

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 21, Issue 2

February 2021

Council Meeting Highlights

- ✘ There was no January meeting.
- ✘ Our annual parish meeting will be held following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 21, 2021. The meeting will take place in the church, with masks being worn and social distancing being observed.
- ✘ 2020 Contribution Statements have been mailed out to parishioners.



Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

1614 E. Monte Vista Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85006
602.253.9515

www.sspeterpaulaz.org

www.oca.org

www.orthodoxfellowship.org

The Right Reverend DANIEL
Bishop of Santa Rosa
Rector

480.287.0240 Mobile
frdaniel@sspeterpaulaz.org

Archpriest David Balmer, Attached Retired

Deacon John Weiss

Andrew Evans
Council President
480.948.7929

Barbara Harp
Choir Director

Barbaraharp.2030@gmail.com

Stephanie A. Homyak
Church School Director
Newsletter Editor

602.432.7473

Stephanie_Homyak@yahoo.com

Mike Wagner
Web Master

Mike@sspeterpaulaz.org

Heather Pfeiffer
Myrrhbearers Altar Society
flagstaffred@gmail.com

Three Paths to One Reward

The Church remembers three very different people, in some years, depending on the calendar, on the very same day.

First is Saint Theodore Trichinas, who lived in the late 4th century. Next is Zacchaeus, whose story is told in Luke's Gospel. Finally, we read the Old Testament account of God's meeting with Satan concerning Job in Job 2: 1-10.

If we knew only the early years of Theodore Trichinas and Zacchaeus, we might guess that their lives would turn out very differently. Theodore was the son of wealthy parents and grew up in the sophisticated city of Constantinople. While still a young man he turned his back on the social and financial security of his family. He left the glittering city and went to Thrace, now mostly in Bulgaria, where he began a life of severe ascetical effort in a monastery far from any city. He used a rock for a pillow, and his clothes were



not only simple but severe in themselves. It was due to the hair shirt he constantly wore that he was called "Trichinas" or "hairy."

Theodore chose his severe life, and was given the gifts of wonderworking and healing. Zacchaeus made a very different choice in his earlier years, one that would hardly seem to lead to the acquisition of spiritual gifts. Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco has written of Jewish tax collectors like Zacchaeus that their choice of profession "was bound up...not only with national, but above all, religious betrayal: to become a tool for the subjugation of the divinely chosen people [Israel] by coarse pagans [the Romans for whom Zacchaeus collected taxes], one had to deny the hopes of Israel, everything holy to it, its dreams..."

What happened to Zacchaeus in his later years? One day, he decided to risk looking foolish, scrambling up a tree to see

Jesus, in a crowd that hated him for getting rich by betraying his own people. The result was that he experienced the Lord's forgiving love. He let God change his life, and later became a follower of the apostle Peter and a bishop, proclaiming the Gospel with power. Even though his personal choices and his early path in life had been very different from those of Theodore Trichinas, Zacchaeus found his way to the same reward.

Job's story is different from those of both the other men. He was a righteous man from his early days, so his path in life was similar to that of Theodore Trichinas. But through no choice of his own, his life was changed greatly when he was old. God allowed him to be severely tempted, and stripped of the many comforts of his life. Job's response, and his choice not to react as others urged him to, eventually brought him a great gift: a personal encounter with the Lord.

The lives of the three men show us that many paths, even those that are rough, indirect and unpredictable, can lead to the reward of life with God.

Rector's Message

February 2, 2021- Feast of the Meeting of the Lord

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings with the Feast!

Hail, Virgin Theotokos, full of grace! From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those who were in darkness! Rejoice, O righteous Elder; you received in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, Who grants us the Resurrection. - Troparion of the Feast



Though still facing the challenges presented by the coronavirus, this weekend we will return to celebrating the Divine Liturgy according to our usual schedule. As you are aware, when we returned to having services with the faithful in attendance last May, we did so with the understanding that we would adhere to the protocols and guidelines blessed by Archbishop Benjamin. Without agreeing to observe these we would simply not be blessed to gather for worship. As the weeks now turn into months and although we find the constraints we face to be tedious, troublesome, and tiring, I would like to remind you of these protocols and to make some additional observations as to how we are doing in implementing them. Although several in our parish community have contracted and, thankfully, have recovered or are recovering from the virus, we have generally been doing a wonderful job in following these—and your cooperation is definitely appreciated. This is just a timely reminder...

