SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 10 **NEWSLETTER** OCTOBER 2026

Splash Bash 2026







Splash Bash Kicks Off Another Great Church School Year

Our Annual Splash Bash once again provided the perfect way to kick off a new church school year with fun, fellowship, and plenty of splashing! Students invited friends to join the celebration, creating a lively and welcoming atmosphere that brought everyone together.

The kids enjoyed an afternoon filled with slip-and-slides, pool noodles, kiddie pools, rubber duckies, and, of course, plenty of water balloons! With the warm weather, the water activities were a huge hit and kept everyone cool while they played and laughed together.

A favorite once again was Kona Ice, where everyone had fun creating their own delicious flavor combinations. It was the perfect refreshing treat after an afternoon of non-stop fun!

A big thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Splash Bash such a wonderful success. What better way to begin another year of learning, growing, and building friendships together in our church school community!

You can find more pictures at:
https://www.facebook.com/stspeterandpaulaz

September Council Highlights

- There was no Council meeting in September.
- First Choice has successfully completed our parking lot upgrades, including crack sealing, sealing the entire lot, and repainting all the lines.
- The air conditioning units that went down this summer have been fully repaired. Thank you for your patience during the summer heat while this important maintenance was completed to keep our facility comfortable!
- We are tentatively planning to show the film El Tonto por Christo (The Fool for Christ) on Sunday, November 8 during coffee hour. Grab a refreshment, pull up a chair, and join us for this special screening and fellowship.



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Message from Our Rector



Here we are, already beginning the month of October with over three-quarters of the year behind us. As we reflect on our journey, we recall that the history of the Orthodox Christian Church begins in the Acts of the Holy Apostles with the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Scripture tells us: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

As Orthodox Christians, we are all called to understand the true, deep essence of our faith. Receiving the Holy Spirit helps us embrace the authentic teachings of the Church, acting as our helper and guiding us into all truth. As Christ says: “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17). While the Church provides every teaching necessary to grasp the essence of the faith, it is up to us to actively implement it in our daily lives.

When we enter the church, we are there to worship Christ and draw closer to Him. We should leave all earthly cares behind and truly focus on the prayers being offered. Even at home, we need to clear our minds before starting our prayers or reading the daily Gospel and Epistle, always striving to remember Christ throughout the day.

Orthodox Christianity is not just a Sunday obligation; it is a way of life. In this day and age, Christianity comes in many different shapes and sizes. It is often viewed as an obstacle or an intrusion to how "I" personally want to live. Consequently, some try to make Christianity easier to accept by watering down the truth. As Orthodox Christians, however, we know that a strict life in Christ is necessary for the salvation of our souls.

Many people are looking for the Truth of the Gospel, and we must always be open to sharing the Gospel with others. We should be sure that we are fulfilling what Christ has commanded us to do, and that is to go out and tell of the good news of the Gospel. We should try during the rest of the year to share that good news with someone and invite them to the church. May the good Lord help us in the building up of His church.

FOCA Tailgate & October Birthdays

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) wishes a blessed and happy birthday to everyone celebrating in the month of October! May God grant you many blessed years!

Looking ahead to November, it's time to gear up for fellowship and charity. FOCA is hosting its annual Tailgate Party on Sunday, November 1. Come dressed in your favorite team colors, show your team pride, and enjoy great food and community.

Best of all, this event is for a wonderful cause: all proceeds will go directly toward sponsoring a seminarian family at St. Herman's Seminary in Alaska for Christmas and funding a festive holiday meal for the seminarians. (*Note: The featured pictures show the two wonderful families we sponsored last year*)





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Roll Bake Thank Yous

Thank you to everyone who has helped with the nut roll bakes. It has been another great season. For everyone who ordered rolls, pick-up will begin in November.

Myrrhbearers Altar Society (MBAS) News

Silent Auction Bids being accepted for the month of October

The Myrrh Bearers Altar Society (MBAS) is holding a silent auction during the month of October. There is a variety of items for individuals of all ages including such as an icon, unique baskets, and stained glass artwork. Check the table often to make sure you keep up with the bids on your favorite item(s) or to check out any new items that might appear throughout the month. We would also like to thank everyone that donated items to the auction.

