SAINT OF THE DAY:
ST. MATRONA OF THESSALONICA

St. Matrona was an orphan who became the slave of a Jewish woman in Thessalonica, Greece. She lived quietly and secretly as a Christian. Her owner found out she was going secretly to Christian liturgies and was upset as she had wanted her to adopt the Jewish faith. She demanded an explanation from Matrona who said, "God lives in the Christian Church but He has departed from the synagogue of the Jews." This enraged the owner and she beat Matrona to death. Her martyrdom took place on March 27 around 300 A.D.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BRINGING KIDS TO CHURCH:

Matthew 16:24 "If anyone desires to come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

"The word "cross" means sufferings, sorrows, and adversities. To 'take up one's cross' means to accept without complaint everything unpleasant, painful, sad, difficult, and oppressive that may happen to us in life." –St. Innocent of Alaska

To a young child, attending liturgy may feel like a cross they have to bear. To them the service is long and boring. Talk with your child about ways they can engage themselves in prayer and in the liturgy to help it not be so boring.

ST. MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

10383 Albion Rd, North Royalton, OH

March 27, 2022

Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH
Archbishop of New York and Antiochian Metropolitan of all North America

His Grace Bishop ANTHONY
Auxiliary Bishop of the Antiochian Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest

V. Rev. Father Andrew Harmon
Rev. Deacon Macarius Tolbert • Rev. Deacon Basil Vazquez
Sub-Deacon Fred N. Bourjaily • Sub-Deacon Mark Katzbach
Sub-Deacon Richard Sahley • Sub-Deacon George Simon
Reader Anthony Harmon

Phone: Fr. Andrew (h) (440) 826-0662; (c) (440) 539-1116
Email: fatherharmon@outlook.com
Website: stmattroyalton.org
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 33183, North Royalton, OH 44133-3183

Saturday Vespers 5:00 PM
Saturday Confessions 5:30 PM
Sunday Confessions 9:45 AM

Sunday Matins 8:50 AM
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM
Sunday School 11:15 AM

WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS! We are glad to have you praying with us. ***The reception of the Sacrament of Holy Communion*** is limited to members of the Orthodox Church who are in good sacramental standing & have made proper preparation to receive. All are welcome to receive the blessed antidoron bread at the end of the service.

We use the Liturgy of St. Basil during Lent---Some of the prayers from sermon time on are different than usual. The changes are noted in the liturgy book. See elsewhere in bulletin for hymn changes.

THE HOLY BREAD OF OBLATION is offered by the Scanlon family in thanksgiving to God on the anniversary of their entrance into the Orthodox Faith; and is offered by Deacon Basil & Joanne in thanksgiving to God on their 42nd wedding anniversary; and is offered by the Blazek family for the health & salvation of Paul on his 20th birthday; and is offered by Anthony & Judy Yanik in beloved memory of their son, Michael.

During today's liturgy we will pray for the health & safety of:

Josephine Katzbach
Justin Mosier
Tony Burhen
Lucy Kinkaid
Marc Balke
Christopher Samuel
Peter George
Pauline Hanna
Frank Popovich
Issa Zaboura
Argie Katsaros
Archdeacon Joseph Harb
Joseph Watson
Jean Caldaroni
Paraschiva Blaz
Phyllis Simmons
Nancy Yanik
Dolores Kaleal
William
Ron & Donna Teaman
Jerry Morriston
Marianna Russyn
Iliana Radivoj
Lena Batina
Danielle
Nolan Bunch
Ruth Zheltov
James Padzerski
Jan Kattouf
Photia Boukis
Ron Hakaim
Camille Patrick
James Schwind
Ben
Robert Homyak
Michael Vovos
Jason Malaniak
Becca Aboumrad & newborn son

And for the newly departed servants of God: Barbara Ensley (Fr. Andrew's cousin), Rebekah McKlintok, Cindy Retzler, William Campbell, Jay Burns (Cindy George's uncle), Janice Bilski (Gail Malaniak's cousin)

EPISTLE LESSON: Hebrews 4:14-5:6
WOMEN'S MONTH EPISTLE READER: Alice Marantides
GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 8:34-9:1 **HOMILY**:"What Is God Like?"
WOMEN'S MONTH USHERS: Marianne Feuerstein & Rudylin Glaser
MARCH IS WOMEN'S MONTH IN THE ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE. Our women are serving this month by reading the epistle lesson and ushering.
---**THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY CROSS** FOR VENERATION OF THE CROSS SUNDAY WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE END OF THE LITURGY.
---**THE THREE YEAR MEMORIAL PRAYERS** are being offered today by Anthony & Judy Yanik in memory of their son, the departed servant of God, Michael.
SUNDAY SCHOOL & TEEN GROUP MEETING AFTER LITURGY TODAY.
PLEASE STAY FOR COFFEETIME IN THE HALL RIGHT AFTER LITURGY
It is being hosted by the Sisterhood. There will be a free will donation plate—the proceeds will go to the Sisterhood's contribution to the archdiocese's 2022 Women's Project to assist with future expansion at the Antiochian Village.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST IN TONE THREE *(p. 16)*

