



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 ~ February 2008

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

Kreshma e Madhe +++ Great Lent 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Here are some things for us to contemplate together as a family in Jesus Christ:

1. Saint Seraphim of Sarov said very plainly: "He who does not observe Lent is not a Christian, regardless of who he considers himself to be, or whatever he calls himself."

2. Great Lent is about to begin. So, let's start at the end with some thoughts from the Diary of a Russian Priest, by *Father Alexander Elchaninov*:

I bid a sad farewell to the end of Lent.

In Lent:

How much good is accomplished with greater ease

How much evil looses its power and fades away

*What joy there is in observing those who pray, fast,
approach the Holy Chalice with devotion.*

However frequent the disappointments and vexations during Confession,

*However great the number of lazy, indifferent souls
blinded by sins and passions...*

*There are yet many who possess a keenly sensitive conscience,
who are merciless towards themselves,
who love God and thirst for purification.*

*Every Confession is also a lesson and spiritual gain
for the Priest who hears it.*

3. Why struggle and for what?

"But the body is glorious, the body is holy, so holy that God Himself became flesh. Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of the spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against the body, but for the body."

--Fr. Alexander Schmemmann/Great Lent

4. Final thought to begin our Lenten journey together as a community in Christ: "If you want your sins to be 'covered' (Psalm 32:1) by the Lord, do not display your virtues to others. For whatever we do with our virtues, God will also do with our sins."

--St. Mark the Ascetic in the Philokalia

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 - February/March 2008

PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD - SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2 - No Services at SS Peter and Paul

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

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

PRE-SANCTIFIED - WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 26 - 7 PM

Schedule of Other Services

AKATHIST SERVICE - EVERY WEDNESDAY - 7 PM

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 - **Please note:** The Icons are due back to the Church ASAP.

Icon Pledge Sunday is scheduled for February 10, 2008. *When returning your Icons, please return them to the treasurer, James Schaeffer.*

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 - *During 2007 our parish made 65 casseroles and purchased 43 casseroles for Saint John's Hospice. The Hospice feeds 300 homeless every day. Groceries, blankets, sheets, towels and toiletries were also delivered to Saint Johns. A huge thanks to those who made the above possible. Disposable razors and individual/small tubes of hand lotion are still needed.* Please continue to help feed the hungry. Frozen casseroles are col-

lected 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

"SOUPER SUNDAY" CANS DRIVE - SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3 - If you forget to bring canned soup (or any other canned food items) on February 3rd, the "*Souper Sunday*" Cans Drive has been extended to **Sunday, February 10**. Please leave your cans in a pew at the back of the Church. *Thank you for your help in feeding the poor.*



ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY - February 10, 2008 (Inclement weather date: Sunday, February 24) - 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.*

2008 LITURGICAL SCHEDULE - The final version of the 2008 Liturgical Schedule can be found on the final page of this Bulletin. *The only addition is that His Grace Bishop Nikon will be visiting with us for SS Peter & Paul Feast Day on June 21 and 22.*

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.

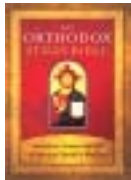
Ne gjuhen shqipe: per te dhena informative mbi Kishen Orthodhokse, klikoni "Komuniteti Orthodhoks" ne uebsajten Forumi Shqiptar me poshte:

Theurlis: www.forumishqiptar.com/forumdisplay.php?f=186

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.*

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/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

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, **February 24**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday **3/2/08**. 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 **February** Birthdays: Edna Bachelor, Joe Bacon, Janet Caparros (Bachelor), Margot Craig, Virginia Daka, Theodore Dementri, Ralph John, Andrew Quirias, Temur Sakhiazhvili, Lilly Shallapi, Andi Steffa, Greg Vrato, Sr.

May God grant them all 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!

