

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 12

December 2011

November Council Highlights

- ✘ Operating income for October was \$11,228.67 and operating expenses were \$12,642.00, resulting in a deficit of **\$1,413.33**. Year-to-date deficit is **\$3,032.10**.
- ✘ Annual Meeting will be held on January 22, 2012.
- ✘ MBAS will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale and Raffle on December 18th.
- ✘ 60th Anniversary with Bishop Benjamin set for weekend of February 11-12, 2012.
- ✘ Water line replacement completed in preparation for new parking lot.



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

Archpriest David Brum
 Rector
 602.274.6794 Home
 480.287.0240 Mobile
 Frdbrum@aol.com

Protodeacon Alexis Washington

Andrew Evans
 Council President
 480.948.7929

Barbara Harp
 Choir Director
 bharp@vosymca.org

Stephanie A. Homyak
 Church School Director
 Newsletter Editor
 623.869.0470

Stephanie_Homyak@yahoo.com

Mike Wagner
 Web Master
 Mike@sspeterpaulaz.org

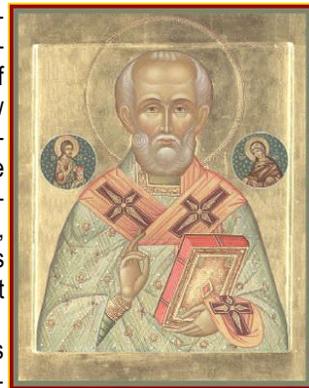
The Sufferings of Saint Nicholas

December 6 is the feast day of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of everyone from longshoremen to embalmers, and of places from New York City to Argentina. In fact he is the patron of more occupations, causes, people and places than any other saint we know of.

The stories of his humility and compassion are well-known. He had no ambition to become a bishop, but accepted the office in obedience. When he saved three marriageable and impoverished girls from disaster by providing money, he planned to do it secretly. There are stories of sailors caught on stormy seas, defenseless peasants wrongly accused of crimes, and countless others in need or in danger who were saved by his intercession. His kindness to children helped them to see Christ in him, so that even if their life circumstances were harsh, they knew a Savior cared for them.

But additional aspects of his life give even more luster to his example. Though he was not a martyr, Saint Nicholas suffered greatly in his life, and had to stand up to powerful forces that could have undermined the Church.

He became a bishop at the beginning of the fourth century and during the reign of Diocletian, a Ro-



man emperor who detested Christianity as an enemy of Rome's glory. Nicholas, having become a publicly visible leader of the Christians, was imprisoned and tortured. The incarceration was not brief, either. Not until Constantine ascended the throne were the Christian prisoners released.

It was not only outward threats that faced the Church during Nicholas' time as bishop. Within the Church the Arian heresy, denying that Christ was truly the Son of God, was widely popular. Bishop Nicholas had to work against its falsehoods, and defend his people against its influence.

At the Council of Nicaea the threat of Arianism was made physically present. Arius had eloquence

enough to make his "reasonable" version of the faith appealing to listeners and did so at the Council, speaking to those in attendance in his intelligent and engaging manner. How painful it must have been for Nicholas to hear this smooth talker distort everything for which Christ had died and risen. His

memories of his own imprisonment and that of so many others who would not compromise the faith only added to the pain.

So Saint Nicholas exemplifies more than loving benevolence. He also shares our experience of suffering, and shows how to carry on without flinching from it. The words of Jesus Christ in Luke 21: 12-19, which are read on this day, apply to Nicholas' life: "...they will lay their hands on you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors...some of you will be put to death; you will be hated by all for my name's sake." But Christ's final words in this passage are the ones Nicholas would encourage us to remember: "By your endurance you will gain your lives."

This weekly bulletin insert comple-

Troparion - Tone 4

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

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

Message From Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn.

The Angels sing! The Archangels blend their voices in harmony! The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise! The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised. Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side the Sun of Justice."

