

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 12

December 2009

November Council Highlights

- ✘ Operating income for October was \$10,703 and operating expenses were \$13,419, resulting in a deficit of **\$2,716**. Year-to-date deficit is **\$10,257**. Please Donate!
- ✘ Church Fence Variance denied by city at hearing. Appeal sought.
- ✘ Donations for Christmas flowers are needed. There is only \$54 left in the flower fund for flowers.
- ✘ MBAS will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale and Raffle on December 20th.
- ✘ Walter Booriakin reported on DOW Assembly.



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What Would St. Nicholas Do?

On Sunday December 6th we celebrate the beloved Nicholas of Myra in Lycia. We know the stories of his saving miracles, his love of children, and the gifts he gave in secret. There is another story, one which seems less in character. Hearing Arius profess his heretical beliefs with smooth, convincing language at the Council of Nicaea, Nicholas finally had had enough. He struck



Saint Nicholas

Arius to keep him from speaking more blasphemy. As a result he lost his position as a bishop, and it was not restored until the Theotokos directed that it should be.

If the saint had a hard time listening to Arius, what would he do with Bill Maher, a social and political commentator, stand-up comic, and opponent of religion? Maher's film "Religulous" (a play on the words "religion" and "ridiculous") might draw St. Nicholas' ire, but perhaps it would merely elicit a resigned sigh at its silly pretentiousness. Like many people who criticize religion, Maher is articulate, but has only a superficial understanding of his subject, and is deeply impressed with his own opinions. He constantly interrupts the people he is interviewing in the film to interject his own ideas. One rabbi

asks him at least four times to "let me finish", but Maher continues to break in. He demonstrates his disagreement with what the rabbi is saying by walking out on him, on camera. This kind of petulance is unbecoming to any interviewer and especially one who constantly claims, as Maher does, that he is completely objective and "only wants to ask questions." One person interviewed is Francis Collins, a leading geneticist who was raised as an atheist but found his way to faith. Maher tells Collins that he is in a distinct minority as a scientist who is also a believer. The soft-spoken

Collins interview is considerably shorter than those he conducts with inarticulate and foolish-seeming believers, obvious charlatans, and people who agree with him.

Bill Maher doesn't possess the dangerous power Arius had in the fourth century. But he appears often on television, and is regarded as a serious commentator and even an intellectual by some. We should be ready, especially in talking with young people, to give a solid and authentic exposition of the faith, and to point out errors and pretense in those who attack it.

St. Nicholas wouldn't give in to people with half-baked ideas. Neither should we, though it would probably be advisable for us to keep our hands in our pockets.

Troparion - Tone 4

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith,
 an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence;
 your humility exalted you;
 your poverty enriched you.
 Hierarch Father Nicholas, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.

Message From Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again, God has led us to this season of prayer and fasting so that we might prepare ourselves spiritually to celebrate the birth of His Son. With the sights, sounds, and scents of the Nativity season filling all our senses, we reflect upon that Holy Night in which the Son of God condescended to enter into our world and into human history in order to raise us to life with Him.

The night of the Lord's birth was a night for shepherds and angels.

Angels sang His praises in the heavens. Shepherds adored him on earth. It was an unusual, never-before experience. The shepherds were outcasts among the people. The angels were part of the highest level of God's creatures. The bottom and the top of God's created beings celebrated that night. Everyone else seems to have slept through it all.

Why were the angels so excited? God becoming human did nothing for them personally. They were not part of fallen creation. Of course, the angels who had remained faithful to God celebrated everything that God did. And the angels, on this holy night, were well aware that the birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of the promise that would open heaven to the human race. Perhaps the angels saw the birth of the Lord as an invitation to the human race to join in the heavenly banquet which they had never left. And so they joyously proclaimed the glad tidings, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke 2:14).

The angels sang and the shepherds adored. Why did the Lord reveal His birth to shepherds before the rest of mankind? Why weren't the powerful of the world the first to hear the Good News of the Birth of the Savior? Why wasn't it to the priests that these glad tidings were first proclaimed? Why weren't those "Glories to God in the highest" first sung to the learned and wise of the world?

