

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 13, Issue 11

December 2013

2013 Nativity Appeal

I ask once again for each one of you to reflect upon the blessings you have received from God and to respond accordingly. The manner of approaching responsible Christian stewardship is actually quite simple: God asks that we be as generous with Him and to His Church as He has been generous to us. I ask that you use the upcoming holiday season and the New Year upon which we are soon to enter as an opportunity to express your gratitude to the Lord in a concrete way, through your generous gifts to our parish—which are gifts to the Lord Himself.

Father David



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Unexpected Joy

On December 9th the Church celebrates an icon of the Mother of God called "Unexpected Joy." It shows the Theotokos holding the child Jesus Christ, and one other figure.

The third figure is a young man kneeling in prayer and turned pleadingly toward the Theotokos. His story is told in the writings of Saint Dimitri of Rostov, and in some versions of the icon part of that story appears in words below the figures of the Theotokos and Christ.

This man prayed every day to the icon of the Virgin, and often repeated the memorable words of Gabriel at the time of the Annunciation: "Rejoice, O Virgin Full of Grace!" But despite having the habit of praying regularly, the young man didn't keep himself from sin. It might often happen that after offering his prayer, he would go out and do something that wasn't at all in keeping with the life of a faithful Christian.

One day the young man had a startling experience. As he was

planning to go out, he glanced toward the icon and was stunned to see the Theotokos standing in person before him. She was holding her Son, whose body showed the same wounds He had suffered on the cross: His

hands and feet were pierced, and blood was flowing from a wound in His side.

The young man fell to his knees, at first so horrified that he was unable to speak. Finally he managed to ask the Theotokos, "O Lady, who has done this terrible thing?"

Her answer came in a soft but firm voice: "You have done it—you and all the others who sin, over and over again. Each time you sin, you crucify Him again."

Realizing the truth of her words, the young man begged forgiveness. But she answered that though he showed her the respect of daily prayer before her icon, he continued to hurt her by continuing to sin.

He cried out, "O holy Lady, may my wrong deeds never outweigh your merciful kindness! Please pray to your Son on my behalf."

The Mother of God, seeing his real repentance, did intercede for the young man, and for the sake of His Mother, Christ forgave him. Having received the unexpected joy of divine forgiveness, he was able to live a God-pleasing life for the rest of his days.

On this same day, the Church remembers two mothers: Hannah, the mother of Samuel the Prophet, and Anna the mother of the Theotokos. Both of them wanted children; both suffered through long years of childlessness before conceiving and giving birth.

These two women experienced a different kind of "unexpected joy" when they finally became mothers after waiting so long. But, like the young man in the icon, the thing they wanted most came to them as God's mercy and love.

Whether we hope to be forgiven, hope to have children, or hope for something else that will change our lives, we can be sure that God knows about it, and will respond to our hope in some way—perhaps with unexpected joy.



Message From Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." Luke 2:8-10

The Gospel of Saint Luke recounts the story of the shepherds keeping watch in the fields surrounding Bethlehem on the night of our Savior's birth. Their work that night was pretty much routine, even to the point of being boring. They had to keep their flocks safe from predators that might attack the sheep, and there was always the danger that some of the sheep might wander away or be stolen. But, for the most part, the work was routine and uneventful. Perhaps that particular night they were once again discussing the sad plight of Israel as God's Chosen People continued to suffer under the yoke of the Roman emperor and his puppet king, King Herod. For pious Jews, Herod was not their true king because he was not of the house and line of King David. King David's throne was therefore empty and the long-awaited Messiah had yet to appear to redeem Israel.

Imagine the fear and surprise and amazement the shepherds experienced when the heavenly hosts appeared to them and the glory of the Lord, shining all around them, illumined the entire countryside. And then, the angel spoke to them! "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." And what was that good news? What was this good tidings? "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

The promised and long-awaited Savior had been born! The choir of

angels from heaven praised God and then—as quickly as they had arrived—the angels left and the night was silent again. The shepherds wasted no time in going to Bethlehem to see this Child and they spread the good news both far and wide. This night was not so routine after all.



