INTRODUCTION

This feast, celebrated on February 2, is known in the Orthodox Church as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Another name for the feast is The Meeting of our Lord. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians call the feast, The Purification of the Holy Virgin. About 450 AD in Jerusalem, people began the custom of holding lighted candles during the Divine Liturgy of this feast day.

BIBLICAL STORY

The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

Joseph and Mary were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and

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St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church is a parish under the spiritual and ecclesiastical shepherding of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The Mission of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church is to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our worship, fellowship, spiritual growth, witness, and service. We invite all people to join us on this journey toward the Kingdom of Heaven.

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Vigil Candles - January

01/03 - George Kouvelas - Memory Eternal. By Elaine Kimmerly & family.
- For unborn twins - better health. By Miriam Haddad.
- For Peter Kappas - Memory Eternal. By Art Tselepis.

01/10 - For unborn twins - better health. By Miriam Haddad.
- For Helen Bistolarides - Memory Eternal. By Rula Koutras.
- For the Carenback family - Family & Relatives. By Eleni Morris.

01/17 - For John Dariotis - Memory Eternal. By Sophia Bernhart & Johnathan; Lita & Gerald Hoeffling & family; Stella & John Korakis & family; Panayiota & George Smiaris & family.

01/24 - For Anthony Koutras - for his nameday. By Rula Koutras.
- For the Koutras family. By Rula Koutras.
- Fr. Gregory & Louis Economou - Memory Eternal. By Soula Economou..
From Fr. Timothy

THE MEETING OF THE LORD: GIVING & RECEIVING

I know a father who said that the weirdest thing about having children is the moment when you bring them home from the hospital...and they stay. It's one of the great and strange things about family, that we come together and we stay. Except that, at least with our children, we know that they aren't going to stay. They will be with us for awhile – under our care and our responsibility – but eventually they will grow up and leave. They are forever a part of our lives – a part of the deepest part of our beings – but they aren't ours. We don't own them, or control them, and the part of their lives when they are under our care and our authority is relatively short. That time when they leave is a reminder – if we ever forget – that neither they nor anything else is truly ours. Rather, they are committed into our care for a time. Everything and everyone – from our smallest possession to our children and even our own lives – ultimately belongs to God and are given to us not for us to “own,” but for our salvation.

On February 2nd we celebrate the feast of the Presentation or Meeting of the Lord in the Temple. On this feast we commemorate the bringing of Christ by St. Joseph and the Theotokos on the 40th day after His birth to be presented and dedicated in the Temple as a first-born son, in keeping with the Law. What we see in this dedication – whether that of Christ or the 40-day blessing we observe with all of our children ever since – is the basic shape of our life and relationship with Christ that is the ever-repeating cycle of “giving-thanksgiving-blessing-returning.” The child is given by God, offered at the Temple in thanksgiving by the parents, blessed by God, and given back to the parents. This is the exact same cycle we see in the offering of the Vasilopita, or the Artoklasia, our own baptisms, and most clearly in the offering of the Eucharist. God gives us wheat and grapes which we refine and labor to turn into bread and wine. We then offer the bread and wine in thanksgiving to God in token of all of His gifts, which He consecrates as the Body and Blood of Christ, and then offers back to us to consecrate us.

This basic purpose of living out communion, our own sanctification, and the sanctification of the world – this is actually the purpose of all of our offerings. When Christ is brought by His parents to be dedicated to God, He especially is dedicated and then given back to them for their salvation and that of the world. They are entrusted with His care, as all parents are entrusted with the care of their children, but He does not belong to them. We see this later when they “lose” him in Jerusalem and, after searching for three days, finally find Him in the Temple – in His Father’s house. It’s so easy for us to mistake the things and even the people in our lives as belonging to us, and existing only for our own happiness, or comfort, or even domination. They are not – they belong to God, and they are entrusted to us (as we are entrusted to them) for their salvation, our salvation, and the salvation of the world.