New Altar Cloths Have Been Ordered

All the proceeds from this year's nut roll sales, silent auction, and other fundraising activities, will be used to purchase four new sets of altar cloths in the crushed velvet.



Learn the Art of Making Prosphora

Marty Gala will be retiring from making prosphora at the beginning of 2027 and is looking for individuals to carry on this important tradition. If you are interested in learning the process and taking over this ministry, Marty is happy to teach you.

A training class is tentatively planned for Saturday, October 10 or Saturday, October 24. Please speak with Marty directly if you are interested in attending.

New Resources

The Godparent Project is a documentary-style video resource designed to prepare Orthodox Christian parents and godparents for the sacrament of baptism. Featuring interviews with priests and matushkas, the film walks viewers through every stage of the experience — from early preparation to life after the baptismal font. *https://whatsyourministry.org/courses/godparentproject/*.

The Akathist Hymn is a profound, devotional poem, which sings the praises of the Holy Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary. It is one of the most beloved services in the Orthodox Church. It was composed in the imperial city of Constantinople, "the city of the Virgin," by St. Romanos the Melodist, who reposed in the year 556. The Akathist Hymn has proven so popular in the liturgical life of the Church that many other hymns have been written following its format. These include Akathists to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Cross, and to many Saints. You can find a repository of Akathists at *https://www.akathists.com/*.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

St. Matthew 6:5-15

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Hidden Gems in the Bookstore

As many of you may have noticed, our little bookstore which once was just a small countertop has grown into a lovely little shop. We originally carried about 10 titles (basically Orthodoxy 101 types of books) and have now spread into the many small facets of the spiritual life. This month I'm showcasing three marvelous books that may be easy to overlook amongst the many titles we now carry. We also have extra large icons of each of the apostles for sale. $50 each.

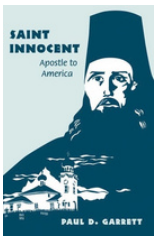


The Sunflower - Conforming the Will of Man to the Will of God, $27

I am currently reading this myself and was pleasantly surprised by the writing's simplicity. This is not some deep theological tome, but rather a practical exposition on discerning God's will and conforming our lives to it. St. John of Tobolsk wrote this; he was the last canonized saint from pre-revolutionary Russia and the namesake and ancestor of St. John of San Francisco and Shanghai.

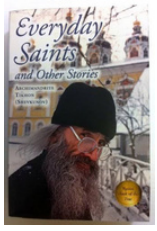
From the Holy Trinity Publication website: Saint John addresses fundamental questions: Why should we care about God's will? What are the benefits in following His will? How do we avoid common obstacles to living in accordance with His will? The reader will find practical and eternal wisdom running through these writings that discuss the perennial questions of why a good God permits evil. This is the first English edition of St John's text, edited and abbreviated for the contemporary reader.

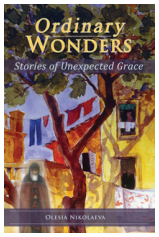
Saint Innocent, Apostle to America, $34



While you can't go wrong with any book about a saint, I always come back to this one. Sometimes the lives of the saints can seem geared only toward those who were never married, didn't have kids, were only children born of spectacular circumstances, or were nestled away toiling as ascetics. Obviously there's nothing wrong with this, but it may be hard to see ourselves in them. St. Innocent was married, had several children, and still fulfilled the Lord's command to evangelize. This book reads like an adventure tale. Seemingly superhuman, St. Innocent brought his family to America and evangelized Alaska through the most bitter and difficult physical challenges.

From the SVS Press website: This eminently readable biography traces the course of North America's beloved Orthodox saint, Innocent of Alaska: his boyhood in Siberia, his call to mission in America, his labors first as a priest and then as a bishop in America and Asia, and his last years as Metropolitan of Moscow. Revealing the many facets of his warm personality and abiding interest in the natural and social sciences, this portrait fully paints him as a man of affection with an unfailing sense of humor. In this work St Innocent emerges as an apt and accessible example of a dedicated bondservant of Jesus Christ.