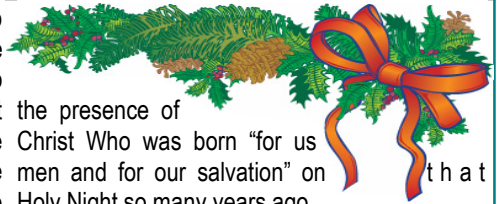
God announced the Birth of Christ to the shepherds through angelic choirs and the sound of the angels' song moved the shepherds to believe and to act. They responded to

the angels' announcement by saying, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us!" (Luke 2:15). Let's take a chance. Let's set aside our usual routine. Let's change our lives and go to Bethlehem and see if we can find this Newborn King of the Jews! And find Him they did. And then, as Luke reports, they "...returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them" (Luke 2:20).

We don't know what happened to the shepherds after that. We don't know if the Lord revealing Himself to the shepherds changed their lives or whether or not they dedicated themselves to the Lord's service. But there is a chance that they did. On at least that one occasion they had shown the energy and get-up-and-go to go out of their way to see the Lord. Perhaps this was a beginning that would bring them to the Lord again and again throughout their lives. If so, no matter what happened to them in the interim, in the end they joined their angelic companions at the Lord's eternal banquet.

We, like the shepherds, have received the Good News of Salvation. It has been announced to us time and time again throughout our lives. We know that the Lord has come to us. Acknowledging this, we must ask ourselves, how willing are we to set aside the routines of our lives to "go to Bethlehem," and to seek out the Lord? How willing are we to make the effort to go to the Lord and to recognize that He is present among us.

As Orthodox Christians we have so many opportunities to draw nearer to the Lord. The Church offers us so many ways in which we can encounter the Lord. This Nativity fast and the Nativity season provide us with yet another opportunity to encounter the Lord Who is present among us—and Who is present with us not just at this time of the year, but every day of our lives. It's my prayer that during the Nativity season all of us will respond to those angelic voices and join the shepherds in seeking out Christ, Emmanuel, God-With-Us, the Lord Who has come to save us. Let's lay aside our routines and all those unnecessary details of life (and of this season) that draw us away from what is truly important. Then, like the shepherds, we can be sure that we will be drawn into



the presence of Christ Who was born "for us men and for our salvation" on that Holy Night so many years ago.

Be assured of my prayerful best wishes as we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May He Who was born of the Most Pure Theotokos, announced by angels, adored by the Shepherds, and visited by the Magi, bless you and yours with a joyful feast and grant that the New Year will be filled with many blessings.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

With love in the Newborn Savior,

Father David

PILGRIM ICON OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS

Beginning in January, an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos will be "on pilgrimage" to the homes of our parishioners. This icon will visit our parishioner's homes as a special blessing and as a special reminder to pray for the members of our parish community and our parish needs. A sign up sheet will be available in the Church at the beginning of January. All you need do is sign up for a week, pick up the icon after the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday for which you sign up, and return it to the Church before the start of the Divine Liturgy the following Sunday. You can then make the icon's visit to your home as simple or as elaborate as you like. The only "obligation" you will have is to gather once a day with those in your home and recite the prayer that will be made available with the icon. Then, once your week is up, you return the icon to church the following Sunday for the next hosts to take home. The presence of this icon in the homes of our parishioners will be a reminder to us of our unity in prayer and of the prayerful intercession of the Mother of God for our parish and our families.



The Nativity Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom

I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn!

The angels sing! The archangels blend their voices in harmony! The cherubim resound their joyful praise! The seraphim exult His glory! All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy.



according to the order of Melchisidech; Servants to Him Who took upon Himself the form of a servant that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom;

Fishermen to the Fisher of humanity; Publicans, to Him Who from among them named a chosen evangelist; Sinful women to Him Who exposed His feel to the tears of the repentant woman;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they might look upon the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the

world!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in the place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice! Ask now how this was accomplished, for where God wills the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He has the power. He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today, He Who Is is born. And He Who Is becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man - while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His.

And so the kings have come and they have seen the heavenly King that is come upon the earth, not bring with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominations, nor powers, nor principalities, but treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb. Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God.

And behold the kings have come that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; Women, so that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of child birth to joy; Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin. Infants that they might adore Him Who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; Children, to the Child Who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men to Him Who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants; Shepherds to the Good Shepherd Who has laid down His life for His sheep; Priests, to Him Who has become a High Priest

Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp, nor with music of the pipes nor holding the torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ! For this is all my hope! This is my life! This is my salvation! This is my pipe, my harp! And bearing it I come, having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels sing: "*Glory to God in the Highest,*" and with the shepherds: "*and on earth peace to men of good will.*"✠

Thoughts on the Nativity of Christ

He became a servant on earth; He was Lord on high. Inheritor of the height and depth, Who became a stranger. But the One Who was judged wrongly will judge in truth, and He in Whose face they spat, breathed the spirit into the face. He Who held a weak reed was the scepter for the world that grows old and leans on Him. He Who stood [and] served His servants, sitting, will be worshipped. He Whom the Scribes scorned—the Seraphim sang "holy" before Him.

