

CONGRATULATIONS to all of you who attended every Lenten Service this year! It was so gratifying to see so many of the same faces at every liturgical service. May God bless all of you who put in the extra effort to be present in church every time our bells rang. We understand not everyone can do this, but it must be noted how many did attend. May God bless for your good intentions!

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN! How do we describe an event that changed the world – an event that even changed the way time is calculated and recorded? How do we describe an event that has replaced despair with hope and death with life? Indeed, how can we even begin to describe what the Resurrection of Christ means to us and to every faithful believer who has ever walked the face of the earth? It is almost impossible to put what we feel today into our own words, so perhaps it is best to use words that our Holy Orthodox Church has drawn upon for more than 1300 years --- words written by the great hymnologist St. John of Damascus: ***“THIS IS THE HOLY AND CHOSEN DAY! THE GREAT AND HOLY SABBATH! THE FEAST OF FEASTS! THE TRIUMPH OF TRIUMPHS! THEREFORE, ON THIS DAY WE BLESS CHRIST FOREVER!”*** Yes, Pascha is all of this for us. At the beginning of our Resurrection Services, we light our candle from the triple candle held by the priest, reminding us of our unity with Christ, Who is the Light of the world. As we walk in procession, it is often a struggle to keep our candles lit. How comforting it is to know that the Light of Christ can never be extinguished. It shines for all, and when the winds of sin take their toll, Christ and His Everlasting Light is always there for us. It is because of the Resurrection of Christ that there is always a glimmer of hope in even the most hopeless situations. It is because of the Resurrection of Christ that we should never feel alone or abandoned. It is because of the Resurrection of Christ that we should never feel defeated, for by virtue of His Rising, Christ conquered death --- mankind’s greatest fear and enemy. ***CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!***

NO KNEELING: The Resurrection of Christ warrants great joy and spiritual uplifting. Due to this joy, there is no kneeling during the period of Pascha to the Feast of Pentecost. Please keep this in mind.

FAST-FREE WEEK: Due to the great joy experienced by the Resurrection of Christ, there is ***no fasting this week!***

APRIL RADIO BROADCAST: IMO ***BASIL & ESTHER TELP*** by daughter, Barbara. ***MEMORY ETERNAL!***

BABAS’ REQUEST: God willing, the Babas are planning another Flea Market for October 2025. When you begin your Spring cleaning, keep this in mind. If you have used, but not abused items, such as small appliances, kitchenware, jewelry, paintings, collectibles, etc., please keep the Flea Market in mind. Drop off at the center will begin in August.

BOOK & PUZZLE SALE: Baba’s will be having a gently used book and puzzle sale on August 9th. Donations of books and puzzles (no missing pieces) will be accepted starting July 25th and ending August 3rd at St. John's Center. Any questions, please call Sandy at 570-876-3576. This is another exciting venture in our parish’s fundraising events. Please remember to check for books and puzzles to help with the inventory for this fundraiser. Thank you!

300 CLUB NEWS: The 26th week and Final Drawings for this Club will be held on **Tuesday, April 29 at 6:00 PM.** The drawings can be watched via Live Stream. **CAPTAINS,** please collect monies from any unpaid clubs **ASAP** so Joanie and Mott can close the books on this club and your members will be included in the final drawings. Please pass this announcement on to your club members.

WHY WE DO NOT VENERATE THE ICONS UPON RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION: Having just received the Body of Christ, one is filled with the grace of the Sacrament, and one is communing with the Divine Presence. It is therefore superfluous to this action of Grace and Communion to be thinking at this time of venerating the Saints who occupy a lesser place in the heavenly realm. So, it is not necessary to venerate the icons, which play no part in what one is participating in at that time. The communion of the Divine Body and Blood is the ultimate act of Orthodox worship and for the rest of the day one should constantly be aware of this fact and act appropriately. In that way, an Orthodox Christian is induced to perform Christian virtues and so progress in his/her spiritual life. It is, however, permissible to kiss the cross at the conclusion of the Liturgy because the cross depicts the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Who by this act of redemption has given us His Body and Blood and by the grace of receiving It brings us closer to Him. The cross is the instrument of our salvation, and we should venerate it. Please keep this in mind when partaking of the Blessed Sacrament.

POLKA PARTY: Our parish is holding a ***“POLKA PARTY”*** on Saturday, **May 17,** between 2 PM & 6 PM at our church center. Music will be provided by JOHN STEVENS’ DOUBLESHOT. Light fare and a cash bar will be available. The cost is **\$15 pp.** Contact any church council member, or Mott (570-335-2128) for tickets.

