

HOLY TRINITY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

February 22, 2026

First Sunday of the Great Fast – Sunday of Orthodoxy

Contact Us

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Catholic Church

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

*While fasting physically, brethren, * let us also fast spiritually. * Let us loose every knot of iniquity; * let us tear up every unrighteous bond; * let us distribute bread to the hungry, * and welcome into our homes those who have no place to stay ** so that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God!*

Sticheron from Presanctified on Wednesday of the First Week

Week at a Glance

Our return to God for His abundant gifts (2/15): \$1,987

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

- 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
- Feb 23-Mar 1 Second Week of the Great Fast
- Wed, Feb 25 5:00pm Confession
6:15pm 9th Hour
6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy
8pm Soup and fellowship
- Fri, Feb 27 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy with reading of *hramoty* (N)
- Sat, Feb 28 Second All Souls Saturday
3:30pm Confession
4:30pm Panichida with reading of *hramoty*
5pm Vigil Divine Liturgy (+ Robert Rosman, given by Ron and Donna Chollock)
- Sun, Mar 1 Second Sunday of the Great Fast – Commemoration of St. Gregory Palamas
9am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Coffee Social Bakers for March 1: Shannon Shaffer



Sawyer Johnson (February 23)
Kelli Johnson (February 26)
Carla Baccelli (February 27)

Cheryl Duttry (February 28)
Audrey Kennis (February 28)
Sean Petrick, Jr. (February 28)

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>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✠ Dates to Remember

- 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.
- Wednesday, February 25: Presanctified Liturgy for the Second Wednesday of the Great Fast. Join us for soup and fellowship afterwards.

✠ Confession Times during the Great Fast

Confession will be available throughout the Great Fast from 5:00-6:00pm on Wednesdays and 3:30-4:30pm on Saturdays, or by request. Additional opportunities will be available when we get closer to Holy Week.

✠ Coffee Socials During the Great Fast

Since the Fast is an effort undertaken by the Church as a whole, and not relegated to a small body of individual believers who take an interest, it would behoove us as a community to implement at least a moderate fast for all official parish functions. Therefore, for the Sundays of February 22-March 29, we would like to ask our coffee social bakers to refrain from using any meat or meat products in whatever they provide for the social. Our Sunday social is an important act of community gathering and we are very grateful to all who sign up to provide for it!

✠ Presanctified Soup Suppers

Please 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.

✠ 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 *proskimedia* 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. 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
 - 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 TEEN 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

On Liturgical Posture

Posture is often a source of confusion in our parishes, both to long-time attendees and visitors alike. Questions of when one should sit, stand, kneel, or do any other physical actions are constantly on the minds of the people. After all, there are pews, so we are meant to sit at some point, right? Add to that the confusion between the clearer instructions given in the past to the much vaguer instructions in our current liturgical books, if any instructions exist at all. With the revision of our Divine Liturgy text in 2006 (the teal book), our bishops have been slowly moving us towards seeing *standing* as the default posture throughout all our worship, in all of our services. Yet, instruction has been lacking in many regards as to *why* that is. Let us try to answer some of those questions.

On the first Wednesday of the Great Fast in the Presanctified Liturgy, we read the story of the creation of man. Man is made in God's *image*, according to his *likeness* (Genesis 1:26). The Fathers of the Church take this to be the single most important statement about what we are as men and women. Central to being made in the image and likeness of God is the notion that we are not merely spiritual: one is not simply his soul, his spirit, or what's going on in his head. Rather, man is *both* material and spiritual; he is body, soul, and spirit together, never one without the others. Consequently, when we pray, we do not pray only with our minds, our lips, or our hearts; we pray with our *entire being*, which includes bodily prayer. We make the sign of the cross; we kiss icons; we sing; we bow when receiving a blessing; we kneel at times, we prostrate at times, and we stand when we worship. All of these are *bodily* actions which are not meant to stand alone in themselves, but are meant to unite what we are doing in our bodies with what is going on in our minds and hearts so that we may glorify God with our whole being. Therefore, we should not think it a meaningless practice that Eastern Christians traditionally stand throughout the divine services, but we instead should search for the meaning of this practice.

The Council of Nicaea, a gathering of bishops in 325 AD which handed us the Nicene Creed, seeing that some knelt in Church on Sunday and during the season of

Pentecost, declared in its final canon (or *rule*) that “one should offer one’s prayers to the Lord standing” (Canon 20). The custom of standing in worship was universal throughout the Catholic Church in both East and West until the introduction of the pew as a permanent fixture in the main body of the church during the Protestant Reformation (16th century). All that is to say, *sitting* through a great part of Christian worship is a quite a new practice in the history of the Church. Rather, standing has been the default throughout much of Christian history.

