

# SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 2

February 2017

## Annual Meeting Highlights

- ✘ Operating Income for 2016 was \$180,387.98 and Operating Expenses were \$154,149.59 resulting in a positive balance of \$26,238.39 for 2016.
- ✘ Proposed 2017 Operating Budget of \$169,000.00 presented and passed at Annual Parish Meeting.
- ✘ Slate of officers and trustees for 2017 presented and elected.
- ✘ Capital improvement and expansion were discussed.

## Biblical Challenge from Saint Andrew

**As Great Lent begins on February 27, we begin chanting and singing "The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete" and continue each evening in church.**

Saint Andrew took part in the Sixth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in the year 680, and then served as Archdeacon at the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in that city. Later he was consecrated as a bishop in the city of Gortineia, on the island of Crete. In addition to these important services to the Church, he wrote sermons, as well as some of the most famous hymns we have, many in praise of the Theotokos. The best-known of the hymns written by Andrew is the Canon with which we begin the season of preparation for Great and Holy Pascha.

The words of the Canon challenge us in several ways. First, they contain innumerable Biblical references which may not be familiar. We don't all have the broad knowledge of the Scrip-

tures that a good number of Andrew's hearers in earlier centuries possessed. So when the Canon verse reads, "You, my soul, have revolted from the

Lord like Dathan and Abiram" we may have to look up these two men in Chapter 16 of the Book of Numbers. There we will find that they rebelled against Moses and Aaron and asked them,

"Why do you exalt yourselves above the congregation...Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey; to kill us in the wilderness...?" Moses replies that it is God they are rebelling against, and Saint Andrew uses the incident as a warning to trust God and not be rebellious, "but with all your heart cry 'Spare!', that a yawning gulf of the earth may not swallow you."

The Canon also challenges us to follow Biblical examples. Saint Andrew writes, "The Shunamite woman of old with right

good will entertained the righteous man. But you, my soul, have taken into your house neither stranger nor traveler." This offers us a good spiritual exercise: We can consider, with serious prayer, what it means for us to "take into our house" those whom God may send, and how we will go about it.

We're also challenged to be worthy of Christ's saving acts: "You laid down Your body and blood for all, O Crucified Word; Your body in order to renew me, Your blood in order to wash me, and You did surrender Your spirit, O Christ, in order to bring me to the Father...Eden that was closed is open; things on high and below, creation and all peoples are saved and worship You."

Great Lent is given to us as a time to work toward meeting these challenges. We can be assured that with God's help we are able to do so. Referring to Exodus 14:16 Saint Andrew writes: "Imagine Moses' staff striking the sea and fixing the deep as a type of the divine Cross, by which you too, my soul, can accomplish great things."



**Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church**  
 1614 E. Monte Vista Rd.  
 Phoenix, AZ 85006  
 602.253.9515  
[www.sspeterpaulaz.org](http://www.sspeterpaulaz.org)  
[www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)  
[www.orthodoxfellowship.org](http://www.orthodoxfellowship.org)

**The Right Reverend DANIEL**  
 Bishop of Santa Rosa  
 Rector

480.287.0240 Mobile  
[frdaniel@sspeterpaulaz.org](mailto:frdaniel@sspeterpaulaz.org)

**Andrew Evans**  
 Council President  
 480.948.7929

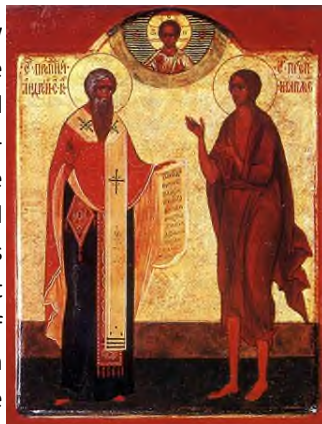
**Barbara Harp**  
 Choir Director  
[bharp@vosymca.org](mailto:bharp@vosymca.org)

