



Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church



45 Ideal Street, Buffalo, NY 14206

A Parish of the ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

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February 2023

PRE-LENTEN SUNDAYS

We know that we are approaching the beginning of Great Lent when we hear at the Sunday Divine Liturgy the reading from Luke 19:1-10 concerning Zacchaeus, the tax collector. The **Sunday of Zacchaeus** is the first of the pre-Lenten Sundays which takes us, step by step, to the beginning of Great Lent, and ultimately to Pascha.

We begin with this particular lesson because Zacchaeus himself begins his repentance with a simple desire: he wanted to see Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was passing by and a great crowd had gathered. Zacchaeus wanted to see Christ, but the crowd was great and Zacchaeus was short, so he climbed into a tree, thereby enabling himself to look at the Master above the heads of the crowd. Christ saw him, called him down and visited his house—much to the shock of those who knew that Zacchaeus was a great sinner. But Zacchaeus repented; he returned four times as much as he had stolen, gave the remainder of his possessions to the poor, and became a true disciple of Christ.

The message of this lesson is clear: everything begins with the simple desire to see Christ. Nothing can happen without this desire. We must desire to see Christ as well. This is our first step toward the approaching Great Lent and Pascha.

Nothing begins without the desire to see Jesus Christ, and when we truly see Him, then and only then are we able to see ourselves. This is the second step in our approach to Great Lent and Pascha and the theme of the second pre-Lenten Sunday.

The Gospel reading for this, the **Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee**, is taken from Luke 28:10-14. Two men went to the temple to pray—a publican and a pharisee. The pharisee was a very religious man. He fasted, prayed, and gave away ten percent of his goods. Yet, he boasted about his accomplishment, and as a result, he was rejected by God. The publican, on the other hand, was truly evil—a genuine sinner. He sought to make a change in his life, however, by confessing his sinfulness and begging God for mercy. As a result, he was justified and accepted by God.

Like the Pharisee, we too are filled with pride and boastfulness; unlike the publican, we often refuse to acknowledge our sinfulness, confess it, and beg for mercy.

On this Sunday we are invited to take a deeper look inward, to search the depths of our souls and beg for mercy. We are called, through our vision of Jesus Christ, to acknowledge our sins and to fall down before the face of God in repentance, making the publican's prayer our own: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Having acknowledged our sins and sought the Lord's forgiveness, we now see that we are called to action. We must return to God, our Father, Who willingly and lovingly accepts us if only we make the slightest motion to return home to Him. This is the theme of the third pre-Lenten Sunday.

In the Gospel lesson for the **Sunday of the Prodigal Son**, Luke 15:11-32, we are presented with a young man, who against his father's advice, had taken all of his possessions and wasted them through foolishness. As a result, he had to resort to carrying for pigs and found himself sharing the food which the pigs refused to eat. However, "he came to himself" and remembered life as it was at this father's house. He returned home, hoping only to be accepted as a servant. His father ran to meet him, kissed his son, clothed him regally, and celebrated his return with much festivity for, in the words of his father, "my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

The next Sunday of the pre-Lenten season is the **Sunday of the Last Judgment**. On this day we read in the Gospel lesson, Matthew 25:31-46, the conditions upon which we will be judged by Jesus Christ. We see, therefore, the conditions of the reward for our righteousness. We see what we must do in our lives on earth and are challenged to undertake a lifestyle which will bring us to eternal life on the day of Jesus Christ's Second Coming—the day of universal and eternal resurrection. (Matthew 25:35-36,40)

(continued)

“For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me... Truly, I say to You, as you did it to one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it to Me.”

On this we are judged. By recognizing Christ in those around us and by treating them accordingly, we attain salvation. We see Christ. We see ourselves. We return to the Father who shows us His Son in the least of our brothers and sisters.

On **Forgiveness Sunday**, the last of the pre-Lenten Sundays, we contemplate our separation from God—our expulsion from paradise. The services for this day continually resound with this theme as recorded in Matthew 6:14-21. We find ourselves cast out of paradise, sitting outside in the darkness and apart from the God Who is the source of Life and Light. We are weeping. We desire forgiveness. We seek mercy. And so we must ourselves forgive and be merciful. (Matthew 6:14-15)

“If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

The whole of Great Lent, as the whole of life, is a movement toward resurrection in paradise. We may enter only if God forgives us if we forgive others. With forgiveness not only in mind, but in action, we enter the season of Great Lent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER BEAD BRACELETS are on sale in the church vestibule and also in our parish hall, which are handmade by Aubriella Irene Rodriguez. They are made of different colors or special ones can be made of the color of your choice. Cost is \$5. With a cross or a medallion is \$6. All proceeds go to our parish. The prayer to say with each bead during your morning, evening, or before the Divine Liturgy is: “Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner.” They are beautiful gifts for others and are made to improve our spiritual awareness of Christ in our lives.

OUR GOT SNEAKERS CAMPAIGN is still ongoing. Please bring in your old sneakers and place them in the box in the church vestibule or our parish hall. We bag them up and send them, free of charge to our parish, and receive monies back from the company so they won't be put into landfills. The soles of these sneakers are used to make playground surfaces.

