



## St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Attached

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

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Bulletin for Sunday, April 14, 2024

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### Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every

time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against

racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

#### **Members of our Parish Council are:**

Greg Jankura - Vice President  
Susan Davis- President  
Sharon Hanson - Member at Large  
Luba Martins - Member at Large  
Susan Egan - Treasurer  
Dn Timothy Skuby - Secretary

#### **Pastoral Care - General Information**

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any

time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

## Announcements

There are just two weeks left before the start of Holy Week; please make arrangements to offer your confession before the start of this holiest of weeks. The schedule of services for Holy Week has been published on our parish calendar. If you need a letter "excusing" you from your secular obligations during this Week, please talk with Fr Steven.

Our annual parish clean up is schedule for Saturday, April 20th, for both the interior and exterior of the property. Remember; "many hands make for light work."

### *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*

The steps are:

On renunciation of the world

On detachment

On exile or pilgrimage; concerning dreams that beginners have

On blessed and ever-memorable obedience (in addition to episodes involving many individuals)

On painstaking and true repentance which constitutes the life of the holy convicts; and about the Prison

On remembrance of death

On joy-making mourning

On freedom from anger and on meekness

On remembrance of wrongs

On slander or calumny

On talkativeness and silence

On lying

On despondency

On that clamorous mistress, the stomach

On incorruptible purity and chastity, to which the corruptible attain by toil and sweat

On love of money, or avarice

On non-possessiveness (that hastens one Heavenwards)

On insensibility, that is, deadening of the soul and the death of the mind before the death of the body

On sleep, prayer, and psalmody with the brotherhood

On bodily vigil and how to use it to attain spiritual vigil, and how to practise it

On unmanly and puerile cowardice

On the many forms of vainglory

On mad pride and (in the same Step) on unclean blasphemous thoughts; concerning unmentionable blasphemous thoughts

On meekness, simplicity, and guilelessness which come not from nature but from

conscious effort, and about guile

On the destroyer of the passions, most sublime humility, which is rooted in spiritual perception

On discernment of thoughts, passions and virtues; on expert discernment; brief

summary of all aforementioned

On holy stillness of body and soul; different aspects of stillness and how to distinguish them

On holy and blessed prayer, the mother of virtues, and on the attitude of mind and body in prayer

Concerning Heaven on earth, or Godlike dispassion and perfection, and the resurrection of the soul before the general resurrection

Concerning the linking together of the supreme trinity among the virtues; a brief exhortation summarizing all that has said at length in this book

Ascending the Heights - A Layman's Guide to The Ladder of Divine Ascent by Fr. John Mack  
ISBN 1-888212-17-9

## Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Please pray for Dn Timothy, Sarah, Aaron, Evelyn, Joan and Victor who are in need of God's mercy and healing.

Many years to Christine Jankura on the occasion of her birthday.

Memory Eternal to Alla Hamisevich on the Anniversary of her

repose.

- Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their

- own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;
- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalized, those who have no one to pray for them;
- All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
- All those who have perished due to hatred, intolerance and pestilence; all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

Please let Fr. Steven know via email if you have more names for which to pray.

- Departed: Gregory
- Clergy and their families: Dn Timothy & Maureen
- Catechumen: Robert, Abbie, Matthew, Joseph, Mary, Kevin and Lynn
- Individuals and Families: Susan, Luba, Suzanne, Gail Galina, Evelyn, Rosemary, John, Karen, Oleg, Lucia, Victor, Melissa, Christine, Sebastian, Olga, Daniel & Dayna
- Birthdays and Name's Days this Month: Maureen Skuby, Nina Naumenko, Christine Jankura, Valery Danilack-Fekete, Sarah Senetcen
- Anniversaries this Month:
- Expecting and Newborn: Anastasia, Malcolm and their unborn child
- Traveling: Maria Christine

- Sick and those in distress: Mabel, Joan

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT — Tone 4. St. John Climacus (of *The Ladder*).** St. Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome (655). Martyrs Anthony, John, and Eustathius of Vilnius (Lithuania—1347). Martyr Ardalion the Actor (4th c.). Martyr Azades the Eunuch and 1,000 Martyrs of Persia (ca. 341).

- Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.
- Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East.
- Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.