That salvation is nothing less than communion – literally complete union – with our Father Who is in heaven, a union that lasts for and exists in eternity. We enter into that union by living out this cycle of “giving-thanksgiving-blessing-returning” not only in the Eucharist, but in every part of our lives. It is why we begin our lives with the 40-day blessing of mother and child. Offering our children to God reminds us (even as He blesses them and gives them back to us) that they are not really ours to begin with. We share in their creation, and He entrusts them to us for their upbringing and safekeeping – but we do not own them. The feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple is, in many ways, the feast of children in Church, because this feast perhaps more than any other reminds us that our children (like Christ) belong in and are welcome in their Father’s house.

As we celebrate the giving, thanksgiving, blessing, and returning of Christ, then, may we always remember that our children, our possessions, and even our lives are not “ours,” but belong first and foremost to God. Let us remember – especially as we begin to look ahead to Great Lent – to sanctify every aspect of our lives – from the greatest to the most mundane – through this cycle of giving-thanksgiving-blessing-returning, so that as parents, husbands, wives, children, friends, family, and neighbors we might enter continually ever deeper into the eternal reality of the Kingdom of Heaven – God with us. Blessed feast!
Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said:

"Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."

Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshiping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah.

After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom.

**ICON OF THE FEAST**

The Icon shows that the meeting takes place inside the Temple and in front of the altar. The altar has a book or a scroll on it and is covered by a canopy. The Theotokos stands to the left and is holding out her hands in a gesture of offering. The one hand of the Theotokos is covered by her cloak or as it is known, the maphorion. She has just handed her Son to Simeon.

Christ is shown as a child, but He is not in swaddling clothes. He is clothed in a small dress and his legs are bare. Jesus appears to be giving a blessing. Simeon holds Jesus with both hands which are covered. This shows the reverence Simeon had for the Messiah. Simeon is bare headed and there is nothing to show that he is a priest. Some biblical scholars say that Simeon was probably a priest of the Temple or a Doctor of the Law.

Joseph is behind the Theotokos. He is carrying the two turtle doves for the sacrifice. Anna the Prophetess is also standing behind the Theotokos and is pointing to the Christ child.

The words Simeon spoke when he saw the Christ Child are known as "St. Simeon's Prayer." This prayer is sung daily at the evening Vespers services of the Orthodox Church.

In the Orthodox Church, both baby boys and baby girls are taken to the Church on the fortieth day after their birth. This is done in remembrance of the Theotokos and Joseph taking the infant Jesus to the Temple.

**ORTHODOX CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION**

This Feast of our Lord is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is conducted on the day of the Feast and preceded by the Matins service. A Great Vespers is conducted on the evening before the day of the Feast. Scripture readings for the Feast are the following: at Great Vespers – extracts from Exodus 12:15-13:16; Leviticus 12 and Numbers 8; Isaiah 6:1-12, and 19:1,3-5,12,16,19-21; at Matins – Luke 2:25-32; at the Divine Liturgy –Hebrews 7:7-17 and Luke 2:22-40.
HYMNS OF THE FEAST

Dismissal Hymn (First Mode)
Lady full of grace, rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, for Christ our God, the Sun of righteousness has risen from you and He illumined those in darkness. And you, righteous Elder, be glad in heart, receiving in your embraces the One who liberates our souls and bestows on us the Resurrection.

Kontakion (First Mode)
You sanctified the virginal womb by Your birth, O Lord, and blessed the hands of Symeon fittingly, O Christ God; and even now You came and saved us. Now, give peace to our Nation in time of war, and empower our Leaders, so loved by You, the only one who loves humanity.

SAINTS/FEASTS OF THE MONTH

February 6
Photios the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople
As for the thrice-blessed Photius, the great and most resplendent Father and teacher of the Church, the Confessor of the Faith and Equal to the Apostles, he lived during the years of the emperors Michael (the son of Theophilus), Basil the Macedonian, and Leo his son. He was the son of pious parents, Sergius and Irene, who suffered for the Faith under the Iconoclast Emperor Theophilus; he was also a nephew of Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople (see Feb. 25). He was born in Constantinople, where he excelled in the foremost imperial ministries, while ever practicing a virtuous and godly life. An upright and honorable man of singular learning and erudition, he was raised to the apostolic, ecumenical, and patriarchal throne of Constantinople in the year 857.

The many struggles that this thrice-blessed one undertook for the Orthodox Faith against the Manichaeans, the Iconoclasts, and other heretics, and the attacks and assaults that he endured from Nicholas I, the haughty and ambitious Pope of Rome, and the great persecutions and distresses he suffered, are beyond number. Contending against the Latin error of the filioque, that is, the doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, he demonstrated clearly with his Mystagogy on the Holy Spirit how the filioque destroys the unity and equality of the Trinity. He has left us many theological writings, panegyric homilies, and epistles, including one to Boris, the Sovereign of Bulgaria, in which he set forth for him the history and teachings of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Having tended the Church of Christ in holiness and in an evangelical manner, and with fervent zeal having rooted out all the tares of every alien teaching, he departed to the Lord in the Monastery of the Armenians on February 6, 891.

February 8
Theodore the Commander & Great Martyr
The holy Martyr Theodore was from Euchaita of Galatia and dwelt in Heraclea of Pontus. He was a renowned commander in the military, and the report came to the Emperor Licinius that he was a Christian and abominated the idols. Licinius therefore sent certain men to him from Nicomedia, to honor him and ask him to appear before him. Through them, however, Saint Theodore sent back a message that it was necessary for various reasons, that Licinius come to Heraclea. Licinius, seeing in this a hope of turning Saint Theodore away from Christ did as was asked of him.

When the Emperor came to Heraclea, Saint Theodore met him with honor, and the Emperor in turn gave Theodore his hand, believing that through
him he would be able to draw the Christians to the worship of his idols. Seated upon his throne in the midst of the people, he publicly bade Theodore offer sacrifice to the gods. But Theodore asked that the emperor entrust him with the most venerable of his gods, those of gold and silver, that he might take them home and himself attend upon them that evening, promising that the following day he would honor them in public. The Emperor, filled with joy at these tidings, gave command that Theodore’s request be fulfilled.

When the Saint had taken the idols home, he broke them in pieces and distributed the gold and silver to the poor by night. The next day a centurion named Maxentius told Licinius that he had seen a pauper pass by carrying the head of Artemis. Saint Theodore, far from repenting of this, confessed Christ boldly. Licinius, in an uncontrollable fury, had the Saint put to many torments, then crucified. While upon the cross, the holy Martyr was further tormented -- his privy parts were cut off, he was shot with arrows, his eyes were put out, and he was left on the cross to die. The next day Licinius sent men to take his corpse and cast it into the sea; but they found the Saint alive and perfectly whole. Through this, many believed in Christ. Seeing his own men turning to Christ, and the city in an uproar, Licinius had Theodore beheaded, about the year 320. The Saint’s holy relics were returned to his ancestral home on June 8, which is also a feast of the Great Martyr Theodore.

February 14
Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles & Teacher of the Slavs

Saint Cyril was born in Thessaloniki in the early 9th century to pious parents. His family was one of only a few Byzantines in Thessaloniki at that time since it was largely populated by Slavs. Growing up in this situation, Cyril learned the Slavonic language, which later in life would serve him and the Church at large. He continued his education in Constantinople with his brother Methodios (see May 11th), each taking to their particular interests: Methodios in politics, and Cyril in philosophy and teaching.

The two brothers were approached in 850 by Saint Photios the Great (see February 6th) to lead a diplomatic mission to the Khazars, the people who inhabited the western shore of the Caspian Sea. Cyril and Methodios accepted this mission and departed to the North. After the success of this trip, the brothers lived for a time in a monastery on Mount Olympus where Methodios became a monk.

At this time the brothers utilized their childhood Slavonic education to develop a written alphabet for the Slavonic language, which to this time had never existed. This alphabet became known as the Glagolitic Alphabet. On their own instigation, the brothers began translating the Gospels and liturgical service books into Slavonic.

Providentially, Cyril and Methodios were again called upon for a mission, this time to travel to Moravia to spread the Christian faith to King Rostislav (see May 11th) and his people. The brothers departed in 862, bringing with them their Slavonic alphabet and service books. After five years of service, the brothers made their way to Rome in 867 to have members of their company ordained to the priesthood to aid in the missionary journey. The group of missionaries celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Rome in the Slavonic language for the very first time with members of their party being ordained as they intended. While in Rome, Cyril fell deathly ill. He was tonsured a monk and died. His brother Methodios continued their missionary work, utilizing the Glagolitic Alphabet. Cyril and his brother Methodios are commemorated together on May 11th.

February 17
Theodore the Recruit & Great-Martyr

Saint Theodore who was from Amasia of Pontus, contested during the reign of Maximian (286-305). He was called Tyro, from the Latin Tiro, because he was a newly enlisted recruit. When it was reported that he was a Christian, he boldly confessed Christ; the ruler, hoping that he would repent, gave him time to consider the matter more completely and then give answer. Theodore gave answer by setting
fire to the temple of Cybele, the "mother of the gods," and for this he suffered a martyr's death by fire. See also the First Saturday of the Fast.

February 18
Leo the Great, Pope of Rome

According to some, this Saint was born in Rome, but according to others in Tyrrenia (Tuscany), and was consecrated to the archiepiscopal throne of Rome in 440. In 448, when Saint Flavian, Archbishop of Constantinople, summoned Eutyches, an archimandrite in Constantinople, to give account for his teaching that there was only one nature in Christ after the Incarnation, Eutyches appealed to Saint Leo in Rome. After Saint Leo had carefully examined Eutyches's teachings, he wrote an epistle to Saint Flavian, setting forth the Orthodox teaching of the person of Christ, and His two natures, and also counseling Flavian that, should Eutyches sincerely repent of his error, he should be received back with all good will. At the Council held in Ephesus in 449, which was presided over by Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria (and which Saint Leo, in a letter to the holy Empress Pulcheria in 451, was the first to call "The Robber Council"), Dioscorus, having military might behind him, did not allow Saint Leo's epistle to Flavian to be read, although repeatedly asked to do so; even before the Robber Council was held, Dioscorus had uncanonically received the unrepentant Eutyches back into communion. Because Saint Leo had many cares in Rome owing to the wars of Attila the Hun and other barbarians, in 451 he sent four delegates to the Fourth Ecumenical Council, where 630 Fathers gathered in Chalcedon during the reign of Marcian, to condemn the teachings of Eutyches and those who supported him. Saint Leo's epistle to Flavian was read at the Fourth Council, and was confirmed by the Holy Fathers as the Orthodox teaching on the incarnate person of our Lord; it is also called the "Tome of Leo." The Saint wrote many works in Latin; he reposed in 461. See also Saint Anatolius, July 3.

February 23
Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

This apostolic and prophetic man, and model of faith and truth, was a disciple of John the Evangelist, successor of Bucolus (Feb. 6), and teacher of Irenaeus (Aug. 23). He was an old man and full of days when the fifth persecution was raised against the Christians under Marcus Aurelius. When his pursuers, sent by the ruler, found Polycarp, he commanded that they be given something to eat and drink, then asked them to give him an hour to pray; he stood and prayed, full of grace, for two hours, so that his captors repented that they had come against so venerable a man. He was brought by the Proconsul of Smyrna into the stadium and was commanded, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, 'Away with the atheists.'" By atheists, the Proconsul meant the Christians. But Polycarp, gazing at the heathen in the stadium, waved his hand towards them and said, "Away with the atheists." When the Proconsul urged him to blaspheme against Christ, he said: "I have been serving Christ for eighty-six years, and He has wronged me in nothing; how can I blaspheme my King Who has saved me?" But the tyrant became enraged at these words and commanded that he be cast into the fire, and thus he gloriously expired about the year 163. As Eusebius says, "Polycarp everywhere taught what he had also learned from the Apostles, which also the Church has handed down; and this alone is true" (Eccl. Hist., Book IV, ch. 14,15).