St. Ephraim the Syrian
Hymns on the Nativity

He who sits at the right hand of the Father goes without shelter at the inn, that He may for us prepare many mansions in the house of His heavenly Father ... He was born, not in the house of His parents, but at the inn, by the wayside, because through the mystery of the Incarnation He is become the Way, by which He guides us to our home.

Venerable Bede

Why "Christ is Born"

On Pascha/Easter the joyous, thoughtful sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read in all Orthodox Churches. But few of us have ever heard his sermon on the Nativity/Birth of Christ. Its structure is similar to the more familiar one and in it he eloquently combines the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church. How wonderful to get the full meaning of this great day. For this is why: "Christ is born! Glorify Him!" Come, then, let us observe the feast! Come and we shall commemorate the solemn festival. It is a strange manner of celebrating a festival; but truly wonderful is the whole story of the nativity. For on this day, the ancient slavery is ended; the devil confounded; the demons take to flight; the power of death is broken; paradise is unlocked; the curse is taken away; sin is removed from us; error driven out; truth has been brought back; the speech of kindness diffused and spread on every side; a heavenly way of life has been implanted on the world; angels communicate with men without fear and men now hold speech with angels.

"Why is this? Because God is now on earth and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He has come on earth while being whole in heaven, he is without diminution on earth. Though being the impassable Word, He became flesh that He might dwell among us. He became flesh; He did not become God; He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive! He was placed in a manger, so that He, by Whom all things are nourished may receive an infant's food from His virgin mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the magi may more easily see Him."

From *The Orthodox Herald*, December, 2005.

SS Peter and Paul 2009 Nativity Appeal Letter

November 18, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this annual Nativity Fast, through prayer, fasting, acts of penance, and almsgiving, we prepare ourselves to once again welcome the Lord into our hearts and homes as we commemorate His holy birth in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago. At this time of the year, as we thank God for the gift of His Son, we also recall and give thanks for the many blessings we have received.

Certainly the greatest blessing our parish has received is the blessing of its people. We are greatly blessed in the faith, dedication, and commitment of our parishioners. Some have been here since the parish was founded over fifty years ago. Other members of our parish family have been here for almost as long. And still others have come to Saints Peter and Paul in more recent years, or even months. All are a blessing to all of us.

Throughout all these fifty-plus years, the founders, benefactors, and supporters of our parish have sacrificed in order to provide us with a temple that is worthy of the Lord, a place of worship, set aside for God, in which we enter His Presence and offer Him our prayers of supplication and thanksgiving. We have also been blessed with a beautiful parish hall which provides us with a place to celebrate our community's life, to offer religious education to our children, and to conduct classes and meetings. While the temple is the center of our parish life, the parish hall is also an important space for us to gather as a community. Having been blessed with a beautiful place to worship and an enviable place to gather and live our community life, we have also been blessed with the responsibility of caring for and maintaining these buildings in addition to meeting the other needs that are part of sustaining a parish, its life of worship, and its community activities.

I am very aware of and grateful for the many sacrifices that our people have made in the past—first to build our temple (over four decades ago), to maintain it in good condition, to heat and cool it as the climate demands, and, in general, to provide a place for God's people to gather together, to hear the proclamation of the Gospel, to offer thanks at the Divine Liturgy, to be nourished with the Holy Mysteries and forgiven in Holy Confession, to celebrate weddings, to pray for the health and wellbeing of our brothers and sisters, and to pray for and perform the funeral rites for those who have fallen asleep.

Those who follow the meetings of the parish council and read the updates presented in our outstanding monthly newsletter are well aware that one of the challenges we face- and one of our most pressing needs- is financial. Our parish council meets each month and, as part of each meeting, discusses the financial aspects of parish life. Both income and expenditures are regularly discussed. And are a regular cause for concern. You can rest assured that the members of the parish council are very diligent in their attention to the question of finances and the maintenance of our parish. As I have said on several occasions, there is no "fat" in our budget, and there are no frivolous or unnecessary expenditures. Quite frankly, where we fall short and where we face our challenges is in the area of stewardship.

