



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

Pastor: Father Stephen Siniari
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Church Bulletin ~ December 2003

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you this sign: The Virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. --*Isaiah 7:14*

Ecce Rex veniet dominus terrae, et ipse auferet jugum captivitatis nostrae.

See! The ruler of the earth shall come, the Lord who will take from us the heavy burden of our exile. — *Latin Monastic Prayer*

Adorn yourself, O cavern.
Make yourself ready, O manger.
O shepherds and magi,
bring your gifts and bear witness.
For the Virgin is coming
bearing Christ in her womb.

— *Orthodox Prayer*

Hail Mary,
the most beautiful dove,
which carried the Word
of God for us;
We greet you with
the Archangel Gabriel saying:
Rejoice, Mary full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Rejoice O Virgin,
the glory of our race,
you have borne Emmanuel for us.
We pray that you will remember us
before the Lord Jesus Christ,
that He will forgive us our sins.

— *Coptic Prayer*

There is one God, whose Word and Wisdom made and ordered all things. God's Word is our Lord Jesus Christ who in these last times became human among humankind, that Christ might unite the end with the beginning, that is, humankind with God. — *St. Irenaeus of Lyon*

The Word of God was made human in order that we might be made divine. The Word displayed itself through a body that we might receive knowledge of the invisible Father. — *St. Athanasios the Great*

Father: He it is who comes to His own image and takes our nature for the good of our nature and unites Himself to an intelligent soul for the good of my soul, to purify like by like. — *St. Gregory Nazianen*

Events & Announcements

The Nativity Season

NATIVITY SCHEDULE

Thursday, December 25, Nativity - Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, 10 AM
No services the night before.

Thursday, January 1 (New Year's Day), Feast of St. Basil - ***No services at our Parish.*** Fr. Stephen will be away.

Sunday, January 4, The Great Blessing of Water

Church News & Reminders

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD - Patrons are now being solicited for the 2003 Community Christmas Card. If you wish to have your name included in the card, see Jim Bachelor or Yelena Alekseyeva asap. ***Deadline: Sunday, 12/7.*** Donation: \$10 (same as last year). Please support this worthwhile project.

ICON PLEDGES - The Church Fiscal Calendar 2003 has now ended. Please fulfill your pledges as soon as possible. Pledges are being accepted by George Kendro every Sunday.

RETURN OF ICONS - Please return your icons as soon as possible to George Kendro or tell him when you return them.

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2003 - MEMBERSHIP DUES 2003 - If you have not yet paid your dues for 2003, please do so as soon as possible. The Church Fiscal Year 2004 began October 1, 2003

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS - Held the 1st Monday of every 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.

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 - The Parish delivered 19 casseroles to St. John's Hospice on Monday, 11/24, in time for Thanksgiving. 12 of the casseroles were

made by our parishioners while 7 were purchased with donations. In addition, coffee, skim milk powder, tuna, and other food items were delivered. A sincere **Thank You!** to all those who helped.

Harry Halkedis will be collecting casseroles the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month. A donation of \$10 to purchase a casserole for the less fortunate can be made at any time. Please see Harry, George Kendro, Jim Schaeffer, or any board member to make a donation to feed the hungry.

Harry is also collecting towels, blankets and sheets for the homeless. Please help if you can.

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

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.

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.

OUTREACH PACKAGE DRIVE FOR HOMELESS KIDS - *Marcus Siniari* is continuing his collection of items to be distributed to homeless kids in Philadelphia through Covenant House. The drive will continue through the Holidays. A collection box has been placed upstairs in the Church Hall. Please be generous. Your donations are desperately needed.

The kids need small items like toothpaste, toothbrushes, lotion, soap, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, socks, underwear, gloves, etc. If you wish to donate cash, Marcus will buy the needed products. Please be creative and try to donate items that you think would be important to have if you or someone you love was living on the street. Thank you for participating by helping those in need right here in your own city!

