

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 12

December 2012

2012 Nativity Appeal

I ask once again for each one of you to reflect upon the blessings you have received from God and to respond accordingly. The manner of approaching responsible Christian stewardship is actually quite simple: God 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, through your generous gifts to our parish—which are gifts to the Lord Himself.

Father David



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The Gift to Be Simple

The first words of a well-known Shaker song, which are " 'Tis the gift to be simple," could well apply to the great saint we remember on December 12: Spyridon the Wonder-worker and Bishop.

Spyridon's life from its very early years was simple. Born in 270, he was a shepherd on the island of Cyprus, his birthplace, and came from a family of farmers. Though they were not educated, his parents were devout Christians and raised him in the Church.

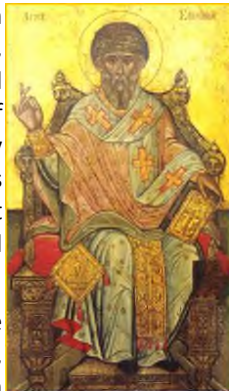
He married early in life and had a daughter, but his wife died when he was still fairly young. After her death he decided to devote his life to God's service and become a monk. His daughter, following his example, also entered the monastic life.

Spyridon's background, unlike that of many bishops, was not one of advanced education and study. Yet his dedication to God and his deep faith led to his being chosen as Bishop of Tremithus. And even though he had taken on this immense responsibility, he didn't change his way of life. He continued to care for his own cattle and till his land. The abundant pro-

duce that the land produced was mostly given to the poor, while Spyridon himself ate sparingly of the simplest food, as he had always done.

Though his work was no threat to anyone, Spyridon was persecuted, mutilated and exiled to slave labor in the mines of Spain toward the end of the third century. When he was finally allowed to return to his diocese, he continued to work with the poor and to bring many pagans to the Christian faith.

Being a person without great education or sophistication did not mean that Spyridon could not find ways of explaining the complex teaching that God is Trinity. He is credited with using the helpful image of a piece of pottery to describe the three Divine Persons. Pottery is made, he said, of three elements—earth, water, and the effect of fire. Yet these three are united in the pot that is produced. In the same way the Persons of the Trinity are three and distinct, yet united. It was at the



Council of Nicaea that Bishop Spyridon, so familiar with the elements of farming and the earth, impressed people with this image.

Spyridon's simplicity made him humble enough to be open to God's guidance, and he was given the gift to work wonders. He was able to cast out demons, bring rain in a time of drought, and heal the sick. Yet his humility never altered. When because of his modest dress he was not recognized as a bishop and was insulted by an arrogant guard, he didn't take offense but quietly accepted the ill-treatment.

Spyridon died in 348, and was buried in the Church of the Apostles in Tremithus, where he

Kontakion - Tone 2

Wounded by the love of Christ,
all-holy one, your mind was given wings
through the light of the Spirit,
you found work in active contemplation, God-pleasing Spyridon,
becoming a divine sacrifice,
and imploring divine illumination for all.

had served for so long. His relics were transferred to the Greek island of Corfu, having been discovered to be incorrupt. His grave sent forth the fragrance of basil, that herb associated with the cross and with kings.

Message From Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin the twelfth month of the year and the Holy Season of Christ's Nativity fast approaches, the Gospel message of Jesus, Who is Light in the midst of darkness, again invites us to draw near to the Crib of Bethlehem. The glad tidings proclaimed in our prayerful celebrations of Christmas echoes in the ears of Christians and re-echoes in our hearts with an ever new freshness and an ever more radiant joy. It is a message which lights up with heavenly truth a world that is plunged in darkness by sin and error. It brings joy to the world which is filled with anxiety, division, confusion, and sorrow. The Good News of Christ's birth proclaims freedom to all those shackled with the chains of sin and guilt. It promises mercy, love, and peace to the countless numbers of those in suffering and tribulation who see their happiness shattered and their efforts broken through the daily struggles and strife of modern life.

Church bells ringing throughout the world to announce the glad tidings of the birth of the Savior will not only recall the gift which God made to mankind at the Birth of His Son, they will also announce and proclaim a consoling reality of the present day, a reality which is eternally young, living and life-giving; it is the reality of the "True Light which enlightens every man that comes into this World" (John 1:9), that eternal Light which knows no setting and is never dimmed. The Eternal Word,

Who is the Way, the Truth
and the



Life, began His mission of saving and redeeming the human race by being born in the squalor and poverty of a stable and thus ennobled and sanctified human life.

