

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Wednesday in Lent: Liturgy of
Presanctified Gifts 7:00 PM**

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

**March 11, 2018 – 3rd Sunday of Lent | Veneration of the
Cross | St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem**

Today all over the world, Orthodox Christians in every nation gather in their churches to celebrate the Precious Cross of Our Savior Jesus Christ. In every Orthodox Church the Cross is lovingly decorated with flowers and greenery and then solemnly carried through the church with incense and candles as the faithful sing hymns about the Glorious Cross. The pious devoutly bow down before the Precious Cross and venerate it.

The Angels accompany the Holy Cross as it is carried through our churches and the demons turn their faces away in terror and revulsion. This Cross that we honor defeated them, this Cross that we venerate has put them to shame.

...Our Savior says, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." There is a yoke and there is a burden but it is light and sweet. We have been taught by our culture to flee suffering at all costs, to avoid anything painful or uncomfortable.

Modern man has come to the unfortunate belief that we have a right to have a pain-free existence, we have a right to undeserved joy and peace and we will purchase



these at any price. We run after drugs, sex, material goods, entertainment and almost any distraction that keeps us from facing the reality of our emptiness. Because in truth, life is nothing but emptiness without Christ and His Cross. We were created by God in His image and likeness, and our hearts are restless until this likeness is achieved. We are lonely, deeply lonely if we try to live our life without Christ ... it is unnatural!

We cannot be content with false imitations of the peace that only Christ can give. We were created to be with Christ, to be united with Him through theosis, and no matter how we may try to avoid it, our hearts are not content and should not be content with anything less. Deep in our hearts we know the truth, buried underneath piles of garbage and filth and lies, the truth shines, no matter how dim, it is there in every human being created by God. It is precisely through Christ and His Cross that our life has meaning and purpose. Through the Cross and only through the Cross can we find peace and salvation. There is no other way.

On this Third Sunday of Great Lent the Church directs us to bring out the Cross with great solemnity as a consolation for the faithful and as a promise of the Resurrection to come. You see the Cross of Christ is really a symbol of victory. If there is no Good Friday then there is not Pascha. If there is no Cross then there is no Resurrection. This is presented to us liturgically this week. The Church shows us the precious and life-giving Cross. We sing hymns and bow down before the Precious Cross, the trophy of victory. The Church shows us the great mystery of our salvation, *through suffering and death comes life, eternal life.* The paradox of the Cross is absolutely essential for our Christian Faith.

My dear brothers and sisters, what we are presented with today here in our little church is not [a] comfortable modern version of Christianity but the authentic, saving Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the way of the Cross. We join Orthodox Christians all over the world bowing down before the Cross, we accept it and embrace it. But this cross that we honor today, if we truly embrace it, is in reality our own cross, whatever that may be for each one of us. It could be heart disease, cancer, old age, mental illness, physical handicaps or simply being misunderstood by those around us.

So what you see today here in the center of our church is the Precious Cross of Christ but also on a personal level it is the cross that He has prepared for you before all time ... embrace it, truly embrace it, bow down before it, and carry it, without complaints, without apology, without regrets, knowing that Our Savior Himself has designed it just for you.

What a grace-filled opportunity we are being given, to carry our cross and walk in the footsteps of Christ. We are being given the opportunity to become His

disciples, for He said, you cannot be my disciple unless you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me. *Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, Our God, have mercy on us. Amen.* (adapted from *holycross-hermitage.com*)

St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem

Saint Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was born in Damascus around 560. From his youth he was distinguished for his piety and his love for classical studies. He was especially proficient in philosophy, and so he was known as Sophronius the Wise. The future hierarch, however, sought the true philosophy of monasticism, and conversations with the desert-dwellers.

He arrived in Jerusalem at the monastery of Saint Theodosius, and there he became close with the hieromonk John Moschus, becoming his spiritual son and submitting himself to him in obedience. They visited several monasteries, writing down the lives and spiritual wisdom of the ascetics they met. From these notes emerged their renowned book, the LEIMONARION or SPIRITUAL MEADOW, which was highly esteemed at the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

To save themselves from the devastating incursions of the Persians, Saints John and Sophronius left Palestine and went to Antioch, and from there they went to Egypt. In Egypt, Saint Sophronius became seriously ill. During this time he decided to become a monk and was tonsured by Saint John Moschus.