With zeal you followed Christ the Master, Who in His goodness appeared to men on earth. He called you from the custom house, revealing you to be a chosen apostle, a trumpet proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world! Therefore, divinely eloquent Matthew, we honor your precious memory. Entreat the merciful God, that He may grant us remission of our sins.

KONTAKION OF THE AKATHIST/ANNUNCIATION IN TONE EIGHT *(p. 80)*

Verily I, thy servant, O Theotokos, inscribe unto thee the banners of conquest, O Defending Soldier; I offer thanks to thee as a deliverer from tribulation. And since thine is the might unconquerable, deliver me, O deliver me from oppression, that I may sing unto thee: Rejoice, O Bride without bridegroom.

THE ANTI-TRISAGION HYMN FOR THE CROSS *(p. 82)*

Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, O Lord, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify. (THRICE)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

And Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify.

Dhynamis!

Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, O Lord, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify.

THE EPISTLE (For the Third Sunday of Great Lent)

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.
Unto Thee, O Lord, will I cry, O my God!

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (4:14-5:6)

Brethren, since we have a great High Priest, Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities, but one Who has been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest, being taken from among the people, is appointed on behalf of the people in things pertaining to God, that he may offer up both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant and on those who are erring, since he himself also is encompassed with infirmity. Because of this he is bound, as for the people so also for himself, to offer up for sins. And no one takes the honor upon himself, but as being called by God, as was Aaron. So Christ also did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest, but it was by the One saying to Him, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee." As He says also in another place, "Thou art a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

Adopt a Box Pascha Donation April 17th

Instructions

Just like we did at Christmas. Instead of the old way we are trying this way as a way of being more organized and allowing for more people to get involved, while also possibly having some uniformity and quality. Take the shopping list with you, fill your box and bring back to the church on April 15, 16, or 17th. Please no sooner than the 15th and no later than the 17th. Boxes will be passed out and delivered to homes on Palm Sunday. No food pantry donations besides the filled Pascha baskets you create at your home, and bring to church completed.

All items must be unopened and unexpired. Nothing can be homemade. Everything must be in its original packaging. Soaps and anything scented must be in original plastic packaging. Anything with a scent will scent and flavor the food around it, so it is very important these things be packaged correctly in original wrappers. Same goes for all personal items such as toothbrushes etc. Have fun packing and thank you! It is a great help!

Fill each box to be donated with the following items:

1 bag (5lbs+) of flour
1 bag (4lbs+) of white granulated sugar
1 container of table salt
1 box or bag of white rice (1lb+)
1 box (16oz+) pasta
1 bag dry beans
1 jar pasta sauce
1 pack of toilet paper (4+rolls)
1 bottle of dish soap (16+ oz)
1-4 bars of soap
1 container of laundry detergent (30+loads, "free & clear" preferred)
1 bag of Easter candy such as chocolate eggs or bunnies
Pascha greeting card

Please put all items in 1 box, able to be carried from a car to a front door by 1 person. We do 1 box per household.

Optional additions (on the next page)

If you are able and want to include more in the box to be donated you can add these items to the above items as well, or other things not listed you feel can be helpful to someone in need. Canned goods, Mac n Cheese, toothbrushes, toothpaste, band aids, and deodorant are some suggestions.

Contact Rebecca to let her know you are filling a box no later than April 10th. If something comes up or you need help or have questions don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you! Contact through email or text saying how many boxes you will be donating. We usually need around 15-19 filled boxes.

440-539-0083 (text or call) or rebecca.kubicek@mailfence.com Thank you SO much for your kindness!

Divine Liturgy Variables on Sunday, March 27, 2022
Third Sunday of Great Lent; Tone 7 / Eothinon 7
Veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

Martyr Matrona of Thessalonica; Martyrs Philetos the senator, his wife Lydia of Rome and those with them; Paul, bishop of Corinth

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

VERSES OF THE FIRST ANTIPHON

The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, has been signed upon us. Thou hast given to those that fear thee a sign, to flee from the bow.

Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast given an inheritance to those that fear Thy Name, O Lord.

Glory... Both now...

VERSES OF THE SECOND ANTIPHON ***(Normal Sunday Refrain)***

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Let us worship at the place where His feet have stood.

God is our King before the ages; He has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.