I realize that this is a difficult time for many. Even those who consider themselves financially sound are unsettled by the news of the current economy which we hear on a daily basis. Everyone has felt the need to "tighten their belts" and pray and hope for the best. That being said, I plead which each one of you to reflect upon the blessings you have received from God and to respond accordingly. God simply asks that we be as generous with Him and to His Church as He has been generous to us. I ask that you use the upcoming holiday season and the New Year upon which we are soon to enter as an opportunity to express your gratitude to the Lord in a concrete way, by personal sacrifices and by acting as ever more responsible stewards of our parish.

It's been a little over three years since I moved to Phoenix and assumed my responsibilities as rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church. In these past three years I've come to know and love this parish, its people, and its history. I have been inspired by those who have been so faithful to the work of our parish for so many years. I have been humbled by those who have come to our parish in search of the Truth which is the Orthodox Faith. I've been greatly blessed in being called to be an instrument through which the Lord has welcomed new members to His Church. And I continue to be blessed each time I celebrate the Holy Mysteries at the Holy Altar—where each and every one of you is remembered in prayer.

I thank you for your generosity—expressed to our parish and to me personally in so many ways. Be assured of my continued daily prayers for you and yours, especially during the coming holidays. May God Who has begun this good work in us bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.

With love in the Lord,

Father David

Disease and Holy Communion

Very Rev. John Breck

A huge amount of controversy has arisen recently over the way Christians receive Holy Communion, particularly in the wake of what some are calling the "H1N1 pandemic."

The issue involves not only Christians. In July of this year, ministers of health from Muslim countries met with specialists of the World Health Organization and issued a statement recommending that children under the age of twelve, together with the aged and the infirm, refrain from making the pilgrimage to Mecca during Ramadan (this after several cases of H1N1 appeared among Iranian pilgrims). Jewish leaders are debating whether the practice of touching the *mezouza* (venerating a symbol of the Law upon entering a pious Jewish home) should be abandoned. And Christians of many confessions are questioning traditional methods of distributing the Eucharistic bread and wine to their faithful.

For the Orthodox, this is a particularly sensitive concern, since we receive Holy Communion on a common spoon, dipped into the one chalice. Then, once the faithful have received, the deacon or priest consumes what remains. Little or no precaution is taken to wipe the spoon or to take other measures out of concern that the chalice and its contents might transmit some potentially lethal disease. This traditional Orthodox practice elicits no little dismay among many (non-Orthodox) medical professionals. Since the outbreak of the AIDS crisis in the early 1980s, even many of our own faithful have been raising the question, intensified by the present media focus on "Swine flu": "Can infectious disease be transmitted by our Eucharistic practice?"

The dean of the Romanian archdiocese in France recently published a document that brought this question to a head. Taking into consideration recommendations made by several medical professionals, he urged that communion be given without touching the lips of the communicant, who would simply hold his or her head back a little so the priest could drop the particle into the open mouth. The dean also recommended that the priest, with the deacon's help, wipe the spoon after each person had received.

Reaction to this proposal was swift and unequivocal. The French Orthodox theologian Jean-Claude Larchet published a letter, addressed to the local Romanian Metropolitan,

sharply criticizing the dean's proposals. They would, Larchet argued, sow worry and doubt in the minds of our faithful, and for no good reason. As support for his position, he quoted an encyclical recently issued by the highly respected (Harvard and MIT educated) Metropolitan Nicolaos Hadjinikolaou, founder of the bioethics institute in Athens.

The gist of their argument, which I believe is accurate and very much to the point, is that Orthodox life and faith are essentially "Eucharistic," and that we commune in the very Body and Blood of the glorified Son of God, the true Physician of our souls and bodies. Metropolitan Nikolaos stressed the point that today's society is militantly anti-Christian and, throughout Europe and in the United States, is using the H1N1 scare to further undermine the faith and traditional liturgical practices of the Church. Do not let 2000 years of experience, he urged, be put into question by "the rationalism and superficiality" of the present times. For there is no evidence at all that illness has ever been transmitted through Eucharistic communion. (Were that the case, we might add, there would have been throughout history a much higher death-rate among clergy, who consume the chalice after all the people have had communion, than there has been among the general populace or among Christian faithful. Empirically, this is simply not the case.)