In the darkest nights of our lives, when circumstances seem at their worst, God sends His messengers to us with good news. For us, those messengers will probably not be angels sent from heaven. The messengers God sends to us with a message of love and hope might be neighbors from down the street, friends you haven't seen for a long time, family members or someone from church, or even strangers. And the message they speak might not be as obvious as that spoken by the angels to the shepherds. But they speak messages to us nonetheless—messages of hope, of love, of trust in God, of His sure presence in our lives. The message announced to the shepherds that night as they went about their usual work routine is that there is always good news, even in the darkest nights of our lives. The message spoken to us is that there is always good news when we keep our eyes of faith open to God's presence and action in our lives.

It is my prayer and hope that all of us will be well prepared to hear the message of the Lord's Birth clearly, that we will be encouraged by it, and that we will also become messengers sent from God into the world, announcing the great news of God's love for us and for all creation. Be assured of my steadfastness in prayer for you and all your loved ones. May the Prince of Peace grant His peace to our lives and to the entire world.

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 fifth 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.

We Do Not All Need the Same Things

Gifts, those we give and those we receive, are on our minds during this season of Christmas and the days following.

On December 31 the Church remembers one of the all-time great givers of gifts, Melania of Rome.

She used her great wealth to give personal help to countless needy people, as well as supporting the institutions of the Church. Her gifts were gratefully accepted, especially because she gave them in humility, without any expectation of praise or special honor.



But one story about Melania describes a time when her monetary gifts were not welcome. It happened at an Egyptian men's monastery she was visiting. Rich as she was, Melania chose not to live in luxury and ease. Yet even the simplicity of her life must have seemed lavish compared to what she saw in the monastery. She was amazed at the monks' life, making do with only the barest essentials and letting nothing of the world distract them from their constant attention to prayer.

Melania soon understood that the men were unwilling to accept any money from her. But while paying a visit to one monk whose name was Ephestion, she saw that in his cell there was almost nothing--only a bit of bread and water, the mats he wove, and a salt pot. Determined to give him something, she hid a few gold coins in the salt pot, and went on her way.

A few moments later, she heard the footsteps of someone running after her. It was Ephestion, clutching her coins in his hand and shouting, "I don't need this; it is yours so take it back!"

Melania answered, "If you don't need it,

surely you can give it to someone who does."

"No, no," the monk insisted. "Nobody around here would have any use for it."

And with that, because Melania resisted taking them back, he flung the coins into the river and went back to his cell. Money was something that he and his brother monks didn't need. They didn't even want it, knowing the power of money to become a temptation to sin.

It takes time and effort to know and discern what we need, because we don't all need the same things. The Church's prayers reflect this. In the Litany of Supplication, for example, the priest prays for us to be granted "all things that are good and profitable for our souls." Not that we be granted what we may want or think we need, not just things that will help us "keep up with" everyone else, but the things that truly are good and profitable for us. In a similar way, before he elevates the Gifts for Holy Communion, the priest asks God to distribute them "unto all of us, for good, according to the individual need of each." Many of us wouldn't throw a gift of gold coins into the nearest river. But if we work to discern what we really

Troparion — Tone 8

The image of God was truly preserved in you, O Mother, for you took up the Cross and followed Christ. By so doing, you taught us to disregard the flesh, for it passes away; but to care instead for the soul, since it is immortal. Therefore your spirit, O holy Mother Melania, rejoices with the angels.

need, and trust God to give it, we can discard a lot of things that are just taking up space.

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>.

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 Tuesday, December 24th following Compline.

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

Help My Unbelief

When Joseph first saw the mighty wonder, he thought he saw only a human child wrapped in swaddling clothes. But from all that came to pass, he discovered the Child to be the True God Who grants the world great mercy! [Vespers of the Prefeast of the Nativity]

Christmas tells the same wonderful story every year, the marvelous fulfillment of John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” It’s the timeless story of Emmanuel—God with us—that never changes.

We, on the other hand, are changing all the time. Our relationships change, our circumstances change, our attitudes and ideas change. This reality makes the meaning of each Christmas uniquely relevant, for it’s message applies to us, “where we are,” today, in 2013.

It is into the midst of all the change in our lives that we proclaim “Christ IS Born;” that inspires our grateful hearts to sing “TODAY the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One.” He is mystically born in the fellowship, services and Sacraments of His Body, the Church: to abide in us, to dwell among us as surely as He was cradled in the Bethlehem cave by Mary and Joseph, wrapped in swaddling clothes, worshipped and offered gifts by wise men, and warmed by the breath of His c r e a t u r e s .