Glory... Both now... O only begotten Son and Word of God…

VERSES OF THE THIRD ANTIPHON

Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool. O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Feed them, and lift them up forever. *(now sing the Apolytikion of the Cross)*

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE SEVEN ***(p. 15)***

Thou didst shatter death by Thy Cross, Thou didst open paradise to the thief; Thou didst turn the sadness of the ointment-bearing women into joy. And didst bid Thine Apostles proclaim a warning, that Thou hast risen O Christ, granting to the world the Great Mercy.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE HOLY CROSS IN TONE ONE

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; and to Thy faithful rulers grant victory over the barbarians. And by the power of Thy Cross, protect all those who follow Thee.

HOLY BREAD OBLATIONS SIGN-UP for 2022 is in the hall to the right of the sink area. Please sign up for what Sundays you wish to offer an oblation.

DONATE BY TEXT- You can now donate to St. Matthew's via text message. It's secure, quick, and free to sign up and takes seconds to make a donation. Send a text message to 440-390-4330 to get started. Reach out to Al Blazek (440-799-2487 by text or phone) if you'd like help or further info.

VACUUMING VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET is on a little table in the narthex.
What volunteers do is, either after Sun liturgy or later Sun or Mon, is vacuum the church-----nave & narthex entry area. Also, they clean up any stray bulletins or other papers left behind. It is fine for two people to do it together (we have enough vacuum cleaners). They do not do any cleaning in the hall, kitchen, rooms, etc. Please consider signing up to do it one week.

SEEKING WORK---Catechumen Michael Palmer is seeking work. He has 15 years experience in customer service, most recently as a health screener at Cleveland Clinic. He is seeking a job of 20-25 hrs/week in Berea/Middleburg Heights area. If you know of anything, please call him----216-212-7436.

SAVE THE DATE! On Saturday, May 28 and Sunday, May 29 St. Matthew's will be holding the inaugural (God willing!) Traditional Orthodox Family Camp Out. ALL ARE WELCOME! Families, singles, old and young, new parishioners and founders and everyone in between. Come and go during the day, but for the full experience bring your tent and camp out for the night! The full agenda is forthcoming, but expect good old-fashioned camp fun – sack races, softball, egg tosses, water balloons and more – combined with Orthodox talks and services – that will end with a pizza meal after Divine Liturgy on Sunday. Enjoy our beautiful Church property while spending time together in Christ as a Church family. Cost? FREE! There will be a freewill offering, but only if you feel led by the Lord to give. Either way, we want YOU to be there!

TO AVOID MESSES…It is important that children not be in any of the rooms near the hall during coffeetime or parish meals without adult supervision. Thank you! ---Father Andrew

GOOD FRIDAY FAMILY DAY--- Bring your children to learn about Good Friday and Holy Week. Children's activities between the services, including candle decorating, singing, crafts, and more. From 9:00am-3:00pm. More details to follow.

RETREAT AT ST. MATTHEW'S

On May 7th our St Matthew chapter of OCLife is sponsoring "a day with Fr Stephen Freeman." Fr Stephen is an OCA archpriest and retired pastor of St. Anne Orthodox Church in Oak Ridge, TN. He is the author of *Everywhere Present: Christianity in a One-Storey Universe,* as well as the popular blog "Glory to God for All Things" and the weekly podcast "Glory to God" on Ancient Faith Radio.

If you would be willing to serve on the breakfast committee for this event, please contact Theresa Popovich at dnv3300@yahoo.com. If you would be willing to serve on the lunch committee, please contact Gloria Zabala at gzabala104@gmail.com.

More details to follow…

ADOPT AN EASTER LILY

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A LILY TO BEAUTIFY OUR CHURCH FOR THE PASCHA SEASON, PLEASE FILL OUT BELOW

Offered by:

_____

For the health & safety of:

_____

In beloved memory of:

_____

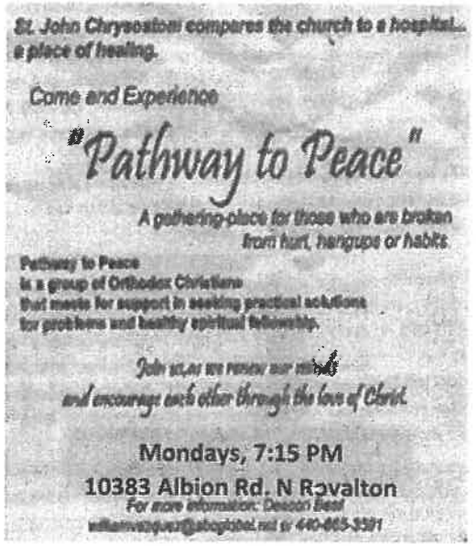
The donation amount is $15. Fill out the form and attach check or cash and mail it to the church or put in offering box or give to Subdeacon Richard Sahley, 216-513-9738/440-457-7089

