

HOLY TRINITY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

February 15, 2026

Cheesefare Sunday – Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise

Contact Us

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Office Hours

9am–5pm Tuesday–Friday

Weekend Services

5pm Saturday Vigil Divine Liturgy

9am Sunday Divine Liturgy

Confession

6–6:30pm Wednesday

4–4:30pm Saturday

*The light of your grace has shone upon our souls, O Lord. * Behold, this is the favorable time, the season of conversion. * Let us turn away from the works of darkness, * and let us clothe ourselves with the armor of light, * so that crossing the ocean of the Fast, * we may come to the harbor of the Resurrection on the third day * with our Lord Jesus Christ, ** the Savior of our souls.*

Aposticha from Forgiveness Vespers

Week at a Glance

Our return to God for His abundant gifts (2/8): \$1,138

Online giving: <https://holytrinitysykesville.org/onlinegiving>

Sun, Feb 15 Cheesefare Sunday – Sunday of Forgiveness

9am Divine Liturgy

2pm Forgiveness Vespers

Mon, Feb 16 Clean Monday – First Day of the Great Fast (Strict Fast)

6:30pm Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

Wed, Feb 18 6:15pm 9th Hour

6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy

8pm Soup and fellowship

Fri, Feb 20 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy with reading of *hramoty* (N)

Sat, Feb 21 5pm Vigil Divine Liturgy (+ Leo Haky, given by Shannon Shaffer)

Sun, Feb 22 First Sunday of the Great Fast – Sunday of the Triumph of Holy Orthodoxy

9am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil and icon procession

Coffee Social Bakers for February 22: Tanya and Karen Sweka

CANTORS' CORNER

Saturday	Sunday
<p><u>1/31</u> Cantor: Victor K. Propers: Start 104; "O Lord, I have cried" and 3 stichera in tone 1 (123); closing hymn "Now you may dismiss" (452)</p>	<p><u>2/1</u> Sunday of the Prodigal Son Cantor: Zeb B. Lector: Mike K. (1 Cor 6:12-20) Propers: Paper supplement</p>
<p><u>2/7</u> First All Souls' Saturday 4:30 Panichida 5pm Great Vespers Cantor: Zeb B. Propers: Paper supplement</p>	<p><u>2/8</u> Meatfare Sunday Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Joseph C. (1 Cor 8:8-9:2) Propers: Troparion Tone 2 (156), the rest is for Meatfare Sunday (217ff)</p>
<p><u>2/14</u> 5pm Vigil Divine Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Propers: Start (104); propers in paper supplement; closing hymn, "Now you may dismiss" (452)</p>	<p><u>2/15</u> Cheesefare Sunday Cantor: Zeb B. Lector: Corey M. (Rom 13:11-14:4) Propers: Troparion Tone 3 (135), the rest is for Cheesefare (218ff)</p>
<p><u>2/21</u> 5pm Vigil Divine liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Propers: Start (104); propers in paper supplement; closing hymn, "Now you may dismiss" (452)</p>	<p><u>2/22</u> First Sunday of the Lent Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Mike K. (Heb 11:24-26, 32-12:2) Propers: Troparion Tone 4 (141); the rest is for the First Sunday of Lent (219ff)</p>
<p><u>2/28</u> Second All Souls' Saturday 4:30pm Panichida 5pm Vigil Divine Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Propers: Start (104); propers in paper supplement; closing hymn, "Now you may dismiss" (452)</p>	

LENTEN SERVICES

<p><u>2/15</u> Cheesefare Sunday 2pm Forgiveness Vespers Cantor: Victor K.</p>	<p><u>2/16</u> Clean Monday 6:30pm Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete Cantor: Shared Lector(s): Ryan and Joseph C.</p>
<p><u>2/18</u> Clean Wednesday 6:15pm 9th Hour 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy Cantor: Zeb B., Natalia T. Lector: Joseph C.</p>	<p><u>2/25</u> 2nd Wednesday of Lent 6:15pm 9th Hour 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Mike K.</p>

