

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Слава Иисусу Христу!

St. Mary ~ Holy Protection
Byzantine Catholic Church
4480 Route 981 Latrobe, PA 15650

Glory Forever!
Слава на вики!

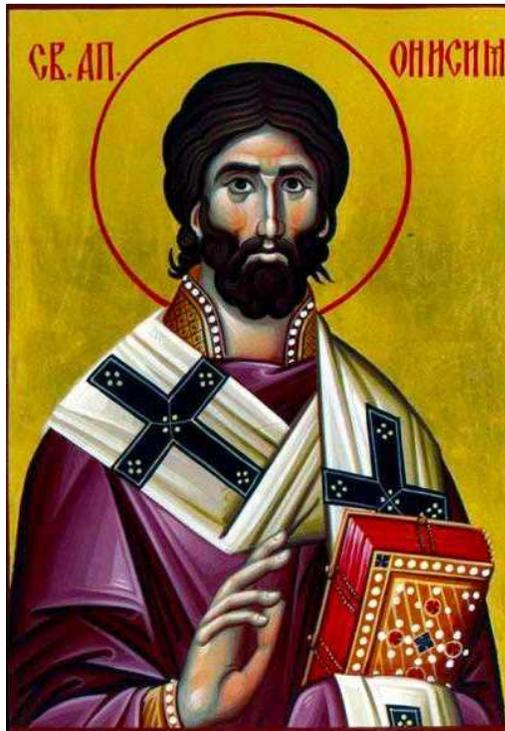
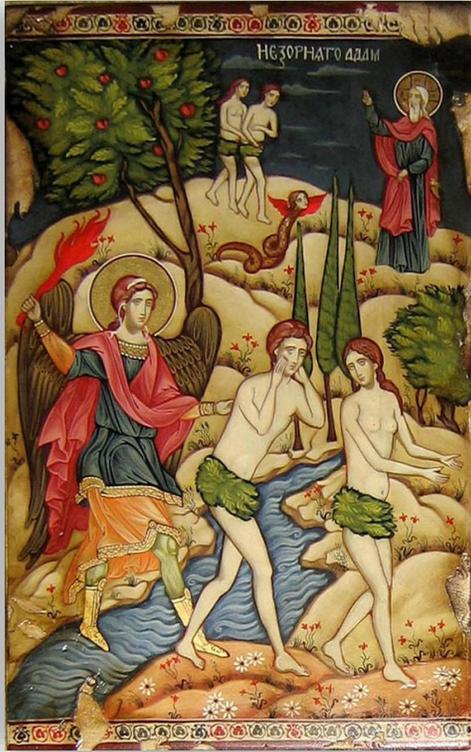
Administrator: Fr. Paul-Alexander Shutt, OSB
Confession Schedule: *Saturday* 16:00 – 16:30,
Parish email: st.marytrauger@gmail.com

Parish Office: 724-423-3 673 **Hall:** 724-423-8838
Sunday 9:00 – 9:30, or by appointment
Website: www.stmarybyzantinecatholic.org

15 FEBRUARY 2026 / 7534

CHEESEFARE, FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

The Holy Apostle Onesimus. The 21 Coptic Martyrs in Libya (2015).



LITURGY SCHEDULE:

- Sat. Feb. 14 17:00 Vigil: **CHEESEFARE, FORGIVENESS SUNDAY**
Suffrages pro populo
- Sun. Feb. 15 10:30 **CHEESEFARE, FORGIVENESS SUNDAY**
Suffrages for +Mary Lezo – children, John and Dolores
- Mon. Feb. 16 18:30 **PURE MONDAY: FIRST DAY OF THE GREAT FAST ~ DAY OF STRICT FAST ~ LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS** *Suffrages for +The Cantor Andrew Regalla – Marge Hulyk*
- Wed. Feb. 18 18:30 **LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS**
Suffrages for +The Davis Family – Jennifer (née Davis) & Eric Surovic

Sat. Feb. 21 17:00 Vigil: **FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST**

Suffrages *pro populo*

Sun. Feb. 22 10:30 **FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST**

Suffrages for **+Edward Syphan** – son, Arthur



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| 02 / 08 / 2026 | Adults: \$1155 | Candles: \$64 | Holy Days: \$95 |
| COLLECTION | Init. Off: \$10 | Fuel: \$20 | Maint.: \$145 |
| TOTAL: \$1509 | Lenten Off.: \$20 | | |



Greed has made us deserve our first nakedness; the bitterness of the fruit has brought disgrace, and we have become estranged from God. Let us now turn back in repentance; let us cleanse our senses, and may the Fast be our food. Let us strengthen our hearts with the hope of grace and not in the passing provisions of this life. For our food shall be the Lamb of God on the night of His glorious Resurrection. He is the Lamb Who offers Himself as a Victim for us at the Mystical Supper in which the disciples take part; the Lamb Who dispels the darkness of night by the brightness of His holy Pasch.

In Your ineffable wisdom, O Word of goodness, together with the Father and the Holy spirit, You have created all things visible and invisible. Make us worthy to pass the time of this bright Fast in peace; in Your goodness, deliver us from the bitterness of sin. Grant us the saving tears of compunction and the forgiveness of our sins, so that, with fortified souls, we may begin our fast in a joyful spirit, and with the angels we may praise Your supreme majesty.

This is how we must now fast: no more arguing and hatred, murmuring and jealousy, no more lying or boasting: but in humility, let us follow the example of Christ.