The Metropolitan concluded with a pertinent observation: the real problem is not the virus H1N1, nor is it world-wide panic; it is rather "the virus of impiety and a lack of faith," for which the best remedy is precisely frequent communion.

Several people who have written on this subject have pointed out that a fundamental problem, too, is the fact that we have radically separated faith and medicine, care of the soul from cure of the body. The ultimate blessing that may come from the spread of infectious diseases—AIDS, "Swine flu," the ebola virus that is now devastating parts of Africa, and others—could be a conscious and active return to the attitude of Scripture and patristic tradition regarding the mystery of sickness and suffering. To declare that disease cannot be transmitted via Holy Communion is an article of faith; it cannot be proved to the satisfaction of everyone (it would in fact amount to proving a negative). Yet as Orthodox Christians, we have two millennia of experience that goes a very long way to confirm what we believe to be true

regarding the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist, a presence that is actually and ontologically real, true and accessible.

Our life in Jesus Christ is nourished and sustained by our sacramental participation in his sanctifying, life-giving Body and Blood. Insofar as we dwell in his presence, fortified by the traditional faith of the Church, our communion will be not to our judgment or condemnation — nor to our physical detriment because of some transmitted disease. It will be to the healing of our soul and body as a "medicine of immortality," venerated and received as the "bread of heaven" and source of eternal life.

Reprinted from the "Life in Christ" series, October 2009, Article #1, Orthodox Church in America web site, <http://www.oca.org/CHRIST-life-article.asp?SID=6&ID=183&MONTH=October&YEAR=2009>

A Word from the Fathers . . .

"Humility is the only thing we need; one can still fall having virtues other than humility—but with humility one does not fall."

Elder Herman of Mount Athos



"Do we forgive our neighbors their trespasses? God also forgives us in His mercy. Do we refuse to forgive? God, too, will refuse to forgive us. As we treat our neighbors, so also does God treat us. The forgiveness, then, of your sins or unforgiveness, and hence also your salvation or destruction, depend on you yourself, man. For without forgiveness of sins there is no salvation. You can see for yourself how terrible it is."

St. Philotheos of Sinai



"He who would be reconciled to God and have peace with God must first be reconciled with his neighbor."

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

St. John, Archbishop of Shanghai: Nativity Epistle of 1962

"Thou, Who art the God of peace and the Father of compassions, didst send unto us the Angel of Thy great Counsel, granting us peace."

The Angel-Messenger of the pre-eternal Counsel of the Holy Trinity comes to the earth. This is not an ordinary messenger; it is the Only-begotten Son of God Himself. He brings peace to men. "Peace be unto you," he said more than once to His disciples. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," He says to the apostles at the Mystical Supper, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And appearing after His Resurrection, again He says: "Peace be unto you." "For he is our peace," the holy Apostle Paul says concerning Him: "He came to the earth to reconcile man unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And having come, He preached peace to those afar off and to those near, because through Him we both have access unto the Father."

The wall that separated heaven and earth is destroyed; the sword that barred the way to the tree of life disappears. Unto man that had sinned comes his Creator, calling him into His embrace! By the mouths of the apostles, the Holy Spirit cries out: "In Christ, be ye reconciled to God." You that had sinned came not to God,

but the Son of God, before Whom you sinned, came to you! He calls everyone to Himself; He gives forgiveness to everyone who merely thirsts for this. For without the desire of man himself, without at least his little effort, God's peace cannot settle in him. The Lord forces no one to come to Him, but calls everyone: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come all ye who are heavy laden with sins, who are exhausted from your labors and who do not find rest! You shall find that inner peace, which you will find nothing on earth more desirable than. The soul will feel unearthly peace and joy.

The Magi who worshipped the Babe experienced that joy; the shepherds, finding Him lying in a manger, also felt it. But neither peace nor joy touched the heart of Herod and those who wanted to destroy the Babe. For evil desire and malice are incompatible with inner peace. And whoever does not have inner peace, also sows strife and malice about.