How can we share this timeless story of “God with us” anew? How can we incarnate our faith in the Living God and give it flesh to convince others of its veracity?

On a Saturday a few years ago, a young

local college student ventured into our church for Vespers. As I spoke to her afterwards, she indicated she was virtually “blown away” by her experience in our humble church. She’d never before been exposed to anything like it.

I asked about her personal religious background. She said to me, frankly: “I have no faith. My parents never went to any church. Now they’re divorced, living in different states, and I’m pretty much on my own.”

“Well,” I said, “why not take this opportunity to ask yourself questions you never asked before: about your relationship with God, about faith, about Jesus Christ and what happens after death, because when you answer these questions, everything you see and experience here in this church will begin to make incredible sense?”

Whether she took my advice or not, I don’t know. But it was somewhat troubling to me to encounter someone who told me straight out “I have no faith.” And I thought to myself, how many are “out there” who are like this student? How many are there like the desperate father in the Gospel who brought his afflicted son to the Lord and, when asked if he had faith that the Lord was able to help his son, replied, “I believe; help my unbelief” [Mark 9:24]? How many have never seriously thought through the most basic questions of faith? And how many more are perhaps “practical atheists” who claim to have faith, yet in reality have none? I was amazed to see a recent survey suggesting that among 18 to 25 year olds in America, over 20% say they have no faith! Our visitor is certainly not alone!

What can we say to them, as precious to God as the rest of us, to convince them that this Jesus Whose birth we celebrate is truly the Lord and Savior, Emmanuel, the Living God? Perhaps the apostle John can

help us. He writes in his first epistle, “If we walk in the light as He is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another.” “He who loves his brother abides in the Light.”

More than the material gifts we exchange at Christmas—more than the decorations and socializing, the music and menu—it’s really how we live that points to the reality of Jesus Christ as the Living God. It reveals to others in clear terms that “Christ IS Born! You can see Him IN ME!” “Christ IS Born! Walk WITH ME in His radiant Light!” “Christ IS Born! His love has wonderfully taken flesh in MY life and can do the same in YOURS.”

In two, 20 or 200 years, there will likely be those who ask, “Who is this Jesus and why should I have faith in Him?” or “Is there a God and does He give a hoot about His creation—about me?”

May part of our Orthodox Christian witness today and our legacy to future generations make the response to these questions crystal clear—by our love, our words, our worship, and our deeds and by the way WE walk in His Light “by faith and not by sight.” May our faith in Emmanuel and the “comfort and joy” of our Savior’s birth truly fill our hearts, homes, communities and world—and help us to help others unbelief!

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, Reflections in Christ, December 5, 2013, <http://oca.org/reflections/fr.-daniel-c.-kovalak/help-my->

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.



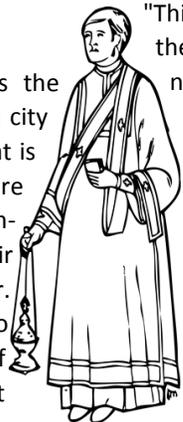
Kontakion



Taking Hold

On December 28 the Church celebrates the memory of not one person but a large group of martyrs—twenty thousand men, women and children. They gave their lives early in the fourth century.

These Christians are known as the 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia, a city in the northwestern area of what is now Turkey. Because they were living during the reign of the emperor Maximian Hercules, their faith put them in serious danger. The pagan emperor was eager to reduce the growing number of Christians, who seemed a threat to his own authority.



He saw a chance as the Feast of the Nativity approached in the year 302. Nicomedia had an especially large Christian population, and the believers would be gathered in the local church for the feast, beginning their worship in the first hours of the new day.

Sure enough, soon after midnight the church was so full of people that there was hardly room to stand. Candles, incense, chanted prayers and singing added to the festive atmosphere, in anticipation of the service that was about to begin.

But the emperor had made his plans. His soldiers, at the command of his official representative, surrounded the church so that nobody could get out. Then the official pushed his way to the front of the church. He announced that the gathered believers had a choice: they could offer sacrifice to the gods immediately,

or be burned to death by the soldiers who were prepared to set the building aflame with everyone inside.