The arena of virtues is now open! Let all who wish to begin training now enter! Prepare yourselves for the struggle of the Great Fast; those who strive valiantly will receive the crown! Let us put on the armor of the Cross to combat the Enemy, taking **faith** as our unshakable rampart. Let us put on **prayer** as our breastplate, and **charity** as our helmet. As our sword, let us use **fasting**, for it cuts out all evil from our hearts. Those who do this shall truly receive the crown from the hands of Christ, the Almighty One on the day of judgment.

Next Sunday is THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY. Originally this first Sunday of the Great Fast was dedicated to the memory of Israel's holy prophets. *Anno Domini* 843, the Byzantine Empress Theodora, her son Michael III, Patriarch Methodius, monks and clergy came in procession into the Great Church of Hagia Sophia and restored the holy icons in their rightful place. This became an annual feast shortly thereafter replacing the memory of the prophets.

If you have an icon that needs to be blessed, place it on the table in front of the iconostasis before the start of the Divine Liturgy. After the Ambon prayer, the icons will be blessed and a procession around the church will commemorate the restoration and veneration of the holy icons to our liturgical and spiritual life. All are invited to bring their patronal or favorite icon to carry during the procession!

SUNDAYS OF THE GREAT FAST mark the return to the Anaphora of St. Basil the Great in our Sunday celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The **Typical Psalms** and the **Beatitudes** will be sung in *lieu* of the Sunday Resurrection Antiphons.



ONESIMUS THE APOSTLE OF THE 70 was from Colossae and a bond-servant of that Philemon to whom the Apostle Paul addressed his epistle. Onesimus escaped from Philemon and fled to Rome, where he became a disciple of Saint Paul. Saint Paul brought him to the Faith of Christ, and then sent him back to his master, who in turn gave him his freedom and sent him back to Rome again, where he ministered to Saint Paul. Later, he was seized because he was a Christian and was sent to Puteoli, where he was beaten to death with clubs. Saint Onesimus is also commemorated on November 22 with the holy Apostles Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus.

THE COPTIC MARTYRS OF LIBYA: On the fifteenth of February, 2015, twenty-one Christians were beheaded in Libya on the shores of the Mediterranean by members of the extremist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Twenty of the men beheaded were Coptic Christians. Coptic Christianity is an ancient branch of Christianity in Egypt. It has a particular connection with **Mark the Evangelist**, who was believed to have founded the Christian Church in Alexandria shortly after 33 AD. Egypt and, in particular, the city of Alexandria, produced some of the great theologians of the early Church: **Athanasius**, **Clement** and **Cyril of Alexandria**, and Origen. These 21 men had been working in Libya as construction workers when they were kidnapped by ISIL in two separate raids in December 2014 and January 2015. They were purportedly executed on the beach opposite a hotel.

These 21 Martyrs of Libya stand as one of the most vivid testimonies of the Coptic Church faith in modern times. The 20 Coptic Egyptians were simple laborers in Libya to provide for their families back home. The twenty-first was Matthew Ayariga, a Ghanaian Christian who was taken in a separate raid and inspired by the steadfastness of the Copts, declared, "*Their God is my God.*" Together, they formed the blessed company now venerated as the 21 Martyrs of Libya. Kidnapped by ISIS between December 2014 and January 2015, the men endured captivity for weeks leading up to their public execution on 15 February 2015 near Sirte, Libya. At the start, the men were treated fairly well with the goal of being persuaded to convert to Islam. Witnesses testify that when these attempts failed, the captors resorted to cruelty and humiliation that instead purified their faith. Like the Three Holy Youth in Babylon, who sang amidst the flames (Daniel 3: 21-25), these men sang and prayed in chains, awaiting their crown.

When all else failed, the men were taken to Sirte, which is on the coast of the Mediterranean, to be executed on live television. Airing on TV on February 15th, 2015, ISIS executed the 21 one by one. They used this method to see if they could try to shake the faith of the men one more time. Once again, the faith of the 21 martyrs was not shaken. They would all be beheaded on live television. Finally, they were led to the Mediterranean shore, clothed in orange garments, and executed on video for the world to see. As each was forced to kneel, their lips moved with the prayer, "Ya Rabbi Yasou" ("My Lord Jesus"), echoing the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen, who prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Their martyrdom was not hidden in some distant desert, but broadcast across the globe, making their witness a proclamation of the Gospel to all nations.

Now, when we recount their martyrdom and commemorate it in our Synaxarion, it feels different than other martyrs. That's because they are martyrs that were televised to the world. Their deaths weren't just written down, they were recorded and shown to the world. Their families are still with us to share their stories. These 21 martyrs are representative of the strength that faith has, even extending to their families, who were comforted and proud that their loved ones did not falter in their faith in Christ. Dionysius of Alexandria tells us that these martyrs "who were

once with us, are now seated with Christ. They are sharers in His kingdom and partakers with Him in His judgment. They act as His judicial assessors.” These words, among many others in comforting those who face martyrdom, also comfort the families whose loved ones stay steadfast in their faith until death.

May these 21 Martyrs of Libya be for us a modern example of what it means to live, and die, in Christ. May their prayers strengthen us to remain steadfast in faith, that we too may confess Christ boldly in a world that often denies Him.

*Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate – The Church of Alexandria
St. Mary & St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church
Reaching out to Somerset and Hunterdon Counties in New Jersey*