With these words, Saint John Chrysostom begins his "Homily on the Nativity of Christ." As we continue our observance of the Nativity Fast in preparation for our celebration on December 25, we should take time, serious and dedicated time, to reflect upon what took place two millennia ago in that small village called Bethlehem. The Fast offers us the opportunity- and the challenge- to set aside worldly concerns, worries, and distractions, and place our focus on the purpose and meaning of this season.

On the night of the Lord's birth in the flesh, that tiny, backward town became the center of the universe, the focus of mankind's attention, and the place in which all human history was fulfilled. On the night of our Savior's birth, the shepherds stood in



wonder, the kings fell down in worship, the animals joined in the feast, the heavens shone forth in the brightness of the stars, and, as St John notes, the angelic ranks joined their voice in harmony and sang the glory of God. As we gather with our families, friends, and brothers and sisters in the Lord, what will our response be to the wonder and of the Savior's birth? How will we participate in this great mystery? How will we welcome the Lord who comes to save us? In what manner will our lives reflect our faith and our knowledge that the Lord Most High has lowered Himself and joined Himself to us as one of us?

During these next few weeks, as the world around us already celebrates a holiday season that seems to reflect a joy and spirit based upon worldly values and experiences, may our focus be on the One whose birth, life, death, and resurrection gives meaning to all things. May our fasting, prayers, and works of charity reflect our faith in the Lord Emmanuel, "God With Us."

Be assured of my prayers for you and all your loved ones. May our Lord Jesus Christ, born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and placed in a manger, grant all of you health, happiness, and peace now and throughout the year to come.

With love in the Lord,

Father David



PILGRIM ICON OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS

In January, our pilgrim icon of the Most Holy Theotokos will begin its third 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.



2011 Nativity Appeal

December 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we enter into the holiday season, what we are really preparing for is to celebrate the birth of our Savior, the fact that the Pre-Eternal Son of God took on our human flesh and was born in Bethlehem, in the Mystery we refer to as the Incarnation.

This year we celebrate our parish's sixtieth anniversary and give thanks for sixty years of faithful ministry. We remember the past, celebrate the present, and plan for the future. Throughout these sixty years, the members of our parish community have been responsible stewards of the gift that is our parish. We have been blessed with a beautiful parish church and a parish center which provides us with a place to live and celebrate our common life as a community. In acknowledging these gifts we have received we must also acknowledge that these gifts also give us the responsibility of maintaining what we have been given, and maintaining, repairing, and improving them.

Those who read the minutes of our monthly parish council meetings or the parish council updates printed in our monthly newsletter are well aware that one of the greatest challenges we face is financial. As I noted last year, this is a difficult time for many. And everyone has felt the need to cut back on expenses. That being said, 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.

I am constantly inspired by the example of those who have remained faithful to the work of our parish for so many years; in some cases, from the founding of our parish. So many people, offering so many hours, make our parish life not only possible, but rich in blessings for all of us. I have been inspired by those who have come to our parish in search of the Truth which is the Orthodox Faith. And I continue to be blessed each time I lead you in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

I thank you in advance for your generosity—expressed to our parish and to me personally in so many ways. Be assured of my continued daily prayers for you and yours, especially during the coming holiday season.

With love in the Lord,

Father David

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 Saturday, December 24th following Compline.

Please contact Elena Kerr to confirm that you will be attending. We look forward to seeing everyone there

Diocesan Assembly/All-American Council

The Diocesan Assembly and All-American Council were held in Bellevue, Washington from October 31 through November 3, 2011. Bishop BENJAMIN opened the meeting, expressing his gratitude to God for His continued blessings on the diocese and that the AAC is meeting for the first time in the Diocese of the West. Bishop BENJAMIN welcomed new clergy and noted that two new missions were added: Encinitas, CA and Durango, CO. Efforts to establish a mission in Spokane, WA have been suspended. He mentioned that the diocese raised and sent \$36,723.87 to the Church of Japan for earthquake relief.

In general, the life in the diocese is fairly good and stable. He wished he could say the same for the OCA as a whole. There are many challenges; critical among them is the relationship between the primate and the Synod of Bishops. He cautioned against believing the gossip and vicious commentary that is found on the internet. There are problems that need to be solved and with God's help they will be solved.

