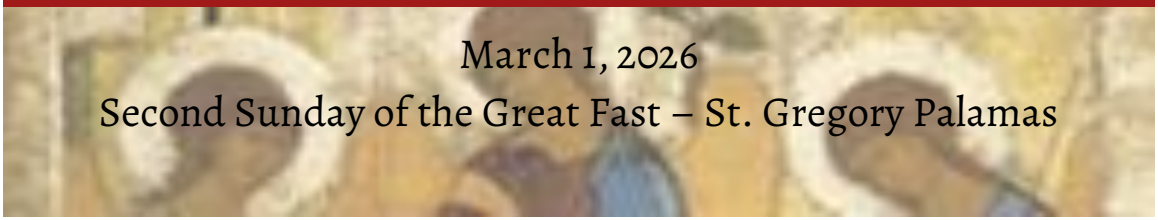
Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Church



March 1, 2026

Second Sunday of the Great Fast – St. Gregory Palamas

Contact Us
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Dcn. Luke Crawford

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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

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*Keeping a spiritual fast, O brethren, * let us not speak lies with our tongue, * nor give our brother cause for scandal; * but through repentance let us make the lamp of our soul burn brightly, * and let us with tears cry to Christ: ** Forgive us our trespasses, since you love mankind*

Sticheron from Presanctified on the 2nd Wednesday of Lent

Week at a Glance

Our return to God for His abundant gifts (2/22): $1,799
Online giving: https://holytrinitysykesville.org/onlinegiving

	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
Wed, Mar 4	5pm Confession
	6:15pm 9th Hour
	6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy
	8pm Soup and fellowship
Fri, Mar 6	9am Presanctified Liturgy with panichida (N)
Sat, Mar 7	Third All Souls' Saturday
	3:30pm Confession
	4:30pm Panichida
	5pm Vigil Divine Liturgy (+ Robert Rosman, given by the Rensel Family)
Sun, Mar 8	Third Sunday of the Great Fast – Veneration of the Cross
	9am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Coffee Social Bakers for March 8: Mary Petrick, Michele Yamrick

Larry McAninch (March 4)
Matthew Ketcham (March 7)

Cantors' Corner

Saturday	Sunday
	3/1 Second Sunday of Lent Cantor: Zeb B. Lector: Joseph C. (epistle is for the Second Sunday; likewise with subsequent readings) Propers: Tone 5 (146), GF2 [-> Second Great Fast Sunday] (222); Cherubikon in "D"
3/7 Third All Souls' Saturday 4:30pm Panichida 5pm Vigil Divine Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Propers in paper supplement; closing hymn, "Now you may dismiss" (452)	3/8 Third Sunday of Lent Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Corey M. Propers: Tone 6 (152), GF3 (223); Cherubikon in "B"
3/14 Lenten Retreat 9am Parastas Cantor: Natalia T. 5pm Great Vespers Cantor: Zeb B.	3/15 Fourth Sunday of Lent Cantor: Hannah K., Natalia T. Lector: Mike K. Propers: Tone 7 (156), GF4 (226); Cherubikon in "A"
3/21 5pm Vigil Divine liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Propers in paper supplement; closing hymn, "Now you may dismiss" (452)	3/22 Fifth Sunday of the Lent Cantor: Zeb B. Lector: Joseph C. Propers: Tone 8 (161), GF5 (230); Cherubikon in "D"
3/28 Lazarus Saturday 9am Baptismal Divine Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Corey M. 5pm Festal Vigil Cantor(s): Natalia T., Zeb B. Lector: Joseph C.	3/29 Palm Sunday Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Corey M. Propers: for the feast (235); blessing of palms to precede the Divine Liturgy

Lenten Services

3/4 Third Wednesday of Lent 6:15pm 9th Hour 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Corey M.	3/9 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste 6:15pm 9th Hour 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy Cantor: Zeb B. Lector: Joseph C.
3/11 Fourth Wednesday of Lent 6:15pm 9th Hour 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy Cantor: Victor K. Lector: Mike K.	3/18 Fifth Wednesday of Lent 7pm Matins with Great Canon of St. Andrew Cantor: Natalia T. Lectors: Ryan C., Joseph C., Corey M.
3/25 Annunciation of the Theotokos 6:15pm 9th Hour 6:30pm Vespers with Divine Liturgy Cantor: Zeb B. Lector: Joseph C. (Note: Genesis and Proverbs for the 6th Wednesday of the Great Fast will be taken; only one reading, for the evening of March 25, Exodus, will be taken)	

Announcements

✠ Dates to Remember

- Monday, March 9: Feast of the 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste. Presanctified Liturgy will be served for the feast.
- Saturday, March 14: Lenten retreat with Dr. Alexander Harb. Don't forget to RSVP!
- Wednesday, March 25: Great Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos.