Throughout His teaching ministry, the Lord proclaimed a message which is still, today, almost two thousand years later, the Word of Eternal Life. That message can solve the most difficult of life's questions, unsolved and unsolvable for those who bring to their investigations a mentality which is fleeting and merely human; and those questions stand up, demanding an answer, before the thought and the feeling of exasperated mankind.

It is my prayer and hope that all of us will be well prepared to hear the message of Christmas clearly, will be consoled and uplifted by it, and, in turn, will take this great news of God's love for us into the world which is so in need of hope. Be assured of my steadfastness in prayer for you and all your loved ones. May the Prince of Peace grant His peace to our lives and to all the world.

With love in the Lord,

Father David



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PILGRIM ICON OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS



In January, our pilgrim icon of the Most Holy Theotokos will begin its fourth year "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 is available at the bookstore counter. 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.

Prayer to the Most Holy Theotokos for Our Parish, Saints Peter and Paul Church,

O Most Holy and Blessed Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We gather to pray before your holy icon, and gratefully remember your prayerful intercession for those who follow your Son as His faithful disciples.

We humbly beseech you, all-powerful Protectress, our Mother and Queen: as you did hasten to the aid of our fathers throughout the ages, grant us now, also, your Motherly protection and care.

Save and keep, O Blessed Lady, our parish community under the shelter of your mercy. Bless our bishop and clergy and all our faithful; Protect our families and loved ones. Intercede with Your Son for those who are ill; ask comfort for those who mourn; pray to Your Son for those who are in need or want. Grant that our parish community may continue to grow in love of your Son and share more fully and perfectly in the mission of the Church so that we may joyfully proclaim the Good News of Salvation. Extend your protecting veil over all of us who in faith and love entreat your intercession and beg your motherly protection and care.

Most Merciful Lady and Mother, raise unto Christ the Lord your hands that received Him at His Birth; plead our cause before His goodness, ask pardon of our sins, a devout and peaceful life, a happy Christian end and a good defense before His dread judgment seat, so that, assisted by your most effective prayers to Him, we may inherit the joys of Paradise and with all the Saints may sing the glory of the most honorable and majestic Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Saintly in Secret

On December 22 we remember a woman to whom the Church gives the title of Greatmartyr: Anastasia of Rome.

Her father, a prominent member of the Roman Senate from an old and established family, was a pagan. Her mother, Fausta, was a Christian whose faith was very important to her, but in order to preserve her marriage she practiced that faith quietly. She did make sure that Anastasia was baptized, and saw to it that the little girl learned about Jesus Christ and the Gospel teachings.

Fausta also gave her daughter the example of charity to people in need, and taught her to be steadfast in her beliefs even though there were many, like her pagan father, who would never share her faith.

Anastasia's father arranged a marriage for his daughter that she did not welcome, but as an obedient child of her times she married the rich landowner, Publius, who had been chosen for her. There was really no love in the marriage, and Anastasia knew that her husband, a pagan, was indifferent to any questions of faith so that she probably would never bring him to the faith.

She also knew that he would never approve of her actions as a Christian. It was a time of persecution for believers; Christians were tortured and imprisoned for the flimsiest reasons. Anastasia would dress in rags, so as not to be identified and anger her husband, and would go to the jails to encourage those who were suffering for the faith, washing their wounds and praying with them. She also gave food, clothing, and large amounts of money to the poor. Though it was her own money, part of her large inheritance, Publius would have considered it wasteful and unnecessary.

Publius discovered her secret work, and punished her harshly for mixing with undesirables in the Roman prisons. He ordered her to be locked up and denied food. It was only when Publius was sent by the Roman Emperor on a mission and drowned at sea that her terrible ordeal ended.

Some time after her husband's death, Anastasia went to Macedonia and ministered to Christians there. She stayed for a while with a young widow named Theodota, who joined her in caring for prisoners. Theodota and her children were burned to death for fearlessly confessing their faith in Christ, and Anastasia herself was imprisoned once again.

During the dark days in prison, Anastasia had visions of her friend Theodota. The younger woman always encouraged and comforted her, but the visions were a secret between them. It was not until Anastasia was condemned to death that Theodota showed herself to other people in an amazing way.

Troparion - Tone 4

Your lamb Anastasia, calls out to You, O Jesus, in a loud voice:
"I love You, my Bridegroom, and in seeking You I endure suffering.
In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in You, and I died so that I might live with You.

