



REJOICE!

The Monthly Publication of the

ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

93 Locust St. Dover, NH 03820 · Tel: (603) 742-7667

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Beloved in Christ,

Due to the date of Pascha this year being April 20th, almost the entire month of February is contained within the *Triodion* period of the liturgical year, which begins on February 9th and ends on Holy Saturday. After the three preparatory weeks of the Triodion, we will begin the Holy and Great Lent on *Clean Monday*, March 3rd. Although the secular world this month is mostly focused on the highly retail-oriented celebration of Valentine's Day, and winter vacation for students and families, we Orthodox Christians should be focused on our spiritual preparation for Great Lent, and the subsequent celebration of the climax of the liturgical year – the Holy Pascha of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First of all, in order not to be misunderstood, I am not implying that there is anything wrong with the above-mentioned secular observances, as long as they do not become a hindrance during this time of heightened spiritual focus. As Orthodox Christians living in the world, we must keep in mind that our spiritual lives always take priority in all that we do.

In regard to Valentine's Day, the retail world loves when we fall into its net of over-indulgence, in order to prove our love through material gifts. This is the same tactic employed during the Christmas season. What we should be more concerned with during the Christmas season, and now as we enter the Triodion, is building up *spiritual treasure* within our hearts and souls. Only the Church has the spiritual food that we need in order to nourish ourselves, and thereby seek spiritual health in our lives. One of the great-

est sources of spiritual nourishment in the Church is *Holy Scripture*.

As we go through the first three weeks of the Triodion, let us pay much attention to the themes of the four Sundays of this period, as presented through the appointed Scriptural passages.

- ***The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee:*** Humility and sincere repentance is what pleases God. He despises when we are judgmental and self-righteous.
- ***The Sunday of the Prodigal Son:*** God is all merciful and forgiving. He will accept us with great joy at any point in our lives, when we seek Him in sincere repentance.
- ***The Sunday of the Last Judgment:*** God expects us to show mercy and be charitable in our lives as taught through Christ's example. When we turn our backs to those in need, we are doing the same to Christ Himself.
- ***The Sunday of Forgiveness:*** We cannot expect to be forgiven anything by God, if we refuse to be forgiving to those who have hurt or wronged us. Our fasting and entire Lenten experience will be hypocritical and in vain if we cannot forgive others, as well as to seek forgiveness.

Beloved, the three preparatory weeks prior to Great Lent should be a focused time of *preparedness*, in order to reap the benefits of the

coming Fast. Our Holy Church in her wisdom, has given us these blessed weeks in order to build our *foundation* for Great Lent. The basic Lenten themes

of *humility, repentance, and forgiveness* are presented to us as we prepare for Lent, and remain throughout the following six weeks and into Holy Week. Even if we are on vacation during the winter break, we can still find time to *pray, read Scripture* (available on-line each day through goarch.org), and *meditate* on these important Lenten themes.

I pray that all of us together will begin “mixing the mortar” and getting the bricks ready for our own Lenten foundation. This should be our priority as we enter the holy Triodion period. So, go ahead and buy a modest Valentine gift, and spend some special time with your families during winter break, but please do not neglect the most important focus of this month – your *spiritual lives* as we prepare for Great Lent.

Wishing you a blessed Triodion season,

+Fr. Anthony



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and state "Newsletter Submission" in the subject line.

FROM FR. ANTHONY

Reflections on the Presentation of Our Lord

The following is taken from *The Year of Grace of the Lord*, by a monk of the Eastern Church; St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992.

In accordance with the law of Moses, forty days after the birth of a male child, its mother had to present it in the tabernacle and to offer as a sacrifice, either a lamb or a pair of doves or pigeons for purification 'from the issue of her blood.' The presentation of a first-born son also signified redemption or buying back, for all first-born creatures, whether animal or human, were considered to belong to God. Mary and Joseph obeyed this precept of the law. They brought Jesus to the Temple where he was blessed by the aged Simeon, and recognised as Saviour by the prophetess Anna. It is this event which we celebrate at the feast of February 2nd...

'Let us also go to meet Christ and let us receive him...Adorn thy bridal chamber...and welcome Christ the King; salute Mary, the heavenly gate.' These texts from the feast of the Presentation can also be applied to our souls. Each soul ought to be a Temple of God, to which Mary brings Jesus. And each one of us should, like Simeon, take the child in his arms and say to the Father: 'My eyes have seen thy salvation'. The prayer of Simeon, 'now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace' does not simply mean that someone who has seen Jesus and has held him in his arms can now leave this life and die in peace; it also means for us that, having seen and touched the Saviour, we are released from the hold that sin has on us, and, in peace, can leave the realm of evil.

