



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 2010

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

The End

These three days which the Church calls Great and Holy have within the liturgical development of the Holy Week a very definite purpose. They place all its celebrations in the perspective of End; they remind us of the eschatological meaning of Pascha.

So often the Holy Week is considered one of the "beautiful traditions" or "customs" a self-evident "part" of our calendar. We take it for granted and enjoy it as a cherished annual event we have "observed" since childhood, we admire the beauty of its services, the pageantry of its rites, and last but not least we like the fuss about the paschal table. And then, when all this is done we resume our normal life.

But do we understand that when the world rejected its Savior, when "Jesus began to be sorrowful and very heavy... and his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death," when He died on the Cross, "normal life" came to its end and is no longer possible. For there were "normal" men who shouted "Crucify Him!" who spat on Him and nailed Him to the Cross. And they hated and killed Him precisely because He was troubling their normal life.

It was indeed a perfectly "normal" world which preferred darkness and death to light and life. By the death of Jesus, "normal" world, "normal" life were irrevocably condemned. Or rather they revealed their true and abnormal nature, their inability to receive the Light, the terrible power in them.

"Now is the judgment of this world." (*John 12, 31*) The Pascha of Jesus signified its end to "this world" and it has been at its end ever since then. This end can last for hundreds of centuries, this does not alter the nature of time in which we live as the "last time."

"The fashion of this world passeth away..." (*ICor. 7, 31*)

--Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

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 March

March 7	- Veneration of the Precious Cross
March 9	- Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste
March 11	- St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem
March 14	- St Benedict of Nursia; St John Climacus (of the Ladder)
March 17	- Ven Aleksy, Man of God; St Patrick, Bishop of Armagh
March 18	- Repose St Nikolai of Zhicha
March 19	- Martyrs Chrysanthus & Daria
March 20	- Holy Martyr Photina (Svetlana)
March 21	- St James the Confessor, Bishop of Catania; St Mary of Egypt
March 22	- Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra
March 23	- Martyr Nikon & 199 Disciples
March 25	- Annunciation Most-Holy Theotokos
March 26	- Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel
March 27	- Lazarus Saturday
March 28	- Entrance into Jerusalem
March 30	- Ven John Climacus of Sinai, Author of "The Ladder"
March 31	- Repose St Innocent, Metr of Moscow & Apostle to Americas

~ Reading & Icon Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~

St Mary of Egypt (Commemorated March 21)

St Zosimas (*April 4*) was a monk at a Palestinian monastery who was disturbed by the thought that he had attained perfection, and needed no one to instruct him. "Is there a monk anywhere who can show me some form of asceticism that I have not attained? Is there anyone who has surpassed me in spiritual sobriety and deeds?" An angel of the Lord appeared and said, "Zosimas, you have struggled valiantly. However, there is no one who is righteous (*Rom 3:10*). So that you may know how many other ways lead to salvation, go to the monastery by the Jordan."



Abba Zosimas went to the Jordan monastery where there was a custom: on the 1st Sunday of Great Lent the monks went off into the wilderness, returning on Palm Sunday, each having his own conscience as a witness of his ascetic struggles.

Abba Zosimas walked into the desert for 20 days and saw a human form, the body black and the short hair white. The desert-dweller saw Zosimas approaching, and tried to flee. Abba Zosimas called out, "Why do you flee from me, a sinful old man?" The stranger said to him, "Forgive me, Abba Zosimas, but I cannot turn and show my face to you. I am a woman and am naked. Throw me your cloak so I might cover my body, and then I can ask for your blessing." The ascetic then turned to Zosimas: "Why do you want to speak with me, a sinful woman? What did you wish to learn from me, you who have not shrunk from such great labors?" He said to her, "O Mother! It is clear that you live with God and are dead to this world. The grace granted you is apparent."

The saint turned toward the East and began to pray. The Elder saw her standing in the air more than a foot above the ground. She turned around and lifted him from the ground, made the Sign of the Cross and said, "May God protect us from the Evil One and his schemes, for fierce is his struggle against us." The Elder fell at her feet saying, "I beseech you by Christ our God, do not

conceal from me who you are and how you came into this desert." She replied, "It distresses me, Father, to speak to you about my shameless life. I was born in Egypt and when I was 12 years old, I left my parents and went to Alexandria where I lost my chastity and gave myself to unrestrained and insatiable sensuality for more than 17 years. One summer I saw people on their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I am very amazed, that the sea tolerated my wantonness and fornication, that the earth did not open up its mouth and take me down alive into hell, because I had ensnared so many souls. I think that God was seeking my repentance. He did not desire the death of a sinner, but awaited my conversion. I arrived in Jerusalem and on the holy Feast of the Exaltation I tried to enter the church, but it some force held me back. I realized it was my sins that prevented me from seeing the Life-Creating Wood. The grace of the Lord then touched my heart. I saw an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos and I prayed: "Help me, O All-Pure One. Let me enter the church. Allow me to behold the Wood upon which the Lord was crucified in the flesh, shedding His Blood for the redemption of sinners. As soon as I have seen the Cross, I will renounce the world, and go wherever you lead me." I then entered the church and saw the Mysteries of God, and how God accepts the penitent. Before the icon of the Mother of God I heard a voice from on high: 'If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest.' At sunset I reached the church of St John the Baptist on

the banks of the Jordan. In the morning I crossed to the opposite shore. I prayed that the Mother of God would lead me where She wished and found myself in this desert."

Abba Zosimas asked, "How have you survived for so many years without sickness?" The woman said, "I spent 17 years in this wilderness fighting wild beasts: mad desires and passions. I suffered from thirst and hunger and a mad desire for lewd songs. At last I beheld a radiant Light shining on me from everywhere. After a violent tempest, a lasting calm ensued. From that time until the present day, the power of God has guarded my sinful soul and humble body. I was fed and clothed by the all-powerful word of God, since man does not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding from the mouth of God (*Dt 8:3, Mt.4:4, Luke 4:4*). When I remember from what evil and from what sins the Lord delivered me, I have imperishable food for salvation. Tell no one what you have heard from me, until God takes me from this earth. Next year, on Great and Holy Thursday bring to me the Life-Creating Body and Blood of Christ our God in a holy vessel so that I may receive the Holy Mysteries." The woman turned and vanished into the desert.

For a whole year Elder Zosimas remained silent. On Holy Thursday, he placed the Body and Blood of Christ into a chalice and went to the Jordan. He saw the ascetic standing on the far side of the river. She made the Sign of the Cross over the water, crossed the Jordan and said to Abba Zosimas, "Bless me, Father." He answered her, "Truly God did not lie when he promised that those who purify themselves will be like Him. Glory to You, O Christ our God, for showing me through your holy servant, how far I am from perfection." When the prayers were finished, she partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. Then she raised her hands to the heavens and said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." The saint turned to the Elder and said, "Go now to your monastery, and in a year's time come to the place where we first time spoke." Again she made the Sign of the Cross over the Jordan, walked over the water and disappeared into the desert.

A year passed and Abba Zosimas went into the desert to the place where he first saw the holy woman ascetic. She lay dead, with arms folded on her bosom, her face turned to the east. He saw something written on the ground: "Abba Zosimas, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust what is dust. Pray to the Lord for me. I reposed on the 1st day of April, on the very night of the saving Passion of Christ, after partaking of the Mystical Supper." Abba Zosimas realized that St Mary, after receiving the Holy Mysteries from his hand, was transported instantaneously to the place where she died. He said to himself, "But how can I dig a grave, with nothing in my hands?" Abba Zosimas saw an enormous lion standing by the saint's body. The lion came close to the Elder, showing its friendliness with every movement. Abba Zosimas commanded the lion to dig the grave, in order to bury St Mary's body and the lion dug a hole.

Arriving at the monastery, Abba Zosimas related to the monks what he had seen and heard from St Mary. All were astonished, hearing about the miracles of God. They always remembered St Mary with faith and love on the day of her repose. The monks passed on the life of St Mary of Egypt by word of mouth. "I however," says St Sophronius of Jerusalem (*March 11*), "wrote down the Life of St Mary of Egypt as I heard it from the holy Fathers. I have recorded everything, putting the truth above all else."

"May God, Who works great miracles and bestows gifts on all who turn to Him in faith, reward those who hear or read this account, and those who copy it. May he grant them a blessed portion together with St Mary of Egypt and with all the saints who have pleased God by their pious thoughts and works. Let us give glory to God, the Eternal King, that we may find mercy on the Day of Judgment through our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom is due all glory, honor, majesty and worship together with the Unoriginate Father, and the Most Holy and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Events & Announcements

Liturgical Schedule - March 2010/April 2010

- + PRE-SANCTIFIEDS - WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 3, 10, 17, 24 - 7 PM NOTE: NO PRE-SANCTIFIED ON WED, 3/24**
- + ANNUNCIATION - THURSDAY, MARCH 25 - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM**
- + LAZARUS SATURDAY - MARCH 27 - Divine Liturgy, 9 AM**
- + ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM - MARCH 28 - Divine Liturgy & Blessing of Palms, 10 AM**
- + HOLY WEDNESDAY - HOLY UNCTION,, MARCH 31 - 7 PM**
- + HOLY THURSDAY - TWELVE PASSION GOSPELS, APRIL 1 - 7 PM**
- + HOLY FRIDAY - VESPERS, TAKING DOWN FROM CROSS,, APRIL 2 - 3 PM; LAMENTATIONS AT TOMB - 7 PM**
- + HOLY SATURDAY - VESPERAL LITURGY OF ST BASIL, APRIL 3 - 9 AM; ORTHROS/PASHKAL CANON/LITURGY - 11 PM**
- + PASCHA SUNDAY - AGAPE VESPERS, GOSPEL IN MANY LANGUAGES, APRIL 4 - Noon**

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.*

◇ **MEMBERSHIP DUES 2010** - Membership Dues for 2010 are \$125. *Dues* can be paid at any time to James Schaeffer, our Treasurer. *Thank you!*

◇ **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, March 1, 7 PM. All Parishioners are welcome to attend.