GREAT AND HOLY LENT 2026

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

- St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*

My brothers and sisters in Christ: the Lenten spring is upon us. The prayers of the Church begin to announce the arrival of the Lenten season throughout the upcoming week and our annual forty-day pilgrimage toward Pascha will start shortly thereafter. Lent is the spiritual pilgrimage for every Christian, annually calling us to offer ourselves more freely to God, to renew our baptismal promises, and to do battle with the passions of the flesh. First of all, it is a **tithe**, an offering of a tenth of the year, in which we are called to give ourselves and our lives more fully to Christ in his Church. Second of all, it is a time of **renewal** of our baptismal promises. Our hymn-writers call it the *lenten spring*, for as we wait for the coming of Pascha, we embrace repentance and self-reflection, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to grow our relationship with God and renew the graces we were given through baptism. These graces have the potential to bring us back to life, much as nature comes back to life in the spring. Third, Lent is a **spiritual arena**, the “Olympics” for the ordinary Christian: a period of testing and strengthening, in which we make a greater effort than the rest of the year to attend the Church’s divine worship more frequently, turn our hearts and minds towards God through prayer and fruitful spiritual reading, and discipline our bodies through fasting. As any athlete sheds from his life those things which distract him from his goals, we too are called to step back from the distractions of the world for a time in order to embrace our walk of faith to Pascha as fully as we can.

Let us take as our theme for Lent this year the concept of **resting in God**. As St. Augustine remarks in his spiritual autobiography, the *Confessions*, our human existence is characterized by a longing for God which cannot be fulfilled until we rest in his love. We are made to love; we are made to seek relationships with others, both with other human beings, but first and foremost, with God, who made us in his image and likeness. We Christians are children of a loving Father, who cry out “Abba! Father!” whenever we pray to him (Rom 8:15). This God, who is Love himself (1 Jn 4:8), calls us his **friends** (Jn 15:15), his **children** (1 Jn 3:2), and his **beloved** (Rom 1:7). He is constantly searching for us, seeking us out (Ez 34:11), always with a mind to draw us closer into his love. We aim to seek Christ more deeply in the time of Lent, so that we may keep his commandments, and therefore abide in his love (Jn 15:10). What is the purpose of prayer, fasting, and giving

alms, but to live out as closely as possible Our Lord's greatest commandment: "love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

It is easy to fall into the trap of the Pharisee and see in Lent yet another "list" of confusing rules, regulations, and statutes couched in religious language. Let us bear in mind, though, that the essential purpose of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is **love** of God and of neighbor. If we engage in these practices **without** the intention of **growing in love**, it is fruitless, "for what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes but bite and devour our brothers and sisters?" (St. John Chrysostom). It is by abiding in Christ's love, by accepting his ever-present invitation to draw nearer to him, that we experience the true joy and peace in our hearts for which we all long. Prayer teaches us to love God; almsgiving teaches us to love our neighbor, and fasting teaches us to love ourselves.

The Church embraces Lent as the Body of Christ to emphasize that our relationship with God is not merely personal, but as a family. Similarly, we need not feel stressed out about creating the perfect Lenten plan as individuals, but join in with our parish community for the many happenings in our parish during Lent which are designed to renew us in Christ's love. With that in mind, I would like to draw your attention to the following items:

- **Lenten Retreat:** Our first-ever, day-long Lenten retreat will be taking place at Holy Trinity on **Saturday, March 14**. We will be hosting Dr. Alexander Harb, a Melkite Greek Catholic from Alabama, who will be leading us through meditations on the body, soul, and heart, to prepare our hearts and minds for the mystery of Our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection. Please mark your calendars and join us for this day of reflection and prayer.
- **Wednesday Presanctified:** As with last year, we will be hosting Lenten suppers following the Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesdays. During our meal, we will be joined by our group of young people preparing for baptism as they continue their catechetical instruction. These sessions have been taking place on Wednesday evenings and will continue on after Pascha. Since Lent is a time of baptismal preparation and renewal as a community, it is fitting that these catechetical sessions be opened up to the entire community in the social hall. Each session begins with a roughly 30-minute video presentation from a program known as *Symbolon*. Afterwards, anyone who wishes is welcome to join the discussion with the group.
- **Prayer of the Church:** Booklets of the Lenten Hours will be available for individuals who wish to use them in their personal prayer. The Hours are small services of our tradition appointed for different hours of the day and are quite

suitable for laypeople due to their practicality and brevity. One may pray a whole Hour when there is time, or take the book with oneself throughout the day and work in prayers and psalms whenever able. If you wish to have a practical resource to encourage you to spend more time in prayer, pick up one of these booklets. In addition, we will be starting the practice of praying the 9th Hour before Presanctified Liturgy, which will begin at 6:15pm on Wednesdays. Bring your book!