1. If you are sick, in a high risk group, have underlying conditions which put you at greater risk, or are uncomfortable about coming to church at this point, please shown concern for yourself and for others and remain at home. "If you are at higher risk for severe illness, you should avoid places of worship. People at higher risk for severe illness include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have

serious underlying medical conditions."

2. If you have a temperature (above 100.4), please remain at home. Please do not put yourself or others at greater risk out of your desire to be in church.

3. Everyone, except clergy and servers (when serving in the Altar) and members choir (when singing in the choir loft) is asked to wear a protective mask upon entering the church and throughout the Divine Liturgy, except while receiving Holy Communion. (Priests wear masks when they distribute Communion; choir members wear masks when entering or leaving the church and when in line for Communion.) Children five (5) and younger are exempted from this requirement. NB: Please refrain from wearing face masks that support any sports team or political party or which could be interpreted as an endorsement or promotion of any product, cause, or political candidate. The Divine Liturgy is not the place for this type of advocacy. Indeed, during the Cherubic Hymn of the Liturgy, we pray for the grace to "lay aside all earthly cares."

4. Everyone must observe social distancing and stay six feet apart at all times, including while visiting outdoors in the church parking lot. Children are always to be under parental control and not allowed to run freely. *The pews that are to remain unoccupied are marked off by a ribbon.*

5. Naturally, Sunday remains the day that most people want to attend the Divine Liturgy. Generally speaking, we have seen that not everyone who has attended the Sunday Liturgy has always signed up, bringing us beyond the social distancing limit. As has been requested before, kindly think of occasionally attending on Saturday instead of Sunday in order to open up space for others.

6. The parish hall continues to remain closed. Restrooms on the west side of the church

are unlocked during the services and are regularly serviced and cleaned.

7. Please use hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the church. Dispensers are available in the vestibule.

8. Collection boxes are available as you enter the nave of the church and are monitored by a member of the Parish Council for security purposes. As always, you may continue your stewardship by mailing your checks to the church or by donating online on our parish website. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to responsible stewardship!

9. If you attend Liturgy and subsequently test positive for COVID-19 or have any personal contact with someone who has, please inform Bishop Daniel. It will be necessary to inform those who were with you at Liturgy on a day on which you could have been positive, even if asymptotically so. If anyone attends Liturgy who tests positive for COVID-19, we will necessarily need to suspend services for the usual period of quarantine (as we have done on several occasions already).

Again, thank you for your patience in being attentive to these procedures and protocols. While they may seem to some to be an inconvenience, they remain the means which allow us the ability to gather for worship in a way that is responsible, considerate, and a means of service to our parish and our community.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:12

With love in the Lord,

+Bishop Daniel

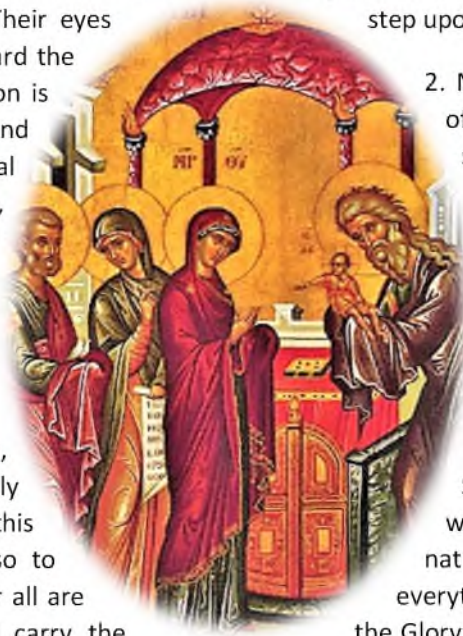
Homily on the Meeting of the Lord

What a tender scene the Meeting of the Lord shows us! The venerable elder Simeon, holding the infant God in his hands, on either side of him are the righteous Joseph and the Most Holy Mother of God. Not far away is the Prophetess Anna, an eighty-year-old faster and woman of prayer. Their eyes are all directed toward the Savior. Their attention is absorbed by Him and they drink in spiritual sweetness from Him, which feeds their souls. You can judge for yourself how blessed was the state of these souls!