The stunned Christians realized that they had no chance of escape against the armed soldiers surrounding them. Before panic could set in, the coura-

geous archdeacon rose and addressed the crowd with great passion.

"My brothers and sisters!" he called out. "Think of where we are, and remember the reason why we have gathered tonight. We have come to celebrate because Our Lord was born as a Man, to come among us and save us. He is about to be sacrificed for us on the holy altar as we perform the Divine Liturgy. Should we not be ready to sacrifice our lives for Him in this holy place, at this holy time?"

These words inspired the believers. Overcoming fear, they were ready now to submit to the terrible flames, still singing praise to God. The church burned for days, but the smoke didn't put forth the usual stench. Instead it was fragrant, and those who passed the ruined building saw a golden light, caused by something other than fire, emanating from it.

On this day we read the following words from I Timothy: "Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (6:12).

That night in Nicomedia, twenty thousand martyrs "took hold of eternal life" in a way they didn't expect. But what better way could there be than singing to the Lord in church, in celebration of His birth for our salvation?

Troparion — Tone 2

Blessed is the earth that received your blood,
passion-bearers of the Lord,
and holy is the dwelling place which received your spirits.
You triumphed over the enemy in the stadium
and you preached Christ with boldness.
Since He is good, we pray that you beseech Him to save our souls.

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THOUGHTS ON THE NATIVITY OF 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 voice 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. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He had the power, He descended, He redeemed; all things move in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, become of impassibility, remaining unchanged."

St. John Chrysostom



"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

God's Plan in Jesus

“So then there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and fourteen from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen from then to the birth of the Messiah” (Matthew 1:17)

On the Sunday before Christmas the Church recalls the ancestry of the Messiah Jesus. Indeed, the whole holy history of salvation, the Old Testament, is completed by the bridge, this recall of humanity's salvation. Here is the reason that His birth divides history. Many come to celebrate this wonder: The shepherds, the wanderers without real estate; angels looking with amazement at what God was doing on behalf of mankind; magi, the scientists and astrologers of the time. That famous nativity scene, our icon, is replicated in western art many times over. It lifts up an ideal, a symbol of perfect union between God and creation —what should develop, and which never did happen.

A. The people chosen to prepare the earth for harmony and peace in the Messiah had another agenda, which Jesus did not fulfill. The hope and change offered by the Lord

was rejected. They hoped that a military leader would conquer the Roman occupiers, and so their historical highlight was a negative event, the Holocaust in the middle of the last century after which they were returned to the Promised Land, and made to defend it ever since;

B. The shepherds, nomads without land of their own, destined to search for fertile land evolved into another Abraham religion – Islam – which has had little to do with peace, and nothing to do with a Messiah sent from God, Son of God to reconcile heaven and earth. Rather, Islam is submission to the deity Allah, imposing by force or conversion that freedom-less faith on any and all, their only vision a return to the triumphant centuries between 8th-19th, and aimed at eradicating Israel and Christians in those nations taking part in the Arab spring;

C. The Magi, scientists of Christ's time who searched the skies for some sign of harmony between heaven and earth, finding it yet as a conquered race having no means of developing their research. Modern scientists with vastly-improved instruments continue

the tasks of the Magi. They discovered neutrinos. By acceleration of atoms, the Higgs boson “God particle,” they are learning about the way particles acquire their masses; however, no angels, no faith, nothing beyond matter, space and black holes.

What of Christianity? What of we who believe in the love of God displayed in the birth of the Son of God, Who so loved the world that He gave the world the witness of victory through suffering, death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, a journey into and through the world, into Hades itself to release mankind from separation, sin and death? Do we believe in the ultimate hope and change introduced by Jesus Christ, promised by politicians but incapable of delivering, or are we caught up in the hope that is economic, continuation of a life style dependent on money, hoping that will not change, looking forward not to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, but rather to a life of pleasure, with death being the end of everything?

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America Web site, <http://oca.org/reflections/berzonsky/gods-plan-in-jesus>

Around SS Peter & Paul

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

Andrew Blischak
December 1

Natalya Delsante
December 5

Deborah Kossob
December 6

Joe Gala
December 26

David and Stephanie Homyak
December 28

**Many Years!
mnogaya leta!**

THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

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

PRAYER LIST

“I was sick and you visited me.”

