

# SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 24 Issue 1

January 2024

### December Council Highlights

- ✘ November's Operating Income was \$15,279.06 and Operating Expenses were \$16,322.24, resulting in a net operating income loss of **\$1,043.18** for November.
- ✘ Annual Church Meeting will be held Sunday, January 28, 2024. There are 3 vacancies on the Church Council.
- ✘ The parish Christmas card raised \$1,700 for the St. Macarius Monastery building fund.



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## Homily on the Baptism of the Lord

St. John of Kronstadt *John did restrain Him, saying: "I must needs be baptized of Thee, and dost Thou, then, come to me?" But Jesus said unto him in reply: "Let it be, for now, for thus doth it behoove us to fulfill all righteousness."*

(Mt. 3:14-15)

Today the entire Orthodox Church universal celebrates the festive remembrance and glorification of the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. The holy Evangelist reports that when the Lord came to the Jordan to be baptized, John attempted to restrain Him, saying: "I must needs be baptized of Thee, and dost Thou, then, come to me?"

Would not we say the like, knowing Who this is Who has come: Lord, what doth it signify, this extreme humility of Thine, that Thou, the Lord Who is without sin, comest to be baptized of a man, even if he be one who is righteous through Thine own grace and righteousness?

What is there to wash away in Thee, Who art more pure than the sun; or to enlighten in Thee,

the Sun of Righteousness?—But is it for us sinful and shortsighted ones, deprived of far-sightedness, to gainsay the Lord Himself, Who created all things and Who wisely does much that is beyond word and reason?



All the words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, and all His actions, bear within themselves the seal of the supreme wisdom and righteousness of God, so incomprehensible to the proud scholars of this age, who dare to equate the Very Lord of Glory Himself to ordinary men, and who interpret His words in accordance with the understanding of their perverted and lost minds; -- and we must humbly

bow ourselves down before Him with perfect trust and with profound reflection, beseeching the gift of understanding from God.

Hence, the aforesaid words of the Lord to John that he baptize Him silently, and without gainsaying Him,—and the very act of baptism at John's hand—likewise bear upon themselves the seal of the most-supreme wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God.

"Let it be, for now," says the Lord, "for thus doth it behoove us to fulfill all righteousness;" i.e., it is for this reason that I came to earth and became man, while abiding ever as God,—the Lord says, as it were—in order to fulfill all Divine righteousness, which was so brazenly trampled down in paradise by the first-created humans and, later, -- the further one penetrates into the depths of time and of the generations of man -- even more audaciously, more wickedly, more evilly, more profanely, was trampled down by all mankind, with the exception of a few chosen ones.

I come to take upon Myself all the iniquities and impurities of

(Continued on page 3)

# Message From Our Rector

As we begin the New Year, it is fitting that we celebrate the day of the feast of Theophany, the Baptism of our Lord, and it is not out of place to remember another baptism: that baptism which was performed over each of us Orthodox Christians; that baptism at which each of us as adults, or by the mouth of our godparents, gave a promise to God that we would always renounce Satan and his works and would always unite ourselves with Christ. This is especially fitting for us to always remember.

The solemn rite of the Great Sanctification of Water is performed. Its center, its main part, one could say, is the prayer where the Lord is glorified and the grace of the Holy Spirit is called down upon the water being sanctified. This prayer begins with the words: *"Great art Thou, O Lord, and marvelous are Thy works, and there is no word sufficeth to hymn Thy wonders."* Whoever has been at a service of the mystery of Baptism and was listening, knows that the prayer at the sanctification of the water in which a man will be baptized begins with these same words, and the first part of this prayer is completely the same, both at the Great Sanctification of Water and at the service of Baptism. And only later, in the last part, does the prayer at the Baptism change, as applicable to this mystery, when a new human soul will be baptized. And so, it would not do us any harm to remember those vows given at Baptism on behalf of each of us. When a person is baptized as an adult, that person makes the vows on his own behalf; but if he is baptized as an infant, his godfather or godmother—his "sponsors," as the Church calls them, say these vows for them. And so these vows, in which a Christian has



promised God to renounce Satan and all his works and to join himself, to unite himself with Christ, are not only forgotten by some people, but many in general know nothing about them or about the fact that these vows were pronounced for them and that they ought to think a little about how they must fulfill these vows.