Accept me as a pure sacrifice,
for I have offered myself in love."

Through her prayers save our souls, since You are merciful.

Anastasia and other Christians were put on a small boat. The plan was that soldiers would capsize it and drown the believers. But Theodota suddenly was seen walking on the water, and pulled the leaky little craft safely to shore.

Anastasia was eventually martyred. The Church on this day honors her and Theodota openly, not in secret, as true saints.

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NATIVITY FAST

Orthodox Christians prepare for the celebration of the Lord's Nativity by observing a period of fasting. This "Nativity Fast" traditionally entails fasting from red meat, poultry, meat products, eggs, dairy products, fish, oil, and wine. Fish, wine and oil are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, and oil and wine are allowed on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The fasting rules permit fish, and/or wine and oil on certain feast days that occur during the course of the fast: Evangelist Matthew (Nov. 16), Apostle Andrew (Nov. 30), Great-martyr Barbara (Dec. 4), St. Nicholas (Dec. 6), St. Spiridon (Dec. 12), and St. Herman (Dec. 13), St. Ignatius (Dec. 20), etc. The Nativity Fast is not as severe as Great Lent or the Dormition Fast.

As is always the case with Orthodox fasting rules, persons who are ill, the very young or elderly, and nursing mothers are exempt from fasting. Each individual is expected to confer with their confessor regarding any exemptions from the fasting rules, but should never place themselves in physical danger.

There has been some ambiguity about the restriction of fish, whether it means the allowance of invertebrate fish or all fish. Often, even on days when fish is not allowed, shellfish may be consumed.

HOLY SUPPER

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

Please contact Marty Gala or Jane Evans to confirm that you will be attending. We look forward to seeing everyone there to celebrate this joyous feast.

The Real St. Nicholas

Fr. Lawrence Farley

One of the things I hate about going shopping during the season of the Christmas rush is the music that is piped in over the mall sound system. I would be happy with traditional renderings of the old carols, but instead, my ears are assaulted with the latest auditory atrocity, celebrating Christmas as a time of consumerism, indulgence, and fun in the snow. And often, to make matters worse, we have St. Nicholas forced to preside over all this—or, as he is described by these contemporary songs, “jolly old St. Nick”.

Some of the transformation of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, into jolly ol’ St. Nick (aka “Santa Claus”) can be laid at the door of the old 1822 poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” attributed to Clement Clark Moore. It is more popularly known as the poem “Twas the Night before Christmas”. Many details from the poem have become part of the popular mythology of Santa Claus and his secret gift-giving on Christmas eve. Stockings were hung by the chimney with care, and the children were nestled all snug in their beds. St. Nicholas appeared on his miniature sleigh full of toys, pulled by his eight tiny reindeer. This St. Nick came down the chimney with a bound, the stump of a pipe held tight in his teeth, his little round belly shaking when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly. Not a lot of holy reverence here; he was a right jolly old elf, and the householder laughed when he saw him, in spite of himself.

I think it is worth comparing this St. Nicholas, who lives at the North Pole, with the real one, who lives in heaven. The main contrasts are three in number.

First, the real St. Nicholas, as found in his icons, is a lot thinner. That is, he points us toward asceticism and self-denial as the prescribed path to fulfillment. The real St.

Nicholas is not portrayed iconographically as having a “little round belly,” nor does he appear as “a right jolly old elf” who provokes involuntary laughter. He appears as a man of God, a hierarch in the holy Church, someone of a serene countenance who comes from much prayer and fasting. Jolly ol’ St. Nick calls his followers to eating and spending sprees, to buying more and more, even if they go into debt to pay for it, and his pre-Christmas feast day is known as “Black Friday.” St. Nicholas the wonderworker of Myra in Lycia calls his followers to take up their cross and follow Christ, and his pre-Christmas feast day is marked on December 6, in the middle of a fast. It is not characterized by a mad scramble to buy, but by worship of the living God. But some festivity is allowed at a feast: we love St. Nicholas so much that even on this fast day we are allowed fish, oil, and wine.

