



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: 856-616-0782



Church Bulletin ~ January 2003

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

When you were a child, before your feet had touched the ground, people who loved you carried you to the Church and you were Baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You were Baptized, Chrismated, and received into the Communion of God's Love. You were Baptized into the death and resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ. But what does this mean to you now?

It means you are part of a community and you have a purpose. You have been planted in the garden of the Holy Church and you will find in that Garden all that you need to work out your salvation in Christ by loving others. You were not left on the other side of the Sea when the people of God crossed over out of Egypt. Even though you couldn't walk or speak for yourself, you were not left for the pursuer to devour. You were not abandoned by the Shepherd and made prey to the wolf of souls. Someone cared for you when you could not care for yourself.

And now a gradual Epiphany is occurring in your life. You are beginning to feel the weight of the words that were chanted when the Priest led your Godparents around the Baptismal font, "As many as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Jesus Christ."

In another translation of these words from Saint Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia we read: "All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes."

And so now you are beginning to see the importance of these "new clothes". You are starting to realize they are the clothes you will wear on that final journey. You now want to be a child of faith, a child of God. But you also see that you have neglected your baptismal garment. Your uniform is soiled and in tatters. You have not risen in rank. You have won no medals or commendations. By your cynicism and bitter worldly attitude, you may even have prevented others from carrying out the work to which God has called all who have been baptized. Perhaps even your own family, children, or friends. You have willfully remained uninvolved in the unseen warfare, the spiritual combat. You have not permitted yourself the truth. You have accepted something in its place and turned the eyes of your soul away from the true purpose God has intended for His community and your part in the work of His garden. You have robbed your life of meaning. What will you do?

Don't be deceived into believing it's too late. But why shouldn't I despair? Because when you were a child, before you could walk or speak for yourself, before your feet touched the ground, Someone loved you... In a place before time began to measure change, in an eternity where time was not, two Theophanies were provided for, two occasions where God would reveal His goodness and His love.

"In the running waters of the Jordan River, on this day the Lord of all cries to John: be not afraid and hesitate not to baptize Me, for I am come to save Adam, the first-formed man." (Kontakion of the Forefeast) This is the first manifestation of God.

The actions of your baptismal day have gone deep within your very being like snow melting into the earth. And now this Epiphany, this springtime of your soul is bringing forth the good fruit of repentance. Make the sign of the Cross and take up your work. Your uniform will begin to shine from within and by it He will recognize you at His second and final Theophany when He comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Events & Announcements

The Nativity Season

GREAT BLESSING OF THE WATER - *Sunday, January 19 - 2 PM.* - Sponsored by St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church on behalf of the Philadelphia Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood. There is a luncheon afterwards by reservation only: \$8 for adults and \$5 for children. For reservations and details, please call **Father Vincent** at **215-635-0509**.

Church News & Reminders

ICON PLEDGES - If you have an outstanding Icon Pledge from 2002, please remember to fulfill your pledge by bringing in any amounts due on your pledge. See George Kendro if you are unsure of how much you still owe. Also, if you still have any Icons in your home, please return them to George Kendro as soon as possible.

ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY 2003 was a big success! A huge **Thank you** to all those who participated! At the last tally, over \$12,000 was raised by Church members. Pledges can still be made by contacting George Kendro, the treasurer, or Stephen Murianka with the Saint's name and the amount. Also, anyone still wishing to make a Christmas donation can do so by seeing George.

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2003 - Dues have been raised to \$100 per person and they can be paid starting now.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS - Held the 1st Monday of every month, 7 PM. All Parishioners are welcome to attend.

CHURCH ENVELOPES for Weekly Donations are now available for pick up in the office. Please pick yours up as soon as possible.

The Joy of Giving

CASSEROLES FOR THE HOMELESS - Let us continue our tradition of giving. Please bring in your casseroles on any Sunday and give them to **Debbie Krimetz**. Recipes and pans are available in the hall. Debbie is also accepting \$10 donations and she will buy the casseroles herself. Thank you, **Debbie and Bob**, for your time and effort! A sincere **thank you** to everyone who donated casseroles. *Debbie and Bob delivered 22 casseroles to St John's Hospice for Christmas.*

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

Events

66TH ANNUAL NOVOGODNY BALL is being held at the Raddison Hotel in Northeast Philadelphia on Saturday, **January 25, 2003**. For reservations, please see **Stephen Murianka**.

Miscellaneous

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, January 26**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on **Sunday 2/2/03**. 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.

Parishioner's Corner

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY is wished to the following parishioners and friends who are celebrating **January** Birthdays: **Lyudmila Chervinchik, Connie Douris, Kakhaber Okropiridze, and Vicki Steffa**

May God grant them all many, many years!

A HUGE "THANK YOU" to parishioners who volunteered with the decorating of the Church for Christmas and to all those who donated money for the tree and for the flowers.

ANOTHER HUGE "THANK YOU" to **Andi** and **Paulette Steffa** for their fund-raising efforts for the **Pastoral Fund**. The Pastoral Fund was established to eventually provide a full-time salary for a Priest at SS. Peter and Paul.

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 Saints Peter and 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 50 newer Icons (laminated prints on wood) that are loaned to the highest bidder. It was decided at the most recent Church Council meeting that Icons would be returned at the same time as the start of the Church Liturgical year, September 1st.

We trust this will give you some background on our parish’s single major fund raiser and ask that you join us on Sunday, January 12th, 2003, immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Let’s make 2003 our financially best year ever by supporting our annual Icon Pledge!