What if on the last day of the human race on earth, which is that day of the Dread Judgment, it turns out that a man (or his sponsors for him) made vows, and he does not even know what the vows were and what was promised? What will happen to the soul of such a man? Think about what it

means to renounce Satan and all his works and to join oneself to Christ. If we made a vow to renounce Satan and all his works, then, in fulfilling it, we ought to strive not to stifle our soul with distractions, but to reject them and to remember how it says in Luke, "One thing is needed"—only one thing is necessary—and to remember that we must join ourselves with Christ. That is, not only to fulfill His commandments, but also to unite ourselves with Him.

It is good to think about this, on this day of the great feast; think and pray that the Lord send you firm faith and the commitment to fulfill these vows that were made, and not to be swallowed up by the distractions of the world and lose the union with Christ. This commitment with Christ was a promise to join yourself for ever to Him.

May our good Lord give us the strength and wisdom to fulfill our baptismal vows throughout this year of 2024.

*Fr. Mikel*

## FLASHBACK: THEN AND NOW



# Homily on the Baptism of the Lord

(Continued from page 1)

humanity, without being defiled by them, in order to make payment for them, thereby satisfying the justice of My Father in heaven, and to offer Myself as a redemptive Sacrifice, in order to immerse them all in the waters of the Jordan.

I, of Myself, as the sinless God-man, desire to wash away all human iniquities and to give to My Church a cleansing bath of eternal life in baptism by water and the Spirit;

I Myself, having fulfilled all righteousness, desire to teach people Divine righteousness, giving them the power and the grace to fulfill it.

That is the significance of the Lord's words to John: "Let it be, for now, for thus doth it behoove us to fulfill all righteousness."

Generally speaking, in the course of reading or hearing the Lord's words, or His Gospel concerning His acts, we must not let it slip from our purview that He is the Lamb of God, Who taketh upon Himself the sins of all the world, and the Redeemer of the human race; the High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek, Who offered Himself as a Sacrifice of reconciliation to His Father in Heaven, on behalf of us sinners, -- that He is the Righteous Judge of all, the Physician of all those languishing in sin, and the Warrior Who has gone out to engage in spiritual single-combat that spiritual Goliath -- the devil -- who, with supreme artifice, cunning and perseverance, did subjugate, and continues to subjugate, the entire human race by means of innumerable passions and vileness of all sorts, and whom the Lord, through divinely-wise, righteous forethought, has vanquished completely, delivering mankind from his [the devil's] power.

Thus was the Lord also baptized in the River Jordan, in order to subdue our destroyer, the devil, in the waters wherein he had his haunt, and to leave the waters

such, that we, in being baptized therein through triple immersion in the Name of the Holy Trinity, might be abundantly washed clean of the filth of the ancestral sin, and that we might be born again into a new life, through water and the Holy Spirit, and might become adopted [sons and daughters] of the Father in Heaven, by living a holy life.

The circumstances of the very Nativity of the God-man likewise bear the seal of the most-profound wisdom and righteousness of God. He was born of a poor Virgin, Most-pure, and was placed in a manger, wrapt in swaddling-cloths, like an infant, in order that through His humility He might make restitution for the pride of Adam and Eve, who aspired to be gods, in order to convict and mortify human pride, and to teach men humility, which is the foundation of all virtue.

All that the Lord spake and did on earth, He did in accordance with the pre-eternal, most-wise, and all-good Counsel of the Trinity, which transpired before all ages, all of which was necessary for the salvation, perfection and blessedness of mankind; and, if any rejected, and continues to reject, His commandments, counsels, statutes, and that Church which He founded on earth, the same was, and is, the enemy of God and of himself, having thus rejected the Divine Counsel concerning himself.

Baptism was ordained by God in the Church for the salvation of the human race,—and it is necessary for every believer as a door into the Kingdom of God, — and whosoever rejected or rejects it, the same sweeps away his salvation, his own eternal well-being. In this manner did the Lord speak of the Pharisees and the Scribes, who were undesirous of being baptized by John; that they were thus spurning the Counsel of God, concerning themselves, in not being baptized by him.

Beloved brothers and sisters! We all have

been found worthy of holy Baptism in our infancy, through the faith of our parents and our sponsors; we were cleansed of the ancestral sin and were reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, and -- became the adopted children of the Father in Heaven.

The doors of the Kingdom of Heaven stand open to us.

