyone wishing to become an Epistle Reader, Please Contact Father Michael

- Sunday, February 4, 2024:  
15th Sunday of Matthew: Alexa Florence
- Sunday, February 11, 2024:  
16th Sunday of Matthew: Scot Johnson
- Sunday, February 18, 2024:  
17th Sunday of Matthew: Georgjean Pitsoulakis
- Sunday, February 25, 2024:  
Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee: Mary Rankin

## Evening Meal Volunteers

- February 28, 2024: Dr. Vickie Pyevich and Adrienne Johnson.
- March 27, 2024: Diane Whitehead.
- April 24, 2024: Helen Moorehead and Marge Stratton
- Anyone interested in taking part in this worthwhile ministry should contact Mary Winters at 563-726-2880

## PARISH COUNCIL SUNDAY DUTY SCHEDULE

- Sunday, February 4, 2024: Mary Kay Eckert, Gus Pappas, Ted Pitsoulakis and Diana Spurgetis
- Sunday, February 11, 2024: Kathy Begyn, Joe Burmeister, Dennis Spurgetis, and Mary Rankin
- Sunday, February 18, 2024: Tom Bakeris, Nick Coin, Mariellen Crosson, and Vickie Pyevich
- Sunday, February 25, 2024: Mary Kay Eckert, Gus Pappas, Ted Pitsoulakis and Diana Spurgetis

## PASTORAL NOTE:

The week of the Publican and the Pharisee, the first week of the Triodion, is a fast-free week. That means we can eat anything any day and still receive Holy Communion on Sunday. It is Fast-free because we do not wish to be like the Pharisee who fasted twice a week and was hypocritical, so we do not fast this week.

## PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION NEWS

Congratulations to the new 2024 Parish Council

### Officers

- Ted Pitsoulakis, President
- Mariellen Crosson, Vice President
- Dennis Spurgetis, Treasurer
- Mary Rankin, Secretary

### Members

- Tom Bakeris
- Kathy Begyn
- Joe Burmeister
- Nick Coin
- Mary Kay Eckert
- Gus Pappas
- Vickie Pyevich
- Diana Spurgetis

## STEWARDSHIP NEWS

- 1.Total Giving Statements for 2023 have been sent to parishioners with 2024 Stewardship materials and pledge cards. Due to limitations with software, the statements show the total amount given per household. If you need an itemized list of your giving, please get in touch with me at mbarnton83@aol.com, and I will develop a spreadsheet to send to you.
- 2.If you have a "secret superpower" for working with spreadsheets and would like to share your knowledge, please contact me (Mary Rankin). I would love to develop a more efficient way to track individual giving! Thank you to everyone for your patience

### Parish Registry Wedding

Jeremy Jestel and Maria Koneva were united in the Sacrament of Holy Marriage on January 13, 2024, and the sponsor was Elena Nistor.

### Funeral

The servant of God, Peter Toubekis, fell asleep in the Lord and was buried on January 11, 2024.

- Sunday, February 4, 2024: Open
- Sunday, February 11, 2024: Open
- Sunday, February 18, 2024: Open
- Sunday, February 25, 2024: Open

## THANK YOU VASILOPITA MAKERS

Thank you to the Florence family for making our Vasilopitas! We pray that our Lord and Saint Basil always bless them and keep them!

## COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

- Sunday, February 4, 2024: Open
- Sunday, February 11, 2024: Open
- Sunday, February 18, 2024: Open
- Sunday, February 25, 2024: Open

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

As we head into 2024, we are looking to start working on the following projects:

The flat segments of our main church roof desperately need repair. We have been able to maintain leaks for several years, but a permanent fix is imminent. We are currently seeking bids for this work, but the expectation is that this could cost \$60,000 - \$70,000. We will be seeking donations to be put toward this effort. The council always appreciates those who gave so graciously and with such loving devotion.

The parking lot surfaces behind and to the west of the church are failing in many areas. Repairs have been made over the past several years, but drainage issues and school traffic have caused many issues that patching/resurfacing cannot repair. We are also looking at options for this effort and are in the development stages for this project.

These projects are above and beyond what our annual budgets can allocate for. We rely on our stewards' generosity by offering time and resources. We humbly request from our parish any ideas on how to help our project efforts with fundraising, strategies, or planning. If you can help financially, donations designated to be restricted to these projects may be made to St. George Greek Orthodox Church.



# LIVES OF THE SAINTS

## The Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple (February 2)

When the most pure Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary's forty days of purification had been fulfilled, she took her first-born Son to Jerusalem on this, the fortieth day after His birth, that she might present Him in the temple according to the Law of Moses, which teaches that every first-born male child be dedicated to God, and also that she might offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, as required by the Law (Luke 2:22-24; Exod. 13:2; Lev. 12:6-8). On this same day, a just and devout man, the greatly aged Symeon, was also present in the temple, being guided by the Holy Spirit. For a long time, this man had been awaiting the salvation of God, and he had been informed by divine revelation that he would not die until he beheld the Lord's Christ. Thus, when he beheld Him at that time and took Him up into his aged arms, he gave glory to God, singing: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master. . ." And he confessed that he would close his eyes joyfully since he had seen the Light of revelation for the nations and the Glory of Israel (Luke 2:25-32). From ancient times, the Holy Church has retained this tradition of the churching of the mother and newborn child on the fortieth day and of the reading of prayers of purification.