Secondly, the real St. Nicholas carries a Gospel, not a bag full of toys which seem to be liberally distributed whether or not one is naughty or nice. Santa Claus is rarely without his sack of loot; St. Nicholas is never without the Gospel. As a bishop, his main task was preaching and rightly defining the Word of Truth, so of course he carries that holy Book. It contains the words which are the most precious to him, and which he constantly preached to his flock in Asia Minor. As his icon shows, it is his message to us today as well. And this message of St. Nicholas is identical with that of his Lord: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Finally, the real St. Nicholas knows that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), whereas Santa Claus would have us believe that it is more blessed to receive than to give. Santa is about receiving—that is why young children do not traditionally ask each other, “What did you give others for Christmas?” but rather,

“What did you get for Christmas?” Santa is the patron saint of consumerism. The authentic St. Nicholas knows that while it is important to receive graciously, almsgiving still results in receiving more grace. Obviously Christmas morning knows both giving and receiving, and parents will attest that the real fun is watching their children receive. There is good in both giving and receiving. St. Nicholas knows this and can keep the two in balance; Santa tends to forget and focus mostly on receiving.

None of the above meditations are offered in a Scrooge-like spirit. Contrasting the true St. Nicholas with the false one does not imply that “Christmas is a humbug,” as the pre-conversion Ebenezer thought. I like Christmas: the tree-decorating, hearing from long-absent friends through Christmas cards, the Christmas day turkey. I even like the gift-giving. I am not much threatened by Santa Claus; I simply don’t mistake him for St. Nicholas. That is, I think that however much (or little) we enjoy the pre-Christmas season, we must discern that there are in fact two kinds of Christmas celebrated concurrently in our culture. One is about consumerism and over-indulgence, pure and simple. Jesus has little to do with it, which is why in some places the public display of a crèche or saying “Merry Christmas” provokes opposition. The other Christmas is our own Christian feast, the commemoration (as the service book says) of “The Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We can partake of both, so long as we remember which one has priority. The contrast between jolly old St. Nick and the true St. Nicholas of Myra in Lycia reminds us of the differences between the two Christmases.

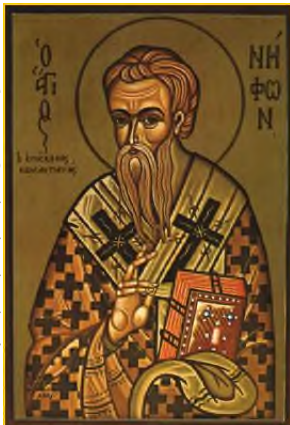
Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, Reflections in Christ, “No Other

(Continued on page 5)

Looking Forward to the Mansion While Living in Tents

On December 23 the Church celebrates the memory of Saint Niphon, Bishop and Wonderworker.

Born in Paphlagonia, in the Asian part of modern Turkey, he had loving parents who took him to church and oversaw his education in Constantinople. The family was associated with the court of a military commander, so he knew the "proper" life of the court.



But as happens to some young men who are born with many advantages and little to strive for, Niphon was drawn to a life that was anything but proper. He indulged himself in all kinds of excess and vice. At times, when he remembered his upbringing, the ugliness of his life disgusted him. But the disgust only convinced him that he was a hopelessly lost soul. Feeling unable even to pray, he resigned himself to his vices.

A friend revealed the depth of Niphon's corruption to him in a startling way. He looked into Niphon's face for a long time with an expression of surprise and horror. When Niphon asked why he was staring so intently, the friend said, "Your face is completely changed. I have never seen it look like that before."

Niphon knew it was his sinfulness that gave his face its frightening appearance. Remembering again his early faith, he cried out to the Mother of God for help. He began to pray constantly for her intercession; sometimes he would see her smiling radiantly and other times—when he fell into sin again—he could not see her at all. But after years of struggle and prayer, he felt her guiding him toward monasticism, and was tonsured a monk.

His struggles did not end. He had visions of demons who continuously whispered,

"There is no God! Why do you bother to strive so, when there is no God?"

But Niphon did strive, since he now knew he had something to strive for. He worked hard to purify his thoughts and to live in repentance. He was finally granted the ability to overcome the evil spirits that tormented him, and to confront the demons that he could see troubling other people.

Niphon was consecrated Bishop of Constantia, Cyprus when he was quite old, and served for just a short while. A young deacon, who would become Saint Athanasius, visited him before he died and reported that his face, that same face once distorted by sin, had shone like the sun.

On this day we read Hebrews 11: 9 and 10, which describes Abraham looking forward to the eternal mansion of God "while living in tents" on this earth. Abraham believed God's promises when it would have been easy to conclude that God Himself had forgotten them and had left His people to wander in this earthly desert forever.