Let us, then, with all our hearts, always esteem the Divine gift and our calling as sons and daughters of God by grace, -- withdrawing far from all sin, and let us, in our thoughts, desires, and actions, strive for the Kingdom of Heaven, that incorruptible, unfading inheritance, prepared for us in the heavens. Amen.

Source: Translated into English by G. Spruksts, from the Russian text of "Krescheniye Gospodnye" ["The Baptism Of the Lord"].

Reprinted from <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2018/01/homily-on-baptism-of-lord-st-john-of.html#:~:text=Baptism%20was%20ordained%20by%20God,his%20own%20eternal%20well%20being.✘>

*At the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," Thou hast come, O Lord, taking the form of a servant, and Thou who knowest not sin dost ask for baptism. The waters saw Thee and were afraid; The Forerunner was seized with trembling and cried aloud, saying: "How shall the lamp illuminate the Light? How shall the servant set his hand upon the Master? O Savior who takest away the sin of the world sanctify both me and the waters."*

– Great Blessing of the Waters,  
Theophany



# December in Pictures at SS Peter and Paul





# Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo, Murom

**R**ighteous Juliana of Lazarevo and Murom presents an astonishing example of a self-denying Russian Christian woman. She was the daughter of the nobleman Justin Nediurev. From her early years she lived devoutly, kept the fasts strictly and set aside much time for prayer. Having been orphaned at an early age, she was given over into the care of relatives, who did not take to her and laughed at her. Juliana bore everything with patience and without complaint. Her love for people was expressed by nursing the sick and sewing clothing for the poor.



running of the household in her hands. Domestic concerns did not disrupt the spiritual efforts of Juliana. She always found time for prayer and she was always prepared to feed the orphaned and clothe the poor. During a harsh famine, she herself remained without food, having given away her last morsel to someone begging. When an epidemic started after the famine, Juliana devoted herself completely to the nursing of the sick.

Righteous Juliana had six sons and a daughter. After the death of two of her sons she decided to withdraw to a monastery, but her husband persuaded her to remain in the world, and to continue to raise their children. On the testimony of Juliana's son, Kallistrat Osoryin, who wrote her Life, at this time she became all the more demanding towards herself: she

intensified her fasting and prayer, slept not more than two hours at night, and then laying her head upon a board.

Upon the death of her husband, Juliana distributed to the poor her portion of the inheritance. Living in extreme poverty, she was none the less vivacious, cordial, and in everything she thanked the Lord. The saint was vouchsafed a visitation by Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker and guidance by the Mother of God in church. When Righteous Juliana fell asleep in the Lord, she was then buried beside her husband at the church of Saint Lazarus. Here also her daughter, the schemanun Theodosia was buried. In 1614 the relics of Righteous Juliana were uncovered, exuding a fragrant myrrh, from which many received healing.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2000/01/02/100010-righteous-juliana-of-lazarevo-murom>

# Whittier Elementary Christmas Outreach

**T**hanks to your generous support, we had donations and student adoptions to support 50 of the neediest students at Whittier Elementary school. The gifts were delivered on the feast of St. Nicholas and we were able to meet some of the parents and students. Thanks to all who contributed or helped.



# Saint Syncletica, Desert Mother and Abbess

We know that monastics practice poverty. They voluntarily give up possessing, owning, and striving to acquire. But on January 5 we remember a monastic saint who cautioned aspiring monastics against being too quick to embrace poverty.

Saint Syncletica (called "Amma" just as the desert fathers were called "Abba") was born to a prominent family in Alexandria in the fourth century, and was one of the women who went to the desert to live a life free from distractions and close to God.

Though such women were few in number, they faithfully followed the example of Abba Anthony (Saint Anthony the Great) and others in fasting strictly, praying intensely, and inspiring those who came to them for counsel or to join them in asceticism. Many, like Saint Syncletica, received spiritual gifts of discernment and healing. Syncletica was approached by great numbers of women who hoped to become monastics. Because she had the gift of



discernment she perceived that some of them, though they were full of enthusiasm, were not ready to take on the rigorous discipline of poverty. They had been comfortable and not at all deprived in their lives. Syncletica knew that if they simply threw away their possessions without taking the "proper prerequisites" they would "be like one who squanders her goods without careful deliberation, only to repent of her rashness."

