

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 15, Issue 12

December 2015

As the Magi beheld the newborn Savior and worshipped Him, they also brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We as Orthodox Christians, as we re-witness the birth of our Savior, also should respond out of love and bring to Him our gift. This gift should not be haphazard, but should be prayerfully considered. As your contribution supports the work of the Church-the body of Christ-it is certainly one of the most important gifts that you will give at Christmas this year.

+Bishop Daniel



SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church
1614 E. Monte Vista Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85006
602.253.9515

www.sspeterpaulaz.org
www.oca.org
www.orthodoxfellowship.org

The Right Reverend DANIEL
Bishop of Santa Rosa
Rector

480.287.0240 Mobile
frdaniel@sspeterpaulaz.org

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

Barbara Peterson
Myrrhbearers Altar Society
602.803.0280

Habakkuk Asks the Universal Question

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk is remembered on December 2nd. His brief book poses deep questions about human life and suggests equally deep answers from God.

The opening verses express the prophet's suffering: "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and Thou wilt not hear? Or cry to thee, 'Violence!' and Thou wilt not save? Why dost Thou make me see wrongs and look upon trouble?"

He goes on to complain that God's unwillingness to hear means that the law becomes slack and ineffective, and justice never prevails.

God gives an answer that, at first glance, seems anything but merciful. He tells Habakkuk He is doing a work "that you would not believe if told." He says that He is using the Chaldeans, a dread and terrible people, as instruments of chastisement upon His still-beloved Israel.

But God's answer does not end with the terrifying Chaldeans.

He instructs the prophet to "write the vision, make it plain upon tablets...For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end, it will not lie. If it

seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (2: 2-3). Then God promises that the righteous shall live by their faith; those who trust God will see the fulfillment of the vision, the saving plan He has for humankind. The prophet is satisfied by this promise, and at the end of his book he writes, "Though the fig tree does not blossom,

nor fruit be on the vines...yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (2: 17-18). Saint Paul quotes Habakkuk in Romans 1:17, writing about the importance of keeping faith even in suffering and worldly oppression.

The fourth Ode of the Canon we sing at Pascha describes "the inspired prophet Habakkuk" who "stands with us in holy vigil" and "cries with a piercing voice: 'Today salvation

has come to the world, for Christ is risen as all-powerful.'" This Ode tells us that the "vision" promised to Habakkuk has been fulfilled by Christ. Like the prophet, we can be sure that the even if the fulfillment "seems slow" we are right to "wait for it" because it does "surely come."

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, the fourth-century Church Father, picks up on Habakkuk's declaration that he will "take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what [God] will say to me" (2:1). In his Oration XLV Gregory writes, "Well, I have taken my stand and looked forth; and I behold a man riding on the clouds...His countenance is as the countenance of an angel, and his clothing as the brightness of piercing lightning; and he lifts his hand toward the East and cries with a loud voice...'Today is salvation come to the world.' "

For Habakkuk, for Saint Paul, and for Saint Gregory, the answer to the universal question is the same: it is the Risen Christ and His salvation.



Message From Our Rector

December 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:1-2).

In a few short weeks, we will hear these words from the Gospel of Matthew proclaimed during our liturgical celebration of the Lord's Nativity. These very brief and concise words, while telling a part of the story of the Lord's birth, nonetheless leave much to the imagination, begging for more information. Although telling the story of the journey of the "Wise men from the East," how they eventually arrived in Bethlehem and how, once there, "they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh," the second chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew does not provide a lot of details. This leaves us to wonder more about the particulars of the Wise

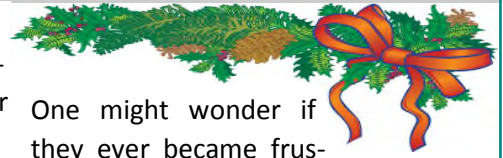
Men's journey from the East to Jerusalem and then on to Bethlehem followed by their secretive return to their homeland.

At this time of the year, even in advance of our Nativity celebrations, it is helpful to pause and reflect upon that mysterious star-led journey that brought the Wise Men to Bethlehem.