## Parish Calendar

### Schedule of Services and Events

April 14 to April 22, 2024

#### Sunday, April 14

☪ Sunday of St. John Climacus  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy  
4:00PM Deanery Lenten Vespers

#### Monday, April 15

☪ Crescens the Martyr

#### Tuesday, April 16

☪ Agape, Chionia, and Irene, the Holy Martyrs  
Rick Page  
Lisa Egan  
8:30AM Lenten Matins  
6:00PM Parish Council Mtg

#### Wednesday, April 17

☪ Symeon the Holy Martyr, Bishop of Persepolis, and those with him  
4:30PM Open Doors  
6:00PM Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

#### Thursday, April 18

Rest of Alla Hamisevich  
☪ 5th Thursday of Lent: The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete  
Christine Jankura  
8:30AM Lenten Matins

#### Friday, April 19

☪ The Holy Hieromartyr Paphnutius

#### Saturday, April 20

☪ 5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn  
Parish Cleanup  
5:30PM Great Vespers

#### Sunday, April 21

☪ Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy  
4:00PM Unction Service

#### Monday, April 22

☪ Theodore of Sykeon  
Commemoration of St Luke

## Saints and Feasts

### April 14

#### **Sunday of St. John Climacus**

The memory of this Saint is celebrated on March 30, where his biography may be found. He is celebrated today because his book, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, is a sure guide to the ascetic life, written by a great man of prayer experienced in all forms of the monastic polity; it teaches the seeker after salvation how to lay a sound foundation for his struggles, how to detect and war against each of the passions, how to avoid the snares laid by the demons, and how to rise from the rudimental virtues to the heights of Godlike love and humility. It is held in such high esteem that it is universally read in its entirety in monasteries during the Great Fast.

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### April 16

#### **Agape, Chionia, and Irene, the Holy Martyrs**

When the Emperor Diocletian was at Aquileia, he learned that these Saints were Christians, and had them brought before him. Because they would not deny Christ, he had them imprisoned, and when he went into Macedonia, he committed them to Dulcitus the Prefect, who, however, lost his understanding and became incapable of doing them any harm. Diocletian then gave Count Sisinius charge over them. He had

Saints Agape and Chionia burned; he ordered that Saint Irene be put in a brothel, but by the providence of God this was not accomplished, and she was shot with an arrow. These holy sisters suffered martyrdom in Thessalonica in the year 295.

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### April 17

#### **Symeon the Holy Martyr, Bishop of Persepolis, and those with him**

This Martyr was Bishop of the royal cities Seleucia and Ctesiphon in Persia. As the number of Christians increased in Persia, building churches and appointing clergy, the Magi, guardians of the Persian religion, and the Jews, who also envied them, accused Symeon to Sapor II, King of Persia, saying that Symeon was a friend of the Roman Emperor and his spy. Then began Sapor's persecution of the Christians of Persia, about the year 343. The Magi together with the Jews destroyed the churches. Saint Symeon was brought before Sapor, and, refusing to worship the sun, was imprisoned. On Holy and Great Friday of that year, Saint Symeon was brought out of prison with a hundred others, bishops, priests, and deacons. As each was taken to be slain, Saint Symeon exhorted him to be of good courage; he was slain last of all. It is said that 1,150 Martyrs were slain; an innumerable multitude of Christians were slain throughout Persia during this persecution, among them Saints Acepsimas, Joseph, and Aethalas (see Nov. 3).

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**April 20**

**5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn**

About the year 626, the Persians, Avars, and Slavs came with a great host and besieged the imperial city of Constantinople while the Emperor Heraclius and the main body of the Byzantine army were absent in the East. Enemy ships filled the sea, especially the Golden Horn, and on land the adversaries were ready for attack with foot-soldiers, horses, and engines of war. Though the citizens courageously withstood them, yet they were few in number and would be unable to repulse the attack of such a great host. Hence, they could not count on any other means of salvation, except the protection of the Theotokos. And truly, suddenly a violent tempest broke up all the ships and submerged them, and the bodies of the invaders were cast out near the Blachernae quarter of the city where the famous Church of the Theotokos stood. Taking courage from this, the people went forth from the city and repulsed the remaining forces, who fled out of fear. In 673, the city was miraculously delivered yet again, this time from an invasion of the Arabs. Then in 717-718, led by the Saracen general Maslamah, the Arab fleet laid siege once more to the city. The numerical superiority of the enemy was so overwhelming that the fall of the Imperial City seemed imminent. But then the Mother of God, together with a multitude of the angelic hosts, appeared suddenly over the city walls. The enemy forces, struck with terror and thrown into a panic at this