Ladies' Society News

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR - Will be held on **Sunday, December 7**. The Ladies Society is accepting donations of cash or goods for the Penny Party. Please see any Ladies Society member (the list is posted on the kitchen door) if you do not know what to donate or can volunteer your time to help. *Thank you!*

MEETING - Sunday, **December 14**, after Divine Liturgy

Events

ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY FOOD DRIVE - is continuing

PHILADELPHIA DEANERY OF THE OCA - Meeting, Tuesday, 12/2

9TH ANNUAL EASTERN CHURCHES CONFERENCE - "Angels in Icons" - 12/13, 10 AM - 3:30 PM, St. Michael's Orthodox Church, 4th & Fairmount Sts., Phila., PA

Speakers: Archpriest Theodore Heckman (St. Mark's Church, Wrightstown) & Dr. Andreas Andreopoulos, PhD, LMS (University of Pennsylvania). *Purpose:* to help us con-

tinue our education in our Faith in Christ, and to help us put our preparations for Christmas back into Christ.

Registration & coffee from 9:30 AM. Morning session, lunch, afternoon session, discussion. *Registration:* Adults, \$20; Youth & Sr. Citizens, \$15. Please mail to: Eastern Churches Conference, PO Box 85, Folcroft, PA 19032. Last minute registration available at door. If you can't afford it, come anyway -- no one turned away!

More Info: Call Fr. John Udics at 610-237-6985 or e-mail john.udics@verizon.net. For last minute info call St. Michael's at 215-627-6148.

FR. HECKMAN WILL BE SPEAKING AGAIN - 12/14, at St. Herman of Alaska Orthodox Church (1855 Middletown Rd., Gradyville, PA). See the flyer on the bulletin board in the Church Hall for additional information.

PHILADELPHIA DEANERY ADVENT LECTURE - "Christ & the Fulfillment of Prophecies" - 12/15, 5 PM at St. Stephen's Church

PHILADELPHIA CLERGY BROTHERHOOD - 12/17, Meeting, St. Demetrios Church, Upper Darby

Miscellaneous

CHILDREN'S NAMES/E-MAILS - The Bishop has requested a complete list of our Members and non-Members. Unfortunately, our data at this time does not include children's names or e-mails. Please check with Alicia to see if she needs this information from you. There are forms upstairs in the Church Hall for listing children's names and/or e-mails. Thank you for your cooperation.

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 (just click on the tip link "**Church Bulletin**"). 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 see Alicia or call her at **215-742-0492** or e-mail: alicia17@mac.com. The deadline for the next Bulletin is **Sunday, December 21**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on **Sunday 12/28/03**. 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.

PLEASE RECYCLE YOUR BULLETIN ENVELOPES in either of the two wire baskets. Thank you!

Parishioner's Corner

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY is wished to the following parishioners and friends who are celebrating **December** Birthdays: **Donna Bacon, Anne Halkedis, Christina Muri-anka, Tatyana Nilova, John Palmerick, Edna Quirias, Elaine Quirias, Hope Vreto**

May God grant them all many, many years!

CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRIS & JAMES SCHAEFFER on the birth of their new son, Nicholas Thomas! Nicholas was born on November 7th, 4 lbs 14 oz, 17" long. God grant him many years! You can e-mail your congratulations to: JSchaeff159@aol.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO ANDI STEFFA on the the marriage of her grandson, Nicholas P. Orphanos to Mary Burke. The couple reside in Pennsauken. He is a Spanish teacher in Woodbury and she is a Spanish teacher in Cinnaminson.

ONE YEAR MEMORIAL FOR BILL KOUTRAS - will be held on Sunday, December 14

PLEASE KEEP THESE REMARKABLE LADIES IN YOUR PRAYERS:

Isabelle McGinley is doing very well after her open heart surgery in mid-November. She has been staying with her daughter Letitia through Thanksgiving and is hopefully home now.

Sandy Speero's neck surgery in early November was successful and she is in high spirits although she has to wear a neck brace at all times for the next few weeks.

Mary Palmerick is almost back to her old self again running around and helping out, even though she is still in a cast for her broken arm.

Installation of Bishop Nikon ~ November 22, 2003

BOSTON, MA [OCA Communications] -- His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, will preside at the installation of His Grace, Bishop Nikon as Bishop of Boston and the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese on Saturday, November 22, 2003.