Saint Niphon, too, had to guard his faith when demons told him that no mansion awaits. His struggle and final victory, like Abraham's, remind us that the tents of the desert are not our everlasting home.

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THOUGHTS ON THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

The child in that distant Bethlehem cave has no desire that we fear him; he enters our hearts not by frightening us, by proving his power and authority, but by love alone. He is given to us as a child, and only as children can we in turn love him and give ourselves to him. The world is ruled by authority and power, by fear and domination. The child God liberates us from that. All he desires from us is our love, freely given and joyful; all he desires is that we give him our heart. And we give it to a defenseless, endlessly trusting child.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann



But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

Galatians 4:4-7



Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the Eternal God is born as a little child.

Kontakion



For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Christ is Born and the Wise Men Worship

One of the ways we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ on December 25 is to sing the Troparion of the Feast. The words of the hymn describe Jesus Christ as the light of the world, the Sun of Righteousness and the Orient from on high. The hymn also refers to the wise men from the East who followed a star to find this newborn King.

Depictions and descriptions of the wise men differ. They are sometimes called Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, but have also been given other names. In Western art they are often shown riding camels, presumably to indicate that they come from the East, but in icons they ride horses, a way of showing that they wanted to get to the Savior as quickly as possible. Swift horses can certainly maintain a different pace from that of plodding camels, though the ride was arduous no matter what animals they rode.

While in many representations all three men look to be approximately the same age, icons show one as distinctly older than the other two, emphasizing that the urgent work of seeking salvation is for people of all ages, just as it is for people

of every background and origin.

One word that is used by most traditions to identify the three travelers is "magi." This word brings to mind images of men who watched the stars closely and tried to derive wisdom from them, or who "worshipped the stars," as the Troparion states.

The wise men are not the only ones to whom this word is applied. In Acts 8: 9-24 we meet a "magus" (the singular of "magi") named Simon, who says of himself that he is "something great." He is popular and is listened to because he has amazed the people with magic. But Simon's response to the truly great things he sees the apostles doing is all wrong. He hopes to buy the power they have, so that "anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter rebukes him and urges him to repent.

The magi who come to worship Jesus in the cave are quite different. They are ready to humble themselves before this Child. They are willing to be "taught by a star to adore" Him, as the Troparion puts it, not seeking to share His power but just to offer Him gifts. They are ready to accept what God is showing them by

means of a star that is different from all the stars they have studied so attentively.

In his poem "Journey of the Magi" T.S. Eliot writes that the men returned to their kingdom homes but were "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, With an alien people clutching their gods." The magis' lives were changed, and perhaps

Troparion - Tone 4

Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the Light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
Were taught by a Star to adore You,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know You, the Orient from on High.

they would never again be comfortable. God had shown them something entirely new in the stars, and the only possible response was the one we sing in the Troparion: "O Lord, glory to Thee."

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Around SS Peter & Paul

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

Andrew Blischak
December 1

Natalya Delsante
December 5

Deborah Kossob
December 6

Joe Gala
December 26

David and Stephanie Homyak
December 28

*Many
Years!*

*mnogaya
letia!*

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.

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:

Dan Perotto
Nicholas Enoch
Ann Garza
Mary Maul
Rose Koval

If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Father David.

Bits and Pieces

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

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 Marty Gala or Jane Evans to confirm that you will attend this special celebration of Our Lord's Nativity.

BOOKSTORE

The bookstore has a small supply of Christmas cards and tree ornaments, as well as a CD with Orthodox Hymns of the Nativity. Additionally there is a limited amount of the 2013 Orthodox Pocket Calendars published by St. Tikhon's available for \$4 each. Last year they sold out quickly, so be sure to pick yours up soon. Have a blessed Nativity!

MYRRH BEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY

The Myrrh Bearers Annual Christmas Bake Sale will take place on Sunday, December 23rd 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 Compline at 6:00. Marty Gala and Jane Evans will be taking reservations. Those attending will be asked to bring a traditional symbolic Lenten food to share with our Parish family.

CHRISTMAS BAKE 2012

A successful baking of Christmas rolls was completed in 7 baking days. This was accomplished by those of you who volunteered your time and labor. Thank you to the following: Fr David, Barbara, Michelle, Pat, Betsy, Lisa, Tonya, Dusanka, Marty, Ann, Jane, Rita, Gina, Stephanie, Nora, Katrina, Trish, John & Carol, Svitlana, Anna, Sylvia, Helen, Paul, Dan, Vi, Heather, Elena & Elizabeth.