Mary Caetta presented the financial report: The finance committee verified actual against budget numbers and made recommendations on when the budget could be exceeded. Auditing committee completed review of 2010 records. The Diocesan web site provides guidance to parish treasurers on how to conduct external review of the records and budget. The 2012 budget was presented and approved by a voiced vote. Budget shows total income of \$652,665 and allows for expenses of \$643,453. Copy of the budget is available on the diocesan website (dowoca.org).

Fr. Ian MacKinnon talked about the need to institute a Diocesan Loan Program (this was presented at the last DOW assembly and is still being developed). It will provide loans to parishes and will be a non-profit organization. Terms of loans will be spelled out on the website to be setup.

Fr. Basil Rhodes read a letter from John Parker recommending that OCA withdraw from the membership of National Council of Churches (NCC); being part of the Council gives an impression that we support the sometime radical pronouncement from the Council. After discussion, it was proposed that a resolution be presented to the AAC that the OCA withdraw from the membership (but could participate as an observer) of NCC. Resolution was approved.

Dmitri Solodow gave his perspective on the status of OCA. The Synod of Bishops will guide the

church in the future. A split has occurred between the Metropolitan and the Metropolitan Council. Existing problems need to be resolved between the Metropolitan and the Synod of Bishops.

Bishop Benjamin stressed that the parishes need to ensure that administrative forms such as certification of clergy and parishioners to interface with young people are completed and mailed on time. Next year's assembly will be at one of the parishes in Colorado, most likely the Denver area. Would like to see a creation of a program "Adopt a Seminarian", which will support a seminarian for 3 years. Implementation of proportional giving (similar to tithing) will take place within a year.

ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

Bishop Benjamin welcomed the All-American Council to the Diocese of the West. He noted that it has been 3 years since we elected Metropolitan Jonah, but we still have problems that need to be resolved.

Metropolitan Jonah's addressed the All-American Council. Positive achievements that he listed were the separation of Washington and New York/New Jersey into separate dioceses, visiting dioceses, parishes, monasteries, seminaries, and other institutions for meetings, anniversaries, diocesan councils and assemblies, and encouraging and getting to know the people of the Church. We have elected and installed several new bishops, but have more to go.

Metropolitan Jonah mentioned that the last three years have been the three most difficult years of his life. He was under a relentless barrage of criticism from every forum that he meant to oversee: the Chancery officers and staff, the Metropolitan Council, and—most troubling—the Holy Synod of Bishops. He worked very hard to fulfill their expectations, but the past three years have been an administrative disaster and he has accepted full responsibility for this. He is willing to do whatever is necessary, working in close collaboration with the Holy Synod. As a first step, he will begin a process of discernment that will include a complete evaluation in a program that specializes in assisting clergy, starting in November. He asked for everyone's forgiveness, understanding, prayers, and support. He thanked Fr. Garklavs for his work as Chancellor during this very difficult time. While he found it difficult to work with the Chancellor, it is his hope that the mutual forgiveness will bear much fruit through continued service to the Church. The seminaries

and seminarians are his greatest joys. Both St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's have their challenges, both have suffered from the economic down turn and both need greater support from the body of the Church.

He has developed good relationships with the heads of the Greek, Antiochian, and Serbian jurisdictions in America. In particular, he has a strong relationship with Metropolitan Hilarion of ROCOR. His relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church remains very strong.

OCA churches are being slowly transformed from small homogeneous community of ethnic churches to local churches with multiple dioceses, each with its own life, character, and its own mission to the particular communities. There have been thousands of converts from every race and background. There are at least thirteen languages used on any given Sunday in our parishes (English, Spanish, French, Slavonic, Georgian, Romanian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Yupik, Aleutiq, Aleut, Athabaskan and Tlingit). There are also some variants of Nahuatl and Mayan with texts in preparation.

For the first time in many years, the OCA has received a fully unqualified audit opinion. The issue of clergy sexual misconduct has occupied the time and energy of the Holy Synod. Filling the position of Coordinator of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations needs to be a top priority in the next two months.