The Church now calls us to meet Christ Who comes from heaven. What can we do in order to meet Him like the Magi, and not like Herod? "Ye that desire life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." It

tends to be hard to do this; we are weak when it comes to everything good. But the Son of God even came for this: in order to strengthen us. Not for naught was He born in Bethlehem, which signifies "house of bread." He feeds us with heavenly food, His flesh. "God, the Lord and Creator of all, as a babe in the flesh, is worshipped in a poor manger, crying out: eat My body and through faith be made steadfast." These words of the divine Babe are directed to us. Let us hearken to His call! Let us follow the Magi; let us hasten with the shepherds! Our churches are now that cave of Bethlehem. Not illusory, but in reality does He, Who is now being born in His most pure flesh, rest in them. Let us worship Him; let us offer as a gift our thoughts and desires; let us confess our sins, and let us taste of His immaculate Body and Blood. Whoever did not do this earlier, let him at least accomplish it now, when the star of Bethlehem is already shining! Our minds will be enlightened and the heart will hear:

"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!"

Reprinted from St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, <http://www.orthodox.net/nativity/1962-nativity-john-maximovich-archbishop.html>*

Around SS Peter & Paul

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

Andrew Blischak
December 1

Natalya Delsante
December 5

Alex Anderberhan
Deborah Kossob
December 6

Dorothy Yost
December 17

David and Stephanie Homyak
December 28

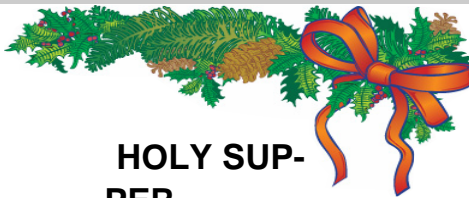
Bill Koval
December 29

THANK YOU

I would like to thank all of you for your cards and encouraging words, and for keeping me in your prayers as I recover from knee surgery. Father David's calls and visits are very uplifting, and keep us in touch with our spiritual family. Thanks to your prayers, I am doing much better. I miss you all!

Rose Koval

*Many
Years!*



HOLY SUPPER

Please join us for Holy Supper on Thursday, December 24th following Compline.

Please contact Elena Kerr to confirm that you will be attending.

We look forward to seeing everyone there

to



celebrate this

joyous feast.

PRAYER LIST

*"I was sick and you visited me."
Matt 25:36*

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

Dorothy Yost
Protodeacon Alexis
Chuck Ullmann
Marie Yevin
Rose & Bill Koval
Peg Linderman
Pauline & Dan Vinay
Beatrice Washington

Bits and Pieces

HOLY SUPPER

In many Slavic cultures, it is traditional for families to gather for a special meal on the Eve of the Nativity of Christ. This meal has come to be known as the "Holy Supper" or "Vigilia." Traditional symbolic foods are shared as part of the Christmas celebration. Our parish family also observes this traditional Christmas Eve observance every year. This year's Holy Supper will take place in the Parish Cultural Hall following Compline at 6:00 p.m. Please contact Elena Kerr to confirm that you will attend this special celebration of Our Lord's Nativity.

CHRISTMAS GIVING

As we celebrate the joyous feast of Christ's Nativity, it is our custom to give gifts to our family, loved ones, and friends as a sign of our love and our gratitude for their presence in our lives. The exchange of gifts at Christmas is one of the ways we celebrate God's love for us and the many gifts He has given us, most especially, the Greatest Gift of all—the Gift of His Only-Begotten Son Who was born for us on Christmas day. As you prepare to give gifts to your loved ones, please do not forget to be generous to our parish and its many needs. Your generosity at this time of the year is a sign of your gratitude to God for the spiritual nourishment and enrichment we receive through our parish community throughout the year. Your generosity at Christmas last year was deeply appreciated. I am confident that you will once again be generous in support of our parish during this Holy Season. May the Lord abundantly bless you for your generous support of the Church's work as we celebrate the Birth of His Son.

Father David

THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

The rich liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church includes a variety of services and blessings. Each year, after the celebration of the Feast of Theophany and the Blessing of Water (January 6), it is customary for the priest to visit parishioners homes, bringing with him the newly blessed Holy Water to sprinkle and thereby bless the home. Father David will be available to bless homes throughout the month of January. To arrange to have your house blessed, please speak with Father David.

PARISH COUNCIL

If you are interested in serving on the Parish Council for 2010, please contact Father David.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who expressed their best wishes and sent cards, gifts, etc., on the occasion of my birthday. Your presence in my life is the source of many blessings and I am thankful to the Lord for all of you.

