

WORLD

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC

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Joy to the world

ANNUAL LIVE NATIVITY AT MOUNT ST. MACRINA IN UNIONTOWN, PA.



The annual Live Nativity took place Dec. 14 on the grounds of Mount St. Macrina in Uniontown, Pa. Greenfield Farms provided animals for the Nativity scene and Joseph's Nursery and Garden Center donated a 18-foot live Christmas tree. For more photos, see page 5.

125 years of faith and heritage

SS. PETER AND PAUL IN PATTON, PA. MARKS MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY

By Father Roman Andriitso
SS. Peter and Paul, Patton, Pa.

This year, our Saints Peter and Paul community in Patton, Pa. joyfully celebrates its 125th anniversary.

For more than a century, our church has stood as a spiritual home for generations of faithful — a place of prayer, unity, and preservation of our Byzantine Catholic heritage on American soil.

In 1900, our forefathers — immigrants filled with deep faith and steadfast hope — purchased a Methodist church building. This was an act of great courage and spiritual vision.

Over the years, the structure was

gradually renovated and adapted to the needs of our Byzantine rite. The installation of the iconostasis, the transformation of the liturgical space, and the establishment of our traditions all shaped this house of worship into a true spiritual home.

The building became more than a physical structure; it became a symbol of how our ancestors preserved their faith, their culture, and their rite, passing them on to future generations.

As we look back, we bow our heads in deep gratitude to Almighty God, who has showered our community with blessings throughout these many years.

Story continued on page 9



ETERNAL MEMORY REVEREND MONSIGNOR ALEXIS EUGENE MIHALIK

Monsignor Alexis Mihalik, a retired priest of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, fell asleep in the Lord on Nov. 29. He was born to Andrew and Agnes Single Mihalik on Dec. 8, 1937 in Hagerstown, Md.

His elementary education was received at St. Mary Latin Catholic School in Hagerstown. After the family moved to the Youngstown, Ohio area, he attended Princeton Junior High School and was graduated from Ursuline High School there.

While a seminarian at SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pa. he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Duquesne University. He was also awarded the Master of Arts degree in theological studies from Fordham University in New York.

He was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Nicholas T. Elko on April 23, 1964 in Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Youngstown, Ohio.

Monsignor Alexis served the following parishes in Pennsylvania: St. Nicholas, Brownsville; SS. Peter and Paul, Braddock; SS. Peter and Paul, Duquesne; St. John, Hawk Run; St. Mary, Clarence; St. John, Barnesboro; Ascension, Arcadia; and Saint John the Baptist, Pittsburgh. In Ohio he served: St. Stephen, Euclid; St. Nicholas, Youngstown, and Infant Jesus

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Reverend Monsignor Alexis Eugene Mihalik

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MISSION

The mission of *The Byzantine Catholic World* is to spread the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Byzantine Catholic Church; to encourage faithful to reflect the image of Christ in everyday activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Byzantine Catholics in the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, throughout the Metropolitan Church in America, and around the world.

ETERNAL MEMORY REVEREND MONSIGNOR ALEXIS EUGENE MIHALIK

Story continued from page 1

of Prague, Boardman where he remodeled the church.

As Prefect professor at SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, he taught a variety of courses from 1974 to 1979 and in 1982 and 1983

His appointments on the Archeparchial level include: to the editorial staff and as business manager of the Byzantine Catholic World, instructor of the Cantor School, chairman of the Archeparchial Music Commission, Pro-Synodal Judge of the Tribunal, and member

of both the Archeparchial and Intereparchial Liturgical Commissions.

Monsignor Alexis was honored by Pope John Paul II when he received the status of Papal Chamberlain and the title of Monsignor by the Investing Prelate Metropolitan Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko on Feb. 3, 1985 at Holy Ghost Church in McKees Rocks, Pa.

He retired from active ministry on Oct. 1, 2007.

Monsignor Alexis was preceded in death by his parents, brother Andrew Mihalik, brother in law, Milan Krivan, and nephew, John

Mihalik. He leaves behind his sister Rosalie Krivan, brother Allan (Patricia) Mihalik, and nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews.

His funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla at Infant Jesus of Prague Church in Boardman, Ohio on Dec. 13.

Interment was at SS. Peter and Paul parish cemetery in Dunlo, Pa.

In blessed repose grant eternal rest O Lord to your departed priest Monsignor Alexis and remember him forever! ■

“Carpathian Cookery” available for purchase

The Carpathian Cookery cookbook is available for purchase.

The 330-page cookbook has a new look and features a protective plastic cover. The book includes sections on Christmas and Easter customs and recipes, traditional Rusyn and Slavic foods, other ethnic dishes, and many other tried-and-true recipes of St. John's parishioners.

The cost of the cookbook is \$14 plus \$6 postage and handling (\$20).

If ordering from Canada, please send a \$36 (\$14 plus \$22).