Triodion Begins February 9

This year, the liturgical season of the *Triodion* commences on 2/9, the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, and continues through Holy Saturday, 4/19. This impactful liturgical season covers the three-week, pre-Lenten period, Great Lent, and Holy Week. The first three weeks of the Triodion are a preparatory period for the coming 40-day fast of Great Lent, each week having its particular fasting guidelines according to the tradition of the Church as follows:

- **First week, 2/9–2/15:** No fasting – all foods permitted daily
- **Second week, 2/16–2/22:** Regular Wednesday and Friday fasting
- **Third week, 2/23–3/2**
 - 1) Meatfare Sunday, 2/23: last day for meat and poultry
 - 2) Cheesefare Week, 2/24–3/2: fish, dairy, eggs, wine and olive oil permitted daily, up to and including Forgiveness Sunday, 3/2

Spiritual Wisdom

Forgive and pray, in order to live your life serenely. And do not do to others that which you do not want them to do to you, or return the evil which they have done to you. (St. Raphael of Lesvos)

Cry out, O sinner, with all your might, and spare not your throat; for your Lord is merciful and loves those who repent. As soon as you return, your Father will come out aforehand to meet you. He will slaughter the fatted calf, clothe you in a fine robe, and rejoice in you. (St. Ephraim the Syrian)

It is necessary most of all, for one who is fasting to curb anger, to accustom himself to meekness and condescension, to have a contrite heart, to repulse impure thoughts and desires, to examine his conscience, to put his mind to the test and to verify what good has been done by us in this or any other week, and which deficiency we have corrected in ourselves in the present week. This is true fasting. (St. John Chrysostom)

PARISH NEWS AND EVENTS

Parish Chronicle

Deaths

1/6 - James Sousane (husband of Deborah Sousane)

Memorials

2/16 - Vasilike Cavaris, 3 years
Nicholas Cavaris, 32 years

May their memory be eternal!

Parish Prayer List

Please pray for our brothers and sisters:

Elizabeth, Deborah, Demetrios, Ray

In keeping with a common Church tradition, we will keep names on the parish prayer list for **40 days**. If you wish to offer names for prayer, please send those via e-mail to the church office at:

annunciationover@gmail.com,
or call the office at 742-7667.

Please give first names only, and preferably full names, not nicknames.

Donations

Decoration of Icon of the Presentation of Christ, 2/2 - Richard Clairmont

Church Lighting Enhancement

As of the publication of this issue, we are still awaiting quotes from electricians in order to move forward with this project. Once a decision is made on the electrical contractor, a dollar amount for sponsoring each chandelier and installation will be shared with the parish.

HOPE/JOY Ministry Established

Now that our parish has grown to include many families with elementary aged children, we are excited to announce the formation of a combined HOPE/JOY ministry. These Archdiocesan programs are geared toward the spiritual growth of our children, and to provide opportunities for fellowship through age-appropriate events and activities. We invite all our families with children in this age group to plan on participating, *first and foremost, with church attendance and with our Church School program*, as well as in our newly formed HOPE/JOY ministry.

We are also pleased to announce that our HOPE/JOY coordinator will be **Laura Blagojevic**, one of our Church School teachers. Laura is excited for this opportunity, and will be communicating with our families via the *Rejoice* newsletter and other means, so please stay informed!

Aid for Los Angeles Area Fire Victims

For information on how to help, please go to the Archdiocesan website (goarch.org) and click on the National Fire Relief Fund icon on the home page.

PARISH NEWS & EVENTS

New Library Guidelines

Since we do not have a formal checkout system for our library, we therefore have no idea which books are out or have been, or have not been returned. Going forward, we will now have a checkout and return form in front of the shelves, so that everyone who wishes to borrow a book can mark those down, including when returned. It is easy to forget that we may have church library books in our homes, so this will create a way to keep track of our collection.

At this time, we ask that everyone check if they have church books that need to be returned. You may simply shelve them yourselves without needing to inform anyone. We appreciate in advance, everyone's cooperation going forward!

Coffee Hours for February

As of the date of publication of this issue, following is the status of February coffee hours.

2/2 – Irene Tsougranis

2/9 – AYA (Annunciation Young Adults)

2/16 – Frudakis family

2/23 – Evangelatos family

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy February!

It is with great joy and a profound sense of gratitude that I assume the role of your new Parish Council President. I am truly honored and humbled by the trust my fellow Council members have placed in me, and I eagerly anticipate serving this wonderful community. Having been a member of this parish for twenty years and having had the privilege of deepening my faith, I have experienced firsthand the transformative power of our community. The love, support, and shared devotion of our parishioners and ministry leaders have been a constant source of strength for so many of us. It is my heartfelt desire to continue fostering this spirit of unity, growth, and mutual support for all who are part of our church family.