**Stephanie A. Homyak**  
 Church School Director  
 Newsletter Editor

623.869.0470  
[Stephanie\\_Homyak@yahoo.com](mailto:Stephanie_Homyak@yahoo.com)

**Mike Wagner**  
 Web Master  
[Mike@sspeterpaulaz.org](mailto:Mike@sspeterpaulaz.org)

**Barbara Peterson**  
 Myrrhbearers Altar Society  
 602.803.0280



# Rector's Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At the beginning of this month (February 2) we celebrate the Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord. Recalling the events recounted to us in the second chapter of the Gospel of Saint Luke, we remember that the Lord Jesus, on the fortieth day after His birth, was taken by Mary and Joseph and presented in the Temple in order to fulfill the ordinances of the Law (Luke 2:22-40).

Central to the story of the Lord's presentation on the fortieth day is the man referred to as "just and devout," the pious and faithful believer, Simeon. The Gospel tells us that Simeon was looking forward to the consolation of Israel and that the Holy Spirit was upon him. When Simeon saw the forty-day-old infant Jesus being brought into the Temple, he recognized in this small child the fulfillment of his hope. Taking the Infant Jesus into his arms, Simeon proclaimed the beautiful words we hear at every Vesper service: "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-31).

Indeed, this Infant, whose birth we celebrated a few short weeks ago, was and is the Light of Revelation to the entire world. And the good news is that His light continues to shine in our hearts and lives and throughout the world. Some would say, of course, that this Light does

not seem to be burning very brightly today in the world in which we now live. This brilliant shining Light is only dimmed by the world's sinfulness and by our personal sinfulness as well. But, acknowledging this, we do not lose heart! The brilliance of the Light of Christ shining in our hearts and lives—and, indeed, in the world—can be restored through our own lives of repentance, by our own turning again to the Lord.

In a few short weeks, indeed, before the end of this month, we will enter into the very serious, sober, solemn, and focused period of Great Lent. As we enter into this season of the Great Fast, the Church encourages us to enter more deeply into the spirit of penance and provides us with all the "tools" we need to remove any haze or fog or mist that dampens the brightness of the Light that has come into the world. I encourage everyone in our parish community and each one of you as individuals to recognize the great means which the Church offers us to enable the Light of Christ to shine within us. The Scriptures invite us to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. I ask that you join with me in seeking to redouble our efforts in prayer—both our personal prayer and by a greater participation in the additional opportunities for prayer which the Church offers us in the season of Great Lent. Take the fasting prescriptions of the Church seriously, to the best and fullest of your ability and to the fullest extent your physical health will allow. Give alms—seek to help those around you in any kind of need. Give alms of spiritual support, reaching out to those who feel in need of any type of support. And, yes, give alms from your own materi-

al resources, stretching out a hand to those in need of material assistance—and there are many.

Making use of and, yes, taking advantage of, these means for spiritual growth in Great Lent will help each and every one of us to refocus, to wipe away from our lives anything that dims the Light of Christ within us so that the Light of Christ may shine brightly in our world.

Be assured of my prayers—for all of you and for each of you—as we prepare to enter into the season of grace which we know as Great Lent. May the Light of Christ, which illumines all, enlighten your hearts and homes.

With love in the Lord,

*+Bishop Daniel*

## DIACONAL PRACTICUM

On the weekend of January 13-15, SS Peter and Paul hosted a Diaconal Practicum. Thirty participants from throughout the Diocese of the West and beyond were in attendance.



# By the Waters of Babylon

Fr. Lawrence Farley

Recently I was finishing up in the altar while the choir was practicing, and I heard them sing (beautifully, as always) the pre-Lenten Matins hymn, "By the waters of Babylon." After it was all over, I stopped to ask them, "Do you know where Babylon is?" After a few blank stares, someone tentatively offered, "East of here?" It was a safe guess; we live on the west coast, and pretty much everything is east of here. No doubt the person meant, "somewhere in the Middle East," which is of course correct.