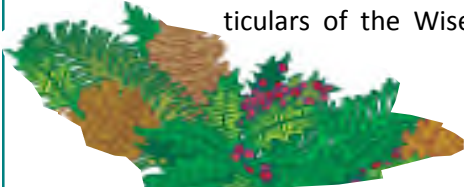


First, these wise and scholarly men (some translations of the Scriptures refer to them as astrologers, i.e. learned people who studied the stars) had first to decide to follow the star (and their hearts as well) and begin the journey, wherever it might lead them. Once they had

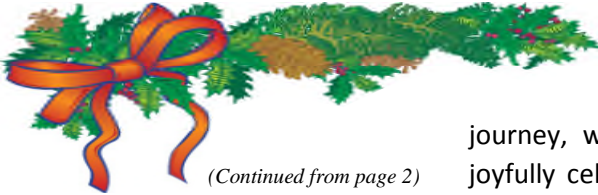
committed themselves to make the journey, they then had to prepare themselves and make ready to set out, arranging for all the practical aspects of what it meant to travel in those days. Preparation of all the necessities of travel was part of their arrangements; means of transportation were obtained (horses? camels? donkeys?), provisions were gathered and food was prepared, and a retinue of servants and retainers was assembled. Once they had set out, they did so facing certain and very real hardships and deprivations. They submitted to the potential dangers of the road, facing robbers, thugs, and murderers as a very real possibility. They also had to deal with the trip's daily monotony as they traveled across vast tracts of land.



One might wonder if they ever became frustrated and doubtful. Did they ever decide to give up, to turn around and go home? Were they ever discouraged? Did they ever doubt the star which they had chosen to follow? Did any one of them decide to give up only to be reassured and encouraged by the others? As we've already observed, such interesting details are unknown to us. But, whatever the cost or danger or doubts there might have been, whatever boredom they faced, the Wise Men, being wise, continued their journey nonetheless. Day after day, night after night, they journeyed on. Eventually they found themselves in Jerusalem, standing before King Herod and asking their question, "Where is He who has been born the King of the Jews?" "In Bethlehem of Judea," they were told; and so they trustfully continued their journey, following the star to that small village. "And the star stood over the place where the young child was." There, in Bethlehem, having trusted the star which led them over many miles and through many dangers, having faced "field and fountain, moor and mountain" and all types of challenges, they encountered the newborn King of the Jews, the Savior of the World. Their persistence and trust and fidelity to their journey were rewarded. Having seen and adored the newborn Christ and offered Him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they completed their journey, they reached their goal.



Message From Our Rector (cont'd)



(Continued from page 2)

In communion with the Orthodox Church throughout the world, we now find ourselves on a journey as well as we travel toward this year's celebration of the Lord's Nativity. While the world around us seems to be already in full holiday mode, as if the Feast has already arrived, we live these days in an entirely different spirit and with an entirely different focus. We live these days in a spirit of calm and peaceful prayer and preparation. As the world around us celebrates a feast that has yet to arrive, we give ourselves to the sacrifices of the Nativity Fast, we spend these days reading and reflecting upon the Holy Scriptures, we live these days seeking and serving Christ in the lives of those in need. Like the Wise Men, we journey on and look ahead to arriving in Bethlehem where we encounter the Son of God Who is born for our salvation. The requirements of the Fast might seem too difficult (especially when those around us are already fully feasting while we're fasting) and the calm and prayerful spirit in which try to live these days may be disrupted by the sights and sounds of the holiday season. However, if we are true to what is asked of us, if we keep our eyes on the destination to which we are led, we can be sure that our journey to the Feast of the Nativity will be rewarded and that we will encounter

the newborn King of the Jews. If we keep our focus on the purpose of this journey, we will reach its goal and joyfully celebrate the great love that God has shown for us in His only-begotten Son Who "came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man."

As we continue the journey of this Nativity Fast, we must acknowledge that the world around us continues to struggle under the weight man's sinful nature. Throughout these days, part of our daily practice should be to keep in our prayers all those who suffer in any way, especially those who are innocent victims of any form of violence or terrorism. We ask the Prince of Peace to grant His peace to this world, healing and restoration to those who suffer, and comfort to all those who mourn.

It is my prayer that all of you, your families, and all those whom you encounter in your daily lives will "follow the star" and thus be led to worship the Newborn King, to fall down in adoration before Him, and to offer Him the only gifts He really desires, gifts of our very selves. Come, let us adore Him!

Assuring you of my blessing and prayers...

With love in the Lord,

+Bishop Daniel

*This Nativity night bestowed peace on the whole world;
So let no one threaten;
This is the night of the Most Gentle One – Let no one be cruel;
This is the night of the Humble One – Let no one be proud.
Now is the day of joy – Let us not revenge;
Now is the day of Good Will – Let us not be mean.
In this Day of Peace – Let us not be conquered by anger.
Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake;
So, rich one, invite the poor to your table.
Today we receive a Gift for which we did not ask;
So let us give alms to those who implore and beg us.
This present Day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers;
Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.
Today the DIVINE BEING took upon Himself the seal of our humanity,
In order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of DIVINITY.
– St. Isaac Syrian, Nativity Sermon*



HOLY SUPPER

Please join us for Holy Supper on Thursday, 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.



Peanuts, Popcorn and Christmas Cartoons



Fr. David Mezynski

When I was young, I would get to watch some great TV cartoons during the Christmas season. Waiting to devour a bowl of popcorn, I would anxiously anticipate the appearance of the “special presentation” logo and with abandon throw myself into the stories of Frosty, Kris Kringle, and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Nowadays, kids can watch these cartoons any time, through iTunes, Hulu, and Netflix, but in my day kids could only watch them around Christmas time, which added to the excitement of the season. These shows reminded me that soon we would be celebrating the birth of Jesus—and that soon I would be opening my presents.

However, at my young age I usually “reversed” that order. If my parents or my priest were to have asked me what Christmas meant, I would have had quite a bit to say about what Santa might bring me for Christmas. If I had remembered—and that is a big “if”—I might have mentioned that Christmas is also about the birth of Jesus and the salvation of the world. In my youth, I had offered Jesus a backseat to *Star Wars*, and I had displaced the truly wonderful gift that I had received from God with opening my own Christmas gifts.

I could easily excuse my behavior as youthful exuberance, blame my immaturity, or point to the commercialization of the season. What I could not get around (even now) is that Linus—the character from Charles Schulz’s “Charlie Brown” comic strip—taught me better; he taught me what Christmas is really about.

Most of us probably recall “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” a TV cartoon special that debuted in 1965 and has been aired every year since. In the cartoon Charlie Brown—the main character in Schulz’s

strip—laments the commercialization of Christmas and falls into an emotional depression. Acting as the resident psychiatrist, Lucy (Charlie’s ever-present antagonist) suggests that Charlie Brown direct the school Christmas play, and in so doing find some peace within the Christmas season. However, rather than finding peace, Charlie Brown instead finds greater frustration: the Peanuts gang wants to modernize the Nativity story rather than highlight Jesus’ birth.

Seeking to create a more appropriate mood, Charlie Brown and Linus (Lucy’s gentler and kinder younger brother) set off to find a Christmas tree for the play. As they leave, Lucy requests that they get a “big, shiny aluminum tree.” However, in the midst of the many extravagant and fake trees in the lot, Charlie Brown finds and chooses a humble, unassuming evergreen—the only real tree available.

Despite Linus’s misgivings, Charlie Brown returns with this tree to rehearsal, where the Peanuts gang promptly laughs at him for his seemingly poor decision. Shaken by their response, Charlie Brown cries out, “Will somebody tell me what Christmas is all about?” Responding to his question, Linus takes center stage and recites six verses from the Gospel of Luke: “And the angel said unto them: ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you this day is born in the City of Bethlehem a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men’” [Luke 2:10–15].

After recounting the Gospel’s “infancy

narrative,” Linus states, “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”

Inspired, Charlie Brown decides to take his tree home to decorate it, to show the rest of the gang its true beauty. Charlie Brown borrows an ornament from the prize-winning Christmas display created by his own dog, Snoopy, only to watch the little tree droop from its weight. After crying out “I’ve killed it!”, he flees in despair.

Now sorry for their rough treatment of Charlie Brown, the Peanuts gang (inspired by Linus), follow after him, only to discover the humble tree bowed down by the weight of the ornament. Linus lovingly props up the tree to give it strength, and wraps his security blanket around its base. The gang decorates the tree with the rest of Snoopy’s ornaments as they sing “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” Upon returning, Charlie Brown is stunned as his friends shout, “Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!”

Charlie Brown learned something valuable that day: the joyful gift of our salvation comes wrapped not in worldly glory but in humility. The Messiah comes not in earthly splendor but in heavenly glory, wrapped in swaddling clothes rather than royal garments. The small tree chosen by Charlie Brown symbolizes the truth of the Incarnation of the Word of God: our salvation resides in an outpouring of love, not in self-glorification.

We can perhaps find even deeper symbolism in Linus’s security blanket (usually an ever-present fixture; he does not leave home without it!). As Linus recites the gospel verse, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,” he lets go of his security blanket. Linus has always depended on his blanket to have peace of mind, to feel protected, to feel safe. Yet, in this dramatic moment, he lets his

(Continued on page 5)

What Kind of Conception?

On December 9th, the Orthodox Church celebrates a feast called, in its full formality, The Conception by Righteous St. Anna of the Theotokos. The festal icon shows Anna and her husband Joachim in a loving conjugal embrace.

This feast reveals one of the major differences between the teachings of the Orthodox Church and those of the Roman Catholic Church. In the Roman Church, the conception of Mary the Theotokos is called the Immaculate Conception. (Some people



are not aware that this term refers to her conception rather than the conception of Jesus Christ.) The Roman Church teaches that Mary's conception was different from that of every other human being. Unlike the rest of us, she was born, through the intervention of God, without the stain of the Original Sin of Adam, which taints every human birth and which is transmitted through the act of sexual intercourse.

The Orthodox Church's teaching is that Mary was born just as the rest of us were; she is a human being and her conception was the same as ours. In Orthodox teach-

ing we human beings do not bear guilt for a sin committed "in Adam." Nor is there any "stain" associated with the act of sexual intercourse which was, after all, created by God as the way for children to be born from the union of a man and a woman.

But Mary was a person with a special destiny, whose upbringing prepared her for a great place in God's plan. Her aged, childless parents had longed for a baby for many years. They prayed fervently, and Mary's conception was God's answer. As Father Thomas Hopko has written in his book *The Winter Pascha*: "Mary is conceived in fulfillment of her parents' prayers in order to be formed in the womb, born on the earth, dedicated to the Lord, and nurtured in holiness to become by God's grace the mother of His Son the Messiah."

The combination of Mary's unique destiny and her normal conception as a "mere human being" means a great deal for our lives. We can look to Mary as the model of Christian life, and it's a model to which

we can actually aspire, since she is not separated from us by having a conception and birth totally unlike ours. Yet her pure life and obedience to God, and her resulting closeness to Christ, make her an intercessor like no other. As some of our prayers put it, "the entreaty of a mother has great power to win the favor of the Master." In fact, the word "immaculate" is sometimes used to describe the purity and loving obedience to the Lord that characterized the Theotokos' life. But this word should not be misunderstood as referring to her conception.

In the Theotokos we have a woman born like us, yet able to be a mother to the whole Church. The prayers of the day invite us to share the joy of Joachim and Anna in Mary's conception, "for she is the fruit of the grace of God."

Troparion - Tone 4

Today the bonds of barrenness are broken,
God has heard the prayers of Joachim and Anna.
He has promised them beyond all their hopes to bear the Maiden of God,
by whom the uncircumscribed One was born as mortal Man;
He commanded an angel to cry to her:

*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>.**

Peanuts, Popcorn and Christmas Cartoons *cont'd*

(Continued from page 4)

blanket drop, symbolically reaching for the Savior to find true peace, protection, and safety.