Please know that you are always welcome to reach out to me or any member of our Parish Council with any questions, concerns, or suggestions about the life of our parish. Together with the entire Council, I look forward to serving you and to continuing the work of strengthening and enriching our parish community.

Best,

Shana Mitropoulos

Parish Council President



STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Greetings everyone.

A blessed and happy New Year to us all!

With the Holiday season behind us, we find ourselves patiently enduring another New England winter and joyously anticipating Great Lent, one of the most beautiful and profound seasons of the Orthodox Christian life. As we look back, we can truly say with the Holy Fathers that “He is a good God, and He loves mankind”.

Great Lent is a multi-faceted season, inviting us to experience God’s grace in many ways. The emphasis on fasting is important, but it is by no means the whole picture. We are also invited to make more time for worship and prayer, beautiful things which bring us closer to God and renew our souls. Equally important is the emphasis on alms giving. Lent calls us to reflect upon the blessings of God and to respond to those blessings by being a blessing to others.

St. John Chrysostom speaks of the greater meaning of Christian stewardship when he reminds us that the Christian really owns nothing because God owns everything.¹ Our time, our talent, and our treasure are all gifts from God. Christian stewardship is not just what we give but how we give, and this includes giving of ourselves to help and serve others.

As one Orthodox writer observes, “Stewardship does not mean being hit up for an annual pledge to the Church. It is not being enlisted in a financial campaign... It is not even tithing....stewardship is a state of being. It is based in service...the most important aspect of being a steward is serving.”²

In a few weeks we will all receive our first annual “Talents and Volunteer” survey. It is a simple form, and we are asking everyone to take a few minutes to fill it out. This is important. God has given us a beautiful church, a faithful priest, and a wonderful, growing community. We have so much to be thankful for! This year, as we reflect upon the innumerable blessings of God, let’s consider how we can best say “Thank you”, by giving of ourselves to love and serve as Christ has loved and served us.

Hronia Polla!

Steve Poole

For your Stewardship Team

¹“On Wealth and Poverty” (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984).

²Benjamin D. Williams,

<https://www.oca.org/the-hub/the-church-on-current-issues/an-orthodox-understanding-of-stewardship>

CHURCH SCHOOL

Happy February, Church School families!

For those of you who do not know me, I am Laura - the new 8 & Under Church School teacher. I started subbing in October and officially took over in December.

A little bit about me: I am currently an Educational Technician (Para Educator) in South Berwick, Maine. I work with special education students in small group and one-on-one settings, and I am blessed with the opportunity to have my own classroom in our church school. I am excited to continue working with our youngest parishioners.

This past January we studied the Three Hierarchs. We have taken each saint and discussed who he is, what he did, and why we commemorate the three together. The children have been working on small crafts to go along with our lessons. They are full of questions and ideas! I am looking forward to hearing what else they have to say.

For the rest of this school year, we will work on the basics of Orthodoxy with the aid of *Orthodox Basics*; a wonderfully illustrated new workbook designed and constructed by Natalie and Despina of Orthodox Pebbles. The workbooks will arrive soon, and we will also acquire their Great Lent activity workbooks (Level 1 & 2) for the upcoming Paschal season.

Thank you,
Laura Blagojević

GOYA

Friday, February 7, is the first Friday of the month! We will be having a GOYA field trip to PINZ bowling in Portsmouth at 6:00 pm. Please spread the word and bring your teens!

Mark Canney
(603) 781-1862

ANNUNCIATION YOUNG ADULTS

The AYA have multiple events coming up, making for quite an eventful February! First, we will have Orthodoxy on Tap on 2/10 at 6:00 pm, at Anatolia Restaurant in Somersworth. Mark Canney will be our presenter, speaking about his conversion to Orthodoxy. The Tendercrop Farm bonfire event will be on the 2/15, and finally, the trip to St Nektarios Monastery from 2/21 - 2/23. May everyone have a blessed February!



ALKISTIS NEWS



Dear Parishioners,

Happy New Year!

The **Alkistis Ladies Association** had a wonderfully eventful and productive Fall, and we are excitedly preparing for another vibrant year ahead. I want to remind all ladies of the *Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church* that you are automatically members of the Alkistis Ladies Association. We invite you to join us at our monthly meetings—your insights and ideas are invaluable as we continue our mission of supporting Father, our Parish, the Diocese, and the broader community.

