

Assumption of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church

2101 South 28th St. (corner of 28th St. & Snyder Ave.)
Philadelphia, PA 19145 * Church Phone: (215) 468-3535
Website: <http://www.holyassumptionphilly.org>



<http://www.facebook.com/holyassumptionphilly>

Mailing Address: PO Box 20083 * Point Breeze Station | Philadelphia PA 19145-0383

Sunday, March 19, 2017 | Third Sunday of Great Lent

Tone 6 – Veneration of the Cross

Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria and those with them at Rome:
Claudius, Hilaria, Jason, Maurus, Diodorus & Marianus (283)

V. Rev. Mark W Koczak, Acting Rector

615 West 11th Street | New Castle, DE 19720-6020
Phone: Home: 302-322-0943 | Mobile: 302-547-4952
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Parish President - Peter Parsells

Phone: (908) 872.5657

Weekly Schedule

Today: Choir Rehearsal in the church after fellowship/coffee hour

Today: Mission Service – Ss. Peter & Paul Albanian Church (OCA)
9230 Old Bustleton Ave | Philadelphia, PA 19115
Time: 4:00pm Phone: 215.676.3311
Website: <http://www.sspeterpaulphila.org>

Tuesday: March 21 – Bible Study at 6:30pm. Book of Leviticus
[Rescheduled from last week due to snow storm!]

Wednesday: March 22 - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts begins at 6:30PM

Friday: March 24 – Vespersal Divine Liturgy at 6:30PM! *[for the Feast of the Annunciation!]*

Saturday: March 25 – Great Vespers at **5:00PM!**

Sunday: March 26 – Fourth Sunday of Great Lent!
St John Climacus, of the Ladder
Reading of Hours – 9:30am
Divine Liturgy – 10:00am
Fellowship & coffee hour to follow the Divine Liturgy

Texts for the Liturgical Service

Troparion (Tone 6)

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure body. / Thou didst capture hell not being
tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. // O Lord, Who didst rise from the
dead, glory to Thee.

Troparion (Tone 1 – Cross)

O Lord, save Thy people / and bless Thine inheritance! / Grant victories to the Orthodox
Christians / over their adversaries; / and by virtue of Thy Cross, // preserve Thy habitation!

Kontakion (Tone 7 – Cross)

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden; / it has been mysteriously quenched
by the wood of the Cross. / The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished; / for
Thou, O my Savior, hast come and cried to those in hell: // Enter again into Paradise!

(In Place of the Trisagion, we sing:)

Before Thy Cross / we bow down in worship, O Master / and Thy holy Resurrection // we glorify.
(3x's)

Prokeimenon (Tone 6)

O Lord, save thy people / and bless Thine inheritance!
v. To Thee, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!

Epistle Reading: Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek" Alleluia (3x's) (Tone 8)

- v. Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased of old!
Alleluia (3x's)
- v. God is our King before the ages; He hath wrought salvation in the midst
of the earth! Alleluia (3x's)

Gospel Reading: Mark 8:34-9:1

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

Instead of “It is truly meet...” we sing the following

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace: / the assembly of Angels and the race of men. / O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, / the glory of virgins, from whom God was incarnate and became a Child: / our God before the ages. / He made your body into a throne, / and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens. / All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace. // Glory to thee!

Communion Hymn:

The light of Thy countenance is signed upon us, O Lord. Alleluia (3x's)

Announcements

A Warm Welcome to all of our visitors & guests who worshiped with us today and who have joined us in celebrating the Divine Liturgy. Please join us in the church basement for our Fellowship and Coffee Hour.

Announcements (cont.)

LOST & FOUND: A pair of black gloves was left on the stage in the church basement last Sunday. They have been placed on the front center part of the stage (in front of the icon stand) for the owner to claim them.

Our **Charity collection next week (March 26)** will be earmarked for the Diocese appeal to aid Fr. George and Matushka Larissa Volkovinsky & family.