Metropolitan Herman, along with His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa, Protopresbyter Robert Kondratick, OCA Chancellor and Archdeacon Alexei Klimitchev, will arrive in Boston on Friday, November 21 in preparation for the installation. On Saturday morning, the Divine Liturgy and Enthronement will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m. at Saint George Cathedral, 523 East Broadway, South Boston, MA. A banquet will follow at Anthony's Pier 4.

Consecrated Bishop of Baltimore and Auxiliary to Metropolitan Herman in 2002, Bishop Nikon was canonically elected to fill the vacant Boston See by members of the Holy Synod of Bishops at their fall session in October 2003. A few weeks earlier, delegates to the Albanian archdiocesan assembly had nominated Bishop Nikon as the candidate for the episcopal see.

Born in New York City on October 9, 1945, the son of the late Evans J. and Helena P. Liolin, Bishop Nikon was raised in a family nurtured in the Orthodox Christian faith and active in the



Albanian Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church in America. His father had served as lay chairman and founder in 1947 of the Diocesan Theological Student Fund. For many years, his mother served as choir director at the family's home parish of Saint Nicholas, Jamaica Estates, NY. His brother John, now deceased, served on the parish council of Saint George Church, Trumbull, CT, while his youngest brother, James, served as lay chairman of the Jamaica Estates parish and member of the Archdiocesan Council's Student Fund. His elder brother, the Very Rev. Arthur Liolin, is Chancellor of the Boston-based Albanian Archdiocese.

Bishop Nikon pursued his elementary and secondary studies in New York City, where he developed an interest in theatre arts and the biological sciences.



Tonsured to the Order of Reader by His Eminence, the late Metropolitan Theophan [Noli], Bishop Nikon studied at Saint Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, NY; Iona and Concordia Colleges, New Rochelle, NY; and the New School for Social Research and Political Science, New York City.

In 1967, he married the former Sarah Arthur, with whom he shared a ministry in which she devotedly served as choir director. He was ordained to the Diaconate by the late Bishop Stephen [Lasko] on July 5, 1969 and to the Holy Priesthood the following day. During his years of ministry, Bishop Nikon was well-known for his pastoral acumen and broad-based ministerial sensitivity and experience, having served as rector of Saint Nicholas Church, Southbridge, MA and Saint Thomas Church, Farmington Hills, MI. In addition to his pastoral ministry, Bishop Nikon served as President of the Greater Detroit Council of Orthodox Churches and Chaplain for the Wayne State University Orthodox Christian Fellowship. He also appeared on numerous live television and radio programs, broadcasting to the faithful and those interested in the Orthodox faith. Notably, he was a project coordinator for "The Voice of Orthodoxy," a radio ministry established by New England's Russian Orthodox Layman's League, and he served as editor of "The Vine," the Albanian Archdiocese's newspaper.

On July 25, 2000, his wife, Sarah, reposed in Father Nicholas's arms following a bout with cancer. His Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius presided at her funeral.

Prior to his consecration, Bishop Nikon pursued further studies at Saint Tikhon Seminary and Monastery, South Canaan, PA, where he was tonsured to monastic orders prior to his episcopal consecration.

Acceptance Message of His Grace Bishop Nikon November 22, 2003

Christ is in our Midst!

Your Beatitude, Your Grace, Reverend Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

The responsibility and Charge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to lead His flock; is at the same time a yoke and a great joy.

I am thankful to you, Your Beatitude, for the advice, counsel and mentoring you have given me over the past year and a half.

And, Your Grace, to you as well for responding to the spiritual needs of immigrants, especially those of Albanian background living in Canada. Their mission stations are operating under your Omophorion and loving care.

I am thankful for all the hard work by the members of our Archdiocese in preparation of today's celebration. I am thankful also for the help of our sister parishes in New England, whose members have worked with the officers of the Albanian Archdiocese, so that our common goals can be realized, but especially for today.

I know I can count on the prayers and support from this congregation, this flock. I will need the help of our community at large; I shall need help from you, my brothers and sisters in Christ. Your help and participation are essential to fulfill our mission as Orthodox Christians.

And today, I am asked to accept the flock given to me by God and His Holy Church. How does one accept? How does one prepare? We are mindful that we now stand on the shoulders of courageous hierarchs who have labored in this vineyard. Indeed, we all stand on the shoulders of the founders of Orthodoxy in America, on the shoulders of St. Herman of Alaska and St. Innocent.

From the early beginnings of Patriarch Tikhon, now St. Tikhon, a saint who had a vision of bringing Orthodox of many and varied backgrounds to this continent, of Metropolitan Platon, who ordained the founder of this Archdiocese, Metropolitan Theofan of blessed memory, to the priesthood.

We are reaping the labors of Bishop Raphael, now St. Raphael of Brooklyn, who ordained him to the diaconate.

And in recent decades, The Tomos of Autocephaly, gathered together His Holy Flock. Under the leadership of Bishop Stephen, we also, became part of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America.

Sot kujtojme edhe Peshkopet tane: Hiresia e Tij, Imzot Theofan Noli. Ai me beri nene-dh-jak kur isha i ri. Te gjithë ne kalojme pas gjurmat e tij, ne rrugen e Shenjte te Krishtit, per te miren e kishes dhe te kombit.

Kujtoj edhe Hiresia e Tij, Peshkop Stefan Lasko, se ai hyri peshkopaten tone ne Kishen Orthodokse ne Amerike.

But our calling was not simply to join, as if we were, some organization. Our Charge is to preach the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In this we are successful (if success is a word to be used in the life of the church). We now are successful, for the devil has and is still working even more diligently to separate, cripple and splinter the body of Christ.

Yet, we rejoice, for we are living a joy, a joy that is expressed and wonderful, when brothers dwell together in harmony and peace: One church. One head: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ himself, one living body of Christ: with many members of the body. St. John Chrysostom said of the church that there are many members of the body of Christ.

He stated then that he would put himself in the category of feet: referring to his travels preaching the Gospel. Spreading the good news.

Where would we place ourselves today? Where would you place yourself within the Body of Christ? As pastors, as teachers, as witnesses, as evangelists, as lawyers, as doctors, as businessmen, as housewives?

St. Gregory spoke of the diversity of the body of Christ during one of his messages in the midst of the Advent season. He used an analogy taken from the Book of Isaiah (xli: 18-20). He quoted the passages in the Bible where God said: "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the thorn bush and the myrtle and the olive trees, the fir trees and the elm, and the evergreen boxwood tree.." And he went on to explain the meaning of these words -- words that speak to us today. The cedars because of their incorruptible nature and strong perfumes are those who show forth wonders in their ministry and those whose hearts are so full of love eternal that no taint of earthly love corrupts them.

The thorns are those who pierce the hearts of their listeners with the message of joy eternal. The myrtle possesses the power of soothing, so that it binds loosened members: those who know how to comfort their neighbor with an affliction and temper sorrow with compassion and restrain with bounds that are becoming.

The olive means those who show mercy. The fir tree that soars into the air represent those who while dwelling in their earthly bodies in the church already contemplate heavenly things. The elm signifies those planted in the world amid earthly concerns yield no fruit, yet by their goodness sustain the holy men endowed with spiritual gifts. What are they doing but supporting the vine and its fruit?

The box tree does not grow high or bear fruit, but represents those by reason of the infirmity of their age are unable to produce good works, yet following the belief of believing parents, cherish a faith of unfading freshness.

The Holy Church is called to be a growing, blooming reflection of nature and each of us have our talents.

We must all take the time to consider how we are the body of Christ. How we are to execute our personal Royal Priesthood: how our individual talents are used to reflect something of Christ into the world.

The world is starving for Christ's peace to enter into their lives. We live in a world whose morals and mores yearn for a firm foundation in eternal truths. The world is starving for peace: peace of mind, peace of heart. We must give it to them.

But we cannot give them something they we ourselves do not posses. We must perfect our own relationship to Christ, keep our prayer life as central to our daily lives. Communicate with Christ so that we may offer Him to others by our words, by our actions, by giving our hearts and His love to them.

