



SS Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church
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Church Bulletin ~ December 2002

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

...At Nativity and Theophany, the Church thinks about the "Kenosis," the deep self-emptying of the Incarnate Word. He Who is the Giver of the Law is Himself obedient to the Law: "Today He who once gave the law to Moses on Sinai submits himself to the ordinances of the Law, in His compassion becoming for our sakes as we are." (festal menaion, feast of the meeting)

In the end, my brothers and sisters, our only hope is love. The love of God enables us to love. If we have struggled to love at all, we know the weakness and the limits of our love. But God is the source of love. The Scripture says, God is love. And this, His love for us, is our only hope.

When we turned away from Him in the garden, the love of the Holy Trinity did not turn away from us. And when by the grace of the Holy Spirit the Holy Mother gave birth to the Word of God, the love of the Father was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

We who bear the name of Christ must not grow weary or become discouraged in our struggle to love others, as He has loved us. You may say, but how can we, who are so weak in love, ever hope to fulfill such a calling and be saved?

Each day we must rise up again, make the Sign of the Cross, admit our failings, reflect on the gifts He has given, forgive those who trespass against us, and strive to become more like our Master, practicing "kenosis" ourselves and as a parish community.

We must struggle to get ourselves, our selfishness, our fears, our faithlessness, out of the way so the Holy Spirit can work in us, so we can serve Christ in the other, so we can be the incense of Christ where ever we may be, icons of hope, witnesses to the Father's love, knowing that on this side of the grave, we may never fully succeed. This is the path onto which He has called us. This is the work He has assigned to you and to me. He didn't say it would be easy. In fact, He said, "In this world you will have tribulation." But He also said, "Lo, I will never forsake nor abandon you, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This is the message of the Nativity, God has come to us in the flesh, promised to be with us, and offered us a way, His Way, the way of love, even when we can't see it, especially when we can't see it. Let us follow Him, as a loving community in Christ, making this our prayer, "O Lord, born of a Virgin, grant that we may live as faithful witnesses to your loving Nativity in the Flesh, and save us in ways which are known to You Alone."

Events & Announcements

The Nativity Season

NATIVITY - Wednesday, December 25, 10 am - Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

CIRCUMCISION & ST. BASIL - Tuesday, December 31, 7 pm - Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil

GREAT BLESSING OF WATER FOR THEOPHANY - Sunday, January 5, 10 am - Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil; Blessing of Water after Liturgy

Church News & Reminders

ICON PLEDGES - The year is coming quickly to a close and some of us still have outstanding Icon Pledges. Please remember to fulfill your pledge by bringing in any amounts due on your pledge. See George Kendro if you are unsure of how much you still owe. Also, if you still have any Icons in your home, please return them to George Kendro as soon as possible.

ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY 2003 will be held the second Sunday in January, **1/12/03**, immediately following the Liturgy. Please plan to attend. Icon Pledges will be accepted prior to Icon Pledge Sunday, 1/12/03. Pledges can be made by contacting George Kendro, the treasurer, or Stephen Murianka with the Saint's name and the amount. *Participants need not be present on Sunday, 1/12/03, to win.*

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2002 - If you have not yet paid your Membership Dues for 2002, please do so as soon as possible. The Church bookkeeping calendar has already advanced to 2003.

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2003 - Dues have been raised to \$100 per person and they can be paid starting now.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS - Held the 1st Monday of every month, 7 PM. All Parishioners are welcome to attend.

CHURCH ENVELOPES for Weekly Donations are now available for pick up in the office. Please pick yours up as soon as possible.

The Joy of Giving

DONATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS FLOWERS - Please be generous in donating for the tree and flowers needed for the Church's Christmas decorations.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ON 12/22 - If you have the time, please come and help decorate the Church for Christmas

CASSEROLES FOR THE HOMELESS - Please help the homeless, especially during this season of giving, by bringing in your casseroles on any Sunday and giving them to **Debbie Krimetz**. Recipes and pans are available in the hall. Debbie is also accepting \$10 donations and she will buy the casseroles herself. Thank you, Debbie and Bob, for your time and effort! A sincere **thank you!** to everyone who donated casseroles. *Debbie and Bob delivered 20 casseroles to St. John's Hospice for Thanksgiving.*

POOR BOX DONATIONS - Please continue to remember those who are less fortunate than we are.

POYA will be putting Christmas stocking stuffers together for the kids at Covenant House sometime within the next 3 weeks. They still need: 10 toothbrushes, 10

small tubes of toothpaste, a few bags of chocolate, and wrapping paper. *Please help to make Christmas a bit brighter for some young adults who are less fortunate.*

If interested in any of the above, please contact **Katia** at **215-776-1162** or e-mail: **ekatarina2000@msn.com**. A message board has been set up on Yahoo for upcoming event information. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to:

PhillyOrthodoxYoungAdults-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Ladies' Society News

OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR/PENNY PARTY was a huge success! A sincere **thank you!** to all the ladies of the Society and to all parishioners who donated time, tangible goods, and money.