However, brethren, we are called not only to think about this blessedness, but also to taste it in reality, for all are called to have and carry the Lord in themselves, and to disappear in Him with all the powers of their spirit. When we have reached that state, then our blessedness will be no lower than that of those who participated in the Meeting of the Lord. They were blessed who saw it; we shall be blessed who have not seen, but believed. Pay attention. I will show you briefly how to achieve this. Here is what you should do.

1. First of all, repent. Remember that nothing must be done in spiritual life without repentance. No matter what anyone endeavors to seek, let the beginning of it be repentance. Just as a house cannot be built without a foundation, nor a field be sown or planted without first being cleared, so also without repentance we cannot begin our spiritual search; anything begun without repent-

ance was begun in vain. Thus, first of all, repent—that is, weep over everything bad that you have done, and resolve to do only what is pleasing to God. This will be like turning your gaze and your whole body towards the path of meeting the Lord, and taking the initial step upon that path.



2. Next, keep this state of repentance constant; establish for yourself a manner of life and conduct that would make every step or movement something directing your attention to our Lord and Savior. Such an order of life will establish itself naturally, if: a) you do everything that you do for the Glory of the Lord and Savior, for Christ's sake. Here we mean not only great deeds, but all deeds. For, seeing and hearing, silence and speaking, food and drink, sitting and walking, work and rest can all be dedicated to the Lord and sanctified by His All-Holy Name. There isn't a minute when we are not doing something; so, by thus dedicating your activity, you will be meeting the Lord minute by minute, directing all of your activities to His glory. You can even more conveniently do this and reap fruits from it if you also: b) insert into the order of your daily activities the practice of prayer—both in church and at home; and in general make it your rule to be a strict fulfiller of all the rules and order of the Holy Church to the last iota, without vain elaboration and distorted commentary, and with simplicity of heart. As the con-

tent of all prayer is the Lord and our turning to Him, by doing it and participating in it you will be meeting the Lord through your heart's sympathy and delight. If after this: c) you fill all your interim time with reading the Scriptures about the Lord, listening to talks about Him, or with your own contemplation of Him and the great work of salvation that He wrought on earth, then you will see for yourself that nothing will remain within us or outside of us that does not bring remembrance of the Lord, bring Him to your attention, or carry your spirit to meet Him.

3. Just the same, you should not forget that all of these labors and occupations are only preparation. You should not stop at them, but rather strive onward. Just as food taken in rough form later imbues refined elements needed for life, so must these occupations performed visibly and tangibly turn into a spirit of a very refined inclination or striving toward the Lord. Namely, the labor of consecrating all our activities to the Lord should have the quality of reaching with our whole soul's desire only for the Lord; when we do all our prayers or attend the Divine services, a feeling should form in our hearts of accord only with the Lord and what is His. Underlying our reading and hearing the Holy Scripture about the Lord should only be the eager directing of our mind's attention toward the Lord alone. These labors are that very working of the field, and these strivings are the growth of what has been sown. The first are the stem and branches, the latter are the flower and fruit. When these inclinations come up in us, it will mean that our spirit has gone out with

(Continued on page 5)

55 Maxims of Christian Living

Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko

A few years ago, I was asked: "Father Thomas, if you summarized, in the short-form, what a practical life of a believing Christian, of a human being who believes in God and believes in Christ, what would it be like? What kind of maxims or rules would that include?" And in response to that request, I made up a list of what I called "55 Maxims," 55 things that a believer, very simply, would do if they were really a believer and were really obedient to God and wanted to live the way God would have us live.

1. Be always with Christ and trust God in everything.
2. Pray as you can, not as you think you must.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer done by discipline.
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times each day.
5. Repeat a short prayer when your mind is not occupied.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation and fast on fasting days.
8. Practice silence, inner and outer.
9. Sit in silence 20 to 30 minutes each day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly.
12. Go to confession and holy communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings.
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings to a trusted person regularly.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books, a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person, one of the human race.
19. Be polite with everyone, first of all family members.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, even a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and attentive, fully present where you are.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. Speak simply, clearly, firmly, directly.
37. Flee imagination, fantasy, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, grumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't seek or expect pity or praise.
41. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
42. Don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God, not people.
46. Accept criticism gracefully and test it carefully.
47. Give advice only when asked or when it is your duty.
48. Do nothing for people that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
50. Be merciful with yourself and others.
51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, and never on darkness, temptation and sin.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your faults serenely, under God's mercy.
54. When you fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear or shame.

