

St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church

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Mission Statement of St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church: To give thanks to God continually, as Byzantine Catholics, through our spirituality, our service, and preaching the Risen Christ through our everyday life.

Liturgical Schedule

Intention

Sun	Dec 15	9:30am	Third Hour	
		10:00am	Divine Liturgy	For the Faithful
		12:00pm	Ge'ez Liturgy	
Wed	Dec 18	9:00am	Divine Liturgy	+William Baker
Thu	Dec 19	6:00pm	Divine Liturgy	
Fri	Dec 20	6:00pm	Divine Liturgy	
Sat	Dec 21	5:00pm	Confessions	
		6:00pm	Vespers	

Confessions

one hour before liturgy or by appointment

Readings

Epistle

Gospel

Sun	Dec 15	Col 3:4-11	Lk 14:16-24
Mon	Dec 16	Heb 11:17-23 & 27-31	Mk 9:42-10:1
Tue	Dec 17	Heb 12:25-26 & 13:22-25	Mk 10:2-12
Wed	Dec 18	James 1:1-18	Mk 10:11-16
Thu	Dec 19	James 1:19-27	Mk 10:17-27
Fri	Dec 20	James 2:1-13	Mk 10:23-32
Sat	Dec 21	Gal 3:8-12	Lk 13:18-29
Sun	Dec 22	Heb 11:9-10 & 17-23 & 32-40	Mt 1:1-25

Parish Activities

Sun	Dec 15	11:15am	Social; NO ECF – movie for the children
		2:00pm	Ge'ez Social
Fri	Dec 20	6:00pm	Ge'ez choir practice in hall
Sat	Dec	5:00pm	Ge'ez young mothers meet w/ Fr. Weldit in hall

THANK YOU to everyone who participated in this year's Cookie Sale. Everyone who baked, made pirohi, helped set-up and break down the hall, put together the trays, made baklava, bagged the cookies and worked the sale. You all made this another successful sale. I appreciate all your hard work. ~Fr. Robert

Confessions Saturday, December 21 beginning at 5:00pm. Several priests will be available. There will be Vespers, but the confessions will go on until they are finished.

The Giving Tree - This year the purpose of the Giving Tree this year is to raise money for the replacement of the hall roof. The total cost of the replacement is \$74,018 and we have paid \$37,009 already. We need to raise the balance. We will have special envelopes for your donations to this effort and they can be left on the tree or in the collections boxes.

We thank you for all your help in raising money for this greatly needed repair.

Iconography Workshop Feb. 6-8, 2025 Fr. Marek Visnovsky will be offering an iconography workshop at St. John Chrysostom on Thursday, February 6 from 5 pm to 9 pm. Friday, February 7 from 9 am to 9 pm, and Saturday, February 8 from 9 am to 9 pm. We will paint the icon of the SORROWFUL MOTHER. The cost of the workshop is \$400 and includes boards, paints, brushes, twenty-four karat gold leaf (food and accommodation not included).

Beginners as well as advanced artists are welcome. DEADLINE to register is Wednesday, January 15, 2025. For more information, please email Fr. Marek at marekvisnovsky@yahoo.com

The office will be closed for the Christmas/New Year holiday from December 24, 2024 through January 2, 2025



Prayer to Saint Charbel Makhlouf

Lord, infinitely Holy and Glorified in Your Saints, You have inspired Charbel, the saint monk, to lead the perfect life of a hermit. We thank You for granting him the blessing and the strength to detach himself from the world so that the heroism of the monastic virtues of poverty, obedience, and chastity, could triumph in his hermitage.

We beseech You to grant us the grace of loving and serving You, following his example. Almighty God, Who has manifested the power of St. Charbel's intercession through his countless miracles and favours, grant us... (State your intention(s) here...) through his intercession. Amen.