UPCOMING SERVICES

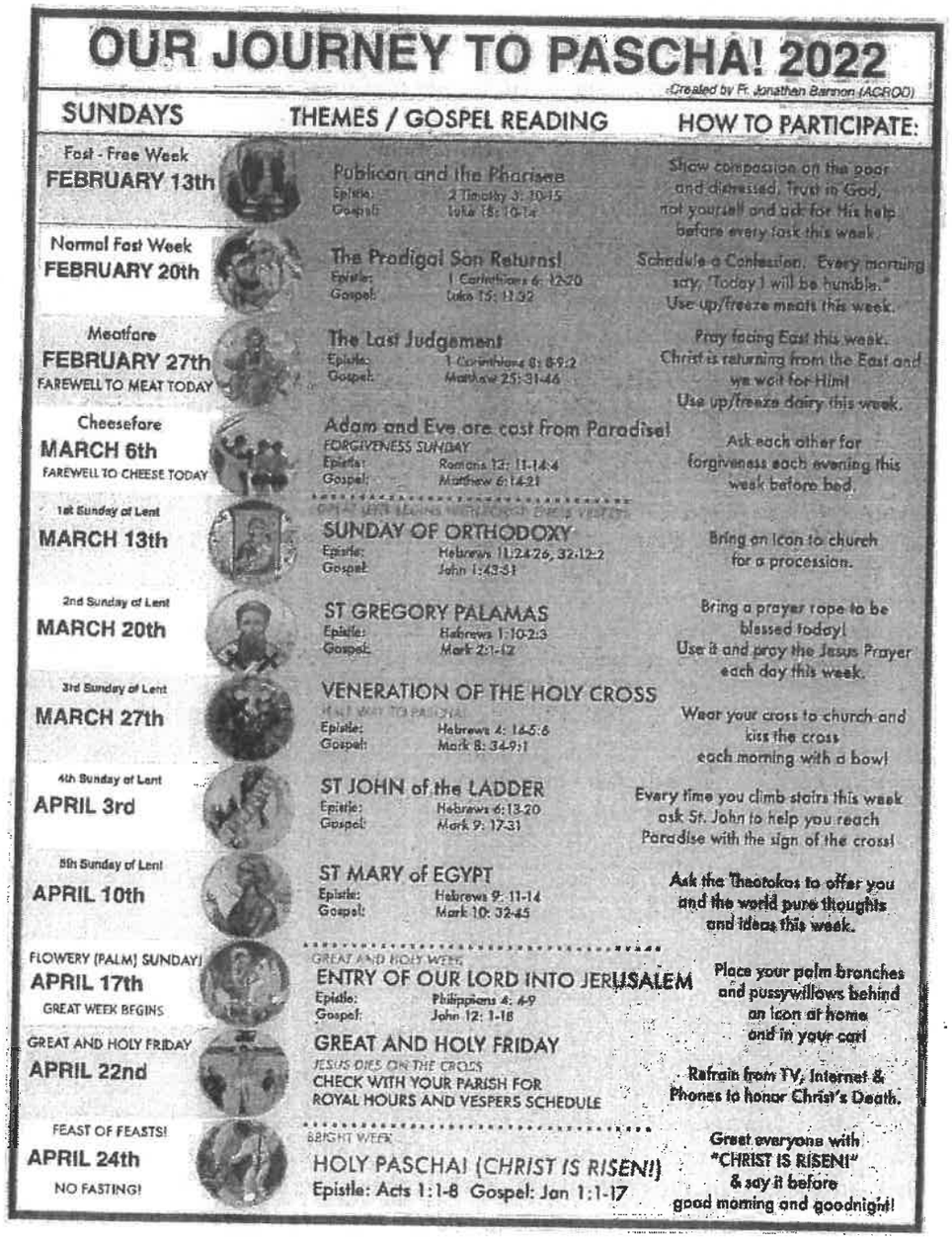
GREAT COMPLINE SERVICE---Monday, March 28, 6:30 p.m.
PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY—Wednesday, March 30, 6:30 p.m. Potluck meal right after…..
AKATHIST TO THE THEOTOKOS---Friday, April 1, 7 p.m. Preceded by potluck parish supper at 6 p.m. coordinated by the Teen Group. ***Akathist is followed by Saints Alive! meeting in the hall a 8 p.m. Catherine Morton will teach about St. Xenia.***
SAT, APRIL 2--- Vespers, 5pm
SUN, APRIL 3--- Matins 8:50am, and Divine Liturgy, 10am; The Holy Bread of Oblation will be offered by the Musarra family for Erin on her Name Day (St. Mary of Egypt) and birthday; and will be offered by the Amer family for Nadeema Gazal's birthday; and will be offered by Khourie Bonnie for Justin Mosier, Barbara Harmon, Yun Han, & Jess Payne on their birthdays.
SERVICE SCHEDULE FOR THE 5TH WEEK OF GREAT LENT:
MON, APRIL 4----Great Compline, 6:30pm
WED, APRIL 6---Little Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete and the reading of the life of St. Mary of Egypt, 6:30pm
THURS, APRIL 7---Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, 6:30pm Followed by Potluck meal.
FRI, APRIL 8---Akathist to the Theotokos, 7pm. Preceded by potluck meal at 6pm coordinated by Sunday School; Then "Saints Alive!" class in hall at 8pm. Agni Wagner will be teaching about St. Mamas.
SAT, APRIL 9- Vespers 5pm