To order, send a check or money order to: Ethnic Craft Club, St. John Byzantine Catholic Church, 201 E. Main Street, Uniontown, Pa. 15401, or call 724-438-1382 (M-F 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. – leave message). ■



Pope Leo XIV's homily on Christmas

"DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, SINCE THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, HUMANITY NOW SPEAKS, CRYING OUT WITH GOD'S OWN DESIRE TO ENCOUNTER US"



Pope Leo XIV gives his homily during Christmas morning Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 25, 2025. (Catholic News Service photo/Vatican Media)

OSV News — This is the text of Pope Leo XIV's homily at the Mass he celebrated Dec. 25, 2025, on the solemnity of Christmas in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

Dear brothers and sisters,

"Break forth together into songs of joy" (Is 52:9), cries the messenger of peace to those standing amid the ruins of a city in desperate need of rebuilding. Though dusty and wounded, his feet are beautiful, writes the prophet (cf. Is 52:7), because, along rugged and weary roads they have carried a glad announcement in which everything is reborn. A new day has dawned! We too are part of this new beginning, even if few as yet believe it: peace is real, and it is already among us.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (Jn 14:27). Thus Jesus spoke to the disciples, whose feet he had just washed. They were to be messengers of peace, sent to journey tirelessly through the world to reveal to all the "power to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). Today, therefore, we are not only surprised by the peace that is already here; we also celebrate the way in which this gift has been given to us. In this "how," in fact, shines the divine difference that causes us to break forth into songs of joy. For this reason, throughout the world, Christmas is a feast par excellence of music and song.

The prologue of the fourth Gospel is itself a hymn, with the Word of God as its protagonist. The "Word" is a word that acts. This is a hallmark of God's Word: it is never without effect. Indeed, many of our own words also have effects, sometimes unintended. Yes, words "act." Yet here is the surprise that the Christmas liturgy

presents to us: the Word of God appears but cannot speak. He comes to us as a newborn baby who can only cry and babble. "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14). Though he will grow and one day learn the language of his people, for now he speaks only through his simple, fragile presence. "Flesh" is the radical nakedness that, in Bethlehem as on Calvary, remains even without words — just as so many brothers and sisters, stripped of their dignity and reduced to silence, have no words today. Human flesh asks for care; it pleads for welcome and recognition; it seeks hands capable of tenderness and minds willing to listen; it longs for words of kindness.

"He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (Jn 1:11-12). This is the paradoxical way in which peace is already among us: God's gift invites us in; it seeks to be welcomed and, in turn, inspires our own self-giving. God surprises us because he leaves himself open to rejection. He also captivates us because he draws us away from indifference. Becoming children of God is a true power — one that remains buried so long as we keep our distance from the cry of children and the frailty of the elderly, from the helpless silence of victims and the resigned melancholy of those who do the evil they do not want.

To remind us of the joy of the Gospel, our beloved Pope Francis wrote: "Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord's wounds at arm's length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of

others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune and instead enter into the reality of other people's lives and know the power of tenderness" (Evangeliium Gaudium, 270).

Dear brothers and sisters, since the Word was made flesh, humanity now speaks, crying out with God's own desire to encounter us. The Word has pitched his fragile tent among us. How, then, can we not think of the tents in Gaza, exposed for weeks to rain, wind and cold; and of those of so many other refugees and displaced persons on every continent; or of the makeshift shelters of thousands of homeless people in our own cities? Fragile is the flesh of defenseless populations, tried by so many wars, ongoing or concluded, leaving behind rubble and open wounds. Fragile are the minds and lives of young people forced to take up arms, who on the front lines feel the senselessness of what is asked of them and the falsehoods that fill the pompous speeches of those who send them to their deaths.

When the fragility of others penetrates our hearts, when their pain shatters our rigid certainties, then peace has already begun. The peace of God is born from a newborn's cry that is welcomed, from weeping that is heard. It is born amidst ruins that call out for new forms of solidarity. It is born from dreams and visions that, like prophecies, reverse the course of history. Yes, all this exists, because Jesus is the Logos, the Meaning, from which everything has taken shape. "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn 1:3). This mystery

speaks to us from the nativity scenes we have built; it opens our eyes to a world in which the Word still resonates, "many times and in many ways" (cf. Heb 1:1), and still calls us to conversion.

To be sure, the Gospel does not hide the resistance of darkness to the light. It describes the path of the Word of God as a rugged road, strewn with obstacles. To this day, authentic messengers of peace follow the Word along this path, which ultimately reaches hearts — restless hearts that often desire the very thing they resist. In this way, Christmas gives fresh impetus to a missionary Church, urging her onto the paths that the Word of God has traced for her. We do not serve a domineering Word — too many of those already resound everywhere — but a presence that inspires goodness, knows its efficacy and does not claim a monopoly over it.

This is the way of mission: a path toward others. In God, every word is an addressed word; it is an invitation to conversation, a word never closed in on itself. This is the renewal that the Second Vatican Council promoted, which will bear fruit only if we walk together with the whole of humanity, never separating ourselves from it. The opposite is worldliness: to have oneself at the center. The movement of the Incarnation is a dynamics of conversation. There will be peace when our monologues are interrupted and, enriched by listening, we fall to our knees before the humanity of the other. In this, the Virgin Mary is the Mother of the Church, the Star of Evangelization, the Queen of Peace. In her, we understand that nothing is born from the display of force, and everything is reborn from the silent power of life welcomed. ■

“Come and See”

FOURTEEN CANDIDATES ATTEND “WEEKEND OF DISCOVERY” AT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY IN PITTSBURGH, PA.