What were the "proper prerequisites" that Syncletica considered to be so important? They were things such as fasting, sleeping on the ground and other bodily hardships. These, she said, must come first. They would prepare a woman for the hard discipline of poverty, which should come last of all. She pointed out that Our Lord, in talking to the rich young man (Mark 10:21), did not ask him to take on poverty first, but instead recounted the commandments. Only when He was sure that the young

man had been seriously observing those did He say that the one thing lacking, the next thing to be done, was to become poor. It was Christ who said that poverty was to come last.

Saint Syncletica recognized that poverty is a strong defense against the devil and his temptations, because the devil's great weapon is to make us fear the loss of something we value. Those who have given up everything, who have no attachments to things, can't be threatened with the loss of anything. At the same time, she warned that greed is a terrible sickness, because once we want a little bit of something, our desire grows and grows, so that we always want more. Desire can consume us just as much as the fear of loss can.

Poverty and greed are not things that only monastics should consider, of course. The new year gives all of us a new chance to think about what we have and what we want, and to determine whether our priorities are in line with the teachings of Christ, so memorably reflected in the words of Saint Syncletica.\*

## Around Saints Peter & Paul

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- January 1 George Moriarty  
 3 John Tanner  
 4 Alexander Dolenko  
 5 Pat Starkey  
 Deacon John Weiss  
 6 Walter Booriakin  
 8 John & Lauren Hecht  
 David Sourk  
 Bill Weiss  
 12 Victor Zarembo  
 16 Liliya Armstrong  
 16 Antonia Adams-Clement  
 19 John Hecht  
 George & Nadya Moriarty  
 Alexander Shubin  
 21 Monya Bock  
 26 Teddi Gardner  
 28 Samuel Melendrez  
 29 John & Carol Yavornitzky

**MANY YEARS! MNOGAYA LETA!**

### CONGRATULATIONS AND MANY YEARS!

To Deacon John Weiss as he celebrates the sixth anniversary of his ordination to the Holy Diaconate. May the Lord bless him and grant him, Matushka Juliana, and their family many blessings as they continue serve Christ's Holy Church!



### 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:

*Matushka Lisa Bock*

*Marie Lobb*

*Ann Carroll*

*Antonia Adams-Clement*

*John Adams-Clement*

*Walter Booriakin*

*Jamie Arango*

*Tammy Horton*

*The suffering people of Ukraine*

*If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Fr. Mikel Bock.*



# Bits and Pieces

**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. To arrange to have your house blessed, please speak with Fr Mikel.

**MBAS HOLIDAY THANK YOU** The Myrrh Bearers Altar Society would like to thank everyone who supported our holiday fundraising by purchasing nut rolls, items from the bake sale, or tickets for the prize drawing. This year we are purchasing new red and blue altar covers.



**THANK YOU** to everyone who made our 2023 celebration of the Nativity of Christ another joy-filled, beautiful, inspiring, and spiritually-rewarding celebration. We are truly blessed! The Divine Services, Holy Supper, music, flowers, decorations, food, etc., were all wonderfully arranged and a sign of our parish community's love of God and of neighbor. Blessings to everyone!

**FOCA** Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Thank you to everyone who donated books for the students at Whittier. Your kindness and generosity were greatly appreciated. We also made treat bags for all the students. Thank you to my friend, Tru Dee for her watercolor bookmarks. They were beautiful and went to the older grades; the younger grades received bookmarks to color with a crayon.

Wishing everyone with a birthday in January many years. May God grant everyone a blessed and happy New Year!



**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** The annual parish meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, following the Divine Liturgy.

### HELP NEEDED FOR COFFEE HOUR CLEANUP

Your help is needed to keep our church hall clean on Sunday's after coffee hour. Each week volunteers help remove the coffee hour food and beverages from the hall, wash the dishes, put away extra plates/cups/silverware/food items/etc., wipe down tables, tidy up the kitchen, put items back in the pantry, take out the trash, and take the wash cloths/towels home to wash. The first three Sundays are covered by MBAS, FOCA, and the church board; however, volunteers are needed for the remaining Sundays. A sign-up sheet for the coffee hour cleanup has been hung by the kitchen pass-through window. If you are able to stay and help, please sign up. If you have questions about coffee hour cleanup, please see one the MBAS ladies.

**STEWARDSHIP/PLEDGES/BUDGET** You will be receiving your 2023 Statement of Contributions shortly for your tax purposes. It's also time to start thinking about your pledge for 2024. Please be generous when filling out your 2024 Pledge Form and return it by or at the Annual Meeting, January 28, 2024. If you have any questions, please see David Homyak.