Everyday Saints and Other Stories, $23 or Ordinary Wonders: Stories of Unexpected Grace, $20

While these are two separate publications, they are similar. Both books feature ordinary people: you, me and our neighbors. Each chapter stands alone, so you don't have to sit down and read the whole thing which can be difficult at the end of a long day at work when we may not have the mental or emotional bandwidth to tackle a long book. I promise you this is the perfect remedy (in addition to our daily scriptural readings of course)! It's people living ordinary lives and God's marvelous grace exposed in the midst our our daily mundanity.

From the SVS Press website: More than a million copies and several million electronic versions of this book have sold in less than a year. Everyday Saints and Other Stories is the English translation of a work that has soared at the top of the bestseller lists in Russia since its publication in late 2011. Its readership spans philosophical boundaries, from the devoutly religious to the vehemently atheist. Discover a wondrous, enigmatic, remarkably beautiful, yet absolutely real world. Peer into the mysterious Russian soul, where happiness reigns no matter what life may bring. Page upon page of thanks, praise, and testimonies to the life-changing effect of these bright, good-hearted, and poignant tales have flooded the Russian media. This book has been the cause of many sleepless but happy nights: "I couldn't put it down—was sorry when it ended" is the common reaction.

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Donate Appreciated Common Stock To Your Church

Your church now has a financial brokerage account with Fidelity Investments to be able to receive donated stock shares. This enables one to transfer stock shares directly from your brokerage account to the church's brokerage account—not sell them first and then donate the cash. Our church is an IRS-qualified charity. If you have held publicly traded stock for more than one year, you can avoid paying the capital gain tax associated and be able to deduct the stock's entire fair-market value, subject to itemizing and IRS limits.

1. Talk to your church treasurer before initiating anything.
2. Tell the church treasurer you plan to donate stock, the ticker symbol, approximate number of shares or value, and your intended timing. Ask to get a copy of the Fidelity Investments' written securities-transfer instructions.
3. Choose the number of shares, not merely a dollar target.
4. Because stock prices move, instruct your broker to transfer a stated number of shares—for example, "Transfer 125 shares of XYZ"—rather than relying on an exact eventual dollar amount. Keep the cost basis and acquisition dates for your records.
5. Give your broker written transfer instructions.
6. Use your brokerage firm's charitable-transfer form or secure message. State:
    - Your name and account number
    - Security name and ticker
    - Exact number of shares
    - The church's receiving brokerage information
    - That the shares are an irrevocable charitable gift
    - A request for transaction confirmation

For stock already held electronically in a brokerage account, an electronic DTC transfer is generally the simplest method.

1. Notify the church that the transfer is coming.
2. Send a separate note or email identifying yourself, the security, share count, purpose of the donation (for example, general fund, building fund, missions), and any restrictions. A restriction should be agreed on in advance; overly specific donor control can create tax and practicality issues.

Records and tax reporting

- Save the broker confirmation. You normally must itemize deductions to receive an income-tax charitable deduction. The tax benefit is not automatic merely because the church receives the stock.
- For publicly traded securities, fair market value is generally determined using the average of the day's high and low trading prices on the applicable contribution date—not necessarily the closing price.

Simple illustration

Suppose you bought stock shares years ago for $3,000 and they are now worth $12,000:

- If you sell them first, you will recognize a $9,000 capital gain tax, then donate the remaining cash proceeds.
- If instead you transfer the shares directly to an eligible church, the church can sell them, and you generally do not recognize that $9,000 gain. If all eligibility, holding-period, substantiation, and deduction-limit requirements are met, your potential deduction is generally based on the $12,000 fair-market value.

How do I calculate the fair market value of donated stock

For ordinary publicly traded stock, calculate fair market value using the average of the day's high and low selling prices on the date of the charitable contribution, then multiply that per-share amount by the number of shares donated. It is not normally the closing price.

Which date applies?

Use the price data for the date the gift is legally complete—not necessarily the day you first contacted the church or instructed your broker. For an electronic stock transfer, retain the broker's confirmation and the receiving charity's acknowledgment so you can substantiate the transfer date.

If the market was closed or there were no trades on the contribution date, IRS valuation guidance uses prices from the nearest trading dates before and after the gift date, with a weighted calculation based on their distance from the contribution date.

For publicly traded common stock, this calculated value is normally what you report on Form 8283, Section A when your total claimed noncash charitable deduction exceeds $500.

Comprehending the Gospel

"Wisdom! Attend! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel! Peace be with you all!" (Divine Liturgy, preamble to reading of the Gospel)

Wisdom is the requirement not just to listen to the gospel, the normal translation, nor to read it ourselves at home or in the English translation provided in those churches praying in other languages, but to grasp the inner meaning. The inner sense comes from wisdom [Sophia. Premudrost.] Sophia means the deep things of God which we understand not just by reason but by preparing our souls to comprehend a "hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory." And how do you gain that great wisdom? By returning to the purity and innocence of childhood. By cutting through the drivel, the superficial veneer that has built up over the years of listening to banality, vulgarity, stupidity and nonsense that infects our hearing and pollutes our minds so that we not only do not hear any longer those truths about life and meaning and purpose and direction, we have long forgotten that such realities exist. The sounds of the world have clogged up the arteries of the mind. The banalities, trivia and truisms have infected us so that we not longer hear as we had when we were children. So each time the gospel is read, we are warned that what is coming is not what you learn from TV or read in a magazine. This is profound wisdom. But even with this warning and invitation, it's so difficult to change the way we tune into the world.

What is needed is a blessing. "Peace be with you all." The voice is my own as the celebrant at the Divine Liturgy for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have no peace of my own to give you. I'm just like you – maybe even a bit worse – yet I have the honor and duty to appear as the representative of Jesus who is here among us but cannot be here physically; He sent me to appear on His behalf. With the mystery of wisdom, then you can imagine through me Christ is really here with us. With my hand He is blessing all of you the way He did the apostles in the Upper Room on Resurrection day.

Once again, all this is hidden, possibly just nonsense, to those Christ called the "wise and prudent." [Or learned]. Who are they? God forbid they are you. They are those who live in an adults only world. They know everything, but they know nothing about the ways of the Lord. They are street smart. Shrewd and clever, they don't believe in anything or anyone, and they call it wisdom. They live by axioms like:

a) All men are hypocrites no matter what they tell you;

b) They all have a price and can be bought and controlled – it's just a matter of money;

c) Don't trust anyone.

Yet Jesus said that "Many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see and have not seen it, and hear what you hear and have not heard it" (Luke 10:24)



What did they want to hear?

A. That the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth is still concerned for the universe;

B. He is not to be feared, except if you are a sinner and don't know Him;

C. To His children, He is a Father;

D. To His special Son, He is a special Father;

E. He invites and welcomes all who wish to be adopted children through bonding with Christ; Note: You don't adopt adults, of course; you only adopt children. Therefore, to be a son or daughter of the heavenly Father, you must return to childhood, and to do so you will become what the world calls foolish.

F. For "The Father so loved the world that He sent His Son into the world so that all who would like to become united with the Father are encouraged to do so through the Son by the Holy Spirit." (John 3:16)

Very Rev. Vladimir Berzonsky

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Youth Spotlight: Dylan's Dreams Take Flight



My first discovery flight was an experience I'll never forget. I flew a Piper PA-28 Archer and got to take control of the airplane, including taking off and landing. It was more than just a flight—it was the moment my dream of becoming a professional airline pilot started to feel real. This was only the beginning, and I'm ready to keep moving forward, one step at a time.

Celebrating Nya's Big Milestone!



We are so proud of our very own Nya, who recently completed a major milestone at Phoenix Coding Academy! Last week, she showcased her first website. While computer coding can seem like a completely foreign language, Nya has learned how to build these pages from the ground up. It was wonderful to see her hard work turn into real, live websites. Please join us in congratulating Nya on her fantastic growth and creativity!

Women's Book Club

Saturday, October 24
at 3pm.

We are reading ***Living According to God's Will***. You may purchase a copy at the bookstore for $15.

It is not a problem if you miss a month. Each meeting is independent of the previous one. Join us for about 75 minutes of learning, discussion, and a little laughter. Please see Katrina in the bookstore for any questions.

Digital Fasting Discussion

Fr. Mikel's September 26 weekly letter highlighted a video from the Thriving Parish Project about digital fasting. After watching the video, Fr. Mikel invited Chris to lead a discussion during coffee hour about how we might incorporate a digital fast into our own lives and perhaps as a parish. Everyone shared ideas, experiences, and practical advice on taking a break from digital distractions.





OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

October 2	Walter & Vera Moschowsky
4	Christi Sourk
6	Robert Ruiz
8	Emma Hecht
10	John Adams-Clement
11	Susan Weiss
13	Alexander Gala
14	Arlo Towne
17	Rosemarie Osolinsky
	Yulia Loshkareva
20	Mia Quintanilla
21	Svetlana & John Tanner
24	Levi Guerrero
25	Olivia Weiss
	Brad Christensen
30	Anthony Chilbert

Heartfelt Thanksgiving

On Sunday, September 20, the Hoff family sponsored our coffee hour in heartfelt thanksgiving for the two-year anniversary of their daughter Jamie Arango's successful double lung transplant. We were incredibly blessed to celebrate this milestone of health and healing together as a parish family. In honor of this beautiful occasion, all proceeds from the coffee hour will be donated to support the seminarians at St. Herman's Seminary in Alaska. Thank you to the Hoff family for their generosity, and to everyone who came together to fellowship and support this wonderful cause!



PRAYER LIST

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

Sandra Hoff
Pamela Bolton
Sue Bieber
David Bieber
William Osolinsky
Anatoly Bezkorovainy
Jamie Arango
Ann Carroll
Antonia Adams-Clement
Tania Booriakin
The suffering people of Ukraine

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

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

OCTOBER 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	St. John Fall Festival Saturday, October 24, 2026 10 AM – 9 PM Admission: Adults & teens (13+): $5, Children 12 & under: FREE Hosted by: St. John the Evangelist Church. Mesa			**1** Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos Pskov-Protection Icon 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	**2**	**3** **8:00am** **Nut roll bake** 5:00pm Vespers
4 Hieromartyr Hierotheus 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy **CHURCH SCHOOL** **FOCA MEETING** **Project Mexico Collection**	**5** 6:00pm ZOOM Catechumen Class	**6** Holy Apostle Thomas St Innocent the Aleut	**7** 6:00pm The Bible & the Orthodox Faith	**8** 5:30pm Vespers	**9** St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy	**10** 5:00pm Vespers
11 Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy **CHURCH SCHOOL** **MBAS MEETING**	**12** 6:00pm ZOOM Catechumen Class	**13** 6:00pm Council Meeting	**14** 6:00pm The Bible & th e Orthodox Faith	**15** Be sure to check out our Silent Auction.	**16**	**17** **8:00am** **Nut roll bake** 5:00pm Vespers
18 Apostle & Evangelist Luke 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy **CHURCH SCHOOL**	**19** NO ZOOM CLASS	**20** Tailgate Party November 1, 2026 Wear your favorite team jersey.	**21** NO CLASS	**22**	**23** Apostle James, Brother of the Lord	**24** 3:00pm Women's Book Club 5:00pm Vespers
25 Martyrs Marcian & Martyrius 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy **CHURCH SCHOOL**	**26** Great Martyr Demetrius 6:00pm ZOOM Catechumen Class	**27**	**28** 6:00pm The Bible & the Orthodox Faith	**29**	**30**	**31** Priestmartyr John Kochurov 5:00pm Vespers
1 Cosmas & Damian 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy **CHURCH SCHOOL** TAILGATE PARTY **Project Mexico Collection**	**2** 6:00pm ZOOM Catechumen Class	**3**	**4** 6:00pm The Bible & the Orthodox Faith	**5** We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the church hall for coffee and fellowship after Liturgy.	**6**	**7** 5:00pm Vespers