But I was thinking of something else. I pointed to the doors leading out from the church into the parking lot, and said, "It is just on the other side of those doors." We live in Babylon, in world fixed in its rebellion against God and its oppression of His people. "And here," I continued, "is Jerusalem. Right here in this nave. When we stood before the chalice earlier this morning, our feet were standing within Jerusalem."

This is perhaps why we sing the hymn "By the waters of Babylon" just before we enter Great Lent. This hymn is based on Psalm 137, and the psalm is not so much a song as a cry of pain, a pang piercing the heart set to the music of a harp. Israel had been ravaged and raped by a foreign invader, both

metaphorically and literally. The overthrow of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BC was accomplished with all the horror of ancient warfare—soldiers cut down, old men killed where they sat, women and young girls ravished, children's brains knocked out against the rocks. Then the defeated and starved survivors were taken far away to languish in exile in Babylon. To cap it all, as they languished there, their Babylonian "hosts" demanded that they take their harps and use them to play for them some of the Temple songs they had heard so much about. Zion's Temple had some great music, right? How's about playing some for us?

*"But our hearts do not forget where we came from or where we truly belong. Babylon is not our home. Here we are but strangers and sojourners, exiles upon the earth (1 Peter 2:11). Our true home is Jerusalem."*

It was the crowning humiliation, the final blasphemy. To think of the holy hymns once sung in the sacred Temple courts to the praise of Yahweh now being used as secular entertainment, reduced to a kind of pagan drinking song! The Psalmist's heart overflowed with pain and indignation—by the rivers of Babylon, sitting beside its canals, he sat down and wept over it all. How could one sing the Lord's song like this in a foreign land, forgetting and debasing all that one once knew as holy? If I ever do that, the Psalmist promised, if I ever use my skillful right hand to play one of the songs of Zion for the amusement of Zion's ravagers, may my right

hand wither up and never play anything again! No: I refuse to settle down and accept Babylon as the new normal, forgetting the joy of knowing God and worshipping Him in His courts. I refuse to become Babylonian. In my secret heart, I will live and die as one from Jerusalem. I will exalt Jerusalem above my highest joy.

This must be our song too, for we also live in Babylon. Is the world so very different? Christians and their faith are openly mocked in the public square, and icons are sold as *objets d'art*. The values enshrined and protected by law fly in the face of everything the Church has held dear, and the pressure is constant for Christians to acquiesce and support the secular status quo. Forget the old ways, and the Church's dogmas and values and canons. It's a new day; it's 2016. You're in Babylon now.

Indeed we are. But our hearts do not forget where we came from or where we truly belong. Babylon is not our home. Here we are but strangers and sojourners, exiles upon the earth (1 Peter 2:11). Our true home is Jerusalem. If we ever forget this and settle down and live like the Babylonians, may our right hands wither and our tongues cleave in silence to the roofs of our mouths. Let us take courage. The exile will not last forever. Jesus is coming. Soon enough we will all go home.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in American web site, Reflections in Christ, <https://oca.org/reflections/fr-lawrence-farley/by-the-waters-of-babylon>✠

# January in Pictures

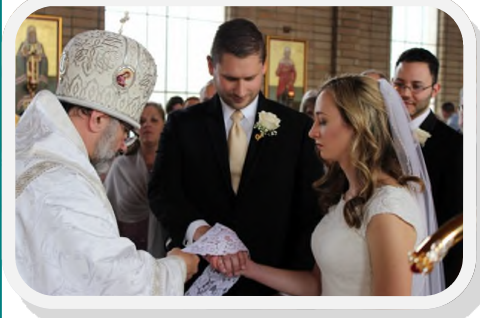
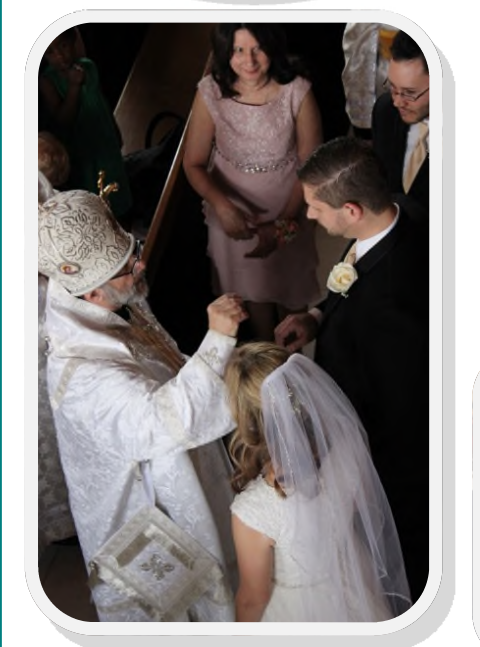
**LAUREN & JOHN'S WEDDING**



**DIACONAL PRACTICUM**



**ANNUAL MEETING**



# Saint Brigid of Ireland

On February 1st we celebrate one of the Orthodox Church's great ancient saints, Brigid of Ireland. Born in about 451, she was the daughter of an Irish chieftain and one of the female slaves in his court. Even as a child, Brigid apparently noticed and cared about poverty and destitution, responding by giving away her own and her family's considerable possessions to people in need.

This generosity did not meet with the wholehearted approval of her father, who complained to a friend that his daughter was bankrupting his household. The friend answered, "Let her be. She has more virtue before God than either you or I."



Brigid grew into a cultivated, energetic young woman with a sunny spirit. She had plenty of chances to marry, but turned them down and followed her desire to be a nun. With several other young women she established a monastic community, located under a large oak tree. It became known as the "Church of the Oak" (in Gaelic Cill-Dara), and she is sometimes called "Brigid of Kildare"--an English rendering of Cill-Dara.

The community grew in numbers, reputation and achievement. Brigid was the abbess, and continued her care for the poor, selling whatever she had to give them what they needed. People who lived in the area flocked to the monas-

tery to receive medical help and food, and to pray with the nuns. They would often see the abbess out in the fields, tending to the community's cattle. Brigid and the sisters cared for the local children as well, establishing schools and training for them. Others heard of these efforts, and before long the abbess was traveling all over Ireland to start schools, oversee the building of hospitals, and encourage people in their faith by her own steadfast, cheerful example.

Under Brigid's direction, the monastery itself became the site of an art school, where metal work and manuscript illumination (decoration of manuscript pages with colored figures and designs) were taught. The products of this school included a Gospel book, famously beautiful for its harmony of colors and intricate designs. To some it almost seemed that this "Book of Kildare" must have been the work of angels, with human beings merely copying the figures shown to them by celestial beings. Unfortunately, the book was later lost.

Brigid was a contemporary of Saint Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland, and a partner in spreading and strengthening the Christian faith throughout the country. There are many stories of their common work, and one involves a time when Brigid, perhaps exhausted by her labors and travels, fell asleep during one of Patrick's sermons.

Rather than being miffed or reproachful, he simply asked his friend, "What did you dream about?" Brigid replied that she had had a most curious dream. She saw white-clothed sowers, peacefully sowing seed in a field. They were followed by another group of sowers, hunched over and wearing dirty clothes, who with hurried, jerky movements sowed weeds in the same field. Patrick told her the meaning of her dream. It was a stark prediction: After all the work the two saints had done to "sow" the true faith in Ireland, false teachers would come along and do their best to destroy it.

Perhaps many of us, if we could know beforehand that others would work vigorously to destroy our life's work, would ask, "What's the use?" and give up. Or would we find the faith and fortitude to continue working anyway, leaving the results in God's hands? Would we find it even in dark times, when others failed us? And Saint Brigid did continue to work. She is one of the most beloved and appealing saints in the Church calendar. She is the patron of milkmaids, fugitives, printing press operators, chicken farmers, poets, and children whose parents are not married. Among her many titles is "Patroness of the Green Isle."