BUY A BRICK CAMPAIGN is still going on. Copies of bricks already donated can be found in our church vestibule and parish hall. They may be donated (\$100 each) for the health or eternal memory of a loved one or friend. Forms are located in our church vestibule or parish hall. Please hand them in to Father John.

WE ARE STILL COLLECTING redeemable plastic bottles and cans for our parish. Please bring them in to the parish hall or leave them in the church vestibule. They will be taken in and redeemed for our parish general fund.

GENERAL SERVICE

SCHEDULE

Saturday: 6:00pm Vespers

Sunday: 9:30am 3rd & 6th
Hours

10:00am Divine Liturgy

1st Sunday of Month: 9:25am

General Confession Service

CHURCH WEBSITE:

www.peterandpauloca.org

CHURCH FACEBOOK PAGE:

[www.facebook.com/
SaintsPeterAndPaulBuffalo](http://www.facebook.com/SaintsPeterAndPaulBuffalo)

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and Canada

The Most Reverend Michael

(Dahulich)

Archbishop of New York,
and NY & NJ

**NEXT
PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING
Sunday
Feb.12**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEAUTIFUL CHURCH WALL CALENDARS are on sale in our church vestibule for the cost of \$8 each. Please purchase one for your home to have the Epistle/Gospel readings for each day and also the Old Testament readings during Great Lent. Your spiritual life might become stronger by having these readings by your side.

DURING OUR RECENT ALL-AMERICAN CONGRESS this past summer in Baltimore, Maryland, a motion was made for parishes in the United States to help financially support our Diocese of Alaska, which exists on a very small budget to the few priests of that area. Those who are interested in helping this Diocese, please see Father John. What a beautiful gift — to give this Diocese our financial support so that the Gospels and Divine Liturgy may be spread to the Aleutians.

ST. MARY'S ORTHODOX CHURCH on Losson Road in Cheektowaga is sponsoring on Saturday, February 18th, a take-out only Spaghetti Dinner from 4-6pm. The menu consists of the following: spaghetti with homemade meatballs, Costanzo's roll/butter, and a tasty treat. The cost is \$15 per plate and cash only. Orders for these take-out orders can be made by calling Fr. George Ellis (716.671.5067) or email (fr.georgeellis@gmail.com). Just pull under their carport for pickup—don't even have to get out of your car.

A WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT will be held at St. George's Orthodox Church (1073 Saunders Settlement Road, Niagara Falls, NY) on Saturday, March 11th. Elissa Bjeletich Davis will be the guest speaker. The schedule will be as follows: 10:30am- Morning prayers; 11:00am- Refreshments; 11:30am- Session I; 1:00pm- Lunch; 2:00pm- Session II; 3:30pm- Q&A with Elissa and book signing; 5:00pm- Vespers. The cost is \$15 which includes a Lenten lunch. They will be collecting a good-will offering for Elissa. Please RSVP by March 5th: KhKellylynn@gmail.com or call/text her at 716.861.4773.

From the Church Fathers...

The path of God is a daily Cross. — *St. Isaac the Syrian*

Do not be ashamed to enter again into the Church. — *St. John Chrysostom*

You don't need to be polite with God, simply pour out your heart before Him. — *St. Sophrony of Essex*

Do not forget these words: God has given you time to build your eternal salvation. Do not waste it.
READ THAT AGAIN! God has given you time to build your eternal salvation. Do not waste it.—*Elder Sophrony*

Fire and water do not mix. Neither can you mix judgment of others with the desire to repent. — *St. John Climacus*

In the parish, everything belongs to everyone, and even if we have our personal efforts and temptations, the way we approach them can contribute to the work of strengthening and developing parish life. — *Archpriest Seraphim Gan*

Let us remember that God always answers our prayers in one way or another, but not always as we want and not always at the time we planned. God's silence always teaches us something. Awaiting an answer from God is a question of patience, repentance, and personal prayer. Let us learn to wait for the Lord daily, for He is much nearer to us than we think. — *Hiermonk Kirill of Popov of Sretensky Monastery*

Schedule of Divine Services

FAST FREE WEEK—Sunday, Feb.5 thru Saturday, Feb.11

The ORTHODOX CHURCH exhorts us to eat MEAT and DAIRY PRODUCTS the entire week following the SUNDAY of the PUBLICAN and PHARISEE

Sunday, Feb. 12

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

9:25am—Reading of 3rd/6th Hours

10:00am—Divine Liturgy

Memorial: Daniel Metz, Mary Bugel, Mary Abraham

Parish Council Meeting

Sunday, Feb. 19

Meatfare Sunday / Sunday of the Last Judgment

9:30am—Reading of 3rd/6th Hours

10:00am—Divine Liturgy

Memorial: Martin Daniel Doucette

Sunday, Feb. 26

Cheesefare Sunday / Forgiveness Sunday (The Expulsion of Adam from Paradise)

9:30am—Reading of 3rd/6th Hours

10:00am—Divine Liturgy

Memorial Service: Hans and Svetlana Graef

Abbreviated Forgiveness Sunday Vespers / Prostrations

Monday, Feb. 27

ORTHODOX GREAT LENT BEGINS! STRICT FAST DAY (no meat, no dairy)

Wednesday, March 1

6:00pm—Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Friday, March 3

6:00pm—Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

**It's good to have icons in
your prayer corner, but
it's best to have prayer in
your icon corner.**

~Anonymous Monk