

**SLAVA ISUSU CHRISTU!  
SLAVA VO V'IKI!**



**GLORY TO JESUS CHIRST!  
GLORY FOREVER!**

**January 24, 2016  
Sunday of the Prodigal Son**

*Please remember in your prayers* those confined to home, nursing facility or hospital. *Please pray especially for Brother Gus, OFM, Barbara C., John S., Margaret, Tom K., Deacon Richard, Hiromi, Tammy, Darren, Theresa, Bill, Bernice, Augustina, Fr. Greg and Fr. Jody.* If you would like to add a name to the prayer list, please give a written note or email to Fr. Jerome or Deacon Larry. Communion calls are made on the week of the first Friday of each month. Please call the rectory if you or a family member wishes to be visited, either permanently or temporarily. Don't wait until there is a crisis to call. The sacraments should be brought to the sick on a regular basis.

*There will be no pirohi making sessions on Monday, Jan 25<sup>th</sup>.* Sessions will resume on Monday, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 AM. New volunteers are always welcome to assist in this valuable parish fund raiser. Please consider being a volunteer. Thank You.

*St. John Bingo* is held every Tuesday night in the church hall. Doors open at 4:30 PM and bingo begins at 6:00 PM. Please patronize our parish bingo and bring a friend!

*Please pick up your 2016 envelopes* in the church vestibule. We ask that you now use these 2016 envelopes. Please do not submit any 2015 envelopes. Envelope numbers have been changed for 2016 so in order to be assured proper credit for your donations, only use the 2016 envelopes.

*Area GCU Lodge* will hold its first quarter meeting in our church hall on Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 1:00 PM. All members are asked to attend. Activities for the year will be discussed and delegates will be elected for the upcoming GCU Convention in June.

*Aluminum Cans* – We are still collecting aluminum cans to help in raising funds for the parish. You can bring the cans in whenever the church is open for Divine Liturgy, or call the rectory to make other arrangements for dropping off cans. Please remember: *aluminum cans only* and please be sure all liquids have been removed.

*Please remember to return your parish census forms as soon as possible. You may return the forms by placing them in the collection basket. Thank You!*

## ***From the Deacon ...Gospel Reflection***

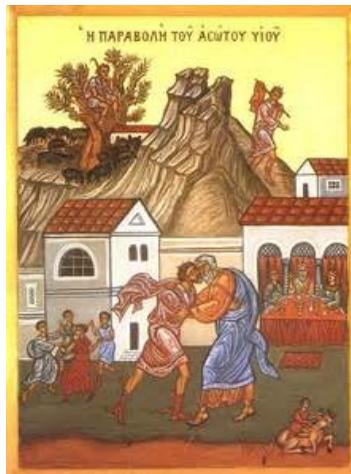
There are certainly occasions where dissension in families leads to hard feelings and resentment. Family members may become estranged and leave their families behind. But this separation only adds to even more hostility and anguish. The situation with God, however, is quite different. He will always give us ample space and opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the parable of the prodigal son, two brothers divide up their father's wealth. One stays at home while the other journeys to a foreign country and wastes all of his inheritance. When he himself realizes the error of his ways, he resolves to return home and beg his father's forgiveness. Likewise, God allows us to contemplate our mistakes and our sins and learn from them.

When the father sees his son returning home, he rushes out to meet him, forgiving him and rejoicing that his son "was lost and now is found" (Luke 15:24).

But what of the older brother? He was unforgiving and indignant that his younger brother was welcomed home. How much better it would have been for everyone involved to welcome back his brother, who realizes the mistakes he has made, and seeks to correct those mistakes. How can we ask God to forgive us when we refuse to forgive others? Sin is like a wound and repentance is the medicine. Just as there are ways to heal the body, there are ways to heal the wound of the spirit. To ask to forgiveness or to give forgiveness does not involve shame; rather it requires courage and love. There is no situation that cannot be restored through honest repentance and forgiveness. Learn from the love of God, who is always ready to receive us, redeem us and restore us. We are always welcome in God's house, even when we have been absent for a long time. God loves us all and when we come to Him, He stretches out his arms to gently welcome us back.

We will soon commemorate Forgiveness Sunday (February 7<sup>th</sup>) as a prelude to the beginning of Lent, the Great Fast. This most solemn season is a time for forgiveness, reconciliation and repentance. As we seek forgiveness from God, we must also seek to be at peace with others, especially our family, and, of course, we must also be at peace with ourselves.



Read it again: Luke 15: 11-32

## ***Prayer for Christian Unity – Sunday January 24 at 3pm***

Everyone is welcome to come to our Hazleton area prayer for Christian unity, this weekend, here at our parish. Please help show Hazleton area Christians our great St John's hospitality.

There will be a reception after the 3pm prayer service. Any contribution of a snack or drink would be welcome. Thank you for your presence ... or if you are unable to attend, thank you for joining with us in spirit as we pray for Christian unity, joining in the prayers held this week around the world.