(See goarch.org/chapel for additional saints' lives)
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<th>SUNDAY</th>
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<td>28 Sunday of the Prodigal Son</td>
<td>Righteous John Cassian Basil the Confessor I Corinthians 6:12-20 Luke 15:11-32 Orthros (8:50 am) Divine Liturgy (10:00 am)</td>
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- Shaded days denote a fast day.
- ✺ denotes a Liturgy
- ❋ Great Vespers/Compline
- ♢ Akathist/Paraklesis
- ☎ Presanctified Liturgy
- ✌ fish/wine/oil allowed
- ⛯ wine/oil allowed
"TIME FOR A CHECK-UP"

CONFESSION DAYS BEFORE GREAT LENT

As we begin to prepare for the upcoming season of Great Lent, Fr. Timothy will be available on the following days to hear confessions, as well as by appointment.

**Saturday, February 27th**: 12pm - 4pm  
**Saturday, March 6th**: 1pm - 4pm  
**Saturday, March 13th**: 1pm - 4pm

If one of those days does not work for you, or if you have concerns related to COVID, please call or email Father to make an appointment (Church: (989) 331-5600 / frtimothycook@gmail.com).

Confession is about more than Great Lent, it is a sacrament of the Church and a vital part of our spiritual lives. A good general recommendation is that we should, in an ideal world, go to Confession four times a year (more, as needed) - once before each of the great fasts (Lent, the Apostles' Fast, the Dormition Fast, and the Nativity Fast). At the very least, we should go to confession at least once a year.

Click here for a video introduction to the Sacrament of Confession, courtesy of "Be the Bee"

Click here for a guide on how to prepare for Confession.  
(Ask Fr. Timothy if you have questions or need additional help)

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METROPOLIS OF DETROIT COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**  
(see website or call office with questions)

- Anyone who is currently experiencing **any** symptoms of illness **must** stay at home.
- All at risk persons are strongly encouraged to stay at home.
  - At risk persons are those with pre-existing health conditions, and those over the age of 65.

St. Demetrios will continue to live-stream all of our services, so anyone who is so desires may continue streaming our services from home.

- Everyone is **required** to wear masks. Masks are available at the door if needed.
- The faithful should refrain from kissing the icons and other holy objects, showing reverence instead with a bow.
INTRODUCTION

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the first Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. It marks the beginning of a time of preparation for the spiritual journey of Lent, a time for Orthodox Christians to draw closer to God through worship, prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. It is also on this day that the Triodion is introduced, a liturgical book that contains the services from this Sunday, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), to Great and Holy Saturday.

BIBLICAL STORY

The name for this Sunday is taken from the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ found in Luke 18:10-14. This is the story of two men, one a Pharisee, a member of a Jewish sect known for its diligent observance of the Law, and the other a Publican, a government official charged with the responsibility of collecting taxes.

Both men enter the temple, and the Pharisee stands openly and prays, thanking God that he is not like other men, specifically extortioners, the unjust, adulterers, “or even this tax collector” (v. 11). He then begins to list his religious accomplishments by stating, “I fast twice a week, and I give tithes of all that I possess” (v. 12).

In direct contrast to the pride of the Pharisee, the Publican goes to a place where he will not be noticed by others and beats his breast saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (v. 13).

Having told this story, Jesus affirms that it was the Publican who returned home justified and forgiven rather than the Pharisee. He states, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (v. 14).

The theme of this parable is repentance. Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting-point of the journey to Pascha. To repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past. The Greek term metanoia means “change of mind.” To repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship with God and with others. The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self-satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him. The Gospel depicts him as a man that is pleased only with himself who thinks that he has complied with all of the requirements of religion. But in his pride, he has falsified the meaning of true religion and faith. He has reduced these to external observations, measuring his piety by the amount of money he gives.

The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a “change of mind.” He humbles himself, and his humility justifies him before God. He becomes, in the words of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3), “poor in spirit.” He acknowledges that he is a sinner, and he knows that salvation is only found in the mercy of God. Here we find an example of true humility, an essential aspect of repentance. A “change of mind” and the transformation of our lives can only happen when we humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our willingness to turn from sin, and receive His grace into our lives.

Our preparation for Lent thus begins with a prayer for humility, the beginning of true repentance. Through repentance, we can find and return to the true order of things, a restoration of our spiritual vision that will guide us in a very difficult and challenging world. By entering Great Lent in humility
and repentance, we can attain deeper communion with God as we receive His forgiveness and He blesses by guiding us to greater spiritual heights.

**ICON OF THE FEAST**

The icon of the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee shows both men in the manner in which they enter the temple to pray. The Pharisee goes to a very prominent place where others will see him. The positions of his hands indicate that he is addressing God by speaking of his stature and accomplishments. In contrast, the Publican enters and remains in a low place, far from the holiest parts of the temple. His posture shows his openness to God, his humility, and his petition for mercy.

The icon also shows the state of both men as they leave the temple. Following the words of Christ in Luke 18:14, the Publican has now been exalted in the kingdom of God because of his humility. He leaves the temple forgiven, and he shows that he remains open to the will of God. In contrast, the Pharisee leaves the temple unjustified, still in need of forgiveness. Because of his pride and lack of repentance, he will be humbled before God, the One who knows the condition of each person’s soul and who will offer the gift of salvation to those who come to Him in true repentance.

**THE SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON - FEB. 28TH**

The parable is the story of a man and his two sons. The youngest of the sons asks his father to give him his inheritance. The father does this, and soon after the son leaves and journeys to a distant country (vv. 11-13).

After the younger son arrives, he squanders all of his possessions with “prodigal” living. Within a short period of time, he wastes everything. A severe famine comes, but he has nothing and falls into great need (vv. 13-14).

He is able to find work feeding swine, but this does not improve his situation. The Scriptures say, “He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, but no one gave him anything” (vv. 15-16).

The parable says that in the midst of his dire conditions, he came to himself. He realized that his father’s hired servants have enough to eat and food to spare, while he perishes with hunger. He says, “I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants’” (vv. 17-19).

He arose and returned to his father. But as he approached, his father saw him at a great distance. The father had compassion on his son, ran to meet him, embraced him, and kissed him. The son admitted his sinfulness and his unworthiness to be called a son, but in his joy at the return of his son, the father called his servants to bring the best robe,
a ring for his son’s finger, and sandals for his feet. He also called for the fatted calf to be killed for a feast. He exclaimed, “For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (vv. 20-24).

While they were feasting and celebrating the return of the prodigal son, the older son comes and inquires about what is happening. He is told that his brother had returned and that his father has received him with a feast. The older brother becomes angry and will not go in to the feast. The father comes out and pleads with him, but the older son answers by saying he has been faithful to his father for many years and yet the father never gave him the opportunity for such feasting. He expresses his anger and jealousy over his brother who was received in such a manner after he squandered his inheritance (vv. 25-30).

The father responds by telling his oldest son, “You are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (vv. 31-32).

The parable of the Prodigal Son forms an exact icon of repentance at its different stages. Sin is exile, enslavement to strangers, hunger. Repentance is the return from exile to our true home; it is to receive back our inheritance and freedom in the Father’s house. But repentance implies action: “I will rise up and go…” (v. 18). To repent is not just to feel dissatisfied, but to make a decision and to act upon it.

In the words of our Lord, we also learn of three things through this parable: the condition of the sinner, the rule of repentance, and the greatness of God’s compassion. The reading of this parable follows the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee so that, seeing in the person of the Prodigal Son our own sinful condition, we might come to our senses and return to God through repentance. For those who have fallen into great despair over their sins thinking that there is no forgiveness, this parable offers hope. The Heavenly Father is patiently and lovingly waiting for our return. There is no sin that can overcome His love for us.

Finally, this parable offers us insight into the world in which we live. It is a world where the activities of people are disconnected and not ordered toward the fulfillment of God’s divine purpose for life. It is a world of incoherent pursuits, of illusory strivings, of craving for foods and drinks that do not satisfy, a world where nothing ultimately makes sense, and a world engulfed in untruth, deceit and sin. It is the exact opposite of the world as created by God and potentially recreated by his Son and Spirit. There is no cure for the evils of our age unless we return to God. The world in which we live is not a normal world, but a wasteland. This is why in the Slavic tradition of the Orthodox Church the reading of Psalm 137 is added to the Matins service for this and the following two Sundays. This nostalgic lament of the Hebrew exiles states: “By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion. On the willows we hung our harps, for how could we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land” (Psalm 137).

Here we can see the challenge of life in this world and the alienation from God that can happen when sin reigns in our lives. As a result of sin in our lives, we lose the joy of communion with God, we defile and lose our spiritual beauty, and we find ourselves far away from our real home, our real life. In true repentance, we realize this, and we express a deep desire to return, to recover what has been lost. On this day the Church reminds us of what we have abandoned and lost, and beckons us to find the desire and power to return. Our Heavenly Father is waiting and ready to receive us with His loving forgiveness and His saving embrace.

**ICON OF THE FEAST**

The icon of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son shows the prodigal being received by his father upon his return. We are presented with an image of a warm and loving embrace, the son showing his need for his father, an attitude that represents repentance, love, and hope for renewal and restoration. The father is shown full of compassion for his son, having born the burden of his sin and suffering, but now filled with joy that he has returned.

(For more on these Sundays, or on Triodion and Great Lent - including hymns, prayers, reflections, and much more - visit goarch.org/lent)
**Stewardship Report - End of January, 2021**

Our 2021 Stewardship goal is **$170,000**. As of January 25 we have received pledges reflecting 39% of that goal. Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge cards for 2021. Please join them in their support of our St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church and submit your pledge card today!

*(Please submit any corrections to the Church office)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Pledges: $66,490.00</th>
<th>Offerings Received: $15,265.00</th>
<th>Largest pledge: $6,760.00</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stewards pledged: 43</td>
<td>Offerings Unfulfilled: $52,750.00</td>
<td>Median pledge: $1,000.00</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev. Fr. Timothy et Pr. Catherine Cook</th>
<th>Soula Economou</th>
<th>Adam &amp; Eleni Morris</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Fr. Peter et Pr. Peggy Bistolarides</td>
<td>Bill &amp; Alexia Evans</td>
<td>Elevtheria Paez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Augusta Ahejew</td>
<td>Betty Lou Gustafson</td>
<td>Marge Paron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Petro &amp; Sandra Ahejew</td>
<td>Evan &amp; Alexia Houpis</td>
<td>Dr. Nicholas &amp; Julie Paron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Thomas &amp; Angela Barris</td>
<td>Matina Ioannidis</td>
<td>Elaine Rapanos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnathan Bernhart</td>
<td>Risty &amp; Karen Kalivas</td>
<td>Jason Rapanos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophia Bernhart</td>
<td>Mersina Karris</td>
<td>George &amp; Fran Rouman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas &amp; Joan Billingsley</td>
<td>Katerina &amp; Athanasios Katsiouras</td>
<td>F.T. &amp; Beverly Siradakis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. John &amp; Dr. Judy Blebea</td>
<td>Ron &amp; Connie Kelso</td>
<td>Elaine Tambouridis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brady &amp; Sandy Duke</td>
<td>Elaine Kimmerly</td>
<td>William &amp; Thespo Tarachas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark &amp; Anastasia Bristley</td>
<td>James &amp; Mary Kokas</td>
<td>Art Tselepis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia Caris</td>
<td>Nick &amp; Lena Legakis</td>
<td>John Veremis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill &amp; Vonnie DeLong</td>
<td>Grace Makrianis</td>
<td>Theodore &amp; Georgia Veremis</td>
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<td>Barbara Milionis</td>
<td>George &amp; Gladys Zubulake</td>
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</table>
St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church  
2021 Stewardship Commitment Form

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.” - Matthew 14:14

The Greatest of These is Love

Please bring this form to the Church or mail it to the Church Office at 4970 Mackinaw Rd., Saginaw, MI 48603

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Street Address: __________________________ City: __________ State: ___ Zip Code: __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual or Family</th>
<th>Spouse (if applicable)</th>
<th>Children (if applicable)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Home Tel:</td>
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<td>Mobile Tel:</td>
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<td>Work Tel:</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
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<td>Occupation: (Last, current)</td>
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</tbody>
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In gratitude for God's blessings, I/we pledge to contribute for Christ's work at St. Demetrios Church for 2021.

$_________ annually

Please indicate areas of expertise or interest where you would like to serve:
(Individuals should provide a check mark and families provide "H" for husband, "W" for wife and "C" for children)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADMINISTRATION</th>
<th>__ Audit Committee</th>
<th>__ Website / Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__ Election Committee</td>
<td>__ Education</td>
<td>__ Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ Finance Committee</td>
<td>__ Bookstore / Library</td>
<td>__ Intro to Orthodoxy</td>
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<tr>
<td>__ Parish Council</td>
<td>__ LITURGICAL</td>
<td>__ Altar Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ Office help</td>
<td>__ Music Ministries</td>
<td>__ Baking Phosphora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ Stewardship Committee</td>
<td>__ MINISTRIES</td>
<td>__ Coffee Hour Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILDING &amp; GROUNDS</td>
<td>__ Iconography / Beautification</td>
<td>__ Sanctuary &amp; Altar Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ Garden &amp; Landscape</td>
<td>__ Property Maintenance</td>
<td>__ Baking Phosphora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ Communication</td>
<td>__ Computer / Technical</td>
<td>__ Coffee Hour Ministry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I/we would like to receive notifications from St. Demetrios by: ___ email ___ paper mail

You can also submit your stewardship card and your contributions online at www.stdemetrios.mi.goarch.org/stewardship

CONFIDENTIAL: For Authorized Parish Personnel Only
Parish Happenings

**Christmas Outreach**

We rejoice that - in spite of COVID restrictions - we still managed to continue our yearly tradition of Food Baskets and gifts for the needy at Christmastime. Because we were working with a smaller crew, we prepared and distributed fewer baskets this year - but not many. Thanks to the efforts of our gallant crew, we distributed food to more than 60 families with gifts for 78 children (and we did it quicker and more efficiently than ever before). We deeply appreciate all of our volunteers who turned out for all the phases of this ministry - those who donated funds to purchase food and gifts, those who purchased gifts for the Giving Tree, and all those who offered their time to unload, pack, and deliver the food. Most of all, we all especially thank Andrea Ferris for all of her hard work and dedication to this ministry.

We look forward to December, 2021!

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**Funerals**

**Russ "Vasili" Ahejew** (1945-2020)  
December 10th, 2020

**Christos Samaras** (1935-2020)  
December 28th, 2020

May their memory be eternal

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**Chriismation**

**Brady "Stephen" Duke**  
We were delighted to welcome Brady Duke into the Orthodox Church on December 27th - the feast of his new patron saint, St. Stephen the Protodeacon and First-Martyr! (It also happened to be his birthday). His sponsor is Art Tselepis. May God grant them both many years!
WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

FEASTDAY
PEACE
PRESENTATION
SALVATION
SHORT
SIMEON
TEMPLE
ZACCHAEUS

P J D L B A P E I T P H B E X N X Z P A C
J O X L S N R L Y D Z M O L A T L Y R C
L P C D O F E P T S Y X N C V N W T E R
V Z E E O Q S M D V R K C S H O R T T L
U N M A J Y E E R P C H Z H Y Y Y C M S
S I S Y C G N T V M A L D B C W F Y J S
S C C P A E T Y V E N O I T A V L A S B
S Z V B E D A K U D I O T D R Z N Z W E
O Y Y Q S K T S C U N N L W I B J U R E
W B U X K M I S P O P P M O V O Y J D L
X W Q L U S O R A R K I T X J R L X P S
M P G U J W N T L E Z K D M O W O E W E
G T S G K F P X T K F R Z X D A P J V Y

WHAT'S IN THE ICON?

Here is another icon of the Presentation of the Lord.

You can find baby Jesus. Do you remember the name of the person holding Him?

Do you see the baby Jesus blessing Simeon?