## Kontakion for Saint Brigid (Tone 4)

The holy virgin Brigid, full of divine wisdom, went with joy along the way of evangelical childhood, and with the grace of God attained in this way the summit of virtue. She now bestows blessings upon those who come to her with faith. O holy virgin, intercede with Christ our God that he may have mercy on our souls.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org) ✂

# Where Forgiveness May be Needed Most

During the week that includes Forgiveness Sunday and the beginning of Great Lent, we remember a saint who confronted power in a most unusual way. He is Nicholas, the Fool for Christ, whose memory is celebrated on February 28th.

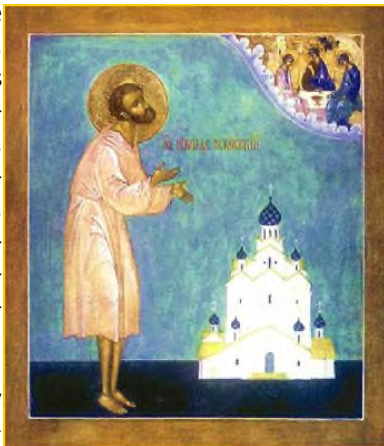
Nicholas lived in the town of Pskov in the 16th century, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. This tsar, who began his reign as a reformer determined to improve Russia, had become an unbalanced, murderous tyrant. He would order mass killings, and then would seclude himself in a monastery and pray intensely.

The best-known story about the blessed Nicholas is set in a time when

the feared Tsar Ivan visited Pskov. The inhabitants were terrified, and though they presented the customary welcome of bread and salt, they were not eager to encounter their ruler themselves.

But Nicholas, already known as a fool for

Christ, was not afraid. He came dancing into the tsar's presence riding a stick like a toy horse and chanting, "Little Ivan, little Ivan, eat the bread and salt! Eat no more of the blood of your people!" He ran away and hid before the tsar's soldiers could grab him, but his words had made an impression on the tsar, who made an effort to find him and then visited him in his shabby hut.



Nicholas made special preparations for this visit, which the whole town was talking about. It was the first week of Great Lent, but he managed to find a piece of raw meat. When Tsar Ivan entered his hut, he bowed and offered the meat and said, "Eat, little Ivan!"

The tsar replied with indignation, "I am a Christian and I do not eat meat during the Great Fast." His statement gave Nicholas the chance he had been waiting for. Nicholas said, "You do much worse than that; you consume the flesh and blood of your people. You not only forget the fast but

God too." Once again, Nicholas' words had a deep effect on the tsar, who abandoned his plans to devastate the town.

Nicholas had diverted the ruler from his destructive plans. But, like all Holy Fools, his primary goal was others' salvation. His "odd" behavior was meant to give Ivan a strong message. He risked the tsar's unpredictable violence, but took that chance because he cared for Ivan's soul, and knew that this powerful but deeply scarred man needed forgiveness more than most. We can imagine that he prayed with all his spiritual energy that God would grant that forgiveness.

On this day we read from Proverbs 1: 20-33: "Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice, 'Give heed to my reproof.' "

Nicholas "cried aloud" very publicly, and called on Ivan to "heed his reproof." As we are called to forgive each other on this Sunday, we have Nicholas' example of personal risk for another person's salvation. He took that risk because of his certainty that even the greatest sinners can find forgiveness in God.

## Around SS Peter & Paul

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

February	5	Mark and Sanna Littell Vadim O'Brien
	9	Katrina Delsante Maya Stchur
	11	Joe Delsante Anatoly Bezkorovainy
	14	Jane Evans
	20	Sterling Sourk
	23	Erica Stark Matthew Stark

Many years! Mongaya

### CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to the newly-illuminated Children of God, Anthony Peck and Raphael McDonald, to their parents, godparents, and families. May the Lord grant them Many Years! And may the Holy Theotokos always guard them with her protecting veil.

### 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:

Luka Radjenovich  
Ann Garza  
Rose Kurowski  
Tillie (Tatiana) Kulek  
Ann Carroll  
Anna Michkofsky

# Bits and Pieces

## FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday will be celebrated after the Cheesefare Coffee Hour. This special Vespers service introduces us to the Great Lenten Fast and strengthens us for the weeks ahead.