One of the most important pan-Orthodox developments of the past three years was the process of reconciliation between the Orthodox Church in American and The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The development of the dioceses is the next most important challenge for this Church. Each diocese needs to take greater and greater responsibility for its own life, its ministries, and outreach.

The Strategic Plan has been developed over the past couple of years. There are three main areas on which we must focus: Missions, Youth, and Funding. Each of these goals has elements that can only be accomplished at the parish, diocesan, or central levels. We need to find ways to expose people to the vision underlying these goals, so that they become inspired to take up the cross of ministry. Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern PA made the following observations: The Metropolitan has difficulty with administration and is seeking help in this area. We all need help in leading our lives. Bishop Benjamin noted that there is a fear

(Continued on page 5)

Diocesan Assembly/All-American Council

(Continued from page 4)

of change, but we must change or die. The church must meet the needs of the community. The dioceses are all different. Bishop Matthias of Chicago and Midwest and the newest bishop in the synod observed that Metropolitan Jonah does not react with anger at criticism. We disagree at times, but we still love each other. We must love and support each other and serve God.

Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western PA reported as interim Chancellor. Most of his time was spent in working on the Sexual Misconduct issues/training/implementation of the program. The old practice was to move people around in hopes that the behavior at a new place would be different having learned a lesson. Now this will get one arrested. The action of the Bishop has to be different and action must be taken when confronted by a case of sexual misbehavior. Fr. John A. Jillions, the new Chancellor was introduced.

The Bishops were asked about the problems with sexual misconduct. This was seen as a Roman Catholic issue, but it is not. The Bishops were unable to answer this question due to issues with confidentiality; allegations are not facts, and they must wait until completion of investigation. Rumors should not be spread on the internet. Everyone needs to be aware of the OCA policy in this matter.

Approximately 20 clergy/lay delegates that assembled ready to provide some ideas on the funding goal for the church. It quickly became apparent that there were two factions in this group: one to reduce the funding to the central administration to \$50 per member starting on 1 January 2012 and the other to go to proportional funding, where individual parishes will provide payments to the dioceses based on their income and the dioceses will fund the central administration in a similar proportional manner. The resolution proposed by the New York/New Jersey diocese to reduce the funding to \$50/per head was judged to be too radical and would not provide funds necessary to promote the OCA's goals. Agreement was reached that proportional funding is the model that we should adopt; details will need to be worked out between the diocesan treasurers and central administration treasurer. The resolution will be discussed before the entire council.

Melanie Ringa gave a background of financial status of central treasury: In 2005 the church was broke. Special assessments had dropped, income from the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards declined, and revenues decreased across

the board. Deficits were accumulated primarily because of professional fees associated with the legal issues, which arose out of misappropriation of funds. In the 2011 budget, there was an increase in allocation of funds to handle residual legal matters.

Mr. Rob Taylor presented the 2010 audit findings: the budget is balanced. There is a deficit of over 1 million in Restricted Funds balances. Funds were borrowed from the endowment fund to meet the payroll. Fiscal management has been improved. There is a need to set up a payback plan (e.g. 5 year period) to pay off the deficit.

The 2012 budget was presented by the chairman of the Finance Committee. Salaries for central staff are based on federal rates paid in the Syosset area. The committee has looked at the impact of reduction of contributions. After examining the consequence of reduced assessments at \$90/member, they will need to shift some functions to the dioceses and individual parishes. They have considering selling the Syosset property and moving the central administration to a less expensive area. The 2006 evaluation of the property was 9.4 million, 2008 the estimate was 4.5 million and in 2010 the property was estimate to have a value of 3.5 million.

We cannot operate expecting miracles, but need to separate functions if funding is not sufficient. The Dioceses of the West and the South are already practicing proportional funding, but the term is still vague, and needs to be definite so that everyone understands. The \$50/member is a very polarizing issue and the budget with that funding is very scary; perhaps we should look at \$95/member assessment budget. Bishop Michael of NY/NJ made a statement—if not this—then what; if not now—then when, indicating that the issue should be settled and not dragged out.