✠ Presanctified Liturgy at Nativity

Please note that for the remainder of the Great Fast, the Presanctified Liturgy will be held on Friday mornings at 9am.

✠ 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 March 7. The names of the departed will be remembered aloud in a *panichida* before the Saturday evening service and during the *proskemedia* 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=PLhMUIK0hjH84WPLgf3eWj1stcEvZr7d26&si=CLkimL6T0HBx-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

ByzanTEEN
AGES 13 THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL
RALLY
EARLY BIRD (BEFORE APRIL 1) & SIBLING DISCOUNT $350
"TAKE COURAGE!
I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."
JOHN 16:33
Registration is OPEN now!
Deadline to register is Friday, May 15, 2026
JULY 9-12 2026
FULL PRICE $380 AFTER APRIL 1
CLEVELAND OHIO
JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY
More info & registration Scan QR code

Lenten Reflections

Our Fast Revolves Around the Eucharist

No one can deny that the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts has a peculiar beauty. The bright, yet somber music, the prostrations, the lighting, and hymns create an atmosphere for worship that is loved by many. The question may still arise, though: what exactly is the purpose of the Presanctified Liturgy? Why do we serve it only during the Great Fast? Why do we receive the eucharist in the evening, when the usual time for receiving the eucharist is Sunday morning?

The answer may be found in a few places, all of which pertain to the very nature of the Great Fast itself. As Kallistos Ware describes in his introduction to the *Lenten Triodion* (the service book of the Great Fast), the self-denial of the fast is meant to "make us conscious of our dependance upon God" (p. 16). It is difficult and nearly impossible to follow the full rule of abstinence from material goods and the pleasures of the world without God's help. Couple this with the traditional, Eastern Christian rule of fasting from midnight before receiving the Eucharist, and we begin to see how the Presanctified Liturgy came about: after an entire day of going hungry, we are sustained spiritually by the Lord himself in the Eucharist, so that by his help we may persevere in the rigor of the Great Fast. The Presanctified Liturgy, then, which is prescribed for sundown—although it is common to celebrate in the morning or later in the evening, depending on availability—is like the periodic water stations that are placed along the route of a marathon for the runners. While in the midst of the difficult race, friendly and well-meaning bystanders sustain and nourish the athletes with water and sustenance so that they may be momentarily refreshed and continue on. So it is with the Eucharist in the Presanctified Liturgy.

Another question may arise: why does the Church fast before receiving the Eucharist, and why even more so for the Presanctified Liturgy? In the early days of the Church, the Divine Liturgy was always celebrated before an evening meal, but this led to issues of which St. Paul writes: "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and

another drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you?" (1 Corinthians 11:20-22) Later, he explains that those who partake of the eucharist unworthily will be "guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord." (1 Cor 11:27) Rather, the Christian ought to discern the Body and Blood of the Lord as Paul says, to know, understand, and prioritize the Eucharist as the far more important meal, above his own.

How to Understand the Eucharistic Fast

By way of analogy, we can see in three different circumstances how we already observe "fasting" in secular life: in childhood, friendship, and at weddings. First, regarding childhood: parents often forbid or regulate their children's snacking so as not to "spoil their appetite" for dinner. On the one hand, the snack may be less healthy than the dinner, but on the other hand, the parents are trying to instill a sense of *priorities* in their children. Breaking bread together at family mealtimes is clearly of a higher priority to build healthy family life and responsible individuals.

Second, in adulthood, we have a similar experience. Imagine a friend inviting you over for dinner at 7:30. You gratefully accept, though you know that you will be a bit hungry, as you typically eat dinner at 5:00. No one in their right mind would eat dinner before they arrive as a dinner guest, for to do so would not only be rude but would also offend or at least sadden the host, who spent hours or even days preparing the meal. Why is that? The issue at hand is not one simply one of social expectations, but deeper: it affects our *relationship* with our friend and host, and therefore, it is also a matter of *love*.