apparition, fled in disarray. Soon after this, the Arab fleet was utterly destroyed by a terrible storm in the Aegean Sea on the eve of the Annunciation, March 24, 718. Thenceforth, a special "feast of victory and of thanksgiving" was dedicated to celebrate and commemorate these benefactions. In this magnificent service, the Akathist Hymn is prominent and holds the place of honour. It appears that even before the occasion of the enemy assaults mentioned above, the Akathist Hymn was already in use as the prescribed Service for the Feast of the Annunciation, together with the kontakion, "When the bodiless one learned the secret command," which has the Annunciation as its theme. It was only on the occasion of the great miracle wrought for the Christian populace of the Imperial City on the eve of the Annunciation in 718 that the hymn "To thee, the Champion Leader" was composed, most likely by Saint Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople.

Historians have ascribed the Akathist Hymn to Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (638), to Saint George the Confessor, Bishop of Pisidia (818), or even to Saint Photius the Great (891), all of whom lived either at the time of or after the above-mentioned sieges. However, it appears most likely from its language, content, and style that the true composer of the Akathist Hymn is Saint Romanus the Melodist (6th century).

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## Hymns of the Day



### **Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)**

When the women  
disciples of the Lord  
learned from the angel  
the joyous message of  
Your Resurrection,  
they cast away the

ancestral curse  
and elatedly told the apostles:  
“Death is overthrown!  
Christ God is risen, //  
granting the world great mercy!”

### **Tone 4 Troparion (St. Alexis)**

O righteous Father Alexis,  
our heavenly intercessor and teacher,  
□divine adornment of the Church of Christ! □  
Entreat the Master of All to strengthen the  
Orthodox Faith in America, □  
to grant peace to the world and to our souls  
great mercy.

### **Tone 1 Troparion (St. John Climacus)**

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the  
body,  
you were a wonderworker, O our God-bearing  
Father John.  
You received heavenly gifts through fasting,  
vigil and prayer,  
healing the sick and the souls of those drawn  
to you by faith.  
Glory to Him Who gave you strength!  
Glory to Him Who granted you a ^crown! //  
Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

### **Tone 4 Kontakion (Resurrection)**

My Savior and Redeemer  
as God rose from the tomb and delivered the  
earth-born from their chains.  
He has shattered the gates of hell,  
and as Master, // He has risen on the third day!

### **Tone 5 Kontakion (St. Alexis)**

Let us, the faithful praise the Priest Alexis,  
a bright beacon of Orthodoxy in America, a  
model of patience and humility,  
a worthy shepherd of the Flock of Christ.  
He called back the sheep who had been led  
astray  
and brought them by his preaching to the  
Heavenly Kingdom.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the  
Holy Spirit,*

### **Tone 4 Kontakion (St. John Climacus)**

The Lord truly set you on the heights of  
abstinence,  
to be a guiding star, showing the way to the  
universe, //  
O our father and teacher John

*now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

### **Tone 6 Kontakion (Steadfast Protectress)**

Steadfast Protectress of Christians, □Constant  
Advocate before the Creator;  
despise not the entreating cries of us sinners,  
□but in your goodness come speedily  
to help us who call on you in faith. □  
Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede  
for us,

□ O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you!

*(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following)*

### **Hymn to the Theotokos**

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace:  
the assembly of angels and the race of men.  
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,  
the glory of virgins,  
from whom God was incarnate and became a  
Child -  
our God before the ages.  
He made your body into a throne,  
and your womb He made more spacious than  
the heavens.  
All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace.  
Glory to you!

### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him  
in the highest!  
The righteous shall be in everlasting  
remembrance! He shall not fear evil  
tidings! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## **Gospel and Epistle Readings**

### **Epistle Reading**

#### **Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Psalm 103.24,1.**

O Lord, how manifold are your works. You  
have made all things in wisdom.  
Verse: Bless the Lord, O my soul.