**BOOKSTORE** The bookstore has a limited supply of 2024 wall calendars and pocket calendars from St. Tikhon's. Also, we have two sizes of Holy Water bottles for the Feast of Theophany on January 6th.

Additionally, Fr. Seraphim Rose's popular book "The Soul After Death" is now in stock, \$10.

**2024 CHURCH CALENDARS** We are grateful to Nick Enoch and John Blischak for their generosity in continuing to provide our parish with church calendars! Thank you!

**ALL SAINTS SUMMER CAMP** will be hosted at Camp Shadow Pines in Heber, Arizona, May 26-June 1! This annual program is available to all youth entering third grade through those who just graduated high school. The registration fee includes transportation to the camp. To register, go to: <https://www.allsaintscamparizona.org/registration>


Scholarships are available. Contact Fr. Mikel for further details.



**TWO LITTLE BOYS**, ages 5 and 7, are excessively mischievous and are always getting into trouble. Their parents know if any mischief occurs in their town, the two boys are probably involved. The boys' mother heard that a preacher in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The preacher agreed, but he asked to see them individually. The mother sent the 5 year old in the morning, with the older boy to see the preacher in the afternoon. The preacher, a huge man with a deep booming voice, sat the younger boy down and asked him sternly, "Do you know where God is, son?" The boy's mouth dropped open, but he made no response, sitting there wide-eyed with his mouth hanging open. The preacher repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God?!" Again, the boy made no attempt to answer. The preacher raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "WHERE IS GOD?!" The boy screamed, bolted from the room, ran directly home & dove into his closet, slamming the door behind him. When his older brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?" The younger brother, gasping for breath, replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time!" "GOD is missing, and they think we did it!"



# January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1 Sun. Before Theophany</b> Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	<b>2 Repose of St. Seraphim of Sarov</b> <b>THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS</b> Please speak with Fr Mikel to arrange to have your house blessed,	<b>3</b>	<b>4 Synaxis of the 70 Apostles</b> 6:00pm Bible Study	<b>5 Eve of Theophany</b> 8:00am Royal Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Water</i> 6:00pm Matins	<b>6 THEOPHANY</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers
<b>7 Sun. after Theophany</b> Synaxis of St. John the Baptist 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>CHURCH SCHOOL</b> <b>FOCA Meeting</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10 Ven. Gregory of Nyssa</b> 6:00pm Bible Study	<b>11 Ven. Theodosius the Great</b>	<b>12 Akathist &amp; Milk-Giver Icons</b>	<b>13 Sat. after Theophany</b> 5:00pm Vespers
	 all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour.					
<b>14 Leavetaking of Theophany</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>CHURCH SCHOOL</b> <b>MBAS Meeting</b>	<b>15</b> <b>NATIVITY CARD UPDATE</b> Thanks to your generous support, the parish Nativity card raised \$1,700 for the St. Macarius Monastery Building Fund.	<b>16</b>	<b>17 St. Anthony the Great</b> 6:00pm Bible Study	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> <b>ANNUAL PARISH MEETING</b> The annual parish meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28 <sup>th</sup> , following the Divine Liturgy.	<b>20 Ven. Euthymius The Great</b> 5:00pm Vespers
<b>21 Confessor Maximus</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>CHURCH SCHOOL</b>	<b>22 Apostle Timothy of the 70</b>	<b>23 Hieromartyr Clement</b>	<b>24 New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia Ven. Xenia of Rome</b> 6:00pm Bible Study	<b>25 St. Gregory the Theologian Saint Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev &amp; Gallich</b>	<b>26</b> 6:00pm Vespers	<b>27 Translation of the Relics of St. John Chrysostom</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers
	<b>CGS IS SEEKING A VOLUNTEER(S)</b> to help in the atrium next year. Please see Lesley Zaremba or Stephanie Homyak if you are interested.					
<b>28 Venerable Ephraim the Syrian St. Isaac of Syria</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>CHURCH SCHOOL</b> <b>ANNUAL MEETING</b>	<b>29</b> 6:00 Vespers	<b>30 Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	<b>31 Wonderworkers Cyrus &amp; John</b> 6:00pm Bible Study	<b>1 Forefeast of the Meeting</b> 6:00 Vespers	<b>2 Meeting of the LORD in the Temple</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Candles</i>	<b>3 Righteous Simeon Anna the Prophetess</b> 5:00pm Vespers