Events

66TH ANNUAL NOVOGODNY BALL is being held at the Raddison Hotel in Northeast Philadelphia on Saturday, **January 25, 2003**. For reservations, please see **Stephen Murianka**.

Miscellaneous

ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEWS ABOUT PARISHIONERS - If you have any items to include in next month's Bulletin, please see Alicia or call her at **215-742-0492** or e-mail: **alicia17@mac.com**. The deadline for the next Bulletin is **Sunday, December 22**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on **Sunday 12/29/02**. Bulletins will be mailed to any Parishioners unable to attend.

Thank You to all members of the Parish who have helped out or volunteered in any way with their time and efforts, and a very special **thank you** to anyone whose name was inadvertently omitted from the Bulletin.

2002 Archdiocesan Assembly

Report by Stephen Murianka

Our Archdiocesan Assembly was convened in October in Trumbull, Connecticut. Our hosts were the parishioners of St. George and their pastor, Father Sergei Bouteneff.

The SS. Peter and Paul Parish was represented by our pastor, Father Siniari, delegates Christina Murianka and Sandy Speero, and myself.

Besides the discussions that occurred at the Plenary Sessions, there is a much bigger picture which undergirds the work of the Assembly. The clue to coming to this realization is the presence of our Bishop Nikon and, at this assembly, his Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman. Often as parishioners, we only see the Church within the limited perspective of our own parish. It is at assemblies with other parishes and with other Orthodox Christians that we begin to see the bigger picture: our bond as part of the Apostolic Church connected through our Bishop to the Orthodox community throughout the world and extending back to the Apostles and to Christ.

It is in this context that we come together in prayer to undertake the work of the Archdiocese.

The work of the Assembly involves reports from the many facets of diocesan activities. Our Chancellor, Father Arthur Liolin, gave his report. This has been posted on the bulletin board in our church hall.

We reviewed the Archdiocesan budget and discussed the recommendations of the budget committee; the emphasis was the proposed “dues” increase to \$75.00 per member. This increase was seen as necessary in order to properly support our Bishop, as well as to provide for the regular and ongoing expenses of running the Archdiocese. The proposed budget was passed and the 1,650 members of the Archdiocese will support a balanced budget of \$170,600.00 for the fiscal year 2003.

There was one workshop this year that was conducted by Father John Dresko. He spoke on the issue of Stewardship Funding for the future of the Church and explained the scriptural basis for stewardship giving. As an example, Father John referred to his actual experience of implementing stewardship giving in his own parish.

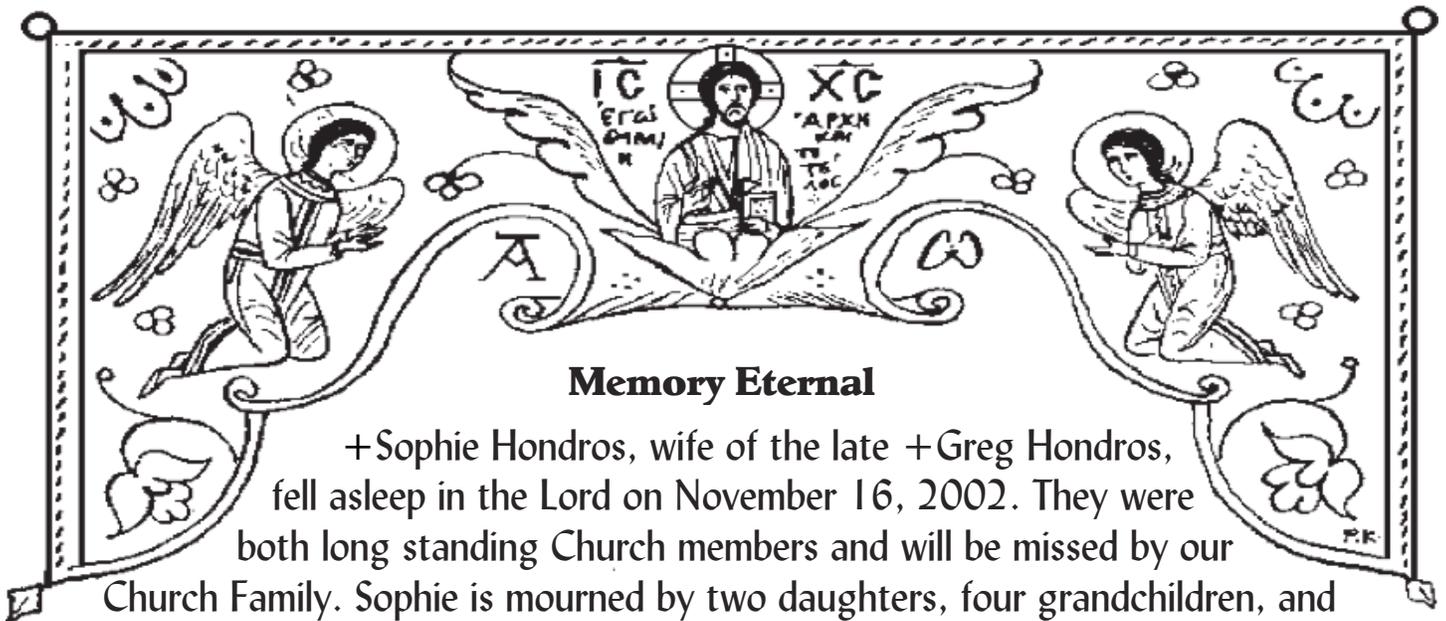
Following a luncheon break we listened to the inspirational words of Metropolitan Herman in his Hierarchical address to the assembly.