BLESSING OF BASKETS: The Pascha (Easter) Basket holds a special place in Slavic culture and in Orthodox tradition. It is a deeply spiritual and beautifully symbolic custom that blends faith and heritage in the joy of Christ’s Resurrection. Its history reflects the journey of the Church throughout time, with it stretching back to early Christian practices, shaped by centuries of religious life and culture. The tradition of bringing food to church for blessing dates to the earliest centuries of Christianity. In the early Church, particularly during the time of fasting in Great Lent, Christians abstained from meat, dairy, fish and rich foods (many still do). When Pascha arrived, it was customary to bring these abstained from foods to the church to be blessed before breaking the Lenten Fast. Over time, this evolved into the ritual of preparing a basket filled with those foods that had not been eaten during Great Lent. The custom spread throughout the Christian world, but in Slavic lands it developed certain characteristics enriched by local piety and symbolism. The Easter Basket became an important feature of Paschal celebration, and the blessing of food was integrated into liturgical and parish life. It flourished in village churches and was lovingly maintained by immigrants around the world, including in the Orthodox parishes in America. Each item in the Paschal basket has symbolic meaning rooted in our faith. After today’s Liturgy, the baskets will be blessed by Fr. Nathaniel. He will recite prayers and will bless the baskets with Holy Water, joyfully proclaiming, ***“CHRIST IS RISEN!”*** to which you, the faithful, will respond, ***“INDEED HE IS RISEN!”*** The blessing will be accompanied by singing, bells, and much love. The Paschal Basket is a beautiful expression of Orthodoxy. Whether in large cities or this small town of Mayfield, PA, the faithful have prepared their baskets with reverence, love, joy, and gratitude. Many of you are teaching your children and grandchildren the meaning behind each food item, passing on not just a tradition, but a living Faith. In Orthodox parishes throughout the world, the basket remains a sign of love, spiritual richness, and the true and blessed joy of Christ’s Holy Resurrection. May you and your loved ones experience the true joy, love and spiritual uplifting within your hearts when you hear the words, ***“CHRIST IS RISEN”*** this year! Wishing you all a most blessed and joyous Feast of the Resurrection!

Holy Fire in Jerusalem on Orthodox Pascha



The Holy Fire is a deeply symbolic and miraculous event in Orthodox Christianity, celebrated annually on Holy Saturday, the day before Orthodox Pascha (Easter). It takes place at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the site of Jesus' burial and resurrection. During the ceremony, the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem enters the tomb chamber and prays for the Holy Fire to descend. The fire is said to miraculously ignite candles and lamps, and pilgrims claim it does not burn them for the first 33 minutes. This tradition is considered one of the longest-attested annual miracles in Christianity, with documentation dating back to

the 4th century. The Holy Fire is distributed to Orthodox churches worldwide, symbolizing the light of Christ's Resurrection.

The Holy Fire ceremony has a rich history rooted in Christian tradition. It is believed to date back to the early centuries of Christianity, with accounts tracing it to the 4th century. Historian Eusebius mentions a miraculous event in Jerusalem around 162 AD, where lamps were said to ignite with water instead of oil, a story linked to the origins of the Holy Fire. The ceremony as we know today takes place annually at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on Holy Saturday, the day before Orthodox Pascha. The Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem leads the ritual, entering the Sepulchre (the chamber which houses Jesus' tomb) to pray for the Holy Fire to descend, then distributing it to the faithful pilgrims who are present. It remains a profound symbol of Christ's Resurrection and the triumph of light over darkness.

For modern believers, the Holy Fire symbolizes the light of Christ's Resurrection, a central tenet of Christian faith. It represents hope, renewal, and the triumph of life over death. The fire is said to have unique properties—it reportedly does not burn those who touch it initially, and it is distributed to clergy and pilgrims who light their candles from it. The flame is then transported to Orthodox churches worldwide. For many Orthodox Christians, this event is a profound expression of their faith and the divine presence. The flame is seen as a reminder of God's presence and the spiritual illumination that guides believers in their faith journey. Additionally, the Holy Fire fosters a sense of unity among Orthodox Christians worldwide. As the flame is distributed to churches and communities globally, it serves as a shared symbol of faith and connection, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. For many, the Holy Fire also inspires personal reflection and spiritual renewal, encouraging believers to rekindle their faith and embrace the transformative power of Christ's Resurrection. It is a profound tradition that continues to resonate deeply in the hearts of the faithful.