MEETINGS

PATHWAYS TO PEACE—Meets on Mondays, 7:15 p.m., at church & by Zoom. "A gathering place for those who are broken from hurts, hangups, or habits. Join us as we renew our minds and encourage each other through the love of Christ." Call Dcn Basil, 440-665-3591, for zoom info. See flier in this bulletin.



SOUTH BIBLE STUDY--- Tues, Apr 5 at 6:30pm at Craig & Cindy George's, 9451 Sherwood Trl, Brecksville. Regularly meets the 1st & 3rd Tues of the month. The topic is the book of Ruth.
WEST BIBLE STUDY--- March meeting already held, April date to be announced. (Meets monthly at church after Vespers). We are studying the book, "The Wisdom of Sirach."
NORTH BIBLE STUDY--- Not meeting in March as host is not available. Studying the book of Isaiah.
WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP—April 15, 1pm. Meets monthly at Tara Reidy's, 274 Elmwood, Berea. For more info, call Sandy Tolbert, 440-773-9162.
HOMESCHOOL SUPPORT GROUP--- Friday, April 8, 9am
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL--- Sun, April 10 during coffeetime will be led by Craig George.



Join us for fellowship, friendship, and worship!

SAINT GEORGE
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Grand Rapids, Michigan
invites you to join us for the

2022 Parish Life Conference
June 15 to June 19, 2022

HOTEL NOW ACCEPTING RESERVATIONS!

https://group.embassysuites.com/jhuvwp

EMBASSY SUITES

$99—$129 room rates!

Includes Complimentary Daily Breakfast & Evening Reception

EVENT WEBISTE IS LIVE!

www.antiochianevents.org

Please visit to register your "AD" in our Souvenir Journal
In Celebration of Bishop Anthony's 10 Years or In Memory of Fr. John Winfrey

Find us on Socials!

#GRPLC2022 St.georgegr

MINISTRY NEWS

ST. HERMAN'S MINISTRY TEAM— OUR APRIL DATE TO PROVIDE, COOK, AND SERVE A MEAL TO THE POOR AT ST. HERMAN ORTHODOX HOMELESS SHELTER IS ***APRIL 17.*** If you can help with providing, cooking, or serving the meal, please contact Deacon Basil, 440-665-3591.
OUR PARISH'S MINISTRY OF DELIVERY OF FOOD, CLOTHING, ETC. TO THE HOMELESS ON THE STREETS OF CLEVELAND will occur on April 17. Alms box to help fund this is on counter right by main hall entry door. **We will be making the sandwiches here at St. Matthew's---details soon.**
ANOTHER MISSION TO HELP THE POOR is now scheduled for Sat, April 30----details soon.....
NEW MINISTRY BEGINNING AT ST. MATTHEW'S-St. Matthew Parish is now officially affiliated with OCLife, a "non-profit organization dedicated to equipping the Orthodox Christian community to strengthen its commitment to the sacredness of human life from conception to death, illuminating the Church's teaching on life issues through education and engagement." If you would like to get involved in this new ministry, please contact Lisa Palivoda at LDPAL1703@outlook.com or Cindy George at cindygeorge127@gmail.com.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLASS ON "PRAYER IN OUR LIVES" BEGINNING IN APRIL

Father Andrew Harmon, pastor of St. Matthew Orthodox Church in North Royalton, will be teaching a 6-session course about prayer, entitled "Prayer In Our Lives", this spring through the Baldwin-Wallace Institute For Learning in Retirement program. The 6 classes will be on Mondays, April 4-May 9, from 2:40-4 p.m. They will be held in either Berea or Middleburg Heights---the location will be definite by the time registration is under way.