The start time for the liturgy remains 6:30pm.

- **Spiritual Reading:** The library in the social hall remains a great resource for fruitful spiritual reading. This year, we have purchased 10 copies of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's *Great Lent*, a wonderful daily guide for the whole period of Lent. If you'd like something small and manageable to help guide you through Lent, give it a try. These may be found in the library in the social hall.
- **Fasting:** Outside the required fasting regulations which are expected of all Byzantine Catholics who receive the Eucharist (see the bulletin announcement), Lent is a time of fasting. As you may know, the tradition of the Byzantine Church is to generally abstain from meat products, dairy products, alcohol, and oil until Pascha, with some exceptions. Never tried it? Give it a go. If that is too much for you, try a modification, such as abstaining from meat only until Pascha.
- **Confession:** Nothing is more powerful for spiritual renewal than to examine our lives honestly and make a worthy confession. Confession is a doctor's appointment, a chance to experience the healing and love of Our Lord in a profound way. Confession will be offered throughout Lent from 5-6pm on Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30 on Saturdays, by request, and at select other times.

I am praying for all of you as we begin this beautiful time of spiritual renewal. Please pray for me as well.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Nate

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✠ Dates to Remember

- Sunday, February 15: Cheesefare Sunday. Forgiveness Vespers will be held in the afternoon on 2pm to inaugurate the Great Fast.
 - Join us at 1pm on Sunday for “Cheeseluck,” our meatless potluck before we begin Forgiveness Vespers!
- Monday, February 16: Beginning of the Great Fast (Clean Monday). To enter into this season of repentance and renewal, we will be celebrating Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew at 6:30pm.
- Wednesday, February 18: First Presanctified Liturgy. Join us in the social hall for soup and education afterwards.
- Sunday, February 22: First Sunday of the Great Fast. The children are welcome to bring their icons from home and join the small entrance procession during the Divine Liturgy.

✠ Ceiling Rewiring in the Church

Please be advised that a contractor will be working on the ceiling of the church from Monday, February 16 until Thursday, February 19. They will be working from 7am-4:30pm, but we will still be able to use the church for services.

✠ Presanctified Soup Suppers

See the sign-up sheet downstairs if you would like to participate. Note two special days: first, on March 18 we will celebrate Matins with the Great Canon in the evening. Since the service is non-eucharistic, we will precede the service with meal and fellowship at 6pm and the service will begin at 7pm. Second, March 25 is the Feast of the Annunciation, so we will have a more celebratory meal afterwards at which fish is permitted according to the fasting customs.

✠ Fasting Regulations for the Great Fast

With the Great Fast approaching in just a couple weeks, it is good to review our eparchy's fasting regulations and traditions. According to the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh's *Pastoral*

Handbook, simple abstinence (refraining from meat) and strict fast (refraining from meat, eggs, and dairy) is binding on all Byzantine Catholics who receive the Eucharist. Simple abstinence is observed on all Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast (or whenever else a “fish” appears on the church calendar) and strict fast is observed the first day of the Great Fast (Monday, February 16) and Holy Friday (April 3). These are, of course, the minimum regulations, as by tradition, strict fast is observed every day of the Great Fast. If you’d like to learn more about why we fast, see Fr. Nate’s presentation from November 8, which is posted under the Resources tab of the website.

✠ Donation statements for 2025 are now available in the narthex. Parishioners who donated online through Tithely will also receive a statement electronically.

✠ All Souls’ Saturdays

The next All Souls’ Saturday is February 28. The names of the departed will be remembered aloud in a *panichida* before the Saturday evening service and during the *proskemia* commemorations of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. If you would like to add more names to your family’s list, please indicate this on your collection envelope; otherwise, the list of names from previous years will be used.

✠ *Life and Liturgy* Adult Catechesis Series

- IMPORTANT UPDATE! Thank you to all who have participated in our *Life and Liturgy* sessions since August, as they have been a wonderfully blessed time of prayer, reflection, and fellowship. Please be advised that the next two sessions of *Life and Liturgy* are being altered for the sake of other parish events:
 - The Lenten Retreat on March 14 will not follow the same schedule as other sessions; rather, it will run from 9am-6pm. A flyer with the full schedule will be out soon. We will be welcoming Dr. Alexander Harb, a Melkite Greek Catholic theologian and high school teacher from Alabama, who will be conducting our retreat in a series of three talks, aimed at drawing us closer into the mysteries of Holy Week.
 - The Youth and Young Adult Gathering which our archeparchy has asked us to host on April 11 will be in place of April’s session of *Life and Liturgy*,

originally scheduled for April 18. With all that is taking place in April, we are simply cancelling April's *Life and Liturgy*.

- The next session of *Life and Liturgy* will be May 9, as originally scheduled.
- Session Recordings
 - Parish website: [holytrinitysykesville.org/resources](https://www.holytrinitysykesville.org/resources)
 - YouTube: Search “Holy Trinity Byzantine Sykesville” and find the “Life and Liturgy Adult Enrichment Series 2025–2026” playlist
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhMUIKohjH84WPLgf3eWj1stcEvZr7d26&si=CLkimL6ToHBx-XXV>
- As a reminder, these sessions will take place on a monthly basis until June 2026. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather for beautiful liturgical prayer outside of the Divine Liturgy and to learn more about why we do what we do at church and how it relates to the rest of our lives.

✠ Standing Reminder

After Pentecost 2026, we will be celebrating Great Vespers or Vigil only on Saturday evening (no longer with Divine Liturgy). Until then, any change in the Saturday schedule is only on those dates when a session of *Life and Liturgy* takes place.

✠ Youth Events in 2026

Registration for the ByzanTEEN Rally is now open! Please check with Fr. Nate about registration and payment. Registration can be accessed either through the QR code on the flyer, or through this link:

<https://form.jotform.com/YouthArchPitt/byzanteen-rally-2026-participant-fo>

BYZANTINE RALLY

AGES 13 THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

EARLY BIRD
(BEFORE APRIL 1)
&
SIBLING DISCOUNT
\$350

Registration is OPEN now!

Deadline to register is Friday, May 15, 2026



JULY 9-12 2026

FULL PRICE
\$380
AFTER APRIL 1

“TAKE COURAGE!

I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.”

JOHN 16:33



More info & registration
Scan QR code



LENTEN REFLECTIONS

Forgiveness Sunday

The last day before Lent is usually called Forgiveness Sunday, but has another liturgical name: the Expulsion of Adam from the Paradise of Bliss. This name summarizes indeed the entire preparation for Lent. By now we know that man was created for paradise, for knowledge of God and communion with Him. Man's sin has deprived him of that blessed life and his existence on earth is exile. Christ, the Savior of the world, opens the door of paradise to everyone who follows Him, and the Church, by revealing to us the beauty of the Kingdom, makes our life a pilgrimage toward our heavenly fatherland. Thus, at the beginning of Lent, we are like Adam:

Adam was expelled from paradise through food;

Sitting, therefore, in front of it he cried:

“Woe to me...

One commandment of God have I transgressed,
depriving myself of all that is good;

Paradise holy! Planted for me,

And now because of Eve closed to me;

Pray to thy Creator and mine

that I may be filled again by thy blossom.”

Then answered the Savior to him:

“I wish not my creation to perish;

I desire it to be saved and to know the Truth;

For I will not turn away him who comes to me...”

Aposticha of Cheesefare Sunday (sung at Vespers on Saturday evening)

Lent is the liberation of our enslavement to sin, from the prison of “this world.” And the Gospel lesson of this last Sunday (Matthew 6:14-21) sets the conditions for that liberation. The first one is *fasting*—the refusal to accept the desires and urges of our fallen

nature as normal, the effort to free ourselves from the dictatorship of flesh and matter over the spirit. To be effective, however, our fast must not be hypocritical, a “showing off.” We must “appear not unto men to fast but to Our Father who is in secret.” The second condition is *forgiveness*—“If you forgive men their trespasses your heavenly father will also forgive you.” The triumph of sin, the main sign of its rule over the world, is division, opposition, separation, hatred. Therefore, the first break through the fortress of sin is forgiveness: the return to unity, solidarity, love. To forgive is to put between me and my “enemy” the radiant forgiveness of God Himself. To forgive is to reject the hopeless “dead ends” of human relations and to refer them to Christ. Forgiveness is truly a “breakthrough” of the Kingdom into the sinful and fallen world.

Lent actually begins at Vespers of that Sunday, a service often called “Forgiveness Vespers,” for at the end of the service all the faithful approach the priest and one another asking for mutual forgiveness. But as they perform this rite of reconciliation, as Lent is inaugurated by this movement of love, reunion, and brotherhood, the choir sings the Paschal hymns. We will have to wander 40 days through the desert of Lent. Yet at the end shines already the light of Easter, the light of the Kingdom.

- Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent*

If you'd like to pick up a copy and read more of Fr. Schmemmann's lenten reflections throughout the season, they are now available on the library shelf in the social hall. Kindly return the book when you are finished.

A LENTEN RETREAT

*Love the Lord
with All Your Heart*

DEUT 6:5



with
Dr. Alexander Sami Harb

Saturday, March 14, 2026

**Lunch Provided. Please RSVP by March 1 to
Pani Natalia at 412-841-6006.**

HOLY TRINITY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH
104 SHAFFER ST, SYKESVILLE, PA 15865

*Come and learn from the ancient wisdom of the desert fathers
how to offer everything we have to the Lord.*

RETREAT SCHEDULE

9–9:50 AM Parastas (Memorial Service for the Departed)

10–10:45 AM **TALK 1: THE BODY**

While Lent is a time of fasting and asceticism, it should also be a time of rest, retreat, and renewal so that we may regain the bodily strength we need to overcome sin in our daily lives. In order to give God our physical strength, we have to learn to be still, for the Fathers teach us that stillness leads to ceaseless prayer.

10:45 AM–12 PM Break

12–12:30 PM **TALK 2: THE SOUL**

Life is a precious gift, and we often take the lives of our families and friends for granted. We take for granted that we are able to attend liturgy, to receive the Divine Life in the Eucharist. In order to give God our entire soul, we have to learn to quiet our minds from worry, anxiety, and fear and to place our minds in our hearts for prayer.

12:30–4 PM Lunch and Break

2–4 PM Confession Available

4–4:30 PM **TALK 3: THE HEART**

St. John Chrysostom writes that the warm and glowing heart of Jesus is a gift our Lord is waiting to give us. True prayer always brings us back to the heart of the Lord. He alone can teach us how to offer up our hearts to His Father. Therefore, in order to give God our whole heart, we have to allow the Spirit of Christ to enter us when we pray. We have to be spiritually vulnerable so that the His Spirit can enter us and cry “Abba, Father!” (Gal 4:6) and bring us home to the Father.

5–6 PM Great Vespers

6 PM Book Sale with Dr. Harb



Having grown up in the Melkite Catholic Church, **Dr. Alexander Sami Harb** became interested in Eastern Christianity at a very young age. He completed his doctorate in Eastern Christian Studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome with the publication of his thesis in 2022. His theological focus was on the Desert Fathers and their attention to the heart. Dr. Harb especially worked to find ancient textual evidence of attention to Jesus’s heart within the desert and among the early Church Fathers. In 2024, he published *The Kingdom of the Heart: Meditations from the Christian East*. He lives and works as a theology teacher in Birmingham, Alabama. Learn more about Dr. Harb on Instagram @dralexanderharb.

MYSTERIES OF THE CHURCH

Parish Membership: To be a parish member, you must (1) be registered in the parish; (2) demonstrate faithful and consistent participation in the liturgical life of the parish on Sundays and holy days; and (3) regularly offer time, talent, or treasure to the parish according to your ability. Parish membership is required for participation in the sacraments below (but exceptions may be made with Fr. Nate's discretion). All are welcome to become members after attending the parish for one year.

Contact Fr. Nate to register.

Mysteries of Initiation (Baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist): Contact Fr. Nate to schedule pre-baptism instruction. Sponsors must be practicing Catholics.

Mystery of Crowning: Contact Fr. Nate before setting a date or reserving your reception hall (at least six months before the desired wedding date). Pre-Cana program and three sessions with Fr. Nate are required. The ceremony will be celebrated according to the Byzantine Rite.

Mystery of Anointing and Visitation of the Sick: This mystery may be celebrated upon request for anyone navigating spiritual or physical challenges. If you or your loved one is homebound or hospitalized, notify Fr. Nate as soon as possible to ensure they can be visited.

Funerals: Families of the deceased or the funeral director must contact Fr. Nate before setting the time and date of funeral. The deceased need not be a member in good standing. Cremation is discouraged but permitted within certain limitations.

Liturgy Intentions can be requested through the offertory envelopes provided or in person from Fr. Nate or Dcn. Luke. A liturgy may be requested with or without the conventional \$20 stipend, which is considered a donation not a requirement.