## Theodore the Commander & Great Martyr (February 8)

The holy Martyr Theodore was from Euchaita of Galatia and dwelt in Heraclea of Pontus. He was a renowned commander in the military, and the report came to Emperor Licinius that he was a Christian and abominated the idols. Licinius, therefore, sent certain men to him from Nicomedia to honor him and ask him to appear before him. Through them, however, Saint Theodore sent back a message that it was necessary, for various reasons, that Licinius come to Heraclea. Licinius, seeing in this a hope of turning Saint Theodore away from Christ, did as was asked of him.

When the Emperor came to Heraclea, Saint Theodore met him with honor, and the Emperor, in turn, gave Theodore his hand, believing that through him, he would be able to draw the Christians to the worship of his idols. Seated upon his throne in the midst of the people, he publicly bade Theodore offer sacrifice to the gods. But Theodore asked that the Emperor entrust him with the most venerable of his gods, those of gold and silver, that he might take them home and himself attend upon them that evening, promising that the following day he would honor them in public. The Emperor, filled with joy at these tidings, gave command that Theodore's request be fulfilled.

When the Saint had taken the idols home, he broke them into pieces and distributed the gold and silver to the poor by night. The next day, a centurion named Maxentius told Licinius that he had seen a pauper pass by carrying the head of Artemis. Saint Theodore, far from repenting of this, confessed Christ boldly. Licinius, in an uncontrollable fury, had the Saint put to many torments, then crucified. While upon the cross, the holy Martyr was further tormented -- his privy parts were cut off, he was shot with arrows, his eyes were put out, and he was left on the cross to die. The next day, Licinius sent men to take his corpse and cast it into the sea, but they found the Saint alive and perfectly whole. Through this, many believed in Christ. Seeing his own men turning to Christ and the city in an uproar, Licinius had Theodore beheaded about the year 320. The Saint's holy relics were returned to his ancestral home on June 8, which is also a feast of the Great Martyr Theodore.

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (February 25)

The Pharisees were an ancient and outstanding sect among the Jews known for their diligent observance of the outward matters of the Law. Although, according to the word of our Lord, they "did all their works to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5), and were hypocrites (ibid. 23: 13, 14, 15, etc.), because of the apparent holiness of their lives they were thought by all to be righteous, and separate from others, which is what the name Pharisee means. On the other hand, Publicans, collectors of the royal taxes, committed many injustices and extortions for filthy lucre's sake, and all held them to be sinners and unjust. It was therefore according to common opinion that the Lord Jesus in His parable signified a virtuous person by a Pharisee, and a sinner by a Publican, to teach His disciples the harm of pride and the profit of humble-mindedness.

Since the chief weapon for virtue is humility, and the greatest hindrance to it is pride, the divine Fathers have set these three weeks before the Forty-day Fast as a preparation for the spiritual struggles of virtue. This present week they have called Harbinger, since it declares that the Fast is approaching; and they set humility as the foundation for all our spiritual labors by appointing that the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee be read today, even before the Fast begins, to teach, through the vaunting of the Pharisee, that the foul smoke of self-esteem and the stench of boasting drives away the grace of the Spirit, strips man of all his virtue, and casts him into the pits of Hades; and, through the repentance and contrite prayer of the Publican, that humility confers upon the sinner forgiveness of all his wicked deeds and raises him up to the greatest heights.

# 2024 FEBRUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1  <b>No Book Study</b>	2 <b>The Presentation of the Lord</b> 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Assumption	3
4 <b>15th Sunday of Matthew</b> 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School classes following Holy Communion	5	6	7 <b>Fast Day</b> 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA)  11:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum  7:00 p.m. Virtual Orthodox Study Forum	8  7:00 p.m. Book Study: Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (join us either in person (in our parish library) or via zoom	9 <b>Fast Day</b>	10 <b>Feast Day of Saint Haralambos</b> 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by the Divine Liturgy at Saint George
11 <b>16th Sunday of Matthew</b> 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School classes following Holy Communion	12	13	14 <b>Fast Day</b> 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA)  11:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum  7:00 p.m. Virtual Orthodox Study Forum	15  7:00 p.m. Book Study: Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (join us either in person (in our parish library) or via zoom	16 <b>Fast Day</b>	17
18 <b>17th Sunday of Matthew (Sunday of the Canaanite Woman)</b> 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School classes following Holy Communion	19	20  6:30 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	21 <b>Fast Day</b> 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA)  11:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum  7:00 p.m. Virtual Orthodox Study Forum	22  7:00 p.m. Book Study: Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (join us either in person (in our parish library) or via zoom.	23 <b>Fast Day</b>	24
25 <b>Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee</b> <b>Triodion Begins</b> <b>Fast Free</b> 8:30 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School classes following Holy Communion	26 <b>Fast Free</b>	27 <b>Fast Free</b>	28 <b>Fast Free</b> 8:00 a.m. Men's Fellowship Group @ Coffee House (1315 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport, IA)  11:00 a.m. Orthodox Study Forum  Evening Meal  7:00 p.m. Virtual Orthodox Study Forum	29 <b>Fast Free</b>  7:00 p.m. Book Study: Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (join us either in person (in our parish library) or via zoom.		