After Saint Sophronius recovered his health, they both decided to remain in Alexandria. There they were received by the holy Patriarch John the Merciful (November 12), to whom they rendered great aid in the struggle against the Monophysite heresy. At Alexandria Saint Sophronius had an affliction of the eyes, and he turned with prayer and faith to the holy Unmercenaries Cyrus and John (January 31), and he received healing in a church named for them. In gratitude, Saint Sophronius then wrote the Lives of these holy Unmercenaries.

When the barbarians began to threaten Alexandria, Patriarch John, accompanied by Saints Sophronius and John Moschus, set out for Constantinople, but he died along the way. Saints John Moschus and Sophronius then set out for Rome with eighteen other monks. Saint John Moschus died at Rome. His body was taken to Jerusalem by Saint Sophronius and buried at the monastery of Saint Theodosius.

In the year 628, Patriarch Zacharias of Jerusalem (609-633) returned from his captivity in Persia. After his death, the patriarchal throne was occupied for two years by Saint Modestus (December 18). After the death of Saint Modestus, Saint Sophronius was chosen Patriarch. Saint Sophronius toiled much for the welfare of the Jerusalem Church as its primate (634-644).

Toward the end of his life, Saint Sophronius and his flock lived through a two year siege of Jerusalem by the Moslems. Worn down by hunger, the Christians finally agreed to open the city gates, on the condition that the enemy spare the holy places. But this condition was not fulfilled, and Saint Sophronius died in grief over the desecration of the Christian holy places.

Written works by Patriarch Sophronius have come down to us in the area of dogmatics, and likewise his “Excursus on the Liturgy,” the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt (April 1), and also about 950 troparia and stikheras from Pascha to the Ascension. While still a hieromonk, Saint Sophronius reviewed and made corrections to the Rule of the monastery of Saint Sava the Sanctified (December 5). The saint’s three Ode Canons for the Holy Forty Day Great Fast are included in the the contemporary Lenten Triodion. (*from oca.org*)

Today’s Epistle Lesson – St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Brethren, seeing that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” As *He* also *says* in another *place*: “You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint Mark 8:34-9:1

At that time, when Jesus had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” And He said to them, “Amen, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Before the time of Christ, the cross was an instrument of punishment; it evoked fear and aversion. But after Christ's death on the Cross it became the instrument of our salvation. Through the Cross, Christ destroyed the devil; from the Cross He descended into hades and, having liberated those languishing there, led them into the Kingdom of Heaven. The sign of the Cross is terrifying to demons and, as the sign of Christ, it is honored by Christians. "O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Grant victory to Orthodox Christians over their adversaries, and protect Your people by Your Cross."

The beginning of this prayer is taken from the twenty-seventh Psalm. In the Old Testament the word "people" designated only those who confessed the true faith, people faithful to God. "Inheritance" referred to everything which properly belonged to God, God's property, which in the New Testament is the Church of Christ. In praying for the salvation of God's people (the Christians), both from eternal torments and from earthly calamities, we beseech the Lord to bless, to send down grace, His good gifts upon the whole Church as well, and inwardly strengthen her.

The petition for granting "victory to kings" (Grant victory to Orthodox Christians over their adversaries) (ie: to the bearers of Supreme authority), has its basis in Psalm 143, verse 10, and recalls the victories of King David achieved by God's power, and likewise the victories granted Emperor Constantine through the Cross of the Lord. This appearance of the Cross made emperors who had formerly persecuted Christians into defenders of the Church from her external enemies, into "external bishops," to use the expression of the holy Emperor Constantine. The Church, inwardly strong by God's grace and protected outwardly, is, for Orthodox Christians, "the city of God." Heavenly Jerusalem has its beginning. Various calamities have shaken the world, entire peoples have disappeared, cities and states have perished, but the Church, in spite of persecutions and even internal conflicts, stands invincible; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against her (Matt. 16:18).