Linus also wraps his security blanket around the tree after Charlie Brown flees in despair. This hopeful act suggests that Linus wrapped his fears around the Christmas tree, because perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). In the light of Jesus' birth, anxiety loses its grasp upon humanity; our security is no longer in

earthly vessels but in the Lord Himself. Like Linus, we might consider letting go of our own security blankets in order to offer the same gratitude.

The brilliant Charles Schulz, through his thought-provoking and heart-warming characters, tried to convey to the world the true meaning of Christmas. Although I now enter into the Advent Season through the rich services of the Orthodox Church, I still carry in my heart the simple but profound lessons taught to me by the

Peanuts gang.

And, now, when considering my "Christmas presents" I muse: Am I presenting the Lord with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, like the Magi? Or, am I offering him pride, covetousness, envy, and judgment?

What do I really want for Christmas?

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, *Reflections in Christ*, December 19, 2014, <https://oca.org/reflections/misc-authors/peanuts-popcorn-and-christmas-cartoons>*

Three Mothers

On December 9 we celebrate "Righteous Saint Anna's Conception of the Mother of God." This lengthy, explicit title offers some important insights into Orthodox theology.

First, it tells us that Mary the Mother of God was conceived through the union of two human parents, like any other person born in the world. Many icons of her conception clearly show her parents, Joachim and Anna, standing together in a loving embrace, with a bed behind or near them.



It is noteworthy that the day before this feast is, in the Western Church, the feast day of the Immaculate Conception. This refers to the way Mary (not Jesus Christ) was conceived. The Roman Catholic teaching is that God intervened at the moment of Mary's conception to remove the stain of original sin, which is transmitted by the act of human reproduction. This stain marks us all from the day we

are born. So, since God removed that stain from Mary, she is different from every other human being.

Father Thomas Hopko, in his book "The Winter Pascha," writes that Orthodoxy does not go along with this teaching because our Church does not believe that such a stain exists. Father Thomas writes that all of us, including the Theotokos, "are born into a fallen, death-bound, demon-riddled world...We are all born mortal and tending toward sin. But we are not born guilty of any personal sin, certainly not one allegedly committed "in Adam."

The title of the Feast also tells us that the baby girl Anna conceived was indeed the one who would become the God-bearer, or Theotokos. God honors the act of human reproduction by using it to bring forth the woman who will have the most exalted privilege of any human being who ever lived. Not only that, but He leaves her free to say

"no" to His plan for her if she so chooses.

We honor Mary's agreement to God's plan because it is basic to our salvation. That she is born into the world the same way we are, with no special intervention by God, means that she can be a truly human example of holiness, one that we are able to follow.

Another mother is remembered by the Church on this day—Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Like Anna, she had to wait a very long time to have a child. During those years of waiting, she was "broken-hearted and wept and did not eat" (I Samuel/I Kingdoms 1: 7). Joachim and Anna suffered too. Joachim was humiliated by being turned away from the Temple as he attempted to offer his sacrifice; being a childless man he was not considered worthy to do so.

All three mothers suffered, especially the Theotokos who saw her Son unjustly crucified. But their joy later on would be great, and hers would be greatest of all. That is why the Church sings to her at Pascha: "Be radiant, O Pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of Your Son!"

Around SS Peter & Paul

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

- December 1 Andrew Blischak
 5 Natalya Delsante
 Frank Bolton
 6 Deborah Kossob
 11 Isolda Akhba
 15 Svetlana & John Tanner
 16 Nick Stchur
 Dasha O'Brien
 26 Joseph Gala
 28 David & Stephanie Homyak
 Svetlana Tanner (Fleenor)
 31 Tristan Sourk

**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. Bishop Daniel will be available to bless homes throughout the month of January. To arrange to have your house blessed, please speak with Bishop Daniel.