For the sick in our parish families, please remember in your prayers:

Hussein Abdi	Gordon Kaercher	Beauetta Parks	Nicholas Zvansky
William Brake	Susan Kaiser	Cathy Pitt	Sandra Zvansky
Charles Branham	James Kester	Maksym Popadyn	Abby
Mary Carroll	Kathy Krofcheck	Maria Rakowsky	Carol
Maria Czymnik	Regina Lee	Terry Razor	Charyton Intentions
Cindy Cox	Christin Leon	Nadia Ritchey	DeClue Intentions
Will Culver	Christine Long	Charles Roddy	Dock Family
Akela Danovich	Jessie Madzia	Trey Shearon	Hagos
Ron Doctor	Ilya Mandebur	John Sikora	Jackson Family
Jack Figel	Bill Martin	Kathy Slonka	Kathy
Christopher Gehman	Joe Martin	Kim Snow	Lippert Family
Dillon Gomolak	Joy Mersch	Helen Stephens	Mara
Deborah Gordon	Angela Merva	Dennis Stinich	Mech Intention
Charlene Grabner	Katie Nann	Josh Taylor	Melissa
Nataly Grace	Ed Nyahay	L.T. Tekle	Special Intentions
John Griffen	Anne O'Halloran	Ruth Turanchik	Steve
Evelyn Hoehstetter	Mic O'Halloran	Owen Ward	Sarah
Esther Imhoff	John Oshinski	Claudette Weber	
Dora Johnson	Paula Oshinski	Curtis Weber	

The Beauty of the Reconciliation

"We too might walk in newness of life" (*Rm 6:4*): thus writes the apostle Paul to the first Christians of this Church of Rome. But what is the *newness of life* he talks about? It is the life that is born of Baptism, which immerses us in the death and resurrection of Jesus and makes us forever children of God, children of the resurrection destined for eternal life, oriented to the things above. It is the life that carries us forward in our truest identity, that of being beloved children of the Father, so that every sadness and obstacle, every toil and tribulation cannot prevail over this wondrous reality that founds us: we are children of the good God.

We have heard that Saint Paul associates the new life with a verb: *to walk*. Therefore, the new life, initiated in Baptism, is a journey. And there is no retirement in this! No one on this journey retires, one always keeps going. And after so many steps on the journey, perhaps we have lost sight of the holy life that runs within us: day after day, immersed in a repetitive rhythm, caught up in a thousand things, overwhelmed by so many messages, we look everywhere for satisfactions and novelties, stimuli and positive sensations, but we forget that there is already a new life that runs within us and, like the embers beneath the ashes, it is waiting to kindle and shed light on everything. When we are occupied with so many things, do we think of the Holy Spirit that is within us and carries us? It often happens to me not to think of it, and it is bad. Being like this, caught up in so many travails, makes us forget the true journey we are on in the new life.

We must look for the embers under the ashes, those ashes that settle on the heart and hide from view the beauty of our soul; they hide it. So, God, who in the new life is our Father, seems to us to be a master; instead of entrusting ourselves to him, we negotiate with him; instead of loving him, we fear him. And others, instead of being brothers and sisters, as children of the same Father, seem to be obstacles and adversaries. There is a bad habit: that of transforming our travelling companions into adversaries. And we do these many times. The faults of our neighbor seem exaggerated to us, and their qualities hidden; how often we are inflexible with others and indulgent towards ourselves! We feel an unstoppable force to do the evil we would like to avoid. This is a problem for everyone, if even Saint Paul writes, again to the community of Rome: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (*Rom 7:19*). He, too, was a sinner, and we, too, very often do the evil we do not want to do. In short, having clouded God's face, obscured that of our brothers and sisters, blurred the greatness we carry within, we keep on walking, but we need new signposts, we need a change of pace, a direction that helps us rediscover the path of Baptism, that is, to renew our original beauty, which is there under the ashes, to renew the sense of pressing onward. And how many times do we tire of walking and lose the sense of going forward? We stay calm — or not even calm — but still.

Brothers, sisters, what is the way to resume the path of the new life? For this Penitential season, and to resume the journey, what is the way? *It is the way of God's forgiveness*. Set this in your mind and heart: *God never tires of forgiving*. Did you hear that? Can you repeat it with me? Together, everyone: [all together] *God never tires of forgiving*. Just to be sure, once again: [everyone] *God never tires of forgiving*. But what is the problem? *That we are the ones who tire of asking for forgiveness!* But He never tires of forgiving. Let us not forget this. And divine forgiveness does just this: it makes us new again, as if newly baptized. It cleanses us inside, returning us to the condition of our baptismal rebirth: it makes the fresh waters of grace flow again into our hearts, parched by sadness and covered in dust by sins. The Lord removes the ashes from the embers of the soul, cleanses those inner stains that prevent us from trusting in God, from embracing our brothers and sisters, from loving ourselves. He forgives *everything*. "Oh Father, I have a sin that is surely unforgivable". Listen: God forgives everything, because he never tires of forgiving. God's forgiveness transforms us inside: it gives us new life and new sight. It is no coincidence that in the Gospel we have heard Jesus proclaim: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (*Mt 5:8*). He prepares our eyes to see God. One only sees God if the heart is purified: purify the heart to see God. But who can do this purification? Our effort is necessary, but it is not enough. It is not enough. We are weak, we cannot do it; only God knows and heals the heart. Keep this clear in your mind: only God is capable of knowing and healing the heart, only he can free it from evil. For this to happen, we need to bring him our open and contrite heart; to imitate the leper from the Gospel, who asks him: "If you will, you can make me clean" (*Mk 1:40*). This is beautiful! "If you will, you can change me inside, you can purify me". This is a beautiful prayer, and we can repeat it together, here, everyone. Together: "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean". Again: [everyone] "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean". And now, in silence, everyone say this to the Lord, looking