In conjunction with the **100th Anniversary celebration of Holy Rosary Parish**, we are chancing off a ticket for a



**Trip to Italy or \$3,000.00 cash.** The trip is a 9-day pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi, Florence & Venice with Fr. Brian Clarke and members of Holy Rosary Parish. The date is May 8<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and includes transportation, lodging & meals. The donation is \$100.00 per ticket and only 100 tickets will be sold. The drawing will be Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

For more information or to purchase a ticket, please contact Holy Rosary Office at [570-454-6693](tel:570-454-6693), Monday – Friday, 9 am to 4 pm.

***House Blessings 2016:*** Forms are in the vestibule to sign up to have your house blessed. Fr Jerome and Deacon Larry have a special gift for each family that requests a house blessing. Sign up today! ***Census and House Blessing forms may be returned in the collection.***



## ***Parish Calendar***

***Prayer for Christian Unity Sunday January 24 at 3pm in our church***

An opportunity to gather with other Christians to pray for what Jesus prayed for: that we would all be one, as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). The theme of this year's prayer is "Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord" (see 1 Peter 2:9). The event is sponsored by the Greater Hazleton Ministerium. This is a wonderful opportunity to show good will to our brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches and ecclesial communities. There will be a social following in the hall. Please tell Fr. Jerome or Deacon Larry if you can help serve or bring refreshments.

***Prophora Baking for Divine Liturgy Saturday January 30*** after the All-Souls Liturgy (around 10:30am).

***GCU Greater Hazleton Lodge meets Sunday January 31 at 1pm in the Parish Hall***

***Parish Council meeting at 2pm Sunday January 31 in the Rectory Conference Room***

***Forgiveness Vespers Sunday February 7 at 3pm***

Prepare for the Great Fast by praying to God for the grace to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Reconcile with others. **Join us for a pot-luck in the parish hall after vespers.**

***Moleben to Mary at 7pm on Thursday February 11, at St Mary's Byzantine Church,*** Hazleton, in celebration of the jubilee year of mercy. The side door to St Mary's Church has been marked as a special door of mercy for our region.

***Blessed is the Kingdom ... Confession is good for the soul***



Confession began as a process of reconciliation for public sin. During times of persecution, it was not uncommon for Christians to deny the faith, to hide their beliefs and practices. A public denial might require a public reconciliation, but the first battle was to convince the church founded by many who became martyrs, that reconciliation was even possible.

Penance was a time of prayerful reflection, and absolution would be given during holy week. Even soldiers who killed during battle were required to spend time in penance before they could again receive Holy Communion.

The practice of confession eventually embraced smaller, less public sins.

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. (James 5:16)

These days we confess to God before a priest who may have advice to help us on the way. We look for someone to toss us a life preserver, and confession provides just that preserver, that we can hold on, take a breath, and be pulled back to the Ark which is the Church. As those who struggle against addictions know, simply admitting our failings and difficulties can help us to accept God's grace to overcome them.

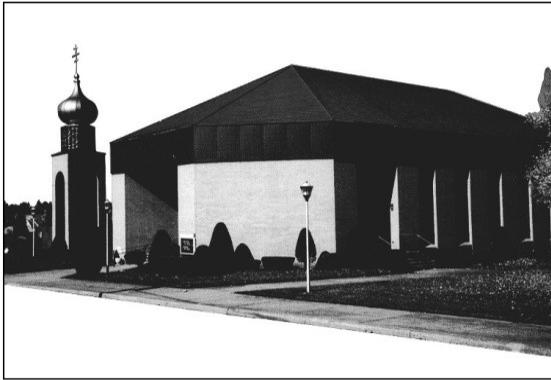


Here at St John's we have a choice of a medieval style confessional with a screen between the priest and penitent, or a more traditional confessional allowing the priest to pray over the penitent, the visible sign of the Holy Spirit at work reconciling us to God and Church. Anyone wishing the medieval (Tridentine) style confessional can simply ask for it by phone (anonymously) or in person. I feel strongly that the sacrament must be available to as many as possible.

After all, Confession allows for and is a guarantee of God's merciful, healing love. Even the act of loving someone may bring them to a better place: as God loves us, we are better able to share His love with others. Confession is like our blindness being healed: in confessing our sins, we are free of sin. We are not bound by sin, forced to make the same mistake over and over. Instead, we allow Christ to move in our hearts and bring us to even better ways of facing life's challenges than we can think of ourselves.

But this sacramental mystery also gives us the grace to forgive and to ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt. As we march steadily to the beginning of the Great Fast, I am happy to hear confessions even after Liturgy: simply ask. But don't forget to offer forgiveness and reconciliation as well. This might well start with celebrating Forgiveness Vespers.

**Next time ...** *Baptism: more than just washing of ancestral sin!*



# **st john the baptist Byzantine catholic church**

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## **Sacramental Mysteries:**

**Confession (Repentance & Reconciliation) Saturday 3:30-4pm and by appointment.**

**Baptism, Chrismation, Becoming Byzantine Catholic: Please meet with Fr Jerome or Deacon Larry.**

**Holy Matrimony (Weddings): Planning must begin at least six months in advance.**

**No date can be set until all paperwork is in order. Pre-Cana classes held every Spring.**

**Please contact Fr Jerome or Deacon Larry to set up an initial meeting.**

**Holy Anointing for Healing: on request in church after Liturgy or call Fr Jerome.**

**Eucharist: for those unable to attend church, contact Deacon Larry for temporary or on-going visits.**