Fr. George has been working on getting legal paperwork in place to become a citizen for the last **4** years. Fr. George came to us from Belarus and serves St. John the Baptist in Edwardsville, PA. Presently, his wife and two children are unable to work until they receive green cards.

So far the Diocese has received \$5,170 over the last few years to cover application fees and legal fees, which includes \$2,625 from our most recent appeal. So far, \$5,305 has been paid out. This process is quite lengthy and expensive, requiring an experienced attorney familiar with the process and deadlines for filing. Presently, he needs another \$1,500 just for the attorney fees to file his I-485 form. The application fee for the I-485 form was \$4,900.

As you know dealing with government offices can be difficult and time consuming. We hope to at least secure a green card for Matushka Larissa and his two children before his daughter turns 21 this fall. Once she turns 21, she would be deported if the paperwork is not complete.

The parish has a HP Printer with a toner cartridge available for anyone who wants it. Also included is a CD disc with instructions and setup along with the original packaging box. The only issues with the printer is there is no Internet connection to perform wireless remote printing (say from an iPad or a smart phone), there is no USB port connections, and it only prints black & white copies. This printer is available due to the parish upgrading its printer last year that includes copying and scanning capabilities. If interested, please see either Kenny Kavalkovich or Matt Andrews for additional details. Even though the printer is being presented, a free will offering for the printer that will go towards future office supply purchases for the parish would be very much appreciated.

Attendance: Third Week of Great Lent Services

Saturday (3/11) – Vespers = Cancelled due to Fr. Mark's illness.

Sunday Mission Service (3/12) = 9 in total from our parish attended either one!!

Wednesday (3/15) – Presanctificied Liturgy = Cancelled due to winter storm weather

Friday (3/17) – Akathist Service = Cancelled!

Announcements (cont.)

Candles and Prayers for the Faithful and Departed

Health for the Living:

Olga Macalush, Joseph Herbert, Emelie Albrecht, and Dave Albrecht offered by M/M Herbert
Emelie Albrecht offered by Nina Patterson
Emelie Albrecht and Nolan Albrecht offered by Melanie Albrecht
Michael Glacken offered by David Pellack
Alexander, Anastasia, William, Marc, Albert, Catherine, Patricia, Edward, Paul, Susan,
Michael, Angelo, Emelie, Sharon, Laura, Allison, Alexander, Colin, Salina, James, Nolan, and
John offered by M/M K Kavalkovich

May God Grant Them Many Blessed Years!

Memory for the Departed:

Helen Spack, Mary (Slivka) Spack, Benjamin Macalush Sophie Herbert offered by M/M Herbert
David Baumgardner offered by David Pellack
Vito Maturo, William, Ruth, Hunter, Al, Marion, James, Michael, John, Anne, and
Vito offered by M/M K Kavalkovich

May Their Memories Be Eternal

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Please remember in your prayers: Fr. Mark; Dave Albrecht Sr (on his recovery and
rehabilitation); Emelie Albrecht (on her recovery & rehabilitation); Cantrell Family; Grace Corba;
Robert Corba; Ronald Kavalkovich (on his continuous recovery); Julia Makara; Margaret Pellack;
Helen Riley; Helen Wanenchak; Father Vincent Saverino; Father John Bohush and the
parishioners of Saint Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church in Philadelphia; and all those who are
serving in our Armed Forces!

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Parish Meeting Minutes:

The minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on January 22, 2017 and the minutes from the
Special Parish Meeting held on February 5, 2017 have been posted on the bulletin board in the
church basement (bulletin board where the sign up sheets are located) for your reading pleasure.
Please ensure you review these minutes before our next parish meeting (scheduled to be held
sometime during the month of May) since a motion to accept these minutes will be voted on
during said meeting.

**Please ensure that your Mobile Phone is set to Silent (or at least set on
vibrate) during the Divine Liturgy! Thank You!!!**

Announcements (cont.)

Sign up sheets for Coffee Hour, Cleaning and Epistle & Hours Reading. Sign up sheets for the above items are posted on the bulletin board in the church basement. Please be considerate and volunteer to assist with some of the parish responsibilities. Your time is very much appreciated!