The morning of November 3rd was spent on the rewording of the proposed amendments of the NY/NJ resolution to reduce the funding and Central Administration's budget to \$50/member. The revised resolution proposed that funding in 2012 will be at \$105/member and reduced proportionally in the future. The final vote on the amended resolution was 269 in favor and 178 against. Resolution passed. The other resolution of interest was the one proposed by DOW: withdrawal from National Council of Churches. This resolution was tabled as it was determined to be within purview of the Synod of Bishops.

Podcasts of the entire AAC Plenary Sessions

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

Resisting Royal Temptations

The Gospel and Epistle readings for December 17 both include some well-known verses.

In Luke 14: 1-11, Jesus has gone on the sabbath to dine at the home of one of the rulers of the Pharisees. As usual, they are "watching Him" to see what He will do and whether He might make a mistake. But Jesus is also watching them, and He notices how they choose the places of honor at the table. As a result of His observation, He tells them a parable. The parable cautions against taking a place of honor at a wedding feast, and then having to give it up when a more eminent guest arrives. Rather, you should humbly take the lowest place, and the host will honor you by moving you to a higher one. Jesus' final words in the parable are, "For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Epistle reading is Galatians 5:22-6:2. Here Saint Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit, and then writes words that form the basis of fasting: "And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

On this same day, the Church commemorates the prophet Daniel, who as an exile in Babylon had to deal with proud foreign kings. Daniel resisted the temptations these strong-willed royals put in his path, by living up to both the

verses we read on this day. He humbled himself, and put away the "passions and desires" of the flesh.

In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar has had a troubling dream, and promises great rewards to whoever can interpret it. But none of his wise men can tell him what he dreamed, or what it meant. Furious, he threatens that they must find the answer, or be "torn limb from limb." The threat includes Daniel.

God reveals the dream and its meaning to Daniel, who then comes before the king with the tempting chance to gain untold riches as the great interpreter. Instead, he tells Nebuchadnezzar that no wise men can find the answers, but that "there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries." Daniel goes on: "...not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me, but in order that the interpretation may be known to the king" (2:30). Daniel directs Nebuchadnezzar's attention to God, and humbly refuses to claim special insight.

In Daniel 1: 1-15, Nebuchadnezzar favors Daniel with the offer of the same rich food that his courtiers consume. Daniel resists this temptation, and persuades the steward to let him observe the Jewish dietary laws. After ten days, seeing how much "better in appearance" Daniel is than the youths who eat richly, the steward begins giving them all vegetables and water. Daniel's fasting thus benefits the whole court.



Kontakion - Tone 3

When your pure heart was purged by the Spirit
you became a vessel of clear prophecy;
you saw things far away as though they were near at hand.
When cast into their den you tamed the lions.
Therefore, we honor you, blessed prophet, glorious Daniel.

Our temptations may not come from royal sources, but we can still use them, as Daniel used his, to glorify the God we all worship.

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

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

Bill Koval
December 29

**Many
Years!**

**mnogaya
letia!**

MEMORY ETERNAL!

We extend our deepest sympathy to Elizabeth Michel and family on the recent repose of her sister and member of our parish community, Dorothy Yost. May the Lord receive his newly-departed servant into his Kingdom and may her memory be eternal! Memorial service commemoration will be announced when arrangements are finalized.

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
Pauline Vinay
Ann Garza
Mary Maul
Rose and Bill Koval

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

Bits and Pieces

HOLY SUPPER

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

CHRISTMAS GIVING

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

Father David

THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

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

PARISH COUNCIL

If you are interested in serving on the Parish Council for 2012, please contact Father David.

MYRRH BEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY

The Myrrh Bearers Annual Christmas Bake Sale will take place on Sunday, December 18th 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. Elena Kerr will be taking reservations. Those attending will be asked to bring a traditional symbolic Lenten food to share with our Parish family.

Members of the Myrrh Bearers' Altar Society have decided to forego their Annual Luncheon in January and, instead, donate the cost of the luncheon to the Parking Lot Project Fund.