Today, when world leaders try in vain to establish order on earth, the only dependable instrument of peace is that about which the Church sings: "The Cross is the guardian of the whole world; the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings; the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the wounding of demons." (Exapostilarion of the Exaltation of the Cross) – St. John Maximovitch

A Preparation for Confession

by St. John of Kronstadt

I, a sinful soul, confess to our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, all of my evil acts which I have done, said or thought from baptism even unto this present day.

- ❖ I have not kept the vows of my baptism, but have made myself unwanted before the face of God.
- ❖ I have sinned before the Lord by lack of faith and by doubts concerning the Orthodox Faith and the Holy Church; by ungratefulness for all of God's great and unceasing gifts; His long-suffering and His providence for me, a sinner; by lack of love for the Lord, as well as fear, though not fulfilling the Holy Commandments of God and the canons and rules of the Church.
- ❖ I have not preserved a love for God and for my neighbor nor have I made enough efforts, because of laziness and lack of care, to learn the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Holy Fathers.
- ❖ I have sinned: by not praying in the morning and in the evening and in the course of the day; by not attending the services or by coming to Church only half-heartedly, lazily and carelessly; by conversing during the services, by not paying attention, letting my mind wander and by departure from the Church before the dismissal and blessing.
- ❖ I have sinned by judging members of the clergy.
- ❖ I have sinned by not respecting the Feasts, breaking the Fasts, and by immoderation in food and drink.
- ❖ I have sinned by self-importance, disobedience, willfulness, self-righteousness, and the seeking of approval and praise.
- ❖ I have sinned by unbelief, lack of faith, doubts, despair, despondency, abusive thoughts, blasphemy and swearing.
- ❖ I have sinned by pride, a high opinion of myself, narcissism, vanity, conceit, envy, love of praise, love of honors, and by putting on airs.
- ❖ I have sinned: by judging, malicious gossip, anger, remembering of offenses done to me, hatred and returning evil for evil; by slander, reproaches, lies, slyness, deception and hypocrisy; by prejudices, arguments, stubbornness, and an unwillingness to give way to my neighbor; by gloating, spitefulness, taunting, insults and mocking; by gossip, by speaking too much and by empty speech.
- ❖ I have sinned by unnecessary and excessive laughter, by reviling and dwelling upon my previous sins, by arrogant behavior, insolence and lack of respect.

- ❖ I have sinned by not keeping my physical and spiritual passions in check, by my enjoyment of impure thoughts, licentiousness and unchastity in thoughts, words and deeds.
- ❖ I have sinned by lack of endurance towards my illnesses and sorrows, a devotion to the comforts of life and by being too attached to my parents, children, relatives and friends.
- ❖ I have sinned by hardening my heart, having a weak will and by not forcing myself to do good.
- ❖ I have sinned by miserliness, a love of money, the acquisition of unnecessary things and immoderate attachment to things.
- ❖ I have sinned by self-justification, a disregard for the admonitions of my conscience and failing to confess my sins through negligence or false pride.
- ❖ I have sinned many times by my Confession: belittling, justifying and keeping silent about sins.
- ❖ I have sinned against the Most-holy and Life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord by coming to Holy Communion without humility or the fear of God.

I have sinned in deed, word and thought, knowingly and unknowingly, willingly and unwillingly, thoughtfully and thoughtlessly, and it is impossible to enumerate all of my sins because of their multitude. But I truly repent of these and all others not mentioned by me because of my forgetfulness and I ask that they be forgiven through the abundance of the Mercy of God.

Librarian's Picks of the Week

Wounded by Love, The life and Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios – Newly illumined Greek monk that reposed in 1991 tells the story of his life and expounds the Christian faith for today.

Facing East, A Pilgrim's Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy by Frederica Mathewes-Green – Chronicles a year in the life of her small Orthodox mission church, eloquently illustrating the joys and blessings an ancient faith can bring to the worshipers of today.