By The Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, Pa. hosted its annual Fall “Come and See Weekend” on Nov. 7 to 9.

A total of 14 candidates representing the four Ruthenian (arch)eparchies and the Melkite Eparchy came together for a weekend of learning, worshipping, and sharing in community life with the seminarians, with their goal of further discernment of the vocation to the priesthood.

Seminars were offered that reflected the four pillars of priestly formation — human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral — with specialized topics including the married and celibate priesthood, liturgical and individual prayer and spirituality, and intellectual requirements for priesthood.

If you are discerning a call to the priesthood or the diaconate, please contact your pastor, along with your eparchial vocations director at our seminary website at: <https://bcs.edu/contact-vocation-director/>. ■



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Joy to the world

ANNUAL LIVE NATIVITY AT MOUNT ST. MACRINA IN UNIONTOWN, PA.

Posted Dec. 5 on the Facebook page of Mt. Macrina Manor:

Live Nativity 2025 was a Magical Success!

To all our incredible volunteers and community supporters who helped bring this beautiful event to life, we are truly grateful for each and every one of you!

A warm and heartfelt thank you to the Sisters of Saint Basil, the dedicated staff of Mt. Macrina, and all the wonderful volunteers who gave their time, energy, and spirits to make this year unforgettable, your smiles warmed the night, your dedication inspired us all, and your spirit of giving truly reflects the meaning of Christmas, (these volunteers stood bravely in the bitter cold for two full hours) your devotion and cheerful hearts lit up the night more than you know. You are the heart of this event!

Special thanks to Greenfield Farms for providing the animals for our Nativity scene, and a shout-out to Joseph's Nursery and Garden Center for generously donating the 18-foot live Christmas tree.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to all the local businesses, radio stations, social media partners, and parishes who helped spread the word and support our mission. Until next year...

We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a blessed, joyful New Year! ■



A visit from St. Nicholas

SS. PETER AND PAUL IN PATTON, PA.

By Father Roman Andriitso
SS. Peter and Paul, Patton, Pa.

On Sunday, Dec. 7, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, all of our parish children, youth, and faithful gathered in the church hall to greet St. Nicholas,

singing the song "O who loves Nicholas the Saintly."

Each child received a gift from St. Nicholas. It was a beautiful Sunday as we all enjoyed great fellowship honoring the life of the wonderworker St. Nicholas. ■



ST. NICHOLAS IN PERRYOPOLIS, PA.

By Frances Garguilo
St. Nicholas, Perryopolis, Pa.

The parishioners of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Perryopolis, Pa. celebrated our patronal feast day with a lovely Dec. 7 brunch coordinated by Leslie Uhren.

What a treat for all to have a visit from none other than St. Nicholas himself. Hymns were sung as St. Nicholas walked around greeting those present. ■



INFANT JESUS OF PRAGUE IN BOARDMAN, OHIO

By Paula Slemmons
Infant Jesus of Prague, Boardman, Ohio

Infant Jesus of Prague in Boardman, Ohio celebrated their annual St. Nicholas Children's Celebration on Dec. 6 following liturgy.

Each child received a gift from St. Nicholas, gold coins and treat bags.

We thank Elaine Chachko, Mary Sinowski and Paul Kasper (St. Nicholas) for organizing the event. All the children and parents enjoyed this wonderful morning. ■



SS. PETER AND PAUL IN WARREN, OHIO

By John and Lisa Mosko
SS. Peter and Paul, Warren, Ohio

The afternoon of Dec. 7 was filled with the spirit of the Feast of Saint Nicholas at a social gathering after Liturgy.

After enjoying a delicious meal, we had a drawing for door prizes, a 50/50 raffle, a Christmas

Carols sing-along and, of course, St. Nicholas brought gifts to the children in attendance.

The afternoon was topped off with a taste of Father Miron Kerul'-Kmec and Sarah's spiced wine and an apple cobbler with a scoop of ice cream for dessert. ■



A visit from St. Nicholas

HOLY TRINITY IN WALL, PA.

Holy Trinity in Wall, Pa. hosted a St. Nicholas dinner after liturgy on Dec. 6. Sponsored by the GCU, it was a wonderful event even visited by St Nicholas

himself. Blessings to all who helped and came to observe our patron's feast day. ■



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION IN CLAIRTON, PA.

Ascension Church in Clairton, Pa. celebrated St. Nicholas on Sunday, Dec. 7 with Father Christopher Burke.

The children participated in a Jesse Tree program following Liturgy. Afterwards, a luncheon social was held at the hall.

Holy Name Society, GCU and

parishioners provided a delicious buffet.

Everyone enjoyed the games and prizes before Jessica Dufalla led the singing of carols. She closed the program with a song to St. Nicholas as he was arriving, inviting the children to visit with him and receive treats and gifts. ■



HOLY GHOST IN MCKEES ROCKS, PA. HOLY GHOST IN PITTSBURGH (NORTH SIDE), PA.

*By Aimee Helms and Leah Trapl
Holy Ghost, McKees Rocks, Pa.
Holy Ghost, Pittsburgh (North Side), Pa.*

This year's annual ECF St. Nicholas Celebration was a beautiful gathering of faith, fellowship, and festive spirit within our parish. Our GCU generously provided food and children's gift bags. Parishioners contributed delicious side dishes and desserts. The ECF students sang songs, the Youth Group read stories of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, and there was a visit by St. Nicholas!

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this wonderful celebration. ■



ST. MICHAEL IN CAMPBELL, OHIO

*By Very Rev. Kevin Marks
St. Michael, Campbell, Ohio*

St. Nicholas stopped by to visit our ECF students on Tuesday, Dec. 2. He visited with each student giving them a gift, as they

told him what they wanted for Christmas.

Thank you St. Nicholas for your kindness and don't get tired out on Friday night filling shoes. O kto kto Nikolaja l'ubit! ■



Experiencing the Liturgy

On Friday Nov. 14, Father Luke Iyengar served a Byzantine Divine Liturgy at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Ky.

Father Luke and his family are close friends with a monk of the Abbey, Brother Joseph Bender.

The weekend was Brother Joseph's annual family visit

weekend. Father Luke was pleased to be able to serve a Liturgy with Brother Joseph leading the responses.

Brother Joseph's family and monks were present. Brother Conrad, 96, said it was his first experience of a Byzantine Divine Liturgy. ■



ST. MICHAEL IN HERMITAGE, PA.
ST. MICHAEL IN CAMPBELL, OHIO

Helping those in need

Food and care items totaling 1,299 pounds were delivered to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Mahoning County last month.

Thanks to our St. Michael parishioners of Hermitage, Pa. and Campbell, Ohio for the donations. A very special thanks to Wee Wisdom Preschool of Hermitage for their donations towards this cause.

Thanks to Father Kevin Marks, David Penwell, Bill Dzuricsko, and Geri Romito for delivering the donated items. ■



SS. PETER AND PAUL IN WARREN, OHIO

Kolachi bake sale

By John and Lisa Mosko
SS. Peter and Paul, Warren, Ohio

Dough, nuts, and more.

That's what the Social Hall at SS. Peter and Paul in Warren, Ohio was full of as the Parish Guild held their annual Holiday Kolachi Baking and Sale.

Over 800 dough balls were rolled out to make five flavors of

kolachi: nut, cranberry nut, apricot nut, apricot and poppyseed. They were sold to our parishioners and to the public the weekend of Nov. 14 to 16.

Many helping hands and hard work made this fundraising event very successful. Thank you to everyone for their time and talent! ■



A special day

By John and Lisa Mosko
SS. Peter and Paul, Warren, Ohio

It was a special day for the Tomsich family on Sunday, Nov. 23 at SS. Peter and Paul in Warren, Ohio.

Emily Tomsich's baby boy, Archangelo, was Baptized, Chrismated, and received the Holy Eucharist from Father

Miron Kerul'-Kmec during the Sunday Liturgy. Jessica Dudd and Carson Orth were honored to serve as Godparents.

Afterward, refreshments were served in the Social Hall.

Welcome to SS. Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Archangelo! May God Bless You! ■





SS. PETER AND PAUL IN PATTON, PA.

125 years of faith and heritage

Story continued from page 1

We give thanks for all our ancestors, those courageous men and women who worked tirelessly, both physically and spiritually, to build this parish.

Despite the challenges of immigration, the hardships of labor in mines and factories, and the trials of adapting to a new world, they safeguarded the Catholic faith in America.

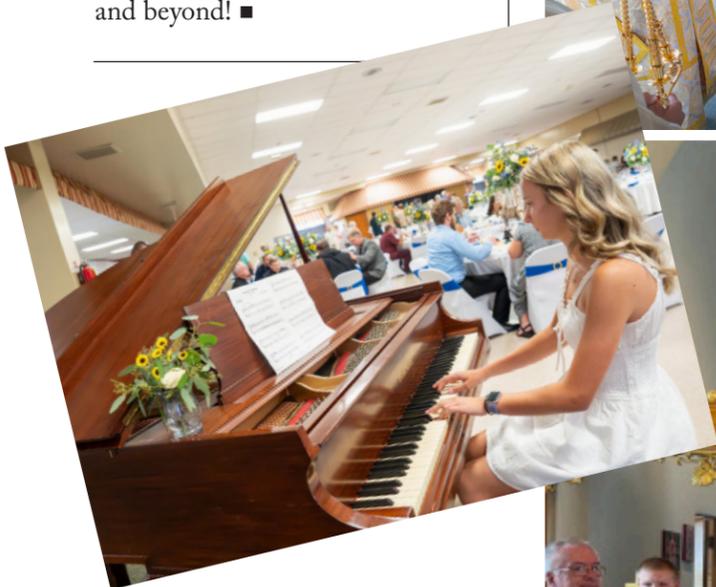
Their sacrifice, devotion, and faithfulness form the foundation upon which our community stands today.

We also extend heartfelt appreciation to all the priests who have served SS. Peter and Paul over the past 125 years.

As true shepherds, they guided our parish through joys and sorrows, administered the Holy Mysteries, taught the faith, supported families, and helped shape generations of believers. Their pastoral care is a vital and beautiful part of our parish's story.

As we celebrate this anniversary, we not only remember the past but also look forward with hope. We desire to pass on our rich heritage to our children and grandchildren, ensuring that our parish remains a place of prayer, encounter, and living faith.

May the Lord, through the intercession of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, bless our community for the next 125 years and beyond! ■





ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD IN WEIRTON, W. VA.

Blessed Theodore Romzha Feast Day

*By Gregg Miliote
Assumption of the Mother of God,
Weirton, W. Va.*

Assumption of the Mother of God (St. Mary) Church in Weirton, W. Va. recently concluded a grace-filled and joy-packed series of events surrounding the Feast of the Blessed Martyr Theodore Romzha and the parish's Halloween outreach. The days were marked by prayer, fellowship, evangelization and genuine community encounter.

Father Luke Iyengar is pastor. In the week leading to the feast, parishioners gathered in the church hall for a well-attended Catholic pumpkin carving party that brought families, children and friends together for an evening of creativity and fun. Laughter, parish fellowship and the glow of carved candles set a joyful tone as the community prepared not only for the holiday but also the spiritual celebrations ahead.

Volunteers also assembled Halloween candy bags that included Bible verses and personal invitations to return to St. Mary's for liturgies and upcoming parish events. The simple act of preparing these treats became an opportunity for parishioners to share their faith with one another and the hope of bringing community members into the church.

The liturgical observances for the Feast of Blessed Theodore Romzha, the heroic Byzantine Catholic bishop martyred in 1947, were especially moving.

The faithful gathered for Great Vespers and Moleben on Thursday evening, honoring the martyr's witness with solemn prayer. On Friday, the parish celebrated the Divine Liturgy with reverence and thanksgiving, followed by



a joyful parish celebration. The faithful also were able to venerate with devotion the presence of an icon containing a relic of Blessed Theodore's skull.

But one of the most remarkable moments came on Nov. 1, when St. Mary's opened its doors to the wider community. The parish welcomed more than 80 visitors — most of whom not connected to the parish — for trick-or-treating outside the church. Children and parents enjoyed candy, homemade cookies and warm apple cider, while parishioners greeted families with genuine hospitality. Many guests entered the church itself during an evening Divine Liturgy to witness the beauty of Byzantine worship up close, ask questions, light candles or simply pray.

What began as an outreach effort blossomed into a powerful encounter with neighbors and families who may never have visited St. Mary's.

Together, these celebrations were prayerful, joyful and evangelizing. St. Mary's continues to shine as a small but vibrant community seeking to share Christ's love with Weirton and beyond, guided by the courage and example of Blessed Theodore Romzha. ■



Pitching in for the needy

Assumption of the Mother of God's (St. Mary's) Altar Society recently donated \$500 to the Weirton Community Bread Basket to help the nonprofit keep its shelves stocked with food for needy families during the holiday season.

"Society members held pirohi and nut roll sales this fall to earn money and assist the bread basket

as part of our outreach program," Janet Winwood, Altar Society treasurer, said.

"We always are willing to pitch in to help the needy."

Pictured with bread basket volunteers are Janet (third from left) and Mike Garan, St. Mary's parish council member (second from right). ■



HS students experience Liturgy

Students from Weirton, W. Va. Madonna High School visited St. Mary's as worshippers on the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos.

Father Luke Iyengar greeted school administrators, teachers, staff members and 125 students as guests. Father Luke had served the school for two years as a theology teacher after finishing his seminary studies, so it was a great joy for him to welcome the community to the church he now serves.

"Two Madonna students are practicing members of St. Mary's while the others are either Roman Catholic or something else,"

Father Luke said.

"I tried to explain what our worship is like and occasionally showed them videos of our services, but there's no substitute for the real thing. So that's why I invited them to be first-hand witnesses to our beautiful church and inspirational Divine Liturgy."

Father Luke also welcomed the school's designated pastor, Father Gerald Muoka, as a concelebrant at the Divine Liturgy. Father Muoka, pastor of St. Anthony Roman Catholic Church in Follansbee, W. Va., serves as spiritual leader for the students and the staff members. ■





ST. ELIAS IN MUNHALL, PA.

Surprise visit

By Mary Caryl Planiczki
St. Elias, Munhall, Pa.

St. Elias was paid a surprise visit by St. Nicholas! Children and adults welcomed him by singing the traditional hymn to him, and

the children were presented with gifts.

The adults were treated to gold "chocolate" coins and candy canes. Thank you, Saint Nicholas! ■



Helping those in need

By Mary Caryl Planiczki
St. Elias, Munhall, Pa.

St. Elias parishioners expressed their gratitude for all the blessings God has bestowed on

them by donating food during this Thanksgiving season to the Rainbow Kitchen in Homestead, Pa. ■



We need a little Christmas

By Mary Caryl Planiczki
St. Elias, Munhall, Pa.

Many St. Elias parishioners, large and small, helped to decorate the church for the Nativity of our Lord.

The church was decorated

outdoors with wreaths on the doors and a beautiful icon written by Father Ivan Mina's mother.

Inside, trees, wreaths, lights, and an icon of the Nativity adorned the church, chapel, and vestibule. ■



ASCENSION OF OUR LORD IN CLAIRTON, PA.

Volunteers gathered on St. Nicholas Day to clean and decorate Church of the Ascension in Clairton, Pa. for Christmas. ■



ST. GREGORY IN UPPER ST. CLAIR, PA.

“Taste of Heaven”

*By Father Valerian Michlik
St. Gregory, Upper St. Clair, Pa.*

All was ready for this year’s 15th annual Taste of Heaven Cookie Sale at St. Gregory in Upper St. Clair, Pa.

We were scheduled to open the doors at 9 a.m. but already our first patrons started lining up at 7:35 a.m.

This was a good sign that this year’s holiday fundraiser would be a successful event. The smile on our patrons’ faces said it all as they carried delicious cookies home for their loved ones.

This year we even had live music — thank you Fejka’s.

We express our sincere thanks to our St. Gregory’s Women of



Faith for organizing this event, our ByzanTeens, and to all our bakers and volunteers for their hard work and dedication. ■



St. Nicholas visits USC

*By Father Valerian Michlik
St. Gregory, Upper St. Clair, Pa.*

Following our Archeparchial celebration, St. Nicholas made it to St. Gregory in Upper St. Clair, Pa. after a winter storm.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, St. Nicholas entered as the faithful sang that beautiful hymn “O who loves Nicholas the Saintly.”

All the children welcomed and accompanied St. Nicholas into our Church hall where our celebration continued.

St. Nicholas was very busy distributing gifts and chocolate golden coins to all our children who play an important role in our parish life.

In the church hall, members of our Bethany Ministry were also busy preparing Christmas bags for our homebound parishioners that will be delivered to them during this upcoming week.

We also express our sincere thanks to our St. Gregory Men’s Club for preparing the wonderful breakfast with St. Nick and for sponsoring the Christmas Kielbasa Sale, which has been for many years a food item enjoyed by many in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

We express our sincere thanks to all who participated and helped prepare this happy event as we all enjoyed great fellowship honoring the life of the wonder-worker St. Nicholas. ■



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHEDRAL IN MUNHALL, PA.

Basket Extravangnza

The Holiday Basket Extravaganza took place at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pa. on Nov. 16.

A dinner of parmesan crusted chicken was served along with door prizes and a basket auction.

A variety of vendors helped guests get their Christmas shopping completed early. ■



Photos by Nick Havrilla Sr.



SS. PETER AND PAUL IN TARENTUM, PA.

Sweet offering of fellowship

By Father Vasyl Polyak
SS. Peter and Paul, Tarentum, Pa.

From Nov. 17 to 20, the parish of SS. Peter and Paul in Tarentum, Pa. was filled with warmth — not only from the ovens, but from the hearts of the more than 20 volunteers who came together to prepare our annual nut roll sale.

Over 200 customers from Tarentum and surrounding communities stopped in to purchase rolls, greet friends, and support the parish. But beyond the numbers, something deeper was taking place: an experience of Christian fellowship, service, and unity in Christ.

A Community Gathered as One Flock

Throughout the four days of baking and selling, parishioners—young and old, lifelong members and brand-new faces—worked side by side. Many remarked that the best part of the fundraiser was simply being together: talking, laughing, sharing stories, and forging new friendships.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us: “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

This promise was felt profoundly in our parish hall. The nut roll sale became more than a fundraiser—it became a living witness to the presence of Christ binding us together as one flock, as He says: “There will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16).

Serving Others Through Hospitality

Customers who came to buy nut rolls often stayed to talk, ask about parish life, or simply enjoy the sense of welcome they felt. Many expressed appreciation for the warm atmosphere and Christ-centered spirit of our parish.

In coming together to serve others, our volunteers lived out St. Paul’s admonition: “Serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13).

Some volunteers worked the dough, others prepared fillings, some rolled and baked, while others greeted visitors at the door—each offering their talents, each essential to the whole.

As St. Paul reminds us: “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:5).

More Than a Fundraiser — A Ministry of Presence

Fundraising is important for the vitality of every parish, but the deeper fruit of these days was spiritual: renewed friendships, strengthened community bonds, and joyful cooperation. In a world that often isolates people, our parish hall became a place of communion and belonging.

Volunteers spoke about how this ministry helped them meet new people, reconnect with old friends, and experience the simple joy of working together toward a shared purpose. Many said it felt like “a small family reunion, but with dough.” Truly, Christ unites His people, even through something as humble as rolling out pastry.

Looking Ahead with Gratitude

We give thanks to God for every person who helped, baked, cleaned, sold, supported, or prayed for the success of this event. May the Holy Spirit continue to strengthen the bonds of love in our parish and guide us as we serve one another.

As we move into the Nativity season, may we remember the words of the Psalmist: “How good and how pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity” (Psalm 133:1).

Our nut roll sale was a beautiful reminder that when we come together in Christ’s name, even the simplest ingredients—flour, sugar, nuts, and time—can become a blessing for many. ■



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IN SCOTTTDALE, PA.

Pirohi pride

St. John the Baptist in Scottdale, Pa. started making pirohi for the holiday season in November. Pictured below preparing potato balls are Margie Edwards, Barb Zaksek, Catherine Catalina, Terry Frederick, Dolly Litman, Betty Sapola, Jane Bricker, and Janice Frederick. ■



Peeling and cutting potatoes are Cindy Hribal, John Onusko, John Kadylak, Barb Zaksek, and Kathy Onusko. Making the pirohi are Margie Edwards, Andy Lipko, Catherine Catalina, Cindy Hribal, Betty Sapola, and Barb Zaksek.

Christmas Craft Sale

St. John the Baptist in Scottdale, Pa. held their annual Christmas Craft Sale last month.

Anne Korba Myers hosted the event and Barb Zaksek was in charge of the bake sale.

Also, a dinner of appreciation was held by the Altar Society for members and parishioners who have helped with many projects throughout the year. ■





THOUGHTS FOR OUR DAY

By Archpriest David M. Petras

THE PRIEST AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE



When a man is ordained a presbyter (priest), the bishop prays for him, “that he may be worthy to stand blamelessly before your holy altar, to proclaim the gospel of your kingdom, to sanctify the word of your truth, to offer you gifts and spiritual sacrifices, and to renew your people by the bath of rebirth.” To stand before the altar and to offer gifts and spiritual sacrifices is how we usually see the priest, as he functions in his office of conducting the services of worship of the Church. How he relates to the spiritual life of the faithful is seen in his ministry of proclaiming the gospel, sanctifying the word of truth (from Ephesians 1:13), and renewing the people by the bath of rebirth. More concretely, this refers to the ways that a priest relates to the people by preaching, by baptizing and hearing confessions, and by giving spiritual guidance and directing lives toward God’s kingdom, leading a life of integrity and truth with God at the center of our lives. Interestingly, this does not refer directly to one of a pastor’s main duties, which is the physical administration of the Church’s building and properties. However, the Holy Spirit is needed even in this secular realm, so that the properties of the Church are used for the welfare of souls, not only those of the parish, but of everyone who is affected by the Church, either directly or indirectly.

The most important service of the priest is to “sanctify the word of truth,” from St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians 1:13. This phrase

is repeated in both of the prayers of the ordination of the priest. Commenting on this passage, the Father of the Church, Athanasius the Great, wrote, “let us vie with each other in observing the purity of the fast, by watchfulness in prayers, by study of the Scriptures, by distributing to the poor, and let us be at peace with our enemies. Let us bind up those who are scattered abroad, banish pride, and return to lowliness of mind, being at peace with all men, and urging the brethren unto love.”

The priest also gives spiritual guidance on a personal level to the faithful committed to his care.

(Festal Letters) Our Lord, the Word of God, is “the truth,” and he has sent us the Spirit to make us holy. St. Athanasius sums up here the ways in which the priest assists in this mission. The priest should serve as both the model and facilitator of Christian life in the community entrusted to his care.

One of the most important ways he does this is through preaching. The Vatican II Council underlined this, “Because the sermon is part of the liturgical service, the best place for it is to be indicated even in the rubrics,

as far as the nature of the rite will allow; the ministry of preaching is to be fulfilled with exactitude and fidelity” (Constitution on the Liturgy 35). It is an essential part of his ministry, “In the Christian community the preaching of the word is needed for the very ministering of the sacraments” (Decree on the Priesthood, 4). The proper word for the sermon is homily, which in Greek means a “communication,” a “word,” an “utterance.” It is an essential part of the Sacred Scripture, for when the inspired word of God was read in the community, the presider was then expected to comment on it. We see Jesus doing this in the synagogue in Capernaum (Luke 4:16-21). It is the priest’s role, as a part of the gift of the Spirit given in ordination, to communicate the meaning of the scripture to the actual congregation gathered in its hearing, for God’s word may have a multiplicity of meanings according to time and place. It is the priest’s duty to explain it and to apply it according to the best of his ability. Of course, the men charged with this ministry have different talents, and some are good preachers, and others are not so adept. The Council acknowledges, “priestly preaching is often very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. In order that it might more effectively move men’s minds, the word of God ought not to be explained in a general and abstract way, but rather by applying the lasting truth of the Gospel to the particular circumstances of life” (Decree on the Priesthood, 4). I think, though, that in some way, the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the words of the priest, even if poorly spoken. Priests today do usually reflect

on Scripture, though for a time before the Council, sermons were often moral exhortations or pleas for money.

The priest also gives spiritual guidance on a personal level to the faithful committed to his care. Having a spiritual father, and seeking guidance from the Church is an essential part of living a Christian life and of the presbyteral ministry. Priests are called “elders,” because they are to have the wisdom to lead the people to Christ. Spiritual direction is a requirement for those living in religious and monastic communities. This is not as true for the faithful in a parish. A small minority actually seek active spiritual direction. Others receive some spiritual guidance through the sacramental mystery of confession, called penance or repentance. There is, of course, a practical limitation, one pastor simply does not have the time available to direct individually all his people. Often direction is given in groups, such as Bible studies or adult education. These can be very helpful and reach many people. Sadly, though, for many a spiritual life is one’s own individual responsibility, as we live in a culture of individualism, while for others, the life of faith is only something on the periphery of their lives, and they are content to leave it to the priest “to pray for them.” As in preaching, priests have differing levels of ability to direct others. Some let their ideologies get in the way of a genuine empathy for the needs of their people. Good spiritual direction requires humility, an ability to listen and the grace of God in a spirit of discernment. ■

PARISH LITURGIES BROADCAST VIA INTERNET

Here is the most current list of parishes broadcasting Sunday Divine Liturgies and other services to the Faithful via their websites and social media sites such as Facebook.

For changes or to be listed, send information to bcw@archpitt.org.

St. John the Baptist Cathedral
Munball, Pa.
www.stjohnsbyzantinecathedral.com

Holy Ghost
McKees Rocks, Pa.
www.holyghost-byzantinecatholic.org
www.youtube.com, then type Holy Ghost Church Live Stream

St. John Chrysostom
Pittsburgh, Pa.
www.sjcbcc.com

St. Gregory
Upper St. Clair, Pa.
www.facebook.com/stgregoryusc

St. Michael
Campbell, Ohio
www.facebook.com/st.michaelbyz.campbell

St. Elias
Munball, Pa.
www.facebook.com/StEliasByzantineCatholicChurch/

SS. Peter and Paul
Braddock, Pa.
<https://www.facebook.com/SSPeterPaulBraddock/>

St. Michael
Hermitage, Pa.
<https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelbyz.hermitage>

St. Mary
Windber, Pa.
<https://www.facebook.com/StMaryDormition>

St. Mary
Bradenville, Pa.
Go to Youtube.com and type in “St. Mary’s Byzantine Media”



LITURGICAL SCHEDULE AT THE SEMINARY

“COME, LET US SING JOYFULLY TO THE LORD”



See the Liturgical Prayer schedule for the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, of SS. Cyril and Methodius, located at 3605 Perrysville Ave. in Pittsburgh, Pa., at www.bcs.edu.

AROUND THE ARCHEPARCHY



COMMUNITY CHURCHES CONCERT — 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026, St. Gregory Byzantine Catholic Church, 2005 Mohawk Road, Upper St. Clair, Pa. Mark your 2026 calendar for the first uplifting event of the new year! Join your Catholic neighbors as they present the 4th annual Theophany-Epiphany Community Churches Concert at St. Gregory. St. Gregory's Chant Group will be joined by the Schola Cantorum of St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Parish and the Our Lady of Victory Maronite Catholic Church Choir (Beechview) in a program of seasonal choral and chant music in celebration of the Nativity and Baptism of Jesus Christ. Each group will sing selections and stage festal scenes from their respective traditions in Arabic, English, Ruthenian, Syriac, and Latin. All are welcome to attend this gathering of joyous voices, which will be followed by a hospitality reception in the church hall. For more information, visit www.stgregoryusc.org.

Slapsticks Productions presents

St. Gregory Byzantine Catholic Church

16th Annual Funny Fundraiser!

Join Us To Raise Funds with Food, Fun and Fellowship

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Doors Open 6:30pm • Showtime 7:30pm

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Feature **Sean Collier** WQVE

Host **David Kaye** abc

\$30.00 Includes
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2005 Mohawk Road
Upper St. Clair, PA 15241
412-835-7800

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or Contact Mike Kiss 412-818-1295
Tix Online: slapsticksproductions.com

THEOPHANY-EPIPHANY COMMUNITY CONCERT

SUNDAY JANUARY 11, 2026 3:00PM

A program of seasonal choral & chant music in celebration of The Nativity & Baptism of Jesus Christ

LOCATED AT
ST. GREGORY CHURCH
2005 MOHAWK ROAD
UPPER ST. CLAIR, PA 15241

FEATURING

- ST. GREGORY CHANT GROUP (ST. GREGORY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH, UPPER ST. CLAIR)
- SCHOLA CANTORUM OF ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH (ST. BERNARD CHURCH, DORMONT)
- OUR LADY OF VICTORY MARONITE CHURCH CHOIR (BEECHVIEW)

Hospitality reception follows in the church hall | Visit www.stgregoryusc.org

DATES TO REMEMBER



- JAN. 1**
Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord
Feast of St. Basil the Great
New Year's Day
Chancery closed
- JAN. 6**
Feast of Theophany
Chancery closed
- JAN. 19**
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
National observance
- JAN. 23**
March for Life
Washington, D.C.

See more upcoming events at www.archpitt.org



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