We are also thankful to our parishioners and friends who supported this bake sale.

Elizabeth Michel

FROM THE CHURCH TREASURER

It's December already, and now is your chance to make sure your 2012 church pledges/donations/contributions are in and accounted for within this year. Please make every effort to contribute. The church has had a financially challenging time again this year, and **we are -\$600 in the red Y-T-D for our Operating Income.** We would at least like to 'break even' with our operating income and expenses, plus have a little extra going into 2013.

Copies of your Y-T-D early contributions report can be found at the back of the church or in the church office. **Please make your 2012 year end contributions prior to December 30th** so they will make the year end deposit. Any contributions received after the 30th will be attributed to 2013. If you have any questions, please

see David in the church office.

MAKING CHARITABLE GIFTS

The best value often comes from donating appreciated assets, because donors can get a full deduction while skipping capital-gains tax on the asset's growth. Cash donations to charities are often deductible up to 50% of adjusted gross income, while the limit for gifts of other assets is often 30%. Disallowed portions usually carry over to future years.

If you aren't sure whether the group is eligible to receive tax-deductible gifts, American Institute of CPAs tax specialist Melissa Labant recommends checking "Select Check" at www.irs.gov, a master list of qualified charities.

Are you concerned that the charitable deduction could shrink next year? If so, make a large donation to a "donor-advised" fund and qualify for a full write-off this year. Assets can then grow tax-free in the fund until donors specify tax-free recipients, sometimes years later. There's no deduction at that point.

SOURCES FOR ICONS, PRAYER BOOKS, AND RELIGIOUS GIFTS

As we buy, make, and otherwise obtain Christmas gifts for friends and loved ones, it's entirely appropriate to consider giving religious gifts—icons, books, prayer ropes, neck crosses, etc.—as gifts to mark the celebration of the Lord's Birth. Below are suggested websites from which you can purchase gifts for the holiday (or throughout the year). Also, Katrina Delsante is always willing to assist you in determining your gift-giving needs.

Online sources:

Saint Isaac of Syria Skete
<http://www.skete.com>

Holy Transfiguration Monastery
<http://www.thehtm.org>

Conciliar Press
www.conciliarpress.com

Light and Life Publishing
www.light-n-life.com



Holy Cross Skete
<http://www.holycross-hermitage.com>

Holy Trinity Store
<http://www.holytrinitystore.com>

Saint Tikhon Seminary Bookstore
<http://www.stspress.com>

Saint Vladimir Seminary Bookstore
<http://www.svspress.com>

December 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p>Christmas Bake Sale The Myrrh Bearers will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 23rd.</p>						1 5:00pm Vespers
2 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	3	4	5	6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker	7	8 5:00pm Vespers
 <p>CHRISTMAS PROGRAM Please join us for our Christmas program on Sunday, January 6, 2013 following Divine Liturgy.</p>						8 5:00pm Vespers
9 Icon "Unexpected Joy" 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School St. Nicholas Celebration	10	11 6:00pm Council Mtg	12	13 Ven. Herman of Alaska	14	15 5:00pm Vespers
<p>ADULT EDUCATION Due to a conflict in scheduling, Adult Education classes for December are canceled and will resume after the Nativity and Theophany holidays.</p>						15 5:00pm Vespers
16 Holy Forefathers 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	17	18	19	20 Icon "Rescue of the Drowning"	21	22 Sat. before Nativity 5:00pm Vespers
 <p>HOLY SUPPER Monday, December 24, 2012 following Compline at 6:00 pm. See Jane Evans or Marty Gala to sign up!</p>						22 Sat. before Nativity 5:00pm Vespers
23 Sunday Before Nativity 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy MBAS Christmas Bake Sale and Raffle	24 Eve of the Nativity 6:00pm Compline and Litya Followed by HOLY SUPPER	25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!	26 Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos	27 3rd Day of the Nativity	28	29 Sat. after Nativity 5:00pm Vespers
30 Leavetaking Nativity 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	31 Leavetaking Nativity	1 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 Ven. Seraphim of Sarov	3 Forefeast of Theophany	4 Synaxis of the 70 Apostles	5 Eve of Theophany STRICT FAST 6:00pm Great Compline and Litya
<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>						5 Eve of Theophany STRICT FAST 6:00pm Great Compline and Litya