## T/YAL

The 2017 project Mexico team for Saints Peter and Paul is very excited to continue fundraising for their mission trip. They will be heading to Mexico May 25 through the 31st 2017!

Mara H., Shae S., Nick S., Alex E. and Juliana D. have raised just under \$2000 already thanks to your loving support! **But we still need to raise about \$2,100 more in order to cover all cost.**

We will be announcing our next fundraising project shortly, but if you would like to make a free-will offering to our SS Peter & Paul Project Mexico team, please contact Mara Hecht, all donations are truly appreciated and your support is vital to this project!

Love in Christ,  
Mara Hecht

## NEW ALTAR CROSS

Thank you to the Myrrhbearers

Altar Society for its donation of a new Altar Blessing Cross, given in memory of Proto-deacon Alexis. May his memory be



eternal!



With the money they raised, they purchased 230 blankets. Some of the blankets were delivered in person to the homeless in the downtown Phoenix area. The rest were donated directly to the Andre House of Hospitality and St. Vincent de Paul at the Sunnyslope location.

Polina expresses her sincere thanks to everyone who participated in making monetary and clothing donations. This could not have been



## BLANKET DRIVE UPDATE

Polina Novitskaya and Nathan Edward were able to collect \$1,300 in donations from both SS Peter and Paul and St. George.

the tremendous help and support of our wonderful parishioners.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS: SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY PROCESSION OF ICONS

Youth will participate in the annual procession of icons on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 5, 2017. Icons will be provided for all youth to carry in the procession around the church. The children are also welcome to bring their own favorite icon from home to carry in the procession.

## LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (aka the "Presanctified Liturgy") is celebrated in our parish church every Wednesday evening throughout the Great Fast. The Liturgy begins at 6:00 p.m. and is followed by a light Lenten-fare meal (soup, bread, and fruit) and a short presentation. Please share of your own blessings and volunteer to bring something for the meal. Please see Pam Bolton to sign-up to bring something.

## FOCA

The FOCA, with the help of fellow parishioners, made 151 dozen piroghi on Saturday, January 21. Proceeds will be used towards the purchase of the "Starter kits" for two students at St. Herman's

done without



Seminary who will be ordained in May.

# February 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p><b>Cheesefare Luncheon</b>            Sunday, February 26, 2017            Following Divine Liturgy            Sponsored by the Russian Ladies</p>			1  6:00pm Compline	2 Meeting of the Lord in the Temple  9:00am Divine Liturgy	3 St. Simeon	4  5:00pm Vespers
5 Publican and Pharisee 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School FOCA Meeting	6 <b>All Saints Camp: June 21-26, 2017</b> Registration for All Saints Orthodox Camp is now open. <a href="http://www.allsaintscamparizona.org/">http://www.allsaintscamparizona.org/</a>			8	9 Leavetaking of the Meeting	10 Areovindus Icon  5:00pm Vespers
<b>FAST-FREE WEEK</b>						
12 Prodigal Son Iveron Icon 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School MBAS Meeting	13	14   6:00pm Council Mtg	15	16 <b>Myrrh Bearers Altar Society</b> Please join us at our next meeting, February 12, 2017 following Fellowship Hour. All are welcome!		17 Tikhvin Icon at Mt. Athos  5:00pm Vespers
19 Meatfare Sunday Sunday of Last Judgment 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	20	21 Kozel'shchanskaya Icon	22	23	24 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Finding Honorable Head of St. John the Baptist	25 Ven. Fathers  5:00pm Vespers
<b>WEEK OF MEAT FARE – FASTING FROM MEAT BEGIN</b>						
26 Cheesefare Sunday Sunday of Forgiveness 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School Cheesefare Luncheon Followed by Forgiveness Vespers	27 <b>BEGINNING of GREAT LENT</b> St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn  6:00pm Canon of St. Andrew	28  6:00pm Canon of St. Andrew	1  6:00pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	2	3	4  5:00pm Vespers
<b>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</b>						