Third, to borrow a common image from Scripture, there is the example of the wedding. Imagine at your own wedding that your irresponsible brother, the best man, who has been given many duties to fulfil throughout the day, arrives to the church for the wedding so drunk that he cannot fulfil any of his duties. Naturally, you would be furious, and probably somewhat resentful at your family for making you appoint him as best man. What is going on here? The nature of the wedding, as with other celebrations, is that there is always *something being celebrated*. Emphasizing this point, for example, is that in our culture, a wedding is typically *followed*, not *preceded*, by the reception. There is

something deeper going on here: a celebration only becomes meaningful when it celebrates the reality of something which has taken place, i.e., the union of husband and wife. Without the actual union, celebration loses its meaning and instead becomes carousing, which St. Paul condemns in his letter to the Galatians as a work of the flesh (Gal 5:21). Once we truly possess the reason to celebrate, however, the celebration itself becomes meaningful.

In the Byzantine Rite, the celebration of the Eucharist is always considered a celebration, with Christians waiting until they have received their *first priority* of Our Lord in the Eucharist, until they take their first meal of the day. In fact, the Divine Liturgy is of such a festal character that it is forbidden to be served on the somber weekdays of the Great Fast. Rather, the Presanctified Liturgy, which consists of the distribution of communion affixed to the daily evening service of vespers, is served on weekdays to sustain us spiritually. In all cases of reception of the Eucharist, we express *our love and respect* for Christ, who died for us and gives us his Body and Blood to nourish and enliven us, prioritizing his Mystical Supper over our own meals. The celebration of the eucharist is equated in many places throughout Scripture as a wedding banquet (e.g., Revelation 19:9). The mystery of the Eucharist is the very mystery of Our Lord uniting him to us as a loving spouse, giving us his very life. Therefore, once we receive the Eucharist, it is time for *celebration*. For this reason, we no longer make prostrations—a penitential gesture—after receiving the Eucharist in the Presanctified Liturgy.

Practical Implications of the Eucharistic Fast

The approach to the eucharistic fast has natural consequences on our pious observances. It is the reason, first and foremost, that the Sunday social follows the Divine Liturgy and that we gather for soup and fellowship after, not before the Presanctified Liturgy. It would not really be appropriate, as St. Paul noticed in his own day, to arrive at the Mystical Supper "with our own meal," that is, with our bellies already full. As Kallistos Ware points out in another place in the introduction to the *Triodion*, a *real fast* always unites physical with spiritual observance. Therefore, we ought to seek a

balance between our spiritual preparation and readiness to receive Our Lord with our physical observance, the fast.

Borrowing from the Roman Church, the Byzantine Catholic Church requires as a *minimum* that we abstain from food and drink (excluding water and medicine) for at least an hour before receiving the Eucharist. Everyone knows, though, that since our services rarely last under an hour, one could practically be eating and drinking to his heart's delight before they walk in the doors of the church for the liturgy! The minimum, then, ought not to be recommended for the majority. The maximum eucharistic fast, on the other hand, is to fast from midnight until one receives the Eucharist and to pray the rule of preparation for the Eucharist. Barring health conditions, this is highly doable for a morning Divine Liturgy, and is strongly recommended. For Presanctified, especially one which begins late in the evening, fasting from midnight can mean not taking our first meal until 8-9pm, which is difficult for most. Rather, a moderate approach may be followed: follow instead a 6-hour fast for the Presanctified—practically, this means eating a light breakfast and lunch at the normal times, but staying hungry for Presanctified—and add some of the prayers of preparation for communion to prepare yourself spiritually (see either the beginning of the teal book, or the small tan booklets on the icon shelf in the social hall). Bear in mind that the *point of the Presanctified Liturgy* is to learn to recognize, in our hunger, our great dependance on God. If we arrive already full, checked out, or otherwise not mentally present, we will miss out on that aspect of the Great Fast. By implementing a stricter eucharistic fast in our lives, we will unite our spiritual observance with our bodily observance, thus making our entire experience of worship an experience of the *whole person*.

This reflection was given as a homily at the Presanctified Liturgy in the Second Week of Lent. Stay tuned for more reflections!

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.