Special weekly collections taken after Gospel or Sermon. In addition to our general collection, the parish takes a special collection each week to fund certain parish projects. Please be generous with your offering. Every little bit counts. The special collections are as follows:

- First Sunday of every month – Kitchen Fund Project
- Second Sunday of every month – Icon Fund (2016-17)
- Third Sunday of every month - Restoration/Maintenance Fund
- Fourth Sunday of every month – Charity Giving

Note: if there is a Fifth Sunday during a month, the special collection is earmarked for the Kitchen Fund Project, unless otherwise noted and stated by the Parish Council.

Cash Flow Activity (March)

	<u>Week of Mar 6 to Mar 12</u>	<u>March Month-to-Date</u>
Attendance:	34	38 (average)
Funds In:	\$ 927.00	\$ 2,679.00
Funds Out:	\$ 1,477.75	\$ 6,050.88
Net Surplus/(Deficit):	(\$ 550.75)	(\$ 3,371.88)

Thank you all for your continuous offerings to maintain the parish!

Shop Rite Gift Cards: If you need to purchase Shop Rite Gift Cards, please see David Pellack to secure them. Your purchase of a Shop Rite Gift Card is an additional fundraising project that helps support the church at no additional expense to the purchaser.

Calendar of Events

1st Sunday of each month – Monthly Panikhida immediately after Liturgy.
2nd Tuesday of each month – Bible Study at 6:30pm in church basement.
2nd Sunday of each month – Property Committee Meeting after Liturgy.
3rd Sunday of each month – Currently no permanent event is scheduled
4th Sunday of each month – Church Life Discussion Class after Liturgy.

PASCHA FLOWERS. We are collecting for Pascha (Easter) flowers during the Lenten Season. There are special envelopes available to use for your offering for Pascha flower donations. Please give the envelopes to Debbie Kavalkovich or to a member of the parish council for your offering.

RESCHEDULED - Bible Study – Tuesday, March 21 at 6:30pm in the church basement. Due to last week's snowstorm and nor'easter, the Bible Study Group will gather together at this time and has already begun reading the next book in the bible. They will continue reading and discussing the Book of Leviticus.

Friday, March 24 – Vespers Divine Liturgy at 6:30pm
Instead of an Akathist served on this day, the Vespers Divine Liturgy will be served for the Holy Feast Day of the Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary (March 25).

Sunday, March 26 - Church Life Discussion after the Divine Liturgy and Fellowship hour in the church. The Topic – History of the Divine Liturgy. Please note the Church Life Discussions on the History of the Divine Liturgy are held on the **4th Sunday** of each month.

Sunday, March 26 – Mission Service at 4:00pm.

Saint Mark's Orthodox Church * 452 Durham Road
Wrightstown, PA 18940. Phone #215.860.9640
Website: <http://www.stmarksoca.org>

The Schedule of Services during the Lenten Season (for both here at our parish and the Sunday Mission Services) have been posted on the church bulletin boards (in the church vestibule and the church basement) Please check them often for the dates and times of the services. As always, if there are any changes to the service schedule, they will be announced in church, noted in the bulletin, and posted on the parish's social media outlets (i.e. parish website and parish Facebook page).



Third Sunday of Great Lent: Veneration of the Cross [March 19th]

Through the Cross, joy has come into all the world.

At the midpoint of Great Lent, Orthodox Christians are invited to the Veneration of the Cross of Christ. In the Lenten journey, we are taught to be mindful of the importance of repentance, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and forgiveness.

Without these, our spiritual pilgrimage is lacking in meaning. We cannot be disciples of Christ without these marks of Christian life and practice.

After an enthusiastic beginning of Great Lent, little by little we show signs of being tired, our attention begins to flag, our love for God and neighbor begins to wear out. In other words, our own comfort again becomes the priority.