I am thrilled to share that our **Fall Dinner Dance**, held on November 9, 2024, was a resounding success. With 166 attendees, the evening featured delicious food, dancing to live music by “OPA,” and a special recognition of our *Festival Chairs, Robert Mitropoulos and Rebecca McNamee*. We are deeply grateful to the parishioners who generously underwrote the major expenses of the event: *Dr. Argeris & Mrs. Eloise Karabelas, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur & Donna Karabelas, Mr. & Mrs. George & Sandy Lazarus, Mr. Anthony Demetracopoulos, Mr. & Mrs. Les & Barbara Hoogveen, and Mr. & Mrs. Dennis & Betsy Kostis*. We also extend heartfelt thanks to the gentlemen who assisted with preparing our wonderful dinner under the direction of *Paul Karoutas and Paul Maskwa, including Kimon Lalas, Kostas Sakkas, George Mitropoulos, Peter Mitropoulos, Tim Abbott and Charlie Gurney*. A sincere thank you as well to *the ladies of our Parish* whose dedication made the evening so memorable. Be sure to keep an eye out for your “**Save the Date**” invitation as we begin planning our next Dinner Dance later this year.

On January 12, 2025, the Alkistis Ladies Association hosted **Vasilopita Sunday**, raising approximately \$460 for St. Basil’s Academy. Around 70 parishioners, friends, and family gathered for church services, followed by the serving of Vasilopita in Father Athans Hall. A special thank you to the following ladies who baked Vasilopites for the event: *Presbytera Themmi Evangelatos, Georgette Kostis, Betsy Kostis, Yota Sakkas, Ekaterina Rallis, Voula Xydias, Jenny Katralis, Barbara Delintsiotis, Paula Panasis, Irene Tsougranis, Lisa Primes, Lee Anestis, Nancy Lipitakis, Evelyn Savage, Stasia Savramis, Karen Pendergast, Rebecca McNamee, and Kathryn Amankwah*. We also want to thank the ladies who supported the event by providing paper goods, beverages, and other refreshments: *Zoe Polychronopoulos, Nanine Venetos, Pam Byers, Vula Lalas, Hope Frudakis, and Linda Rodden*. Below, you’ll find some photos from this and other recent events.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are eager to build on the success of last year and increase participation in our events. We are excited to announce several upcoming fundraising events for this year, including a Tsourekia and Pastry Sale in April, a joint event with the Ladies Association in Portsmouth, a Wine Tasting, a Spring Dinner Outing, a Walk-A-Thon, a visit to Lydia’s House, and, of course, our Dinner Dance in October.

We would love for you to join us at our **next meeting on February 16th**, which will take place in the Church Library following services and coffee hour. Please bring your ideas and suggestions as we work together to plan for another exciting year ahead.

With heartfelt thanks and blessings,

Vula Z. Lalas, Alkistis President



Board Members
Vula Z. Lalas–President, Althea Coussoule–Vice President, Georgette Kostis–Treasurer,
Paula Panasis - Corresponding Secretary, Maryann Charos - Recording Secretary



February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>Please note that all Sunday & weekday Orthros & Liturgies are at 8:45 & 10:00 am.</i></p>	<p><i>There is <u>no fasting</u> during the 1st week of the Triodion- 2/9 - 2/15. See related entry for more info.</i></p>					<p>1 Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p>2 The Presentation of Our Lord Orthros & Liturgy</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7 GOYA night at PINZ Bowling in Portsmouth at 6:00 pm</p>	<p>8 Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p>9 Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee Orthros & Liturgy TRIODION BEGINS</p>	<p>10 St. Haralampus Orthros & Lit. Orthodoxy on Tap <i>Anatolia Restaurant-Somersworth</i> 6:00 pm</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12 Parish Council 6:00 pm <i>(fast free)</i></p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 <i>(fast free)</i></p>	<p>15 Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p>16 Sunday of the Prodigal Son Orthros & Liturgy</p>	<p>17 Presidents' Day <i>(office closed)</i></p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22 Saturday of Souls Orthros & Liturgy Great Vespers 6:00 pm</p>
<p>23 Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare) Orthros & Liturgy</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	

2025 CONFIDENTIAL STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE

How Can I Pay My Pledge?

There are many convenient ways to pay your stewardship including:

- Online bill payment through your bank
- Check by mail
- Online through PayPal
- Cash

We highly recommend paying through your online bank bill payment service:

Payments can be made on a recurring monthly or quarterly basis, or in one complete payment.

- It is the easiest method to use (write “stewardship” in the memo line)
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Attn: Stewardship

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- To use PayPal go to: www.annunciationdover.org
- Click on to the “Donations” link and follow the prompts.

2025 PARISH STEWARDS - AS JANUARY 2025

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