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:

Protodeacon Alexis
 Ann Garza
 Rose Koval
 Rose Kurowski
 Tillie (Tatiana) Kulek
 Larry Gardner
 Ted Demos
 Ann Carroll
 Vickie Mendez
 Anna Michkofsky

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 5:00 p.m. Please contact Marty Gala to confirm that you will attend this special celebration of Our Lord's Nativity.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations and Many Years! to Father David and Matushka Mary on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of Father David's Ordination to the Holy Priesthood. May the Lord Jesus, the Great High Priest, continue to bless them in their service to the His Holy Church.

PARISH ANGEL PROGRAM

The Parish is conducting a Christmas outreach program to provide gifts for the children who live in the apartment building just down the street from church (These are low income families). We will hold a Christmas party in our hall at 10am Saturday Dec 12. All parishioners are invited. Coffee "and" will be provided. Saint Nicholas (John Hecht) will pass out the gifts. The Teen and Young Adult League will help buy presents and prepare & serve the goodies at the party. The initial reaction from parishioners has been terrific. Thank God for the overwhelming charity for our neighbors.

DECORATING OUR CHURCH FOR THE FEASTS

As always, we plan to decorate the church in preparation for the celebration of the Nativity, New Year, and the Feast of the Theophany. The church will be decorated on Wednesday, December 23rd, at 10:00 a.m. The work should last about two hours. Especially helpful will be to have some able-bodied young men and women who are able to climb ladders, etc. Please let Vladyka Daniel know that you will be able to help. You can text him at 480.287.0240.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

If you would like to make a donation to assist with the purchase of flowers for Christmas, please use an envelope designated for flowers or mark a check or envelope "For Christmas Flowers."



ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES.

As part of our preparation for this year's celebration of the Lord's Nativity, there will be three classes held to study the Infancy Narratives (found in the first two chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke) as well as our liturgical practices and the customs associated with the joyful feast of Christ's Birth. Classes will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, December 2, 9, and 16 in the Cultural Center.

CHURCH SCHOOL

We have been truly blessed to see the number of children in our Church School program grow. Our youngest students are learning the familiar bible stories we all grew up on. Our middle class is learning about the church building, and each student will soon be creating his/her own iconostasis. The older students are learning about the early church and reading the Book of Acts.

As we approach the Feast of the Nativity, we are also preparing our Nativity program. The students are working on a very special production to celebrate the feast with the parish on Sunday, January 3, 2016. Be sure to mark the date on your calendar!

MYRRH BEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY

Thank you to everyone who helped in this year's Nut Roll bake. Your help was greatly appreciated.

Please see Marty Gala to let her know if you will be attending Holy Supper on December 24th and what you would like to contribute/bring towards the meal.

The Myrrh Bearers' Christmas Raffle will take place on December 20th. 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.

BOOKSTORE

The Orthodox Hymns of the Feast of the Nativity are available for purchase on CD for \$18, as well as a limited supply of Nativity Cards.

The Pocket Calendars for 2016 have arrived! Major and minor feast days are featured throughout, \$4. Also a few new titles have been added to bookstore, so stop by and take a look!

WELCOME

Welcome to His Beatitude Metropolitan HERMAN and Martin Paluch as they return to Arizona and our warmer weather. As always, we look forward to the blessing of having His Beatitude pray with us through the upcoming holiday season. *Eis polla eti Despota!*

FROM THE CHURCH TREASURER

It's December already and now is your chance to make sure your 2015 church pledges/donations/contributions are in and accounted for within this year. Please make every effort to catch up on your pledge if you made one and contribute even if you didn't make a pledge. The church has had a year in dealing with air conditioner replacements. As of October 31st, **our Y-T-D Operating Income is \$1,099.87 in the red.** We would at least like to 'break even' or be in a better year end position and go into 2016 on a positive note.

Copies of your Y-T-D yearly contributions report can be found at the back of the church or in the church office in early December. **Please make your 2015** year end contributions by December 27th, so they will make the year-end deposit. Any contributions received after the year end deposit will be attributed to 2016. If you have any questions, please see David in the church office. Please let the office know if you wish to have a box of recycled contribution envelopes for use in 2016. Thank you all for supporting our church and its endeavors.