CULTURAL CENTER LOCK-UP

A council member will be designated to ensure that the Cultural Center is locked up and secured each Sunday following coffee hour. Council members are responsible for finding a replacement if they are not available for their designated Sunday.

December 4	David Homyak
December 11	Joe Gala
December 18	Stephanie Homyak
December 25	
January 1	Michele Golowatsch
January 8	Walter Booriakin

PIROGHI WORKSHOP

The FOCA held a piroghi workshop on Friday, November 10 and Saturday, November 11. With many people having Veteran's Day off, a last minute decision was made to make the potato filling on Friday, allowing for more piroghi to be produced. Eight people showed up on Friday to peel and boil potatoes, sauté onions, mix the potato filling, and form the potatoes into logs.

We had a fantastic turnout on Saturday, with over 30 people pitching in to roll and cut the dough, pinch, boil, and package the piroghi. Approximately 140 dozen were made in all. There were a lot of new faces. Newbies: Frederick and Krista did an outstanding job pinching. The pinchers did such an amazing job, that the kitchen had a hard time keeping up with the demand for dough circles. And in the kitchen, Dave was upset that no piroghi broke apart during the boiling for him to sample. Rave reviews for the piroghi have been piling in. Joe and Marty Gala claim that they are the best ever!!!

Thank you to all who turned out to help. Without your help, this would not have been possible.

FROM THE CHURCH TREASURER

It's December already, and now is your chance to make sure your 2011 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, as we all have. We would at least like to 'break even' with our operating income and expenses, plus have a little extra going into 2012.

I have completed inputting all your contributions, that I've record of into a database. 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 2011 year end contributions prior to December 29th**, so they will make the year end deposit. Any contributions received after the 29th will be attributed to 2012. If you have any questions, please see David in the church office.

MISSING

I am missing an icon of the Theotokos Arizonitissa. It was a unique icon with a thin rope outlining the edges. This icon was a personal icon and not for sale at the bookstore. Thanks!

Katrina

BOOKSTORE

Items for Christmas/Theophany:

Hymns of the Nativity CD - \$18

Pack of 10 Nativity Cards - \$11

Holy Water Bottles - \$3-\$5

The bookstore carries a number of small, inexpensive yet thoughtful gifts that are perfect for your visits to a home-bound friend or even as a token of appreciation for a generous hostess.

The 2012 edition of the Pocket Planners will be available for purchase for \$3.50 at the bookstore by the 2nd week of December. Supplies are limited, so be sure to get yours early!

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Memory Eternal to the newly-departed servants of God Loriss Nassimos and Charles Tziakun who fell asleep in the Lord this week and whose funeral services were held in our church on Thursday. May the Lord grant rest to his newly-departed servants and comfort to those who mourn their loss. Our sincere sympathy to their families.

December 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p>Christmas Bake Sale The Myrrh Bearers will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 18th.</p>				1	2	3 5:00pm Vespers
4 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	5	6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker	7	8	9 Icon "Unexpected Joy"	10 5:00pm Vespers
 <p>FOOD DRIVE FOR ST MARY'S FOOD BANK Please bring in your nonperishable food donations. Collection containers are in the church narthex and Cultural Center.</p>				7:00pm Adult Ed'n		
11 Holy Forefathers 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School St. Nicholas Celebration MBAS Meeting	12	13 Ven. Herman of Alaska 6:00pm Council Mtg	14 	15 ADULT EDUCATION Adult Education classes continue Wednesdays through mid-December. See calendar for details.	16	17 5:00pm Vespers
18 Sunday Before Nativity 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School MBAS Christmas	19	20 Icon "Rescue of the Drowning"	21	22	23 Eve of the Nativity 	24 Sat. before 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	30 Leavetaking Nativity	31 5:00pm Vespers
1 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy 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 THEOPHANY 9:00am Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of Water	7 Synaxis of St. John the Baptist 5:00pm Vespers
<p>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</p>				6:00pm Great Compline and Litya		