### **The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20.**

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

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### **Gospel Reading**

#### **The Reading is from Mark 9:17-31**

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation,

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how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

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## Wisdom of the Fathers

Seest thou how He now proceeds to lay

beforehand in them the foundation of His doctrine about fasting? ... See, at any rate, how many blessings spring from them both. For he that is praying as he ought, and fasting, hath not many wants, and he that hath not many wants, cannot be covetous; ...

### **St. John Chrysostom**

*Homily 57 on Matthew 17,4,5. B#54, pp.355,356., 4th Century*

... he that is not covetous, will be also more disposed for almsgiving. He that fasts is light, and winged, and prays with wakefulness, and quenches his wicked lusts, and propitiates God, and humbles his soul when lifted up. Therefore even the apostles were almost always fasting.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

*Homily 57 on Matthew 17,4,5. B#54, pp.355,356., 4th Century*

## Beyond the Sermon



Metropolitan Anthony of  
Sourozh  
SAINT JOHN OF THE  
LADDER  
9 April 1989

In the Name of the  
Father, the Son

and the Holy Ghost.

Lent is a time of repentance, a time when our heart of stone must be made by the power of God into a heart of flesh, from insensitive to become perceptive, from cold and hard to become warm and open to others, and indeed, to God Himself.

Lent is a time of renewal when like spring, everything become new again; when our life that had gone into a twilight becomes alive with all the intensity which God can communicate to us, humans, by making us partakers of His Holy Spirit, by making us partakers, through the Holy Sacraments and the direct gift of God, of the Divine nature. It is a time of reconciliation, and reconciliation is a joy: it is God's joy, and it is our joy; it's a new beginning.

Today is the day of Saint John of the Ladder, and I want to read to you a few phrases of his which are relevant to the particular time of the year in which we live:

“Repentance, that is our return to God is renewal of our baptism; it is our effort to renew our covenant with God, our promise to change our life. It is a time when we can acquire humility, that is peace; peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with all the created world. Repentance is born of hope and rejection of despair. And one who repents, is one who deserves condemnation - and yet, goes away from the tribunal without shame, because repentance is our peace with God. And this is achieved through a worthy life, alien to the sins we committed in the past. Repentance is cleansing of our conscience. Repentance implies carrying off all sadness and pain.”

And if we ask ourselves how we can achieve it, how we can come to this, how we

can respond to God Who receives us as the father received the prodigal son, a God Who has waited for us, longingly, Who, rejected, never turned away from us - how can we respond to Him? Here is a short word about prayer :

“Don't use in prayer falsely wise words; because it is often the simple and uncomplicated whispering of children that rejoices our heavenly Father. Don't try to say much when you speak to God, because otherwise your mind in search of words will be lost in them. One word spoken by the publican brought Divine mercy upon him; one word filled with faith saved the thief on the cross. The use of the multiplicity of words when we pray disperses our mind and fill it with imaginations. One word spoken to God collects the mind in His presence. And if a word, in thy prayer, reaches you deeply, if you perceive it profoundly - dwell in it, dwell in it, because at such moments our Angel guardian prays with us because we are true to ourselves and to God”.

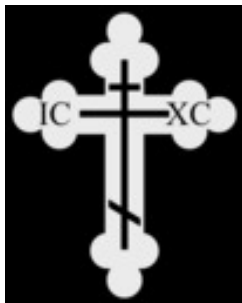
Let us remember what Saint John of the Ladder says, even if you forget the short comments (which I introduced) to make his text more readily understandable. Let us remember his words because he was a man who knew what it means to turn to God, to stay with God, to be God's joy and to rejoice in Him. He is offered us in this time, when we are ascending towards the days of the Passion, he is offered us as an example of what grace Divine can do to transform an ordinary, simple human being into a light to the world.

Let us learn from him, let us follow his example, let us rejoice in what God can do by His power in a human being, and let

us confidently, with faith, with an exulting and yet serene joy follow the advice, listen to God begging us to find a way of life and telling us that with Him, in Him we will be alive, because He is the Truth but also the Way and also Life eternal. Amen.



## The Back Page



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The QR Code here may be used as well.



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