



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 2009

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

Gregory the Theologian on Christmas Decorations and Pageants

For the present let us speak of the festival which is called both Nativity and Theophany. For it is called both, two titles belong to the same thing.

For God was manifested to man by birth. On the one hand He is Being, eternally Being of the Eternal Being (God from God) above every cause and word, for the Word of God is before every word.

And on the other hand, for our sake, He is also Becoming, so that He who gives us our being might also give us our well-being, or rather that He might restore us by His Incarnation when we by our wickedness have fallen from our well-being.

The name Theophany is given to the feast in reference to the Manifestation (for in Greek Theophany means Manifestation of God) and that of Nativity is in respect of His birth.

This then is our present festival. It is this that we are celebrating today: the coming of God to man: that we might go forth or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God.

That putting off the old man
We might put on the new
And that having died in Adam so we might live in Christ
Being born with Christ
And crucified with Him
And buried with Him
And rising with Him.

Therefore, let us keep the feast
Not after the manner of a pagan festival,
But in a Godly way.
Not after the way of this world
But in the fashion of the world which is above.

Not as something which is our own,
But as that which belongs to Him who is ours,
Or rather as our Master's.

Not as of weakness
But as of healing.
Not as of creation,
But as of recreation.

And how shall this be?
Let us not decorate our porches
Or arrange dances,
Nor adorn the streets.
Let us not feast with our eyes,
Nor enchant the ears with music,
Nor enervate the nostrils with perfume,
Nor prostitute the taste,
Nor indulge the touch.

These are the ways that lead to lead to evil
And are the entrances to sin.
Let us leave all these things to the pagans.

But let us who are worshippers of the Word of God,
If we must in some way have luxury,
Let us seek it in God's Word,
And in the laws,

**And the scriptural stories,
Especially those which tell us of the present festival,
So that our pleasure may be like unto Him
Who has called us together today.**

**...For He who gives riches
Becomes poor,
For He assumes the poverty of my flesh
That I may assume the riches of His Divinity...**

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.

Holy Days and Name Days in December

- ✦ **December 4** - GreatMartyr Barbara; New Hieromartyr Alexander
- ✦ **December 5** - Ven Sabbas the Sanctified
- ✦ **December 6** - St Nicholar 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 17** - Holy Prophet Daniel & 3 Holy Youths
- ✦ **December 22** - GreatMartyr 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

Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God

(Commemorated December 26)

The Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos: On the second day of the feast, the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated. Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity - concretely and historically - is the humanity He received from Mary. His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.



Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

-- *Father Alexander Schmemmann, **The Services of Christmas** (1981)*

~ Reading & Icon Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~

Events & Announcements

Liturgical Schedule - December 2009/January 2010

- ✦ NATIVITY OF CHRIST - FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25TH - Divine Liturgy 10 AM
- ✦ EVE OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD & ST BASIL THE GREAT - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31 - Vespertal Divine Liturgy of St Basil, 6 PM
- ✦ CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD & ST BASIL THE GREAT - FRIDAY, JANUARY 1 - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM
- ✦ THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD & THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATER - WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6 - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM

Schedule of Other Services

BIBLE STUDY - EVERY WEDNESDAY - 7 PM - 8:30 PM in the Church Hall - Bible Study led by **Fr. Dn. Gregory**. The title for the Bible Study is "*Seeking the Treasure of Christ Throughout Scripture*." The study will use the new Orthodox Study Bible of the Old and New Testament as a base. The first topic of discussion will be the meaning of the story of Adam and Eve and the discussions will proceed with a journey through the Hebrew Bible.

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 Church Store. You will be given a receipt for all Icons returned. **IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RETURNED YOUR ICONS, PLEASE DO SO ASAP.** All Icon Pledges are due by the end of December. Please check with Jim if you are not sure how much you owe.

◇ **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.

Memorials: Any help in setting up and cleaning up from the families involved is truly appreciated and welcomed by the Ladies Society.

◇ **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.

◇ **CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING** - Monday, December 7, 7 PM. All Parishioners are welcome to attend.

The Joy of Giving

◇ **CASSEROLES FOR THE HOMELESS** - *In November:* 12 casseroles and 1 small bag of toiletries were delivered to the Hospice. Thanks to all! Please continue to help feed the hungry. Frozen casseroles are collected by Harry Halkedis. A \$10 donation for casseroles can be given at any time. Disposable razors and individual/small tubes of hand lotion are still needed. Thank you!

◇ **COLLECTION SUNDAYS** - May God bless you for your generosity!

1st Sunday of each month - *Collection for the Poor*; **2nd Sunday** - *Orthodox Herald*;

3rd Sunday - *Pastoral Fund*

◇ **OTHER DONATIONS: Church Library; Pop Tab Collections for Ronald McDonald House; Wine & Oil:** Altar wine (**Mavrodaphne of Patras** - available at most PA State Stores); Virgin Olive Oil

◇ **CHRISTMAS FLOWERS DONATION** - Please do not forget to return your envelope with your donation for our Christmas flowers. **Thank you for your generosity!**

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.

◇ **A REQUEST...** if you have borrowed any containers, trays, bowls, coffee carafes, etc. from the kitchen, **please return them as soon as possible.** These items are used for many of the functions held in the Church Hall and they are needed. *Thank you!*

Sunday School News

◇ **CHRISTMAS STOCKING PROJECT FOR CHILDREN IN ALBANIA** - *The Sunday School Children offer sincerest thanks to the Ladies Society and all the Parishioners for their help and support during the Hot Dog/Bake Sale to raise money for this most worthwhile project.* With everyone's great generosity, **\$700** was raised, the 2nd most of any parish in the Archdiocese, only behind St George Cathedral in Boston (a total of **\$5,794** was received by the Archdiocese). **Thank you to all!**

◇ **CARDS (\$1.50 each) WILL CONTINUE TO BE SOLD** to raise money for the Pastoral Fund. For questions, please see *Jim Schaeffer, Donna Bacon or Rose Shaloka.*

Future Events at SS Peter and Paul

◇ **CHURCH BOWLING FUNDRAISER** - To be held in **February** on a Sunday evening from 5 to 7 PM. Cost will be **\$15** per person (this includes bowling, shoes, ball, pizza, unlimited soda). The Church will receive \$7.50 per bowler. *Please spread the word among family, friends, neighbors, schoolmates, & teammates. All are welcome! A firm date will be announced shortly.*

◇ **SCREWTAPES LETTERS** (based on the book by C.S. Lewis) - **May 21, 2010, 8 PM** - At the Lantern Theater at St Stephen's Church at 10th & Ludlow. Tickets are **\$30** per person (with a possible group rate if enough of us go). You must reserve a seat by calling **David or Linda Biando** at **215-725-3797** or email: **davidbiando@live.com** as soon as possible. **Money for the tickets is due December 13 to David or Linda.** *People who have seen this production before have loved it and there are many spiritual parallels for us all woven throughout this play.*

General Interest

◇ **ANCIENT FAITH RADIO** - 24 hour a day internet Orthodox radio station:

<http://ancientfaithradio.com>

◇ **ALBANIAN FORUM ON THE INTERNET (FORUMI SHQIPTAR)** - Ne gjuhen shqipe: per te dhena informative mbi Kishen Orthodhokse, klikoni "Komuniteti Orthodhoks" ne uebsajten Forumi Shqiptar me poshte: **www.forumishqiptar.com/forumdisplay.php?f=186**



◇ **IN THEIR OWN TONGUE** - The first in-depth documentary to chronicle the fascinating story of the Albanian Archdiocese in America, beginning with the conquest of the Albanian territory by the Ottomans through the early immigrants who were a part of the historical Divine Liturgy served for the first time in the Albanian language through settlement in the U. S. It ends with an exploration of the current day and a look beyond to the future of the Church.

Available for immediate purchase in our Church Store!

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.

◇ **"DAILY BREAD"** - The Church distributes a daily email entitled "Daily Bread" containing scripture readings for the day and the commemorated saints. To add your name (or the name of anyone who would enjoy getting it) please forward the email address to the Church email address: **sspeterpaul2@verizon.net**

◇ **WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL LIGHTS** - Envelopes are available at the Church Store counter for special prayers to be said during the week in conjunction with the burning of the Seven-Day Votive Light hanging above the Royal Doors. Suggested offering: \$10, which will go towards building up our Pastoral Fund with the ultimate goal of supporting a full time priest.

◇ **SS PETER & PAUL CHURCH STORE** - Open Sundays at 9:30 AM (1/2 hour before Divine Liturgy)
Items available: Divine Liturgy Books, Icons; Crosses (Baptismal, lapel pins, Georgian style, orthodox); Prayerbooks (Georgian and English); Censors; Unique and different wearing apparel; CDs and cassettes; Religious Books. Also available: **IN THEIR OWN TONGUE**, a documentary chronicling the Albanian Archdiocese in America.

◇ **SS PETER & PAUL'S NEW WEBSITE** - **www.sspeterpaulalbanianorthodox.org**. We are working on combining both websites. If you have anything you would like to see up on the new website, please e-mail David Biando at **davidbiando@verizon.net** or call him at **215-725-3797** and he will post it ASAP. Suggestions are always welcomed.

◇ **WEB PAGE/E-MAILS** - SS Peter & Paul Webpage: **<http://homepage.mac.com/aliciaj17/sspeterpaulhome1.html>**. New Bulletins available online by Saturday 8 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 Alicia an e-mail at: **aliciaj17@mac.com**

◇ **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 email: aliciaj17@mac.com. *The deadline for the next Bulletin is Sunday, January 3.* Thank you! *Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday 1/10/10. My apologies for the lateness of the January Bulletin, but I will be out of town until after the New Year. Beginning with February, the Bulletins for the coming month will be issued the last Sunday of the previous month.* 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: Dn Perry Angelos, Donna Bacon, Marge Costa, Christina Murianka, Jeanette Napier, Tatyana Nilova, John Palmerick, Edna Quirias, Eurania (Elaine) Quirias, Hope Vrato

May God grant them all many, many years!

◇ **SINCEREST THANKS AND APPRECIATION** to Christina Murianka, Martha Murianka, Nina Iakimenko, and the Bible Study men for preparing the altar for the Lenten period.

◇ **A MONTHLY CHURCH CALENDAR** will now be included with every Bulletin for your information. There will also be a link online at the top of each webpage.

◇ **GOOD COMPANY & GOOD FOOD: HELP BUILD UP OUR PASTORAL FUND** - A new tradition has started -- serving a hot meal on most Sundays to build up our Pastoral Fund. If you have any ideas or are interested in participating or sponsoring a particular Sunday, please talk to Jim Schaeffer or Letitia Desloges. *Your help and support is needed to get this project up and running!*

◇ **A VOLUNTEER IS NEEDED TO DIRECT THE CASSEROLE PROGRAM** - Harry Halkedis is retiring in January 2010! *Thank you, Harry, for all your incredibly hard work.* We desperately need someone to take over this most worthwhile program.

◇ **VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED TO WORK IN THE CANDLE/BOOKSTORE ROOM** - Please speak with Joe Bacon or Harry Halkedis if you are interested.

◇ **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., Matthew Murianka, Joyce Dorsey, Andi Steffa, Mary Palmerick, John Palmerick, Thimi Daka, Al Rifkin, Sophie Bacon, James Vesho, Margot Craig, Eteri Okropiridze, Katherine Halkedis, Mary Ann Clark, Paulette Steffa, Alexandra Pana, Nicholas Desloges, Steven Yarrow**
**** God knows the names and ages of all who need His love and mercy...**



**Blessing of New
and Re-Elected
Church Committee Members
November 8, 2009**

**CHRIST IS
BORN!**

**GLORIFY
HIM!**