Additionally, there were reports given by various individuals concerning The Investment Committee, Cathedral restoration, Theological Student Fund, Metropolitan Council Summary, and the OCA Convention in Orlando.

Finally we selected sites and dates for the 2003 and 2004 Assemblies, and we elected the officers and trustees of the Archdiocesan Council, the Theological Student Fund and the Representatives to the Metropolitan Council. William Poist and Cindy Vasil Brown will continue to serve as Lay Vice Chairman and Archdiocesan Treasurer respectively.

The Assembly concluded Friday evening with a banquet dinner, the key note address given by His Grace Bishop Nikon. At the banquet, the parishes of SS. Peter & Paul and St. John Chrysostom jointly presented a portrait of Father Arthur Liolin to our Chancellor as a gift of respect and admiration from both parishes.

Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the host parish of St. George on Sunday morning followed by a brunch prepared by members of the host community.

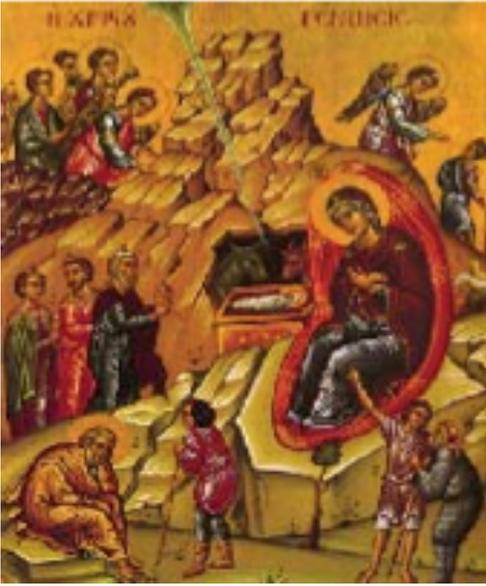


**The 40 day Memorial Service for +Sophie Hondros
will be on Sunday, December 22**

Holy Days and Name Days in December

- December 4 - Great Martyr Barbara
- December 5 - Ven. Sabbas the Sanctified
- December 6 - St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra
- December 9 - Conception of the Holy Theotokos by the Righteous Anna
- December 10 - Martyrs Menas, Blessed John & Angelina
- December 12 - St Spyridon the Wonderworker
- December 15 - Sunday of the Holy Forefathers; Holy Martyr Eleutherius
- December 17 - Holy Prophet Daniel & 3 Holy Youths
- December 22 - Great Martyr Anastasia
- December 24 - Nativity Vigil; Nun Martyr Eugenia & her Companions
- December 25 - Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- December 26 - Synaxis of the Most-Holy Theotokos
- December 27 - First Martyr Stephen
- December 30 - Virgin Martyr Anysia
- December 31 - Leave Nativity; Venerable Melenia

Nativity of Christ



Thus, our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, a city of Judea, whither Joseph had come from Nazareth of Galilee, taking Mary his betrothed, who was great with child, that, according to the decree issued in those days by the Emperor Augustus, they might be registered in the census of those subject to Rome. Therefore, when the time came for the Virgin to give birth, and since because of the great multitude there was no place in the inn, the Virgin's circumstance constrained them to enter a cave which was near Bethlehem. Having as shelter a stable of irrational beasts, she gave birth there, and swaddled the Infant and laid Him in the manger (Luke 2:1-7). From this, the tradition has come down to us that when Christ was born He lay between two animals, an ox and an ass, that the words of the Prophets might be fulfilled: "Between two living creatures shalt Thou be known" (Abbacum 3:2), and "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib" (Esaias 1:3)

~ Courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA ~
from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America web page



Troparion for Saints Peter and Paul

**O Leaders of the Apostles
And Evangelizers of the World
Intercede with Christ our God
To grant Peace to the World
And Salvation to our Souls**

