

Jai Gaur-Nitai! Nityananda Trayodashi Celebrations : 24 February 2024

saṅkarṣaṇaḥ kārāṇa-toya-śāyī garbhoda-śāyī ca payo 'bdhi-śāyī
śeṣaś ca yasyāṁśa-kalāḥ sa nityā-nandākhyā-rāmaḥ śaraṇaṁ mamāstu – (CC Adi 1.7)

“May Śrī Nityananda Rāma be the object of my constant remembrance. Saṅkarṣaṇa, Śeṣa Nāga and the Viṣṇus who lie on the Kārāṇa Ocean, Garbha Ocean, and ocean of milk are His plenary portions and the portions of His plenary portions.”

The appearance day of Sri Nityanda Prabhu is considered to be the purest. In Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes, Balram ji appeared as Nityananda Prabhu and Himself taught the world the best way to serve the Lord. Mahaprabhu is the most magnanimous incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is non different from Krishna, His magnanimity is fathomless which can only be approached by the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu.

On 24th February, devotees in Pittsburgh gathered to experience the joy by chanting and dancing as given by the teachings of Nitai-Gauracandra, who are very merciful. On the auspicious day, abhishekam of new Gaur-nitai deities was done. HG Vrajkishore prabhuji spoke on the wonderful pastimes of Sri Nityananda prabhu that evoked a sense of inspiration in all. With the blessings of Sri Nityanda prabhu, Vanamali Gopal prabhuji and Shyamsundar prabhuji shared the ISKCON Pittsburgh status report with past 20 years achievements and next 20 years plan. ISKCON Pittsburgh has grown immensely as a community and continues to spread spirituality, devotion and vedic culture in our beloved Pittsburgh.

The status report was followed by kirtan, aarti and sumptuous feast.



Gaura Purnima Celebrations : 24 March 2024

On 24th March, the Pittsburgh community came together to celebrate the appearance day of Lord Chaitanya, magnanimous and the most merciful incarnation of Sri Krishna. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came in mesmerizing golden form to relieve people from diseases of greed, anger and lust by offering the medicine of chanting of holy names. Anyone who invokes the remembrance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu can break free from the illusions of maya and receive his divine grace to realize the Supreme.

The celebrations on 24th marked the true essence of devotion as more than 250 devotees gathered and prayed to Sri Chaitanya mahaprabhu. The morning celebrations started at 4:30 AM with Mangal Arti, Darshan Arti and Tulsi Puja. HG Vanamali Gopal prabhuji took the morning special class followed by a discussion where all present devotees shared how they are inspired by seeing the enchanting beautiful

golden form of Chaitnya Mahaprabhu. The evening festivities started with abhishekam- which depicts total love and surrender to the deities. HG Shyamsundar Prabhuji led the evening session, purifying the hearts of the devotees present by extolling the beauty of the Holy Name as expounded by Lord Chaitanya. He highlighted that the Topmost love of Krishna is given by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the whole Hall got filled with beautiful collective chants of Hare Krishna mahamantra. In this divine ambiance, everyone performed the Gaura Aarti followed by a heartwarming and energizing kirtan. Mahaprasadam feast was served afterwards which was enjoyed by all the families.

A heartfelt gratitude to all the devotees who came together to organize the festival and helped with prasadam preparation and decorations and also to all the people who joined and made this a blissful celebration leaving an everlasting impact on everyone who attended it.



Sri Ram Lalla Prana Pratishtha : 21 January

The 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony of Ram Lalla idol in the newly built temple in Ayodhya, marked a fresh beginning for all devotees around the world. The 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony, signifying the sanctification of the idol of Ram Lalla—the youthful incarnation of Lord Ram—was celebrated all over the world. From India to the USA, the whole atmosphere was Ram-conscious and full of divine energy. On 21st January, Pittsburgh devotees joined millions of Ram-bhaktas worldwide and came together to chant Jai Siya Ram. The celebrations took place in the abode of Sri Sri Radha Vrajsundar in Venango Trails. Ram bhajans were sung and cherished by all present. Ram idol was worshiped and the happiness was elevated by beautiful chanting of the holy names. Pittsburgh celebrated the most auspicious Pran- Pratishtha with full enthusiasm and devotion.

Jai Siya Ram! Jai Hanuman!

Visiting devotees: Nuggets of Wisdom from Vrindavan Prabhu, Radheshyam Prabhu, Dwarikadesh Prabhu and Vishakha Priya mataji

ISKCON Pittsburgh had many visiting devotees in the first quarter of this year who spread their teachings and love in the Pittsburgh community. Radheshyam Prabhu visited Pittsburgh at the start of new year and with his fresh perspectives ignited the minds of youth and adults alike. His practical advice on attentive chanting—encouraging devotees to sit straight and focus on the holy names they chant—proved invaluable to many seekers.

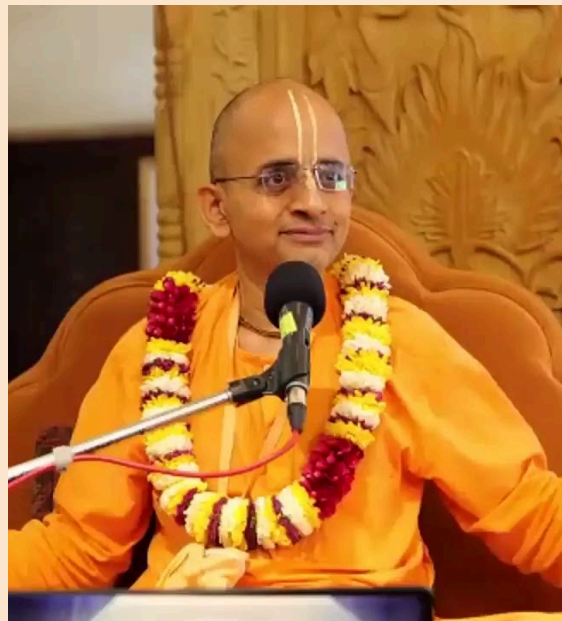


Vrindavan Prabhu, who visited in the month of April, gave a wonderful class to build our consciousness for the approaching Ram Navami celebration. He indicated the conflict that goes in our mind between 'Manthra' from Ramayan and the holy Mantra. The 'Manthra' in mind keeps on pushing us into wrong directions. Therefore, we need to chant the highest holy mantras to break free from the negative shackles of controlling mind.