As diverse as the trees in the forest, as diverse as the body of the church is, we are, still, one church, one body, though its members are diverse. Each member of the body has a responsibility, a calling, a charge. But the responsibilities differ for each member of the Body. They are not the same. They are equal, but not the same.

Similarly, the eyes do not hear, the ears do not taste, the hands do not smell. There are many parts to the body of Christ.

For us, it is comprised of immigrants, converts, virtually every ethnic and national background in the world. We are Boston, we are New England, we are the West, we are the South, we are New York, we are Alaska, we are Washington, we are Canada, we are the Mid-West, we are Mexico, we are South America.

We are the numerous members of the Body of Christ on this continent, virtually on all continents.

What a glorious and rich history we and our brethren have. What a glorious, rich and meaningful history we possess. How dear our ancestry is to all of us, how we relive it, revere it,

talk about it, share it, o how the stories revolve over and over again in my mind -- how we began, the struggles, the disagreements, the reconciliations.

Today is a day for all of us to be especially mindful of our history. No, not our immediate ancestry, not our immediate history, not simply our diverse and beautiful ethnic backgrounds, but to contemplate how much more our common Orthodox ancestry must mean to all of us as citizens of heaven. We can contemplate on how much more than anything else, our tie and ancestry to Christ must be.

To talk about it, relive it, revere it, struggle with it, be reconciled to it, and to Him and most importantly, share it.

How clearly and loudly this mornings Epistle and Gospel speak to us on these very truths, on these very aspects of our faith. The Epistle to the church in Corinth, so easily could have been written today to us, to our Church, to the Church in America, to our Archdiocese, to all of dioceses.



Saint Paul reminded us this morning what we are called to do, what we are charged to do, what we have vowed to do; He reminded us that we are to lay aside our earthly cares and to make known the Grace of God, and the abundance of joy. Imploring us that we should share the gift of God's grace, according to our ability and beyond our ability. Receive the gift of fellowship, a fellowship we share with New England, the Orthodox Church in America and our fellow Orthodox brothers and sisters throughout the world. Giving ourselves first to the Lord, and then to the world, as this is the will of God.

The Gospel today reminds us that there is no excuse acceptable to God. We must follow him, leave the spiritually dead, follow Him and go and preach the Gospel.

Several excuses were given in this morning's message, and none were acceptable to Christ. His Charge is, follow me and go and preach the Gospel. No excuse was acceptable then, and no excuse is acceptable today.

Yes, we revere and honor our ancestry, but it cannot be the center of our lives. A delayed response to our discipleship is not acceptable. We must revere and honor our Holy Orthodox ancestry as well: more than anything else our citizenship in the kingdom of God. There is no other reason for our being, but to introduce the world to Christ, to reintroduce ourselves to Christ.

Yes, I accept this awesome responsibility. Yes your Beatitude, I accept this staff. Yes, Your Grace, knowing that you, my brother bishops and concelebrants, the members of the Holy Synod are there at my side to advise, guide and counsel, knowing that my brother clergy in New England, the Albanian Archdiocese, and our sister dioceses. You, the men and women of our Archdiocese, must work together in fulfillment of the Gospel command, to preach the Gospel.

I have every confidence that I can depend upon you, my brothers and sisters to continue to offer your time, your talent and indeed your whole selves to fulfill our mission as Orthodox Christians. When we make the yoke a lighter burden, the joy becomes greater in the same measure.

Indeed -- Christ is in our midst.

Holy Days and Name Days in December

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| 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 12 | - St Spyridon the Wonderworker |
| December 14 | - Sunday of the Holy Forefathers |
| December 15 | - 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 | - St Stephen Protomartyr |
| December 30 | - Virgin Martyr Anysia |
| December 31 | - Leavetaking Nativity; Ven Melania of Rome |

St Stephen Protomartyr

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, established by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called "archdeacon." He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ at about age 30. In the words of Asterias, he was "the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel."



Filled with the Holy Spirit, St. Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned St. Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. St. Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, St. Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death St. Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

~ Reading courtesy of OCA Webpage ~

Icon courtesy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Webpage



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**