There are no age requirements. A person has to join the ILR (annual membership fee of $20) in order to take a course, which costs an additional $15. Registration begins on March 14 by computer only at ilrbw.org One can join ILR and register for a class at the same time. The deadline is March 27. For any help on registering, go to ilrhelpdeskbwu@gmail.com

Here is ILR's description of the course----**PRAYER IN OUR LIVES—**

This class, taught by an Orthodox Christian priest, will look at different types of prayer and at the mystery of how prayer works. And why sometimes it does not seem to work….

Some of the types of prayer that will be looked at are: praying for others, praying for ourselves, having a disciplined time of daily prayer, praying through the day, and striving towards unceasing prayer (especially by use of the ancient Jesus Prayer). Class members (and their insights) from all religious traditions----or none at all----are welcome.

STILL FAR AWAY …. BUT LENT GOES FAST, SO: HOLY WEEK DONATIONS NEEDED
Needed: Lilies, carnations, palms, congregational candles, olive oil, eggs, large Paschal candles, etc. Contact Subdeacon Richard Sahley---216-513-9738/440-457-7089
HOME ALMS BOXES---now available in the breezeway
Giving to the poor is one of the main Lenten spiritual disciplines. Please take home an alms box. Fill it with money during the Lenten Fast as you should be saving some money from your grocery budget. Then bring it back to church at Pascha----the monies will be distributed by our archdiocese to the poor around the world.
COFFETIME HOSTS NEEDED---sign up in the hall by the bulletin board!

- *Then, the clergy sing the apolytikion of the Holy Cross once, followed by the choir twice.*

APOLYTIKION FOR THE HOLY CROSS IN TONE ONE

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; and to Thy faithful rulers grant victory over the barbarians. And by the power of Thy Cross, protect all those who follow Thee.

- *Then, the clergy sing "Before Thy Cross" once, followed by the choir twice.*

"BEFORE THY CROSS"

Before Thy Cross we bow down in worship, O Lord, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify.

- *Then, the clergy and altar servers return to the sanctuary as the chanters offer this hymn in Tone Two:*

Come, ye faithful, and let us venerate the life-giving Wood, on which Christ, the King of Glory, stretched out His hands of His own will. To the ancient blessedness He raised us up, whom the enemy despoiled of old through pleasure, making us exiles far from God. Come, ye faithful, and let us venerate the Wood whereby we have been counted worthy to crush the heads of our invisible enemies. Come, all ye kindred of the nations, and let us honor in hymns the Cross of the Lord. Rejoice, O Cross, perfect redemption of fallen Adam. Glorying in thee, our faithful kings laid low by thy might the people of Ishmael. We Christians kiss thee now with awe, and glorifying God who was nailed on thee, we cry aloud: O Lord, who on the Cross wast crucified, have mercy upon us, for Thou art good and lovest mankind.

Then the priest gives the dismissal, and distributes the flowers and basil leaves after the Divine Liturgy.

THE LENTEN FAST

Great Lent is a time to especially work on spiritual disciplines to help us grow in Christ. These disciplines include such things as extra worship services, beginning or strengthening the habit of daily prayer, Confession, more Bible reading, almsgiving, and fasting.

Fasting is a discipline meant to help us in several ways: learning self-denial, gaining self-control, helping us to focus more on God and less on food, allowing us to spend less money on food in order to give more to the poor, etc.

The Lenten fast involves both eating less and giving up certain types of food. Throughout Lent, we should eat less and avoid snacks, in addition to abstaining from some types of food.

Lent this year is from March 7 through April 15. During Lent, we give up meat and animal foods (such as eggs, dairy, and fish) and wine and olive oil. Shellfish are eaten. On Annunciation Day, March 25, wine, oil, and fish are consumed. And wine and olive oil are used on all Saturdays and Sundays in Lent. During Holy Week, April 16-23, the fast is the same as in Lent itself except that wine, olive oil, and fish are used on Palm Sunday. Also, Holy & Great Friday and Holy & Great Saturday, April 22&23, are to be observed as especially strict fast days, with as little eating and drinking as possible.

This same Lord Who became incarnate of the Virgin Mary on the Feast of the Annunciation loves every human being He creates, from the moment of their conception. He loves their mothers, along with the fathers, who suffer and sacrifice for their children. The Church, and, indeed, all of humanity, has a duty to care for and support these children and their mothers.

No less equally, the Lord also loves the mothers who, victims of deceitful pressures from this world, make the tragic choice to have their children killed. For these mothers, the Church offers forgiveness, compassion, and healing through repentance and reconciliation both to God and to their lost children.

The Lord loves those fathers and other men who, failing in their duty to provide and protect, instead pressure and even force mothers to have their children killed.

The Lord loves those physicians and other practitioners who, themselves victims of deceit, have allowed themselves to become instruments of evil in the murder of innocent children.

Finally, let us all implore the same Lord, Who desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, that His all-encompassing love and mercy will enfold all who are affected by the tragedy of abortion and bring healing to our land.

Metropolitan Joseph
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Bishop Longin
Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America

Metropolitan Nicolae
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

Metropolitan Joseph
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada, and Australia

Four presiding hierarchs currently participating in the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, including His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph of the Antiochian Archdiocese, are responding to controversial remarks made at January's "March for Life" in Washington, D.C. that received attention in traditional and social media.

Orthodox Pro-Life Statement

The Orthodox Church has consistently and unequivocally recognized the full humanity of every person beginning at the moment of conception. This position is informed by Scripture and Holy Tradition and is validated by modern science, which confirms that a new, distinct human organism comes into existence at conception. The Orthodox Church is, and always has been, unabashedly pro-life, regarding abortion as the killing of another human being.

In recent weeks, this position has been called into question, and, consequently, we, Orthodox Presiding Hierarchs representing several canonical jurisdictions in the United States of America, are compelled to proclaim the only true and correct teaching of the Church on this matter. We reiterate the words of the Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (the "Didache"), which dates to the earliest generations of the Church: "Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant" (οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ οὐδὲ γεννηθέντα ἀποκτενεῖς).

The Orthodox Church strives to stand above politics; yet, the Church also stands for order, against the forces of chaos and lawlessness. All civilized societies prohibit the intentional taking of the life of one human being by another human being, except under extreme and unusual circumstances. The United States of America is certainly no exception: in every state, intentional homicide is outlawed. Yet our laws are inconsistent, banning the killing of some humans but not others. There is no basis in either law or science, and certainly not in morality or religion, to draw a distinction between a human who is in the womb and a human who is outside of it. Thus, the Orthodox Church calls upon the civil authorities, not only in the United States but globally, and especially in traditionally Orthodox lands, to treat all humans equally under the law, and thus to forbid the evil practice of abortion.

It is true that the Most Holy Theotokos gave her consent to the Incarnation of the Uncreated Word of God. The Lord did not impose Himself on humanity, but took on our nature with the permission of us humans, represented by the greatest of us, the Virgin Mary. Once this consent was given, the Incarnation took place: the Word became flesh at that moment. The Orthodox Church embraces this paradox of the Incarnation, of the Uncreated becoming one of His creatures. Yet while paradoxes of this kind are essential to our faith, so too is clarity: the clarity that the newly-conceived human – including the Lord Himself at the moment of His conception – is a full human. Here, then, the consent of the Theotokos ends, and her duties as a mother begin: once she conceived the Lord, she had the sacred responsibility of nurturing and caring for Him, which she fulfilled perfectly.

As with all fasting, the Church's Lenten fasts allows for adjustments for children, pregnant mothers, nursing mothers, and those with health problems that require certain foods. Also, those who are new to fasting may need to begin with a less a strict fast and then gradually "tighten up" year by year. However, we should also remember that unless we fast strictly enough to make it hard, it will be of little value to us. One should always feel free to speak to one's spiritual father about how to personally observe, and make the best spiritual use, of the Lenten fast.

The Bible and the Saints are clear that fasting is not a way to earn salvation, but is a tool to help us grow. We must guard against pride when we fast and concentrate most on fasting from sin---gossip, pride, lust, etc.

The prescribed Lenten Fast is sometimes called "the black fast" to distinguish it from less strict fasting. How strictly each person follows the recommended fast is not any one else's business. We should only be concerned with our own fasting, not judging others for what they eat. ***A good rule of thumb: fast yourself as strictly as you can; and pay no attention to what anyone else eats. However, when we gather together during Lent as a church family, we should abide by the Church's Lenten fast----so we should keep any parish meals or coffeetimes during Lent "black fast".***

THE PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY

Canon law does not permit celebration of the liturgy on weekdays during Lent due to the solemnity of those days and the joyous nature of the liturgy. However, due to increased spiritual struggle in Lent, Holy Communion is needed! Therefore, our Orthodox Tradition allows the receiving of Communion from the reserved Host (from Sunday) on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, and occasional holy days. The most common Antiochian practice is to have it on Wednesday nights only due to our having the Akathist services on Fridays. This ornate and solemn service is one of the most beautiful of all. We will have it at 6:30 p.m. No Pre-Sanctified service on March 24 because that night there will be Vespers leading up to Annunciation Liturgy the next morning. In order to receive Holy Communion, the minimal preparation is to fast after a light lunch if one is not able to fast from after breakfast or for the entire day.

THE AKATHIST SERVICE FOR THE HOLY THEOTOKOS

The Little Compline with the Akathist Hymn, commonly simply called "Akathist Service", was written in Constantinople in the 600's A.D. At that time the city was besieged by the non-Christian Avar barbarians. The people put their hope in the Protectress of the city, the Holy Theotokos. Through her prayers to God, the city was saved. This hymn of thanks to God and the Virgin was written and the people gathered to sing it. In joy, they stood for the whole service----thus, the name "Akathist", Greek for "not sitting." Antiochian practice is to have this beautiful service on the first five Friday nights of Lent. We will have it at 7pm with a black-fast potluck meal before hand at 6pm.

LENTEN CONFESSIONS

All Orthodox Christians should go to the sacrament of Confessoin during Lent or Holy Week. Confessions at St. Matthew's will be held at 5:45 p.m. most Saturdays (after 5 p.m. Vespers), during Sunday matins before the liturgy, or before or after the many other services. And it is possible to make an appointment for confession at other times. If you have questions about the sacrament, please feel free to contact Father Andrew .....

A PRAYER FOR THE SANCTITY OF UNBORN LIFE

O our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who in the beginning fashioned man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life so that he became a living soul, Who knowest the time of life and name of each even from his mother's womb, Who numberest even the hairs of our heads, and Who keepest a watchful eye over every living thing in Thy creation, do Thou now look upon Thy creation which Thou hast fashioned according to Thine own image, and grant to those who are in their mother's wombs and to their mothers the protection that Thou gavest Thine own Virgin Mother when she carried Thee, and fill them with the Holy Spirit even as Thou once filled Elizabeth such that John the Forerunner leaped in her womb at encountering Thee.

As Thou becamest incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became true man, hidden within the veil of Thy Mother's flesh, joining Thy divinity with our humanity, join Thyself now with us and all Thy human creation through Thy grace. As Thou didst enter into the womb of Thy Mother, be present also in the wombs of all mothers, with them and with their children. Protect them from all assaults of the evil one and his foul spirits, that in due time all may come unto Thee, as Thou didst say, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

O Thou Who at Thy birth heard the weeping of Rachel in lamentation, who would not be comforted for her children were no more, crying out at the slaughter of the innocents by the wicked Herod for Thy sake, hear also the weeping of all those who lament the deaths of Thy little children, who cry out for Thy love and peace in the midst of terror and inhumanity.

As Thou once granted true contrition of heart to David and to Manasseh and to Peter, who sinned against Thee, grant true repentance to all who in malice or greed or desperation or hopelessness or ignorance sin against Thee and Thy creatures in the untimely taking of their lives. Receive their tears as the tears of the Publican, which flow from the depths of their hearts, as Thou didst receive David, who had taken life unjustly, and Manasseh, who had permitted the worship of idols, and Peter, who thrice denied Thee. Receive them as the Prodigal, with eagerness and rejoicing, clothing them with the robe of holiness and glory and celebrating with them the feast of faith.

Speak words of justice into the hearts of our rulers, that they may be guided by divine wisdom in protecting and nurturing life in every good way. Give strength and love to those who minister to all who suffer in desperation and need, granting through them every spiritual and earthly blessing. Protect the widows and orphans and the abandoned, be Father to the fatherless and hope to the hopeless, raise the young, protect the bond of marriage in peace and concord. Remember the forgotten and bring them to mind in all of us who pray unto Thee. Grant eternal rest to the fallen, and raise them up at the last day.

O Christ our God, Who knowest us all in our depths and receivest the supplications of Thy servants who call out to Thee in our own transgressions and imperfection, hear this our humble prayer and give us all Thy divine blessing from on high, for Thou are ever glorified with Thy Father Who is from everlasting and Thine all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

THE GOSPEL (For the Third Sunday of Great Lent)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (8:34-9:1)

The Lord said, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." And Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

- *The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great continues as usual with the following variables.*

ST. BASIL LITURGY MEGALYNARION

All creation rejoiceth in thee, O thou who art full of grace: the angelic hosts and the race of men. O hallowed temple and spiritual paradise, glory of virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a little child, even our God who is before all the ages; for he made thy womb a throne, and thy body more spacious than the heavens. All creation rejoiceth in thee, O thou who art full of grace. Glory to thee.

KOINONIKON (COMMUNION HYMN) FOR THE CROSS *(Psalm 4)*

The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, hath been signed upon us. Alleluia.

- *Post-Communion Hymn: Instead of "We have seen the true light", sing the Apolytikion of the Holy Cross.*

PROCESSION OF THE HOLY CROSS
AS DONE ON THE THIRD SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

- *After "Blessed Be the Name of the Lord", the clergy and altar servers process from the sanctuary and around the interior of the church, while the choir sings as many times as necessary:*

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.

- *Once the procession concludes in the center of the church, the deacon says:*

Wisdom. Stand upright.