The veneration of the Cross renews and refocuses our Lenten journey by brining our attention back to Christ, back to the love of God for us. This love is given as a gift to us in the form of the Cross, the symbol both of Christ's suffering and of the resurrection. We are taught by Jesus Christ to take up our own cross and follow Him. To venerate the Cross of Christ is to be inspired, strengthened, and enabled to carry our cross.

All of the above is true. Yet it is incomplete. An important dimension is missing – the dimension of joy. “Through the Cross joy has come into all the world.” These words in a hymn of the Resurrection reveal the dimension of joy as central and essential. Where there is faith without joy, faith is deficient. Where there is almsgiving without joy, charity is deficient. Where there is love, there is joy. Where there is Christ, there is joy.

As we walk the pilgrimage of Great Lent, let it be full of joy, and therefore full of Christ.

[Source: Father Leonid Kishkovsky from *Weekly Spiritual Reflections for Great Lent – Journey to Pascha* booklet by the IOCC (2016)]

Great Lent and Fasting in the Age of “the Screen”

By Father Steven Kostoff

“Enlighten me through prayers and fasting” [Forgiveness Vespers].

Within the context of Great Lent and our ascetical effort during this season, commonly called fasting, I would like to raise the issue of not only fasting from certain foods and drink—the most basic aspect of asceticism because of our sheer dependence on food and drink—but also of “fasting” from the amount of time we spend daily before a variety of screens: television, computer, tablets, movie, smart phones, etc.

This raises the issue of “Orthodoxy and technology,” a fascinating issue and one that should generate a good deal of theological/spiritual reflection when we think for a moment of our overwhelming dependency in the contemporary world on technology. We may be able to live without technology, but we would hardly be able to function without it. However, my goal is much more modest, as I will explain momentarily.

Without entering into a philosophical/theological discussion about technology, we can at least state that Orthodoxy is in no way anti-technological. Although some Orthodox bishops, priests, and monastics may awaken visions of the Amish, there is no real similarity in worldview when it comes to technology. You may just contact any one of those Orthodox persons through their computers and smart phones—but not the Amish! Or you would be impressed by the web sites and overall computer sophistication of both Orthodox seminaries and monasteries. This is to state the obvious.

The Church has never moved to suppress technology or, for that matter, any progress in all of the sciences. This is a crucial aspect of our human capacity to think and create, setting us apart from the rest of the animal world. Yet, one more issue unavoidably related to this is that of the abuse of technology, when it is severed from any clear moral and ethical restraint. Our thinkers and theologians are struggling to keep up with the exponential and seemingly daily moral/ethical challenges that arise out of the obsessive desire to keep pushing forward the frontier of technological progress.

Avoiding these “heavier” issues in this reflection, I would just like to address the more modest issue of our fasting during Great Lent—or, of expanding our understanding of fasting to now include the time spent before our various screens as already mentioned above. It is, after all, Great Lent. Some modest changes in lifestyle or the environments that we create in our homes is an important factor in the overall lenten effort.

With the ubiquitous screen, the questions arise: Outside of our professional obligations and responsibilities, just how attracted, attached, obsessed or, as extreme as this may sound, “addicted” are we to them? How much of that precious commodity of time do we spend in front of screens that could at best be described as distraction, amusement, entertainment, “killing time,” etc.? Can we break through the cycles of surfing, shopping, game-playing, facebooking and blogging that devour huge amounts of our time? And can we show some restraint for the sake of relationships and more serious pursuits which I hope would attract us during Great Lent especially?

To formulate the challenge before us, I would like to turn to an essay written by one of the members of the parish I serve named Emily. She recently wrote an essay titled “Less is More.” The opening paragraph shows that we are of the same mind in formulating the issues before us:

“In the modern world, nearly every direction one turns, surrounding people appear preoccupied by their own little worlds of music, video games, social networking, or the internet. They appear oblivious to anyone or anything, save the technologies that hold their undivided attention. Nearly gone are the days where families would gather together to read, create, play, or converse with each other. The turn of the century bears witness to a rapid-paced world which observes a degeneration in communication and relationships among individuals. Though many remain unaware, this shift brings with it startling changes, affecting present and future generations alike.”

