



Office of the Bishop

312 Garfield Street

Johnstown, PA 15906

NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2018

Protocol No. 17/2018

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Beloved Faithful Clergy and Laity of our God-Protected Diocese,

It is hard to believe that this month marks the sixth anniversary of my Consecration and Enthronement as your Hierarch. During my visits to the parishes you have often heard me preaching on the state of affairs, locally and globally. Conflicts, wars and senseless violence continue to inflict pain and suffering and spill blood everywhere. I am deeply saddened that peace and stillness continues to elude us. Recent events continue to reveal that demonic forces are fighting against us, that evil continues to exist in the world. So many innocent people are killed or wounded on a daily basis. As an example, recently many innocent were killed or wounded in a synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh. Everyday people are dying needlessly in our towns and cities. For what? Can someone please explain it to me. This lack of peace and stillness is the direct result of increased selfishness and hatred throughout the world. Whatever we as inhabitants of this planet are doing it is not working, somehow it is not enough. Obviously we as humans cannot achieve peace and stillness on our own. We need the help of someone and that someone is the Lord.

In addition, many ills (demons) afflict us, just like the demon-possessed man in the land of the Gadarenes. Whether it is an addiction to drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, lying, cheating, stealing, ungratefulness, anger, hatred, domestic violence or something else, we need the Lord. If we are feeling like we are sinking because we are overwhelmed in our home life, work life, school life or even our social life (including social media and technology) we must be like Peter. He was walking on the water towards Jesus and he was distracted by the winds and waves. As he began to sink, Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30).

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

As we once again enter the Season of the Nativity Fast, I ask you, actually I plead with you, the good faithful people of our Diocese, to join me on a journey to meet the new born King. During these 40 days leading to the Nativity of our Lord let us increase our efforts in church attendance, in prayer, in fasting, in scriptural reading, in almsgiving, in repentance and confession, in receiving the Eucharist.

This year, just like the last three years, I am challenging everyone, clergy and laity, to offer a special prayer for peace and stillness during evening prayers. During the Litany of Fervent Supplication at each Divine Liturgy a special petition is also to be included. The text of these prayers will be provided to the Clergy for distribution. Each household should have sufficient copies so that young person that can read has one by their bed to use nightly and those who are too young to read may say the prayer with their parents before they go to bed. Of course, all the adults should also participate.

To assist with this challenge, a special web page has been created on the Diocesan Website, Praying for Peace, which contains downloadable texts of the special prayers. Other postings will be made on various social media outlets to encourage maximum exposure and participation.

With all of us united in prayer and laboring for peace and stillness this Nativity Fasting Season, I am convinced that we will help to make our lives and that of others throughout the world more peaceful and still, even if only in a small way.

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+Metropolitan Gregory".

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

This Archpastoral Letter is to be read in all new calendar parishes of the Diocese on the Sunday prior to the beginning of the Nativity Fast (November 11) during the reading of the parish announcements and placed in your weekly bulletins. Old calendar parishes on Sunday November 25.



His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory's
NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2018

To Be Prayed Every Evening of the Nativity Fast

O Lord, You told us through the Psalmist David to be still and know that You are God. (*Psalm 46:10*) Yet, in our weakness, that stillness is far from our hearts and minds. We are restless in soul and body. The constant noise of the world drowns out Your still, small voice. (*1 Kings 19:12*) Even as we prepare during this season to remember Your Birth, we are diverted by many cares. We are anxious and troubled, neglecting the one thing needful. (*Luke 10:41-42*)

Holy Master, keep us away from those things which distract us from knowing Your Presence. Grant us the stillness, silence, peace, and calm that only comes from You. Help us to be diligent in prayer and attentive to the needs of others.

As Your Holy Mother beheld the great mystery of Your Incarnation, she silently pondered it in her most-pure heart. (*Luke 2:19*) Allow us to reach the celebration of Your coming in the flesh so that, silently contemplating it in our own hearts, we too may be filled with every grace and blessing and give glory to You forever. **Amen.**