Very Reverend Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko (March 28, 1939 – March 18, 2015) was an Orthodox priest, author, and theologian of the Orthodox Church in America. He was the Dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary from 1992 until 2002, having also taught there from 1968 until 2002.

To listen to Fr. Thomas himself talk about these practical guidelines go to: https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/the_55_maxims_of_fr_thomas_hopko/the_55_maxims_of_fr_thomas_hopko ✕

From the Fathers . . .

"Even if we have thousands of acts of great virtue to our credit, our confidence in being heard must be based on God's mercy and His love for men. Even if we stand at the very summit of virtue, it is by mercy that we shall be saved."

—St. John Chrysostom

Celebrating Feasts During COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic presents challenges for celebrating feasts at church, but a little creativity goes a long way. St. Nicholas brought gold coins to parishioners in their cars (and treats for the children, of course), and our MBAS assembled Holy Supper Kits so we could continue the tradition at home with our families.



Homily on the Meeting of the Lord

(Continued from page 3)

all its consciousness and disposition to meet the Lord. Since the Lord is everywhere, and He Himself seeks to meet with our spirit, their mutual meeting will then come about by itself. From that moment on, our spirit will begin to taste the blessedness of Righteous Simeon; that is, it will begin to bear in the embrace of its powers a striving for the Lord, Who is its complete satiety and satisfaction. This is what is called tasting the Lord, rest in Him, mentally standing before the Lord, walking in the presence of the Lord, and ceaseless prayer—the object of all God's saints' labor, desire, and seeking.

I wish that all of you who celebrate the

Meeting of the Lord be vouchsafed this blessing. If anyone complains that he would like the fruit but the labor it takes to get it is too hard, the answer is: Good. There is an easier method, a method simpler than the one laid out. Here it is! Repent; then, with zeal for keeping all of God's commandments, walk unflinching in the Lord's presence, striving for Him with all your mind's attention, all your heart's feelings, and all your will's desires. If you thus dispose yourself, you will soon meet the Lord. He will come down to you and abide in you, as in the embrace of Righteous Simeon. There is no other way to lighten the labor needed to seek a meeting with the Lord. The Jesus Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me*, is powerful and

strong to help in this work. Again, however, not by itself; but under the condition that all the strength of our spirit be directed toward the Lord! *Be sober, be vigilant* (1 Pet. 5:8). *Seek those things which are above ... and your life is hid with Christ in God* (Col. 3:1, 3). Then, having become one in spirit with the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17), you will behold and embrace the Lord, *and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you* (Jn 16:22), neither in this age, nor in the age to come. Amen.

St. Theophan the Recluse
translated by Nun Cornelia (Rees)

Reprinted from the Orthodox Christianity web site, <https://orthochristian.com/44773.html>✠

Celebrating Feasts During COVID-19

THEOPHANY: BLESSING OF WATER



MEETING OF THE LORD: BLESSING OF CANDLES



Around SS Peter & Paul

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

- | | | |
|----------|----|----------------------------|
| February | 5 | Vadim O'Brien |
| | 9 | Katrina Delsante |
| | | Maya Stchur |
| | 11 | Joe Delsante |
| | | Anatoly Bezkorovainy |
| | | Pallas Maria Mauskopf |
| | 14 | Jane Evans |
| | | Valerie Schutter |
| | | Karen Elizabeth Taliaferro |
| | 19 | Heidi Weiss |
| | 20 | Sterling Sourk |
| | 24 | Jane Matthews |
| | 27 | Claire McNeal |
| | 28 | Heather Pfeiffer |

MEMORY ETERNAL

May the Lord grant rest with the saints to His newly-departed servant, the Archpriest Rodion. May his memory be eternal! May the Lord grant memory eternal to His newly-departed servant Archpriest Rodion, and consolation to his family.