at their own sins. Look at your sins, look at the ugly things you have inside and have done; in silence, say to the Lord: "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean". And he can. Some might think: "But this sin is too great, the Lord cannot...". The Lord forgives everything, the Lord does not tire of forgiving. Do you remember? Repeat it: "The Lord does not tire of forgiving". All together: [everyone] "The Lord does not tire of forgiving".

The Lord wants this, because he wants us renewed, free, light within, happy and on the move, not parked on the roadside of life. He knows how easy it is for us to stumble, fall and stay on the ground, and he wants to lift us up. I saw a beautiful painting, in which the Lord stoops to lift us up. And the Lord does this every time we approach Confession. Let us not sadden him, let us not postpone the encounter with his forgiveness, because only if we are lifted up by him can we resume our journey and see the defeat of our sin, erased forever. For sin is always a defeat, but he conquers sin, he is victory. What is more, "at the very instant when the sinner is forgiven, grasped by God and restored by grace, sin — wonder of wonders! — becomes the place where God comes into contact with man. [...] Thus God makes himself known by forgiving" (cf. A. Louf, *Sotto la guida dello Spirito*, Magnano 1990, 68-69). "I know God by studying catechesis...". But you do not know him with your mind alone: only when your heart is repentant and you go to him, showing your unclean heart, there you will know God who forgives. "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven". God makes himself known by forgiving. And "the sinner, peering into the abyss of his own sin, discovers on his part the infinity of mercy" (cf. *ibid.*) And this is the restart of the new life: begun in Baptism, it starts again from forgiveness.

Let us not renounce God's forgiveness, the Sacrament of Reconciliation: it is not a practice of devotion, but rather the foundation of Christian existence; it is not a question of knowing how to say our sins well, but of recognizing ourselves as sinners and throwing ourselves into the arms of the crucified Jesus to be set free; it is not a moralistic gesture, but the resurrection of the heart. The risen Lord resurrects us, all of us. So let us go to receive God's forgiveness and let us, who administer it, feel that we are dispensers of the joy of the Father who finds his lost son; let us feel that our hands, placed on the heads of the faithful, are those pierced with the mercy of Jesus, who transforms the wounds of sin into channels of mercy. And we, who act as confessors, may we feel that the "forgiveness and peace" we proclaim are the Holy Spirit's caress on the hearts of the faithful. Dear brothers, let us forgive! Dear brother priests, let us forgive, let us always forgive like God who does not tire of forgiving, and we will find ourselves. Let us always grant forgiveness to those who ask for it and help those who are afraid, to approach the *sacrament of healing and joy* with confidence. Let us put God's forgiveness back at the center of the Church!

And now, let us prepare ourselves to receive the new life, let us confess to the Lord that there is much that is old in us, bad things... The leprosy of sin has stained our beauty, and so let us say: *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* All together: [everyone] "Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean". From thinking we do not need you every day: [everyone] *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* From living peacefully with my duplicity, without seeking in your forgiveness the way of freedom: [everyone] *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* When good intentions are not followed by deeds, when I postpone prayer and the encounter with you: [everyone] *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* When I come to terms with evil, with dishonesty, with falsehood, when I judge others, despise them and gossip about them, complaining about everyone and everything: [everyone] *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* And when I am content to do no evil, but do no good by serving in the Church and society: [everyone] *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* Yes, Jesus, I believe that you can make me clean, I believe that I need your forgiveness. Jesus, renew me and I will walk again in a new life: [everyone] *Jesus, if you will, you can make me clean!* (Pope Francis, 03/08/2024)