The meaning of standing is not lost on us as Americans. To this day, we reserve standing for certain occasions and persons out of *respect*. For example, we stand to say the pledge of allegiance; we stand to offer applause at the end of a musical performance; we stand in the presence of important persons, like a king or queen or the president; in traditional dining etiquette, we remain standing before the dinner table until the host has seated himself. It would seem to logically follow, then, that we ought to offer an even greater respect to the Almighty God, the King of the universe and Our Lord and Savior, by standing continually in his presence.

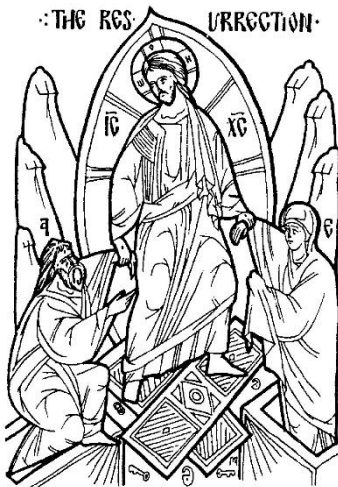
A second meaning of standing is the idea of *standing at attention*. Military men understand this very well: until one is given the command to be “at ease” by his superior, he is to stand attentive, acknowledging the presence of his superior with a salute. The saints see the natural connection between attentiveness and prayer: St. Isaac the Syrian sees reverent postures as crucial to prayer, as posture tells us much about our own mental or spiritual state and attitude towards prayer. In the words of one priest, “St. Isaac advises us to stand, to raise one’s arms, or to even lie prostrate on the ground in order to prepare the body for prayer.” Another saint, Theophan the Recluse, has similar advice: first, focus your thoughts through standing in silence, or walking, or sitting; “stand up in your heart,” and from there, stand piously before God, before your icons, and pray (Homilies on Prayer). “Stand with attention and feeling” while praying, when some particular word or phrase strikes the heart. We stand to pray because standing keeps us at attention before our “superior,” the Almighty God, rather than allowing our minds and bodies to be “at ease.”

A third reason for standing is theological: we stand because we profess that Christ rose from the dead. Christ first died; he fell asleep, and was lain in the tomb. We see the icon of this every Holy Friday and Saturday, on the *burial shroud* of Our Lord. Yet, the final

act of the Paschal Mystery is the resurrection from the dead: hence, we always portray Christ as victorious, rising out of the grave. Likewise, we “rise” in respect, attentiveness, and in joy of the mystery of Our Lord’s Resurrection.

The emphasis on expressing the Paschal Mystery through our bodily worship is the best way to understand why our prayer books (privately) and Lenten services (publicly) prescribe prostrations. They may feel very odd to us Americans, who are used to seeing such religious postures only in Islam. The prostration, however, is an ancient tool for prayer, predating even Islam itself. *It is a miniature of the Christian life*: first we fall to the floor, representative of our falls into sin and even despair at our condition. Immediately after we fall to the floor, we get back up again, as if Christ himself were pulling us out of the darkness of sin and error. We

see this image in the icon of the Resurrection of Christ: Our Lord pulling Adam and Even out of their graves up to him, the true giver of life. We fall down, Christ gets us back up again. We die and lie in the tomb and rise from the dead. We need not, then, feel fearful or silly about making prostrations. After all, we’re all doing them together! Rather, we ought to focus on how we are praying the Paschal Mystery with our bodies.



From left to right: a bow, a profound bow, and a prostration

Practically, we ought to touch on some ways that we can live out what we have discussed. We ought first to consider standing our default liturgical posture, rather than sitting. All are welcome to stand at any point of our services. When in doubt, stand. If you feel too tired or your feet hurt, sit down, rest, and stand up later. If you wish to stand throughout a service but fear it may be a distraction to those who wish to sit for more of the service, please be courteous

and take a spot off the side of otherwise out of the way of those behind you, as much as possible.

Regarding prostrations, do not be ashamed to give them a go, even if you didn't grow up with it. Your priest didn't grow up with it, either! Prostrations may be used in private prayer at home and during our Lenten services. Admittedly, there's not always much room to prostrate because of pews or other furnishings. If that is the case, try to replicate the theology of the prostration in other ways: kneel and bow your head during the prayer of St. Ephrem; make low (or "profound") bows, touching the floor, if you can't physically make a prostration. Most of all, as with all other aspects of our worship, prostrations must be experienced repeatedly to be understood.

In all of this, we wish to emphasize that as human beings, we are made in the *image* and *likeness* of God. We are, as Scripture puts it, in the image of Christ, who became man. Our body, just like all of creation, is not evil, rather, the book of Genesis constantly affirms its goodness. Prayer with our bodies is not a meaningless gesture, but rather a full expression of this goodness, teaching us to worship with our entire being, to be wholly present before our God and creator.

This reflection was given as a homily during the Presanctified Liturgy of the First Week of the Great Fast. Stay tuned for future reflections on other practical Lenten topics.

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.