PRAYER L

PRAYER LIST

**May Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Physician of our souls and bodies, reach out his healing hand and bless these, His servants.*

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

- +Metropolitan Herman
- Fr. David Balmer
- Stephen Bock
- Nicholas Schtur
- Jamie Arango
- Antonia Adams-Clement
- Rose Kurowski
- Tammy Horton
- Frank (Kirill) Bolton
- John Blischak
- Wesley (John) Holmes

Many years! Mongaya

Bits and Pieces

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES We will return to our usual schedule of Divine Services the first weekend in February, i.e. Divine Liturgy on Saturday and Sunday at 9:00 a.m. and Vespers on Saturday at 5:00 p.m. Sign ups will be posted on Wednesday morning.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Our annual parish meeting will be held following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 21. The meeting will take place in the church, with masks being worn and social distancing being observed. Arrangements are also in the works to provide the meeting via Zoom for those who are unable to be present in person.

MEETING OF THE LORD This Tuesday, February 2, is the Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord. The Divine Liturgy of the feast will be celebrated at 9:00 a.m. The Blessing of Candles will follow the Liturgy. No sign up will be necessary.

ORDINATION During Divine Liturgy on January 2, 2021, SS Peter and Paul celebrated the Ordination to the Holy Priesthood of Hierodeacon Mikel of Saint John the Baptist Monastery, Phoenix.



MBAS UPDATE It was a great joy for the Myrrh Bearers Altar Society to continue the tradition of the Nativity Holy Supper,



Wrapping candles for Holy Supper Kits.

even if it was a bit different last year. We hope that all who purchased a starter kit found it useful in keeping this beautiful holiday tradition alive in your own homes. I would like to thank all of the ladies who prepared various parts of the kits and came together to assemble them. The Myrrh Bearers also had the blessing of have a small cookie sale. I would like to thank those who purchased the cookies and baked them.

Beeswax candles in the shape of a cross and a flame were included in the Holy Supper Kits. The Myrrh Bearers have a number of extra candles that are available for \$7 each. These candles make a beautiful addition to your table or prayer corner. Please see Heather Pfeiffer or Marty Gala if you are interested in purchasing a candle. *Heather Pfeiffer*



2020 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS were mailed out in mid-January. If you did not receive yours, see Dave Homyak in the church office, or call him at 602.295.5582. If you haven't already done so, it's time to start thinking about your pledge for 2021. Please be generous when making your pledge.

"Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly, nor under compulsion, for God loves the man that gives cheerfully."

|| Cor. 9:7

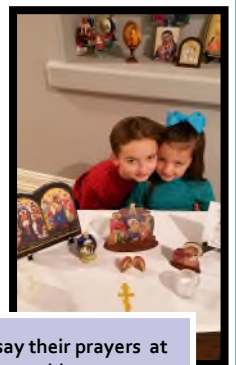
WELCOME We welcome all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening.

LIGHTING CANDLES is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them as we pray, making an offering to accompany our prayers. Orthodox typically light candles when coming into the church - and that is usually the best time to light them, but there are times when candles should not be lit. It is not proper to light candles during the Epistle or Gospel readings, during the Little or Great Entrances, the sermon, and most of the times when the faithful are standing. In addition, **NO CANDLES ARE LIT AFTER THE GREAT ENTRANCE.** If you find yourself arriving to church after the Liturgy has begun, a good rule of thumb to remember is—if everyone is standing, wait until they are sitting to light a candle (unless they are sitting for the sermon, of course). Other than that it is probably all right to light a candle.

"TRAIN UP A CHILD in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6



Dylan and Delilah say their prayers at their prayer table.



Rafael and Danil show off their prayer table.

February 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31 9:00am Divine Liturgy	1 Forefeast of the Meeting	2 Meeting of the Lord in the Temple 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Candles</i>	3	4	5	6 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers
7 9:00am Divine Liturgy	8	9 Leavetaking Meeting 6:00pm Council Mtg	10	11	12 Iveron Icon	13 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers
14 Zacchaeus Sunday 9:00am Divine Liturgy 	SS PETER AND PAUL ANNUAL MEETING Sunday, January 21, 2021 Following Divine Liturgy					20 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers
21 Publican and Pharisee 9:00am Divine Liturgy SS PETER AND PAUL ANNUAL MEETING	FAST-FREE WEEK					27 St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers
28 Prodigal Son 9:00am Divine Liturgy	We welcome all of our guests and visitors.					6 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers