



SS Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church
9230 Old Bustleton Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19115
Church Phone: 215-676-3311

Pastor: Father Stephen Siniari
Rectory Phone: 1-609-385-3757



Church Bulletin ~ December 2007

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful
JESUS CHRIST: The Real Gift of Christmas
How — Not If

The way we observe Christmas reveals how well we grasp its tremendous reality. While some may ask if we celebrate Christmas, it is much more important to consider how we celebrate it.

How would you receive a very important guest who came at great difficulty and expense to help you in time of need?

You would anticipate and prepare.

You would go to meet him and welcome him with real warmth.

You would give him your attention and your thanks.

This is how Christ should be received, not by emphasizing earthly preoccupation of food, drink, and neatly wrapped presents, but by attending to and lavishing our gratitude on the heavenly God who comes to us offering the gift of life.

The services for the Feast of Nativity, with their poetic proclamation of the Gospel in song, open our hearts and spirits to the Lord. We are invited to "go forth to meet Him, our hearts filled with fervor and joy."

At Thy first coming to us, O Christ

Thou didst desire to save the race of Adam

When Thou wilt come again to judge us

Show mercy to those who honor Thy Holy Birth

In the Orthodox Church the Feast of Christ's birth has always been related to our anticipation of His Second Coming on the Last Day.

In reality, the way we receive Him now...

As the Word of the Father,

will determine how He will receive us

on the final and eternal day.

Our Lord has warned us about this, telling us not to be distracted by worldly activities:

As it was in Noah's day

so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

People were eating and drinking,

marrying wives and husbands,

right up to the day Noah went into the ark

and the flood came and destroyed them all...

It will be the same when the day comes

for the Son of Man to be revealed.

-- Luke 17:26, 27-30

Our feasts and customs are no excuse for us to avoid keeping watch for Christ's coming.

The vigilance we observe now
is the vigilance with which we will
welcome Him when He comes again in glory.

Our exchange of gifts on Christmas morning is no reasonable pretext for spurning the gift of Christ's own life at the Festal Liturgy.

On the day of His dawning the world,
He offers us His light.

-- Father Thomas Hopko



Special Announcements from Fr. Stephen

*** *Father Stephen* may be reached at **609-385-3757, Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 5 PM** or by e-mail: **ssiniari@covenanthouse.org**

Please remember that all confessions and consultations on Sunday mornings shall take place from 9 AM to 10 AM before the Divine Liturgy. Thank you!

Events & Announcements

Liturgical Schedule - December 2007/January 2008

NATIVITY OF CHRIST - MONDAY, DECEMBER 25TH - Divine Liturgy 10 AM

EVE OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD & ST BASIL THE GREAT - MONDAY, DECEMBER 31 - (*Tentative Evening Service*) Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St Basil - TO BE ANNOUNCED

CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD & ST BASIL THE GREAT - TUESDAY, JANUARY 1 - No Services at SS Peter and Paul

THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD & GREAT BLESSING OF WATER - SUNDAY, JANUARY 6 - Divine Liturgy, 10 AM

Schedule of Other Services

AKATHIST SERVICE - EVERY WEDNESDAY - 7 PM

Church News & Reminders



ICON PLEDGES - Can be paid at any time to our treasurer, James Schaeffer.

Please note: when returning your Icons, please return them to the treasurer, James Schaeffer. **All Icons and Pledges are due by the end of December.**

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING - To be announced (usually the 1st Mon of each month). All Parishioners are welcome to attend.

SPECIAL SERVICES - If you are planning to have a special service in the Church, please be considerate and notify either Father Stephen or the Church Committee one week in advance. When you are planning for a Baptism, Wedding, Funeral, or any other Prayer Service in the Church, please speak with Father Stephen in advance to determine if there is any way you can contribute to help the Church in helping others. Thank you. *Please note: if the services of the Church Choir are required, please notify the Choir Director, Christina Murianka, as soon as possible.*

NO SMOKING/NO CELL PHONES - Please remember that SS Peter & Paul has a no smoking policy in the building and that ringers on cell phones should be off during the Divine Liturgy.

The Joy of Giving

CASSEROLES FOR THE HOMELESS - In November: *8 casseroles were collected.* Disposable razors and individual/small tubes of hand lotion are still needed. Please continue to help feed the hungry. Frozen casseroles are collected on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month by Harry Halkedis. A \$10 donation for casseroles can be given at any time. *Thank you!*

COLLECTION FOR THE POOR - A special collection for the poor will be held on the 1st Sunday of every month. Please plan to give generously every month to those whose lives are less fortunate than ours. Donations can also be placed in the **Poor Box** at any time.

ORTHODOX HERALD COLLECTION - Collections for the *Orthodox Herald* will take place every 2nd Sunday of the month. Please donate generously.

DONATIONS OF WINE & OIL - Altar wine and virgin olive oil for the altar lamps are always needed. The name of the altar wine is **Mavrodaphne of Patras** and it is available at most PA State Stores. Please help make sure that we always have a plentiful supply.

PASTORAL FUND COLLECTION - Collections for the Pastoral Fund will take place every 3rd Sunday of the month. Please donate generously. "Pastoral Fund" donation envelopes are found in the Church foyer, on the left side of the glass partition, should you wish to donate at another time.

POP TAB COLLECTION PRGRAM FOR RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE - RJ (with the help of his parents, Debbie & Bob Krimetz) is collecting flip tabs from any aluminum cans to donate to the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. **A container has been placed upstairs in the Church Hall for the tabs.** *Help RJ help the Ronald McDonald House! Thank you and remember to bring your tabs!*

Ladies Society News

A MOST SINCERE THANK YOU to the Ladies' Society Members and to all parishioners who helped with their time, efforts, talents, and donations to make the Christmas Bazaar a big success.

Other Events at SS Peter & Paul

SS PETER & PAUL COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD - If you wish to have your name included in the Community Christmas Card, please see Jim Bachelor ASAP. This is a great opportunity to support your Parish! *The donation is \$10 and the deadline is Sunday, December 9.*



ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY - January 13, 2008 (Inclement weather date: Sunday, January 20) - Immediately following the Divine Liturgy. *This is SS Peter & Paul's single largest fund-raiser of the year* and is integral in funding our operating expenses. *Please make every effort to attend and please bid generously.* Absentee bids are gratefully accepted.

A HUGE THANK YOU OF APPRECIATION to the *Dr. Markides Lecture Committee Members and to all Parishioners* who worked so diligently to make this event an educational and truly enlightening spiritual experience.

2008 LITURGICAL SCHEDULE - The tentative 2008 Liturgical Schedule can be found on the last 2 pages of this Bulletin. The Schedule will be included again in the January and February Bulletins with any updates and/or revisions.

General Interest

ALBANIAN FORUM ON THE INTERNET (FORUMI SHQIPTAR) - has a section on: Komuniteti Orthodhoks. It has extensive offerings on Orthodoxy in the Albanian language. Ne gjuhen shqipe: per te dhena informative mbi Kishen Orthodhokse, klikoni "Komuniteti Orthodhoks" ne uebsajten Forumi Shqiptar me poshte:

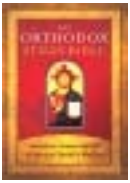
The url is: **www.forumishqiptar.com/forumdisplay.php?f=186**

ANCIENT FAITH RADIO - 24 hour a day *Orthodox radio station* providing high quality internet-based Orthodox programming, music, teaching, interviews, features, convert testimonies, conference recordings, and much more! The URL is: **<http://ancientfaithradio.com>**

Miscellaneous

INCLEMENT WEATHER INFORMATION - Please call the Church at **215-676-3311** to find out if Divine Liturgy is scheduled for a particular Sunday. Stephen Murianka is most diligent about putting that information on the answering machine.

SS PETER & PAUL CHURCH STORE - Open every Sunday at 9:30 AM (1/2 hour before Divine Liturgy) and after Divine Liturgy until 1:30 PM



Items available: Icons; Crosses (Baptismal, lapel pins, Georgian style, orthodox); Prayerbooks (Georgian and English); Censors; Unique and different wearing apparel; CDs and cassettes; Religious Books

*Sign up now at the Church Store to reserve a copy of the new **Orthodox Study Bible**, which now contains the Old and the New Testament.*

FROM ALBANIAN KITCHENS - Ethnic cookbook compiled by the Daughters of St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church, Revised Edition 2007. Includes over 120 recipes for: appetizers, beverages, soups, saladas, vegetables & side dishes, main courses, Lenten specialities, breads, pies, pastries & sweets. *Order forms available in the Church Hall.* Or, send a check or money order for \$15 per book to: St Nicholas Orthodox Church, P.O. Box 650, Southbridge, MA 01550

WEB PAGE/E-MAILS - SS Peter & Paul Webpage: <http://homepage.mac.com/alicaj17/sspeterpaulhome1.html>. New Bulletins can be viewed the Saturday before distribution by 7 PM. If you would like to be kept up-to-date by e-mail or to be removed from our "paper" mailing list, please send me an e-mail at: alicaj17@mac.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEWS ABOUT PARISHIONERS - If you have any items to include in next month's Bulletin, please leave the information in my wicker basket in the office. Or, call Alicia at **215-742-0492** or e-mail: alicaj17@mac.com. The deadline for the next Bulletin is Sunday, **December 30**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday **1/6/08**. Bulletins will be mailed to any Parishioners unable to attend.

Please remember to let Alicia know the names of our members who are ill or in need of prayer so that they can be included in our Bulletins.

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.

Parishioner's Corner



A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY is wished to the following parishioners and friends who are celebrating **December** Birthdays: **Deacon Perry Angelos, Donna Bacon, Zurab Bareladze, Pat Bergey, Marge Costa, Christina Murianka, Tatyana Nilova, John Palmerick, Edna Quirias, Eurania Quirias, Hope Vrato**

May God grant them all many, many years!

OUR MOST SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO TERRI & READER DANIEL DROBISH on the birth of their son, *Alexander Daniel*, on November 26th at 1:06 PM. Alexander weighed in at 6 lbs., 5 oz. and 19 inches long.

May God grant Alexander Daniel many, many years!

GREGORY VRATO, SR., is at the **John Neumann Nursing Home**, Room 726, at the intersection of Haldeman & Tomlinson Road (make a right on Tomlinson and the parking lot is immediately on your right). Visitors are welcome anytime from noon to 8:00 PM.

Please continue to keep Gregory in your prayers. May God grant him good health!

Let Us Keep Them in our Prayers

Please continue to pray for the full and speedy recovery of: **Gregory Vreto, Sr., Nina Horowitz, Spiro Costas, Matthew Murianka, Joyce Dorsey, Andi Steffa, John Palmerick, Thimi Daka, Al Rifkin, Sophie Bacon, Fr Stephen Siniari, Angie Kozlowski, Cathy Cappo, James Vesho, Margot Craig, Isabelle McGinley**

*** God knows the names and ages of all who need His love and mercy...

A Message from the Executive Director of International Orthodox Christian Charities, Constantine M. Triantafilou

"While shopping for your loved ones this Christmas, why not consider offering a donation to IOCC on their behalf? Your gift of love in the name of your loved ones will be a special present to them, and a big help to families and programs all over the world. We currently work in seventeen countries and depend on compassionate people like you to sponsor these life-giving programs: Supporting Small-scale Greek Farmers, Programs for AIDS patients, Family Training, Tools for Self-Sufficiency."

Mail to:

IOCC

P. O. Box 630225

Baltimore, MD 21263-0225

Toll-free Donation Hotline:

(877) 803-IOCC (4622)

Donate Online:

<http://iocc.org>

Happy 1st Birthday, Grace Sophia Vrato!

October 26th, 2007



**Dr. Kyriakos C. Markides at SS Peter & Paul
on Sunday, November 4, 2007**

The author of Gifts of the Desert: The Forgotten Path of Christian Spirituality and The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality was *kind enough to present a brief slideshow at our Church the day after his lecture on November 3 at St Katherine Drexel Mission Center*. For those interested, both books are available in our Church Store.



SS Peter & Paul Sunday School ~ Christmas 2006





Holy Days and Name Days in December

- December 4 - Great Martyr Barbara
- December 5 - Ven. Sabbas the Sanctified
- December 6 - St Nicholas Archbishop of Myra WonderWorker
- December 9 - Conception of Holy Theotokos by Righteous Anna
- December 10 - Martyr Menas, Bl. John, Bl. Stephen & Bl. Angelina of Serbia
- December 12 - St Spyridon the WonderWorker
- December 13 - Ven. Herman of Alaska
- December 15 - Holy Martyr Eleutherius
- December 16 - Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
- December 17 - Prophet Daniel & 3 Holy Youths
- December 22 - Great Martyr Anastasia
- December 24 - Eve of Nativity; Nun Martyr Eugenia
- December 25 - Nativity of Christ
- December 26 - Synaxis of The Most Holy Theotokos

- December 27 - St Stephen Protomartyr
- December 30 - Virgin Martyr Anysia
- December 31 - Leavetaking Nativity

The Holy Prophet Daniel
Commemorated on December 17

The Holy Prophet Daniel is the fourth of the major prophets.

In the years following 600 B.C. Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians, the Temple built by Solomon was destroyed, and many of the Israelite people were led away into the Babylonian Captivity. Among the captives were the illustrious youths Daniel, Ananias, Azarias and Misael.



King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ordered that they be instructed in the Chaldean language and wisdom, dressed them in finery, and had them renamed. But they, cleaving to their faith, disdained the extravagance of court, refusing to defile themselves by eating from the king's table and drinking his wine. Instead, they lived on vegetables and water.

The Lord granted them wisdom, and to St Daniel the gift of insight and the interpretation of dreams. The holy Prophet Daniel surpassed all the Chaldean astrologers and sorcerers in his wisdom, and was made a confidant to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Once, Nebuchadnezzar had a strange dream which terrified him (Daniel 2:1-6). He summoned magicians, sorcerers, and Chaldeans before him to interpret the dream. When they asked him what he had dreamt, the king refused to tell them. He said, "If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins." The Babylonian wise men protested that no magician or sorcerer could be expected to do this. Only the gods could reveal the dream and its meaning, they told him.

The king ordered all the wise men of Babylon to be executed. When they sought Daniel and his companions, Daniel asked that the king's sentence not be carried out because he could tell the king what he dreamt, for it had been revealed to him in a vision. Daniel was able to reveal not only the content of the dream, but also its prophetic significance. The king elevated Daniel to be ruler of the whole province of Babylon, and the chief of all the wise men.

During these times King Nebuchadnezzar ordered a huge statue to be made in his likeness. It was decreed that when people heard the sound of trumpets they should fall down and worship the golden idol. Because they refused to do this, the three holy youths Ananias, Azarias and Misael were cast into a fiery furnace. The flames shot out over the furnace, felling the Chaldeans standing about, but the holy youths walked in the midst of the flames, offering prayer and psalmody to the Lord (Daniel 3:26-90). The Angel of the Lord appeared in the furnace and cooled the flames. This "Angel of Great Counsel," as he is called in iconography, is identified with the Son of God (Daniel 3:25, Isaiah 9:6). In the first Canon for the Nativity of the Lord (Ode 5), the Church sings:

"Thou hast sent us Thine Angel of Great Counsel." The emperor, upon seeing this, commanded them to come out, and was converted to the true God.

Under King Baltasar, St Daniel interpreted a mysterious inscription ("Mane, Thekel, Phares"), which had appeared on the wall of the palace during a banquet (Daniel 5:1-31), foretelling the downfall of the Babylonian kingdom. Under the Persian emperor Darius, St Daniel was slandered by his enemies, and was thrown into a den with hungry lions, but they did not touch him. The emperor Darius then rejoiced over Daniel and ordered people throughout his realm to worship the God of Daniel, "since He is the living and eternal God, and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed, and His dominion is forever" (Daniel 6:26).

The holy Prophet Daniel's people were undergoing righteous chastisement for a multitude of sins and offenses, for transgressing the laws of God, resulting in the grievous Babylonian Captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem: "My God, incline Thine ear and hearken; open Thine eyes and look upon our desolation and that of Thy city, in which Thy Name is spoken; for we do not make our supplication before Thee because of our own righteousness, but because of Thy great mercy" (Dan 9:18). Because of Daniel's righteous life and his prayers for the people's iniquity, the destiny of the nation of Israel and the fate of all the world was revealed to the holy prophet.

While interpreting the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, the holy, glorious Prophet Daniel spoke of a great and final kingdom, the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Dan 2:44). The prophetic vision about the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24-27) speaks about the signs of the First and the Second Comings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is connected with those events (Daniel 12:1-12).

St Daniel interceded for his people before King Cyrus, who esteemed him highly, and who decreed freedom for the Israelite people. Daniel himself and his fellows Ananias, Azarias and Misael, all survived into old age, but died in captivity and were beheaded on orders of the Persian emperor Cambyses.

~ Reading and Icon Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~

Liturgical Schedule: January - December 2008 *(Tentative)*

- JAN 1** - (Tuesday) CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD; ST. BASIL THE GREAT
**** No Services at SS Peter & Paul ****
- JAN 6** - (Sunday) THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD & GREAT BLESSING OF
WATER - Divine Liturgy, 10 AM
- FEB 2** - (SATURDAY) PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD **** No Services at SS
Peter & Paul ****
- MAR 12, 19, 26 / APR 2, 9** - (Wednesdays) PRE-SANCTIFIEDS - 7 PM
- MAR 25** - (Tuesday) ANNUNCIATION - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM
- APR 16** - (Wednesday) PRE-SANCTIFIED - 7 PM *(last one)*

- APR 19 - LAZARUS SATURDAY - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM
- APR 20 - (Sunday) ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM - Divine Liturgy & BLESSING OF PALMS, 10 AM
- APR 23 - HOLY WEDNESDAY (HOLY UNCTION) - 7 PM
- APR 24 - HOLY THURSDAY (TWELVE PASSION GOSPELS) - 7 PM
- APR 25 - HOLY FRIDAY (VESPERS, TAKING DOWN FROM CROSS) - 3 PM
LAMENTATIONS AT TOMB - 7 PM
- APR 26 - HOLY SATURDAY - Vespereal Liturgy of St Basil, 9 AM
ORTHROS/PASHKAL CANON/LITURGY, 11 PM
- APR 27 - PASCHA SUNDAY - Agape Vespers; Gospel in many languages, **Noon**;
Easter Egg Hunt for Children after Vespers
- JUN 5 - HOLY ASCENSION THURSDAY - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM
- JUN 15 - PENTECOST SUNDAY - Divine Liturgy, 10 AM
- JUN 29 - (Sunday) SS PETER & PAUL FEAST DAY - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM
- AUG 6 - (Wednesday) HOLY TRANSFIGURATION - Divine Liturgy - 9 AM
- AUG 15 - (Friday) DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS - Divine Liturgy - 9 AM
- SEP 14 - (Sunday) EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS - Divine Liturgy - 10 AM
- NOV - (Saturday/Sunday - *To Be Announced*) ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S
FEAST DAY & His Grace Bishop Nikon's visit to our Sister Parish
****No Services at SS Peter & Paul****
- DEC 25 - (Thursday) NATIVITY - Divine Liturgy - 10 AM
- DEC 31 - (Wednesday) EVE OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD; ST BASIL
THE GREAT - Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St Basil, 6 PM