Help! I'm Bored in Church, Entering Fully into Worship in the Divine Liturgy by David Smith-Fr. David offers compelling reasons for going to church regardless of how we feel. This book will help you see church as the best place you could possibly be – and the place you most want to be.

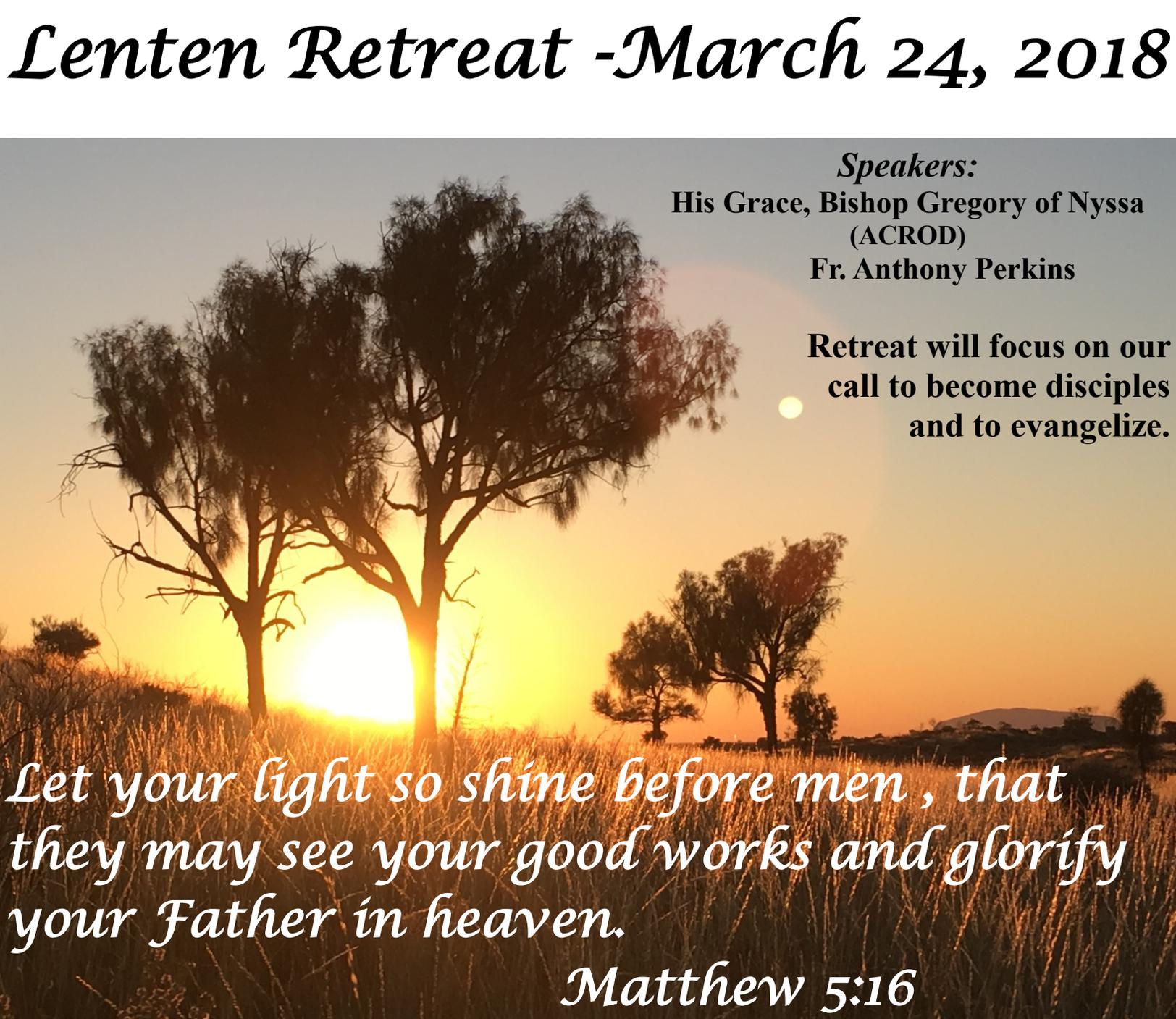
Lenten Retreat - March 24, 2018

Speakers:

**His Grace, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa
(ACROD)**

Fr. Anthony Perkins

**Retreat will focus on our
call to become disciples
and to evangelize.**



*Let your light so shine before men, that
they may see your good works and glorify
your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

***St. Francis Center for Renewal
395 Bridle Path Road
Bethlehem, PA***

Retreat registration: Adults ACROD \$35 (late fee \$20)

Adolescents \$20 (late fee \$10)

Children (under 12) \$7

***Registration includes all meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner.
For more information contact: Oleh or Natalie Bilynsky at
nsufler@aol.com call - 610-892-7315***

LENTEN RETREAT
SATURDAY, March 24, 2018

9:00 AM TO 6:30 PM

ST. FRANCIS CENTER FOR RENEWAL
395 BRIDLE PATH ROAD BETHLEHEM, PA

REGISTRATION FORM

– To Be Filled Out For Each Participant –

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Parish _____

Age (Youth ages 7-18 only) _____

Name of Parent(s)/Adult Chaperone Attending With _____

Cell Phone of Parent/Adult Chaperone _____

\$35 for adults ACROD (prior to deadline)

\$20 for adolescents (aged 13 to 18)

\$7 for children 7 to 12

Appropriate Registration fee is enclosed: Yes _____ No _____ *Amount _____

Check made for total of all family members to: Ukrainian Orthodox League of the USA.

Return registration w/payment to: Oleh Bilynsky 703 Pine Ridge Rd. Media, PA 19063

Please submit registration by March 14, 2018. After this deadline late fees of \$20 for adults and \$10 adolescents is applied.

Pictures from the Retreat can be used for publicity. Please indicate if you do not want pictures of you and/or your child used.

YOUTH LENTEN PROJECT 2018

A Lenten Outreach Initiative - For All Diocesan Youth

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done.

-Proverbs 19:17



"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

-Isaiah 58:6-7



St. John the Compassionate Orthodox Mission

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Needs: serving the poor through meals, job training, spiritual counsel and education.

Challenge: To raise funds to help the Mission in its outreach to those in need.

How YOU Can Help: Work with your parish Jr. ACRY or Church School to raise funds to help St. John's continued efforts to shine light into a darken world.

The John C. Kulis Charitable Foundation Will Match Dollar For Dollar On Every Donatton Made To This Project

Please Send Your Parish's Donatton By June 01, 2018 To:

*Saints Peter & Paul Orthodox Church
141 Hoffman Farm Road, Windber, PA 15963*

Please make checks Payable to: Saints Peter & Paul ACRY Chapter 13

Sponsored by The National Junior ACRY



1st Annual Camp Nazareth Classic Golf Tournament

Last year, His Grace Bishop Gregory inaugurated an annual Science and Nature Camp at Camp Nazareth (this year's camp will be from August 5-11). St. Michael's Orthodox Church in Birmingham, NY has offered to raise funds for this endeavor by hosting an annual Camp Nazareth Classic Golf Tournament, to be held this year on Sunday, June 10. This will take place at the 4-Star 19 hole Championship Course at *Traditions at the Glen Resort* in Johnson City, NY. An Awards Banquet will follow at St. Michael's Recreation Center. If interested, please contact Dr. Nicholas Seketa at (607) 798-9455 or 2018camperclassic@gmail.com. The registration deadline is May 28.

St. Barbara's Meeting

There will be a St. Barbara's meeting on March 11 (TODAY) during lunch. Ladies, please attend as several topics will be discussed, including cleaning of the house and church, fundraising and use of funds.

FEBRUARY TREASURER'S REPORT

For February we had income of \$13,780 and expenses of \$13,970. Large expenses this month included heating the church and the first payment for the icon project.

Follow Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews>

You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddiocese>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiacki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)