The Pittsburgh community got the wonderful opportunity to attend Dwarikadesh prabhuji and Vishakha Priya mataji's class, filled with divine teachings. Their talks extolled glories of holy name. They shared the touchstone story of Sanatan Goswami, one of the principal followers of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Even if you have the entire wealth of the world, it will go away with your body, on the other hand, what holy name gives stays with us forever. Holy name is the real touchstone.

The Nectarian teachings by these truly conscious senior devotees purified many devotees in Pittsburgh and we pray that their values keep on inspiring our community forever.



SPICE DELIGHT (Govinda's) Restaurant ISKCON: Harinam LunchBox Program

ISKCON Pittsburgh is delighted to start the Harinam Lunch Box Program for University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie University Students.

This program is an initiative to provide quality sattvik food to college students while at the same time serving as a precursor to the upcoming Govinda restaurant.

Vegetarian meals that are subsidized, healthy, freshly prepared, karma-free, and sattvic are served to students. The lunchbox is available on a daily basis and will be conveniently delivered to the nearest pick-up point for students.

If you are a student interested in taking advantage of this Lunch Box initiative by ISKCON Pittsburgh Govinda restaurant, please contact Jitender Myla at (412) 738-2120 and Vrajras Das at (302) 743-7888

Guided Meditation/ Chanting: Experiments with Holy Name

To help Pittsburgh devotees improve the quality of japa meditation, ISKCON Pittsburgh held a guided meditation session. Shyamsundar Prabhuji took a one hour session of focussed methods to train our mind into deep levels of chanting. Japa chanting is a type of mantra meditation which is the easiest to be performed in Kali-yuga.

Two tips that prabhuji shared in the session were

-Chant with Faith

-Write the holy name on paper and focus on the impression.



Regular Events

Weekly Saturday Program

The year started with the new session of Sanskul classes and fresh and super enthusiastic Saturday programs. More than 30 families join ISKCON Pittsburgh Saturday programs held in St Brendan Church, Sewickly. These are a great stress- buster for families as they invoke peace and devotion through collective chanting 'kirtan'. The families build a close-knit connection with like-minded people and associate with devotees for collective enlightenment.

Together, celebrations of Mahashivratri (Blessed night of Lord Shiva), Makar Sankranti and many other festivities are done.

Sanskul classes by ISKCON Pittsburgh provide the appropriate Vedic knowledge to kids for their overall development. This helps the kids to stay connected with their cultural roots. Led by experienced and senior devotee teachers like Annadani Mataji for L2 and Srinivas Prabhuji for L1, the curriculum is designed to be engaging and accessible to young learners. High level Bhagvatam classes take place for parents and youth by senior devotees.

Thursday Kirtan

In the bustle of downtown Pittsburgh is the place of serenity and deep devotion- The Pittsburgh Kirtan center. ISKCON Pittsburgh's Kirtan Center in Lawrenceville conducts kirtans every Thursday evening, which is followed by a vegan/vegetarian feast. The Kirtan Center has become the epicenter of spiritual renaissance through beautiful chants!

Friday Bhakti Vriksha

The Friday program encompasses a rich variety of elements to provide a holistic spiritual experience which includes soulful kirtans, bhagavad gita lessons and japa meditations. There is a dedicated segment for children that includes sloka learning, Vedic stories, occasional drama performances. Collective spiritual activities are done followed by delicious dinner prasadam.

Join us on Fridays for an immersive spiritual journey that encompasses wisdom, devotion, and joy! Contact Vanamali Gopal Das (412-725-3442) & Gokulpriya Devi Dasi (4124011308) for more details!



Monthly Donation Program

Dear Devotees,

ISKCON Pittsburgh has evolved into a wholesome community over the years and we all have accomplished a whole lot in the service of the Lord and for the community together.

None of this would have been possible without the gracious support of all the devotees.

Traditionally we used to have a monthly donation program where devotees contributed an amount as their monthly offering to support our various programs and the upcoming temple. A few years back when we changed our banking this program was paused.

We are resuming this program again starting May 1st 2024.

Today, ISKCON Pittsburgh has many vibrant initiatives including weekly programs (Saturday Satsang, Thursday night kirtan, Sunday feast), festivals, visiting sadhus, Govinda's restaurant, upcoming Temple project and more.

This is a golden opportunity to participate and contribute to spread the mercy of the Lord.

There is no pressure- but we do encourage you to contribute what little bit that feels right to you. Your support is not just a donation; it's an investment in the legacy we are creating together.

Please contact Sanskriti at 412-888-9577 or Shyamsundar Das at – for more information.

HARIBOL! ISKCON PITTSBURGH EXPRESSES GRATITUDE!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the devoted members whose unwavering dedication made Quarter 1 of 2024 truly remarkable! With the collective efforts of each individual, ISKCON Pittsburgh flourished with numerous successful events and initiatives. Your contributions have brought immense joy and fulfillment to our community. Thank you all for your invaluable support and commitment!



ISKCON PITTSBURGH Grand Celebration on Janmashtami!

Save the Date - 26 August 2024, Monday