Well-stated and to the point! And something to think about in a season of restraint and re-prioritizing. Emily mentions reading, playing, creating and conversing. Are our families and friendships suffering deficiencies in those time-honored activities that are based on mental agility, socializing skills and the deepening of loving relationships? Is it dinner and then off to the screen? Have we mastered the “art of distraction?”

If so, can we possibly be surprised if we find it difficult to pray effectively—that is, with some concentration and focus? There is a possible alternative approach: Superfluous time spent before the screen can now be redirected and spent renewing those activities that are either intellectually stimulating (a good book or

creative project) or conducive to personal interaction (game playing); or, on a deeper level, “face-to-face” communion (conversing)? Emily writes further:

“Because people do not communicate in person, words and meanings can get misconstrued all too easily. One cannot observe facial expressions or hear tones of voice through the internet, both of which allow the listener to garner a well-rounded impression of what the speaker intends to express.... Nothing compares to quality time given to a person, where one really listens and focuses on getting to know his friends. Human beings are so complex that one cannot get to know anyone very deeply in a diminutive span of time.”

Can you imagine a Facebook entry that states, “In observing Great Lent, this site will be inactive until April 16, the day I celebrate the Resurrection of Christ?!”

What about the screen of the smart phone? This is a wonderful tool for communication that has even been “life-saving,” as we all know of some such stories. You may have to be a modern-day Luddite to argue against the positive use of the cell/smart phone. The important call, the encouraging call, the “where-in-the-world is my child?” call, even the “emergency” call are not what needs to occupy us at the moment.

But here also other questions arise: Beyond all of that, has the smart phone become an extension of our very being? Does it seem to be permanently glued to our ears and/or attached to our hands? Are we lost without it? Do we call and chat in order to... call and chat? (What happened to the spiritual gift of silence?) After all, just a few years ago, we did live without cell or smart phones.

There are styles, colors, sizes, and an endless array of features that turn the smart phone into either a status symbol or a toy—primarily for adults, of course. (Though, at what age now are children equipped with their own phones?). Texting and twittering are producing a certain type of “illiteracy” that is making a wince-creating wreck of the English language, as in “I luv U.” Grammar, spelling, and compound sentences are treated as intrusive. The menus are astonishing for their complexity. The internet is now on your smart phone! And it is also a ready-made camera: Quick! There’s little Johnny running in the years.... How adorable!

Is it possible or even meaningful to show any restraint when living in an age of the screen? If not, then we may be facing the following downward trajectory that can quickly spiral out of control: Attachments become attachments; attachments become obsessions; and obsessions become addictions. Or, as the holy Fathers teach, we become the playthings of our “passions.” We are no longer in control, but under control of our impulses.

As asceticism is not puritanism, so restraint is not repression. All of our ascetical lenten efforts are ultimately directed to our freedom and liberation—to some degree at least—from the myriad dependencies that occupy our bodies and souls. To fast from meat but then to sit in front of the computer for hours surfing, shopping, game-playing, facebooking and blogging somehow points to a disconnect with the overall goal of Great Lent as a “school of repentance” or “journey toward Pascha.”

Professionally and vocationally, we may be living in the age of the screen. I know that I am. I enjoy and try and make something positive of a “cyberspace ministry,” in fact. The irony of writing this meditation on the computer and then launching it out into cyberspace so you will have one more thing to read is not lost on me.

But the challenge remains to retain a degree of freedom from the technological web that can bind us so tightly. Redirecting a lot of our energy—and time!—to prayer, almsgiving and fasting, the reading of the Scriptures and the lenten liturgical services of the Church can create in us the joy of liberation from those very bonds.

Challenges and choices abound! And this is a crucial aspect of our human capacity to think and create, setting us apart from the rest of the animal world.

About the Author

Father Steven Kostoff is rector of Christ the Savior-Holy Spirit Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. He is also a member of the adjunct faculty of the theology department at Xavier University in Cincinnati, where he has taught various courses on Orthodox theology. This article appears on the OCA Website under the section of *“Reflections in Christ”*