



***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 ~ March 2008*

## **Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful**

### **The Lenten Spring**

Finally comes the last day, usually called *Forgiveness Sunday*, but whose other liturgical name must also be remembered: *The Expulsion of Adam From The Paradise Of Bliss*. This name summarizes indeed the entire preparation for Lent.

By now we know that man was created for paradise, for knowledge of God and for communion with Him. Man's sin has deprived him of that blessed life and his existence on earth is exile.

Christ, the Savior of the world, opens the door of paradise to everyone who follows Him, and the Church, by revealing to us the beauty of the Kingdom, makes our life a pilgrimage toward our heavenly Fatherland.

Thus, at the beginning of Lent we are like Adam: Adam was expelled from paradise through food; sitting therefore in front of it he cried, "Woe is me... One commandment of God have I transgressed, depriving myself of all that is good; paradise holy! Planted for me. And now because of Eve, closed to me; pray to thy Creator and mine that I may be filled again by Thy blossom."

Then answered the Savior to him: "I wish not my creation to perish; I desire it to be saved and to know the Truth; for I will not turn away him who comes to Me."



### **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 - March/April 2008

PRE-SANCTIFIEDS - WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 12, 19 - 7 PM

ANNUNCIATION - TUESDAY, MARCH 25 - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM

PRE-SANCTIFIEDS - WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 26 / APRIL 2, 9 - 7 PM

PRE-SANCTIFIED - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16 (LAST ONE) - 7 PM

LAZARUS SATURDAY - APRIL 19 - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM

ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM - SUNDAY, APRIL 20 - Divine Liturgy & Blessing of Palms, 10 AM

HOLY WEDNESDAY (*Holy Unction*) APRIL 23 - 7 PM

HOLY THURSDAY - (*Twelve Passion Gospels*) APRIL 24 - 7 PM

HOLY FRIDAY - (*Vespers, Taking Down from Cross*) APRIL 25 - 3 PM;  
(*Lamentations at Tomb*) - 7 PM

HOLY SATURDAY - APRIL 26 - Vespertal Liturgy of St Basil, 10 AM; Orthros/Pashkal Canon/Liturgy, 11 PM

PASCHA SUNDAY - APRIL 27 - Agape Vespers: Gospel in Many Languages, Noon

### Church News & Reminders

**MEMBERSHIP DUES 2008** - Dues are \$115 per person and can be paid at any time to James Schaeffer, our Treasurer. *Thank you!*

**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. **All icons are to be returned by the end of September.**

**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING** - 1st Monday of each month, 7 PM. 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.*

**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.

## **The Joy of Giving**

**PASTORAL FUND/POOR BOX** - Please note: There are now 2 collection boxes in the back of the church, **the Poor Box AND a Pastoral Fund Box**. *Please donate generously!*

**CASSEROLES FOR THE HOMELESS** - *In January: 18 casseroles and 2 bags of food were delivered. 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 PROGRAM FOR RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE - RJ** (and his parents, Debbie & Bob Krimetz) is collecting flip tabs from any aluminum cans to donate to the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House. *Help by bringing in your tabs! Thank you!*

## **Other Events at SS Peter & Paul**

**POT LUCK LENTEN DINNERS & DISCUSSIONS - WEDNESDAYS, AFTER PRE-SANCTIFIEDS** (March 12, 19, 26 / April 2, 9, 16) - Please join us for Pre-Sanctifieds on **Wednesdays at 7 PM**, followed by our wonderful Pot Luck Lenten Dinners and spiritual discussions. Bring your favorite Lenten entree for all to share!

**COMMUNAL KINSHIP COFFEE HOUR - SUNDAY, MARCH 23** - It is our hope that we can carry on Isabelle's style of mixing with people and welcoming all to our parish. We will continue to have monthly community-building coffee hours throughout the year to honor Isabelle's memory and to help our community be more united in Christ!

## **Ladies Society News**

**MARCH 2 ~ HOT DOG & MEATBALL SANDWICH SUNDAY**, following Divine Liturgy

**MARCH 9 ~ LADIES SOCIETY ANNUAL LENTEN LUNCHEON** - Please join us for this annual event, following Divine Liturgy. *Donation: \$10, Children under 10 Free! Food donations gratefully welcomed!*

## Sunday School News

**SUNDAY SCHOOL** takes place each Sunday after the children receive Holy Communion. Please bring your children each week so that they may take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to be educated in our faith and to build friendships with other Orthodox children.

## General Interest

**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>

**ALBANIAN FORUM ON THE INTERNET (FORUMI SHQIPTAR)** - has a section on: Komuniteti Orthodhoks. It has extensive offerings on Orthodoxy in the Albanian language. They are divided into many themes, i.e. "The Birth of Christ," "The Church is One," a catechism and includes Fr. Thomas Hopko's entire Rainbow series.

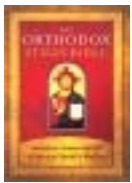
Ne gjuhen shqipe: per te dhena informative mbi Kishen Orthodhokse, klikoni "Komuniteti Orthodhoks" ne uebsajten Forumi Shqiptar me poshte:

Theurlis: [www.forumishqiptar.com/forumdisplay.php?f=186](http://www.forumishqiptar.com/forumdisplay.php?f=186)

## 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 (one half 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.*

**WEB PAGE/E-MAILS** - SS Peter & Paul Webpage: <http://homepage.mac.com/aliciaj17/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: [aliciaj17@mac.com](mailto: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 e-mail: [alicia17@mac.com](mailto:alicia17@mac.com). The deadline for the next Bulletin is Sunday, **March 30**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday **4/6/08**. 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 **March** Birthdays: Thimi Daka, Mary Dim-  
itri, Fr. Gregory Dudash, Debbie Krimetz, Claire Kutzler, Martha Murian-  
ka, Stephen Murianka, Mary Palmrick, Priftesha Margot Siniari, Diana  
Vesho, Kathryn Vrato, Steven Yarrow

*May God grant them all many, many years!*

**HOPE VRATO** had back surgery last week. Please keep her in your prayers.  
*May God grant Hope a speedy recovery and good health!*

**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!*

**ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY APPRECIATION** - A most sincere **Thank You** to everyone who participated in our most successful **Icon Pledge Sunday ever**, either in person or through absentee pledges. Pledges can still be made by contacting the treasurer, James Schaeffer or Stephen Murianka with the Saint's name and the amount. *May God bless you all for your generosity!*

A **"SOUPER" HUGE THANK YOU** to all who helped make **SOUPER Sunday** really super! Thank you also to all who contributed to the several boxes of soup/canned goods for the poor. A *truly special thank you* to **Joanne Johns and Sally O'Brien** for their homemade vegetarian chili and vegetable soup! Soup at coffee hour was a pleasant change and surprise, but even more wonderful was the communal outreach as parishioners co-mingled with folks they didn't really know, à la Isabelle style, all orchestrated by our very own Paulette Steffa!

*May God bless you, Paulette, for your most sincere efforts!*

## 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, Hope Vrato, Pat Bergey, Eteri Okropiridze**

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

## **On Kosovo's Declaration of Independence**

February 21, 2008

We greet the Declaration of Independence of Kosova with joy and prayers that justice has been accomplished for a long suffering people in what has been a sorely troubled region. We have watched with concern the saga of Kosova unfold over the decades And now we add our prayers to the many who shall work with integrity and devotion in the governance of the new state.

The journey to statehood has been a long and arduous one, replete with obstacles and misgivings, martyrdom and heroism as well as with hope and aspiration for a secure and sane way of life. The actual tasks have only just begun as Kosova faces the challenge of building up a society based on constitutional guarantees, human and civil rights and equality before the law for all citizens. In so doing, it shall secure international credibility and thus earn respect and confidence among nations.

As an Albanian Orthodox Christian, I pray that all the God-loving people and citizens of Kosova regardless of ethnicity or religious persuasion shall enjoy all the rights, privileges and responsibilities as are accorded to the citizens of Europe's new republic.

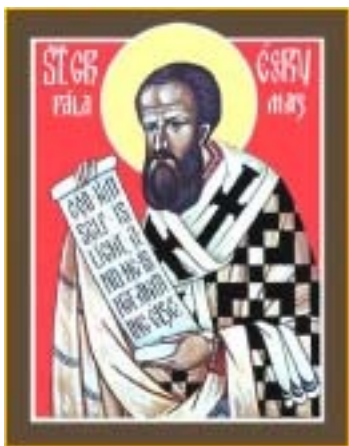
Sincerely,

Very Rev. Arthur E. Liolin Boston

### **Holy Days and Name Days in March**

- March 2 - Meatfare Sunday; Sunday of Last Judgment
- March 9 - Cheesefare Sunday; Forgiveness Sunday; Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste
- March 11 - St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem
- March 14 - St Benedict of Nursia
- March 15 - St Theodore Saturday
- March 16 - Sunday of Orthodoxy
- March 17 - Ven Aleksy, Man of God; St Patrick, Bishop of Armagh
- March 18 - Repose St Nikolai of Zhicha
- March 19 - Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria
- March 20 - Martyr Photina (Svetlana)
- March 21 - St James (Jacob, Iago) the Confessor, Bishop of Catania
- March 23 - St Gregory Palamas; Martyr Nikon & 199 Disciples
- March 25 - Annunciation Most-Holy Theotokos
- March 26 - Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel
- March 30 - Veneration of the Precious Cross; St John Climacus
- March 31 - Repose St Innocent, Metr of Moscow & Apostle to the Americas

## **2nd Sunday of Great Lent ~ St Gregory Palamas Commemorated on March 23**



This Sunday was originally dedicated to St Polycarp of Smyrna (February 23). After his glorification in 1368, a second commemoration of St Gregory Palamas (November 14) was appointed for the Second Sunday of Great Lent as a second "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, was born in the year 1296 in Constantinople. St Gregory's father became a prominent dignitary at the court of Andronicus II Paleologos (1282-1328), but he soon died, and Andronicus himself took part in the raising and education of the fatherless boy. Endowed with fine abilities and great diligence, Gregory mastered all the subjects which then comprised the full course of medieval higher

education. The emperor hoped that the youth would devote himself to government work. But Gregory, barely twenty years old, withdrew to Mount Athos in the year 1316 (other sources say 1318) and became a novice in the Vatopedi monastery under the guidance of the monastic Elder St Nicodemus of Vatopedi. There he was tonsured and began on the path of asceticism. A year later, the holy Evangelist John the Theologian appeared to him in a vision and promised him his spiritual protection. Gregory's mother and sisters also became monastics.

After the demise of the Elder Nicodemus, St Gregory spent eight years of spiritual struggle and then transferred to the Lavra of St Athanasius. Here he served in the trapeza, and then became a church singer. But after three years, he resettled in the small skete of Glossia, striving for a greater degree of spiritual perfection. The head of this monastery began to teach the young man the method of unceasing prayer and mental activity, which had been cultivated by monastics. In the 11th century St Simeon the New Theologian provided detailed instruction in mental activity for those praying in an outward manner, and the ascetics of Athos put it into practice. The experienced use of mental prayer (or prayer of the heart), requiring solitude and quiet, is called "Hesychasm" (from the Greek "hesychia" meaning calm, silence), and those practicing it were called "hesychasts."

During his stay at Glossia the future hierarch Gregory became fully imbued with the spirit of hesychasm and adopted it as an essential part of his life. In the year 1326, because of the threat of Turkish invasions, he and the brethren retreated to Thessalonica, where he was then ordained to the holy priesthood.

St Gregory combined his priestly duties with the life of a hermit. Five days of the week he spent in silence and prayer, and only on Saturday and Sunday did he come out to his people. He celebrated divine services and preached sermons. After he returned from a visit to Constantinople, he found a place suitable for solitary life near Thessalonica in the region of Bereia where he gathered a small community of solitary monks and guided it for five years.



About the year 1330 the learned monk Barlaam had arrived in Constantinople. He was the author of treatises on logic and astronomy, a skilled and sharp-witted orator, and he began to expound on the works of St Dionysius the Areopagite, whose "apophatic" ("negative", in contrast to "kataphatic" or "positive") theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and the Western Churches. Soon Barlaam journeyed to Mt. Athos, where he became acquainted with the spiritual life of the hesychasts'. Saying that it was impossible to know the essence of God, he declared mental prayer a heretical error. Barlaam entered into disputes with the monks and attempted to demonstrate the created, material nature of the light of Tabor (i.e. at the Transfiguration). He ridiculed the teachings of the monks about the methods of prayer and about the uncreated light seen by the hesychasts.

St Gregory, at the request of the Athonite monks, replied with verbal admonitions at first. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put his theological arguments in writing. Thus appeared the "Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts" (1338). Towards the year 1340 the Athonite ascetics, with the assistance of the saint, compiled a general response to the attacks of Barlaam, the so-called "Hagiorite Tome." At the Constantinople Council of 1341 in the church of Hagia Sophia St Gregory Palamas debated with Barlaam, focusing upon the nature of the light of Mount Tabor. On May 27, 1341 the Council accepted the position of St Gregory Palamas, that God, unapproachable in His Essence, reveals Himself through His energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the light of Tabor, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Barlaam were condemned as heresy.

Akyndinos (Barlaam's disciple) wrote a series of tracts in which he declared St Gregory and the Athonite monks guilty of causing church disorders. The saint, in turn, wrote a detailed refutation of Akyndinos' errors. The patriarch supported Akyndinos and called St Gregory the cause of all disorders and disturbances in the Church (1344) and had him locked up in prison for four years. In 1347, when the patriarch was replaced on the patriarchal throne by Isidore (1347-1349), St Gregory Palamas was set free and was made Archbishop of Thessalonica.

In 1351 the Council of Blachernae solemnly upheld the Orthodoxy of his teachings. But the people of Thessalonica did not immediately accept St Gregory, and he was compelled to live in various places. On one of his travels to Constantinople the Byzantine ship fell into the hands of the Turks. Even in captivity, St Gregory preached to Christian prisoners and even to his Moslem captors. The Hagarenes were astonished by the wisdom of his words. Some of the Moslems were unable to endure this, so they beat him and would have killed him if they had not expected to obtain a large ransom for him. A year later, St Gregory was ransomed and returned to Thessalonica.

St Gregory performed many miracles in the three years before his death, healing those afflicted with illness. On the eve of his repose, St John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. With the words "To the heights! To the heights!" St Gregory Palamas fell asleep in the Lord on November 14, 1359. In 1368 he was canonized at a Constantinople Council under Patriarch Philotheus (1354-1355, 1364-1376), who compiled the Life and Services to the saint.

~ Reading and Icon Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~