OUR SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO PAULETTE STEFFA who just retired after teaching the gifted and talented for 30 years! She will continue to train teachers and act as a consultant to local districts. Her new address is: 220 Limestone Lane, Willow Grove, PA 19090. Phone: 215-360-4741

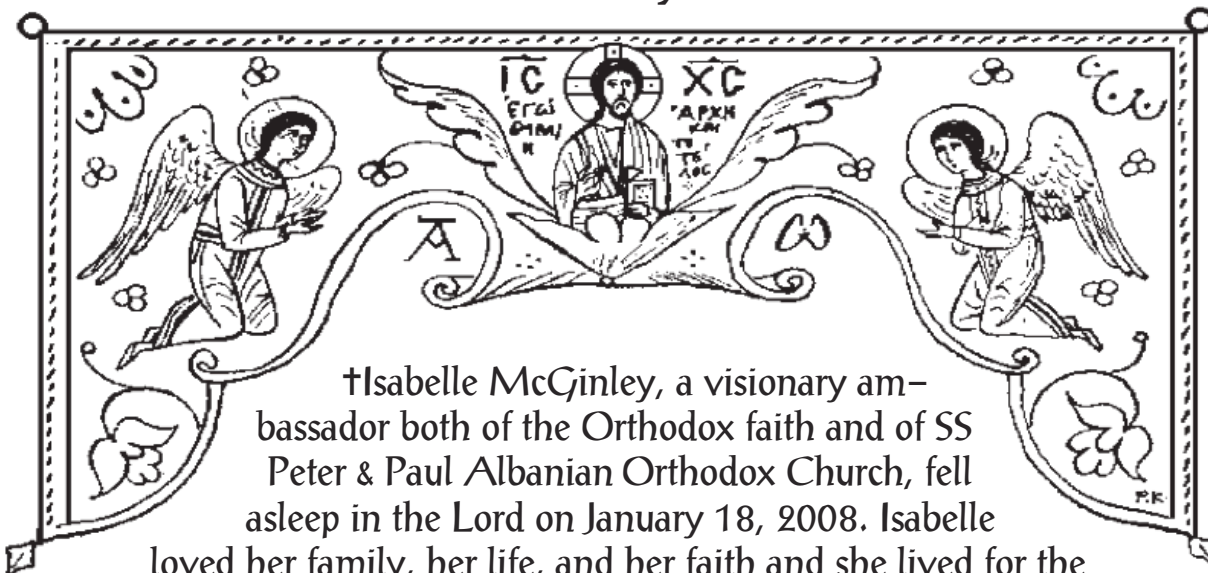
May God grant Paulette many, many years!

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**

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

Memory Eternal



†Isabelle McGinley, a visionary ambassador both of the Orthodox faith and of SS Peter & Paul Albanian Orthodox Church, fell asleep in the Lord on January 18, 2008. Isabelle loved her family, her life, and her faith and she lived for the Church. She lived her faith everyday to the fullest, knew and understood it, but was also always seeking to learn more, always spiritually curious. At all times humble and tradition-

al, yet always open-minded, Isabelle nonetheless spoke her mind and was not afraid to express her beliefs and stand up for her convictions. We knew her by her actions, her love, her sense of humor, and her hard work. There is no one in the Church whose life Isabelle had not touched in some way and who did not love her. "I look at this as another adventure in my life," she said of this new illness... Isabelle is now on her final adventure. She is lovingly remembered and immensely missed by family, friends, and church members.

May her memory be eternal!

The 40 day Memorial Service for Isabelle McGinley will be on Sunday, February 24

A Short History of Icon Pledges *By John Palmerick*

Albanian immigrants, like other Eastern European immigrants of the early 1900's, founded parishes which served as focal points for their community life. The familiar language, ritual, customs, and traditions helped them mutually support each other and ease their sense of longing for their homeland. To help finance the costs of establishing and maintaining the Church parishes, the annual custom of the Icon Auction, or Pledge, evolved from an oft repeated but inglorious event under Ottoman rule.

Albanians, along with many other Eastern Orthodox Christians, suffered many forms of persecution under Turkish rule, which lasted over 500 years, not ending until 1912. Orthodox Christians were persecuted as "Non-Believers", that is non-Muslims, and suffered at the hands of cruel and capricious governors who would arbitrarily seize Church property, such as the chalice, paten, icons, or anything else of value, including the Church bells. To retrieve the Holy objects, the hapless congregation was compelled to pay a ransom. This enabled them to continue practicing their Orthodox faith -- until the next time the local governor needed more cash money.