Love, Fr. David

MYRRH BEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY

The Myrrh Bearers Annual Christmas Bake Sale will take place on Sunday, December 20th during coffee hour along with our Christmas Raffle. Ticket sales for the raffle will be 6 for \$5 or \$1 each. Please see Rita Mudrenko or Jane Evans if you would like to donate an item for the raffle.

Our traditional Holy Supper will take place on the Eve of the Nativity of Christ in the Parish Hall following the Great Vespers at 6:00. Elena Kerr will be taking reservations. Those attending will be asked to bring a traditional symbolic Lenten food to share with our Parish family.

The Orthodox Pocket planner for the year 2010 are on order.

My special thanks and appreciation to those who once again volunteered their time and participated in our baking of Christmas Rolls and to all who supported this fund raiser. This year we had a great interest outside of the parish in purchasing our products.

Plans will be formulated at our December meeting for the Myrrh Bearers' Annual Luncheon in January. Our meetings are held the second Sunday of the month following coffee hour. New members are always welcomed.

Elizabeth Michel

FOCA

Thank you to everyone who spent their precious time (Nov. 12 to 14) working on Piroghi. The potatoes were prepared on Thursday and Friday and then placed into the dough discs on Saturday. A total of 204 dozen were made. We could have made more, but we plan on doing the process again in the near future.

The collection for the seminarian family Christmas was \$200 from the parish and \$100 from the chapter. It will help greatly to make Christmas merry. Again, thank you everyone for your support.

COFFEE HOUR



November's thank you's go out to Rose Kurowski, Rita Mudrenko, Jane Evans, Heather and Thomas Brunson, Marie Yevin, Weini Michael, and the Eritrian community, along with FOCA members. A special thank you to Harold Homyak, and Peter and Luka Radjenovich for always being there to help out. December is open except for the 13th.

Please help out, but remember that we are in the middle of the Nativity Fast, so dairy products are strictly forbidden. Please talk to me at church or call me at 623-512-2021. Thank you.

Pat Starkey

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Alexey and Tiffany Ann Trotsenko who were crowned in marriage on November 8, 2009. May the Lord grant them many happy years together.

BOOKSTORE

Stop by the bookstore during this season of fasting and feasting in honor of our Lord's birth! We have Nativity CD's, icons and books, as well as inexpensive items that will make thoughtful little gifts for a special someone. The service book for the Feast of the Nativity is also available.

The bookstore also carries a small selection of children's books for all age and price ranges. Toys will break, but a spiritual lesson will last a lifetime!

Also, don't forget that Epiphany will arrive soon after the Feast of the Nativity. Holy water bottles will be available for purchase at the end of December.

Thank you for your continued support of our parish bookstore. Have a blessed feast!

FROM THE CHURCH TREASURER

Now is your last chance to make sure your 2009 church pledges/donations/contributions are in and accounted for in this year. Please make every effort to contribute. The church has had a financial challenging time this year, as we all have. We would at least like to 'break even' with our operating income & expenses.

Please make every effort to make your year end 2009 contributions prior to December 31st. Any contributions received in January will be attributed to 2010. If you have any questions, please see David in the church office.



December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
 <p>Christmas Bake Sale The Myrrh Bearers will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 20th.</p>			 7:00pm Adult Ed'n			5:00pm Vespers
6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	7	8	9 Icon "Unexpected Joy"	10	11	12
 <p>FOOD DRIVE FOR ST MARY'S FOOD BANK Please bring in your nonperishable food donations. Collection containers are in the church narthex and Cultural Center.</p>						
		6:00pm Council Mtg	7:00pm Adult Ed'n			5:00pm Vespers
13 Ven. Herman of Alaska 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School MBAS Meeting	14	15	16	17	18	19 Sat. before Nativity
			 7:00pm Adult Ed'n	 <p>ADULT EDUCATION Adult Education classes continue Wednesdays through mid-December. See calendar for details.</p>		5:00pm Vespers
20 Sunday Before Nativity 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School MBAS Christmas Bake Sale	21	22	23	24 Eve of the Nativity 6:00pm Compline and litya Followed by HOLY SUPPER	25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!	26 Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos 5:00pm Vespers
	 <p>HOLY SUPPER Thursday, December 24, 2009 following Compline at 6:00 pm. See Elena Kerr to sign up!</p>					
						
27 Sunday After Nativity 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	28	29	30	31 Leavetaking Nativity	1 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great 9:00am Divine Liturgy NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 Ven. Seraphim of Sarov 5:00pm Vespers
 <p>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</p>						