



January 15, 2017

35th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Divine Liturgy Schedule

Jan. 14 (Sat) Divine Liturgy	5:00pm
Jan. 15 (Sun) 35th Sunday after Pentecost	
ECF Classes	9:00am
Divine Liturgy	10:30am
Jan. 16 (Mon) Divine Liturgy	8:30am
Jan. 18 (Wed) Divine Liturgy	8:30am
Jan . 21 (Sat) Divine Liturgy	5:00pm
Jan . 22 (Sun) 36th Sunday after Pentecost	
Divine Liturgy	10:30am



The Sanctuary Lamp continues to burn before the presence of Our Risen Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ in our church during the week of Jan. 15 thru Jan. 21 for the health and welfare of all parishioners of St. Stephen.

Our Tithe to our Church

January 8, 2017 — \$2,107.50



Let us remember in our prayers all of our friends and parish family members who are sick at home or in a nursing facility and for all who are in need of our prayers.

James Abraham, Tillie Abraham, Diana Abraham, Rosella Busko, Marian Campbell, Ted Druga, John Fekete, Marie Klotz, Carl Magdic, Fran Mogush, Clarence Rizzi, Helen Rizzi, Joseph Rusinko, Maria Rusinko, Ed Suzina, Mary Soltis, Terry Soltis, Cecelia Stephen, Margaret Weber, John Voron Sr.

A HUGE NOTE OF THANKS

St Stephen Dinner

Last Sunday was a wonderful event once again. For all those who were able to participate, it was a time of camaraderie and good will as well as great food and company. It is a sign of the coming together of our parish, and of our growth as a community of faith, worship and fellowship.

Christmas Donations

As you have noticed for the last several weeks, our parishioners have been extremely generous in the donations for Christmas and the end of the year.

This is a sign of the love that we have for our parish and our willingness to share of our bounties with our parish.

Many thanks for your generosity and kindness, and may our parish continue to prosper financially as well as spiritually and in a spirit of cooperation.

POUSTINIA RETREAT

Okay ... what in the world is this? *Poustinia* is a Russian word that simply means *desert*. It is the most simple of retreats, but yet one of the most profound.

It is a time away where we are led into the desert much as the Israelites of old were led into the desert by the Lord. There they were completely dependent on him for food and for water, for the divine presence to keep them going. The People of God often looked back at this experience as the highlight of their life, the time of the most pristine relationship with God.

Before he began his public ministry, we are told that Jesus went into the desert for 40 days, and there he was totally dependent upon his relationship with his Father to sustain him.



In similar manner, Poustinia is a time away for us where we are introduced to this style of retreat and prayer. Then we are given 24 hours of total silence and solitude. Yes, we are left alone for 24 hours simply to be with the Lord. Our only companions are a Bible, and icon and a small loaf of bread and some water.

Does it sound a bit stark and even frightening? Absolutely, it is. And it is also the most intimate time that you will spend with the Lord. If your life seems to be fragile, scattered and without focus, this is the retreat for you.

It takes place at Mount Macrina House of Prayer, 24-26 February 2017, from 7:00 pm on Friday until 11.00 am on Sunday. Offering is \$75.00 and registration is due by 17 Feb 2017. Breakfast is provided on both Saturday and Sunday. For registration, please call 724.438.7149.

RETIRED SENIORS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

There are quite a few programs available that are geared specifically to the seniors among us. There are both volunteer programs as well as programs to help us.

Please take a look at the flyers on the bulletin board at the entrance of the church for details.

THE UMPIRE OF OUR HEARTS

The Pittsburgh area is well-known as sports fans. In fact, we probably guarantee that folks know that the word “fans” is simply a shortened form of “fanatics,” which of course we know that we are not! We are simply loyal fans ... right!!!



One of the key figures in sporting events is the umpire, that wonderful person we all love to hate. If only he would see things our way, he would surely get the calls right. But, to keep the game on an even keel, we rely on the correct calls of the umpire. Although they are also fallible human beings (although we are not!), we expect them to get every call right ... at least “right” as we see it.

Well, in today’s Epistle reading to the Colossians, St Paul tells us something extraordinary. In speaking about the way of life for Christians, he tells us that *Christ is the umpire of our hearts*. Yes, he says that the peace of Christ must control (i.e. umpire) our hearts.

Let’s tease this out a bit. In making decisions, what do we use as our criteria (our umpires)? Do we make judgments simply according to what makes us feel good ... or by what brings us the most benefit ... or what is the easiest or most convenient for us ... or by what will cost us the least?

St Paul tells us that it must be the “peace of Christ” must be our criterion. What choice or decision brings about the peace of Christ. For peace is the goal of our lives. How many times in the Liturgy do we pray for peace ... *In peace, let us pray to the Lord ... for peace from on high, let us pray to the Lord ... Peace be with you ... again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord*. And so it continues.

If we allow “peace” to be our umpire, let’s think how different our choices might be.