From the early days at SS Peter & Paul, the congregation re-created and revised this oppressive tactic, turning it into a positive practice -- using the former Turkish auction as a means to provide funds for Church needs. No Icons were initially presented to successful bidders. All bids were made on the name of a revered Saint or Feast Day. "Successful" or not, these funds were pledged to the Church.

The actual loan of a framed Icon print was a practice initiated many years ago by Gregory Vrato, Sr. We have now acquired approximately 70 newer Icons that are "loaned" to the highest bidder. Icons should be returned at the start of the Church Liturgical year, September 1st.

This is SS Peter & Paul's single major fund raiser. Please join us on Sunday, February 10, 2008, immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Let's make 2008 our financially best year ever by supporting our annual Icon Pledge!

Holy Days and Name Days in February

February 1 - St Bridget of Ireland
February 2 - Meeting of Christ in the Temple
February 3 - Righteous Godbearer Simeon and Anna the Prophetess
February 6 - St Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople
February 10- Zacchaeus Sunday; St Haralambos; St Valentina
February 11- St Blaise; Righteous Theodora
February 14- St Cyril, Teacher of the Slavs
February 17- Sunday of the Publican & the Pharisee
February 18- St Leo the Great, Pope of Rome
February 24- Prodigal Son; 1st & 2nd Finding Honorable Head of St John the Baptist
February 26- St Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza; St Sebastian
February 27- St Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn
February 28- SS Marana, Kyra & Domnina of Syria
February 29- St John Cassian

Venerable Brigid (Bridget) of Ireland



Saint Brigid, "the Mary of the Gael," was born around 450. Her father was a pagan named Dubthach, and her mother was Brocessa (Broiseach), one of his slaves.

Even as a child, she was known for her compassion for the poor and would give away food, clothing, and even her father's possessions. One day he took Brigid to the king's court, leaving her outside. He asked the king to buy his daughter from him, since her excessive generosity made her too expensive. The king asked to see the girl, so Dubthach led him outside just in time to see her give away her father's sword to a beggar. This sword had been presented to Dubthach by the king, who said, "I cannot buy a girl who holds us so cheap."

St Brigid received monastic tonsure and established a monastery on land given to her by the King. The land was called Cill Dara (Kildare), or "the church of the oak." This was the beginning of women's cenobitic monasticism in Ireland.

The miracles performed by St Brigid are numerous and the following is only one example: One evening the holy abbess was sitting with the blind nun Dara. From sunset to sunrise they spoke of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the love of Christ. St Brigid was struck by the beauty of the earth and sky in the morning light. Realizing that Sister Dara was unable to appreciate this beauty, she prayed and made the Sign of the Cross over Dara's eyes. The blind nun's eyes were opened and she saw the sun in the east, and the trees and flowers sparkling with dew. She looked for a while, then turned to St Brigid and said, "Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the world is visible to the eyes, then God is seen less clearly by the soul." St Brigid prayed again, and Dara became blind once more.

St Brigid fell asleep in the Lord in the year 523 and was buried at Kildare, but her relics were transferred to Downpatrick during the Viking invasions. It is believed that she was buried in the same grave with St Patrick (March 17) and St Columba of Iona (June 9).

Late in the 13th century, her head was brought to Portugal by Irish knights on their way to fight in the Holy Land. They left this holy relic in the parish church of Lumiar, 3 miles from Lisbon. Portions of the relic were brought back to Ireland in 1929 and placed in a new church of St

Brigid in Dublin as the original relics of were destroyed in the 16th century during the reign of Henry VIII.

The tradition of making St Brigid's crosses from rushes and hanging them in the home is still followed in Ireland, where devotion to her is still strong. She is also venerated in northern Italy, France, and Wales.

~ Reading and Icon Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~

Liturgical Schedule: January - December 2008

- 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 21-22** - (Saturday/Sunday) **CELEBRATION OF SS PETER & PAUL FEAST DAY**
with His Grace Bishop Nikon; Divine Liturgy, 9 AM; *Parish Meal after the Divine Liturgy*
- 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** - Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St Basil, **6 PM**