Matt 25:36

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

Ann Garza
Rose Koval

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

Bits and Pieces

CHRISTMAS GIVING

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

HOLY SUPPER

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

LANDSCAPING UPDATE

With the completion of the new parking lot our landscaping costs have increased in order to maintain the beauty of our church grounds. We must contract out all the work to maintain the plant life in trimming, watering, fertilizing, repairing, etc. since our volunteer resources have been substantially reduced. We ask you to be as generous as possible in your contributions. Thank you.

BOOKSTORE

The bookstore has a small supply of Christmas cards available for \$15/box. Have a blessed Nativity!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

On March 8, 2014, the Saturday before the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we will be hosting a retreat with Father John Behr of St. Vladimir's Seminary.

MYRRH BEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY

The Myrrh Bearers' Annual Christmas Bake Sale will take place on Sunday, December 23rd during coffee hour along with our Christmas Raffle. Ticket sales for the raffle will be 6 for \$5 or \$1 each. Please see Rita Mudrenko or Jane Evans if you would like to donate an item for the raffle.

Our traditional Holy Supper will take place on the Eve of the Nativity of Christ in the Parish Hall following Compline at 6:00. Marty Gala will be taking reservations. Those attending will be asked to bring a traditional symbolic Lenten food to share with our Parish family.

FROM THE CHURCH TREASURER

It's December already, and now is your chance to make sure your 2013 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 of October 31st, **we are -\$615 in the red Y-T-D**. We would at least like to 'break even' plus with our operating income and expenses.

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 2013 year end contributions prior to December 30th**, so they will make the year end deposit. Any contributions received after the 30th will be attributed to 2014. If you have any questions, please see David in the church office. Please notify the office of any change of address. Please let the office know if you wish to have a box of contribution envelopes for use in 2014.

SOURCES FOR ICONS, PRAYER BOOKS, AND RELIGIOUS GIFTS

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

Online sources:

Saint Isaac of Syria Skete
www.skete.com

Holy Transfiguration Monastery
www.thehtm.org

Conciliar Press
www.conciliarpress.com

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

Holy Cross Skete
www.holycross-hermitage.com

Holy Trinity Store
www.holytrinitystore.com

Saint Tikhon Seminary Bookstore
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CHRISTMAS BAKE 2013

The 6 day bake could not have been completed without the help of all the following people: Lisa Formica, Barbara Peterson, Marty Gala, Elena Kerr, Tonya, Jane Evans, Rita Mudrenko, Gina Mudrenko, Stephanie Homyak, Betsy Belgian, Michelle Golowatsch, Sue, Teddie Gardner, Katrina Delsante, Anna Porter, Ann, Yuliya, Marge Gregoric, Helen Yarbrough and Father David, Roman, David B., Thomas, Joe Gala, John Hecht, Dan Perrotto, Ron Yevin, and Andy Evans.

Thank you to everyone for making it a successful bake and to those who supported it. Make sure to pick up your rolls as soon as possible. *Elizabeth Michel*

December 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	CHRISTMAS PROGRAM Please join us for our Christmas program on Sunday, January 5, 2014 following Divine Liturgy. 				6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker 6:00 am Divine Liturgy St. John the Evangelist Mission	7 5:00pm Vespers
8 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School St. Nicholas Celebration MBAS Meeting	Christmas Bake Sale The Myrrh Bearers will hold their annual Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 22 nd . 				13 Ven. Herman of Alaska 7:00 am Divine Liturgy	14 5:00pm Vespers
15 Holy Forefathers 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	HOLY SUPPER Tuesday, December 24, 2013 following Compline at 6:00 pm. See Marty Gala to sign up! 				20 Icon "Rescue of the Drowning"	21 Sat. before Nativity 5:00pm Vespers
22 Sunday Before Nativity 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy MBAS Christmas Bake Sale and Raffle	23	24 Eve of the Nativity 6:00pm Compline and Litya Followed by HOLY SUPPER 	25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD  8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!	26 Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos	27 3rd Day of the Nativity	28 Sat. after Nativity 5:00pm Vespers
29 Sunday After Nativity 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.		1 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great NEW YEAR'S DAY	2 Ven. Seraphim of Sarov	3 Forefeast of Theophany	4 Synaxis of the 70 Apostles 5:00pm Vespers