The Joy of Giving

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

◇ **HAITI RELIEF DONATIONS** - The *International Orthodox Christian Charities* website is: <http://iocc.org>. Or mail a check to: **IOCC, PO Box 630225, Baltimore, MD 21263-0225**. 92% of resources go towards emergency relief and development programs. *Please pray for the people of Haiti.*

◇ **EASTER FLOWERS DONATION** - Please donate generously to defray the cost of Pascha flowers. **You may give your donation directly to Belinda Mentzer or to our Treasurer, Jim Schaeffer (please inform Jim that your donation is for Pascha flowers).** Thank you!

◇ **CASSEROLES FOR THE HOMELESS** - 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!* **PLEASE BRING IN AND GIVE TO HARRY HALKEDIS THE \$2 STOUFFERS LASAGNE COUPON IN THE BJ'S MARCH COUPON BOOK.**

◇ **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

Ladies Society News

◇ **LADIES SOCIETY MEETING** - **Sunday, February 28**, after Divine Liturgy

◇ **A MOST SINCERE THANK YOU** to all who volunteered their time, efforts and services and to those who came out in the snow and cold to participate in the Lenten Luncheon.

◇ **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

◇ **HUSH! PLEASE!** - Please, if you are upstairs in the Church Hall when Sunday School is in session, make an effort to speak softly so as not to disturb the teaching! Thank you!

Future Events at SS Peter and Paul

◇ **POT LUCK LENTEN DINNERS & DISCUSSIONS - WEDNESDAYS, AFTER PRE-SANCTIFIEDS** (March 3, 10, 17) - 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!



◇ **SS PETER & PAUL ANNUAL SPRING CLEAN UP/FIX UP DAY** - Scheduled for **Saturday, March 13th, 9 AM**. Rain Date: Saturday, March 20th. *If you are at all able, please reserve this time to come and help beautify our Church for Pascha. Thank you!*

◇ **90TH YEAR CELEBRATION OF THE FOUNDING OF SS PETER & PAUL - SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 2010** - Our Bishop, the Right Reverend Nikon, will be visiting our Parish that weekend to join us in this most joyous event. A luncheon will follow Divine Liturgy on Sunday, June 27. Anyone wishing to help, please contact Joanne Johns.

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

◇ **TEAM ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM & THE SUSAN G. KOLMEN RACE FOR THE CURE - SUNDAY, MAY 9, 2010** - If you would like to join St John's Team for this marvelous, fulfilling, life-saving journey, please contact Alicia at aliciaj17@mac.com for a forward of Donna Dimitri's email with all the information you need.

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); Censers; Unique and different wearing apparel; CDs and cassettes; Religious Books. Also available: **IN THEIR OWN TONGUE**, a documentary chronicling the Albanian Archdiocese in America.

◇ **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, March 21.* Thank you! *Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday 3/28/10.* 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: Yolanda Barenbaum, Katherine K. Costa,



Thimi Daka, Mary Dimitri, Fr Gregory Dudash, Debbie Krimetz, Claire Kutzler, Martha Murianka, Stephen Murianka, Mary Palmerick, Virginia Rubis, Priftesha Margot Siniari, Diana Vesho, Kathryn Vrato, Steven Yarrow. *May God grant them all many, many years!*

◇ **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!*

◇ **DONATE AN ITEM A MONTH CAMPAIGN** - In our effort to never run out of goods, we are continuing with the same item, **Paper Towels, for the month of March, but we are adding Ziplock Storage Bags**. Please bring a roll of paper towels (or more) and/or ziplock storage bags on any Sunday this month. Each month a different item will be requested, based on the priorities of the Ladies' Society. *Your continued help in this new project will be truly appreciated!*

◇ **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 Vrato, 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...

An Unusual Individual

Carrie Hooper lives in Elmira, NY. She was born blind. She has taught herself the Albanian language and speaks it fluently, but likes to practice it. If you would like to call her and give her your telephone number, she will call you - just to practice speaking Albanian. Her telephone number is (607) 732-6788.



Further, Ms. Hooper is a soprano with several groups in concert: the works of Bach, Vivaldi and Handel. She graduated Mansfield University with a B.A. in music performance. A Fulbright Scholar, she has studied in Stockholm, Sweden and holds a Master's Degree in German from the University of Buffalo. As well, she teaches German at Elmira College.

Her address is: 601 Robinson Street, Elmira, NY 14904

From: Fr. Arthur Liolin