A Few Words about Icon Pledges **by Stephen Murianka**

The origin of the tradition of the Icon Pledge in the Albanian Orthodox Church has been discussed many times in our parish. The purpose of my writing is not to repeat this, but to make an analogy between our Icon Pledge and another tradition known universally throughout the Orthodox Church. I am speaking of the tradition of Stewardship.

Stewardship has often been referred to as the giving of time, talents, and treasure. All of which, when made to the Church with the proper spirit, are truly blessings to the parish community and to the benefactor.

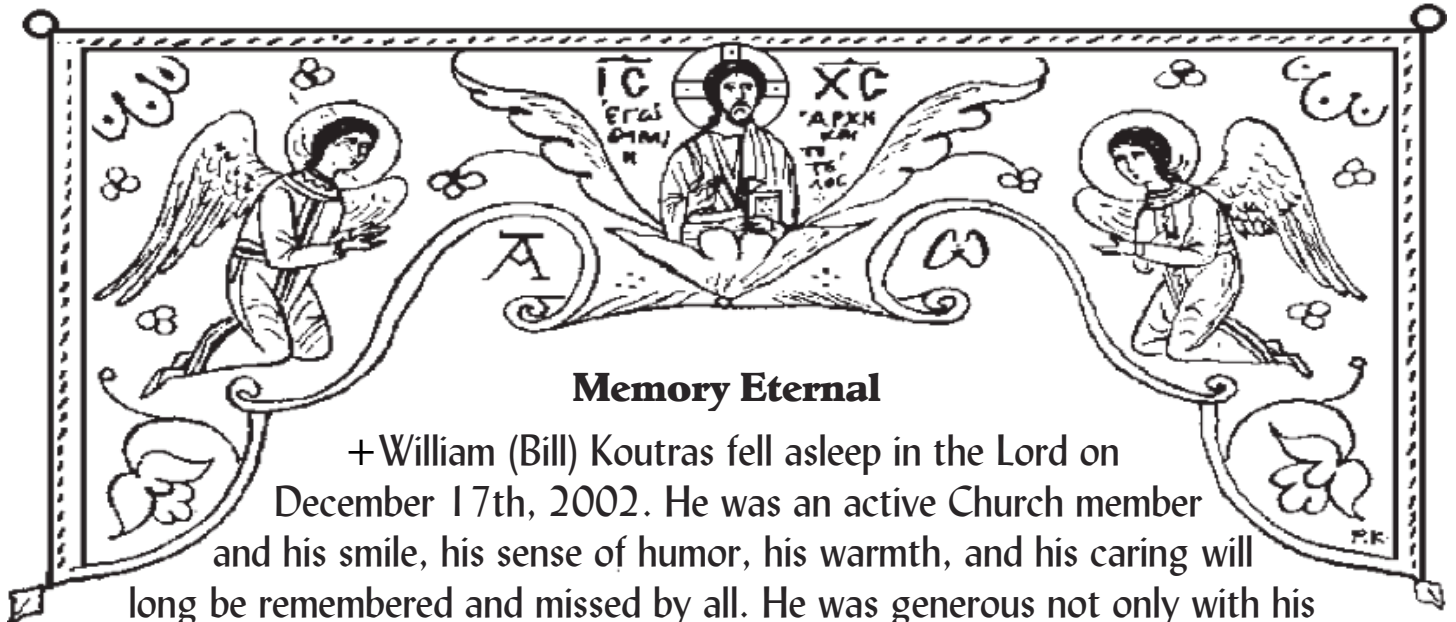
In last month’s newsletter, I mentioned a few words about “dues”. This term is really inappropriate to describe what, in our parish, is the minimum commitment to support our hierarchical structure which is essential in our Orthodox Church tradition.

However, for the sake of understanding I mention our “dues” system to differentiate between it and the icon pledges which serve as the vehicle in our parish stewardship system. The financial commitment of stewardship in the form of our icon pledges is necessary for us to address the ongoing needs of the community. There is much that needs to be done and could be done if the support of the members is bountiful. It is important to understand, however, that the amount of support should not overshadow the proper spirit of the heart in giving. Christ teaches this proper spirit to us in the story of the poor widow (Mark 12: 41-44).

It is my prayer that on Icon Pledge Sunday, everyone will participate in supporting the works of

our parish and do so in the proper spirit. A pledge need not be the highest amount for a particular Saint in order to be made and fulfilled. A stewardship pledge of any amount can be made by speaking with the Church Treasurer.

I invite everyone to participate in the Icon Pledge after the conclusion of Divine Liturgy on January 12th, 2003, and then remain and share in the complimentary luncheon that will follow.



Memory Eternal

+William (Bill) Koutras fell asleep in the Lord on December 17th, 2002. He was an active Church member and his smile, his sense of humor, his warmth, and his caring will

long be remembered and missed by all. He was generous not only with his money, but also with his time and labor for any family member, friend, or Church member in need. Bill had many friends from all walks of life — from Church, from work, from sports, and from the Armed Services. Bill is mourned by brother Alex and sister Cecilia; by nieces and nephews Diane, Ted, Lisa, Alex, and Jeff; by great-nieces and great-nephews Lauren, Alex, Christie, Nicholas, Eric, Alexander, Christopher, Ryan, and Brett. He is remembered lovingly by all those whose lives he touched.



**The 40 day Memorial Service for +Bill Koutras
will be on Sunday, January 26**

Holy Days and Name Days in January

- January 1 - Circumcision of Christ; St Basil the Great
- January 2 - St Seraphim of Sarov
- January 6 - Theophany of Christ

- January 7 - Synaxis of St John the Baptist
- January 10 - St Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa; St Theophan the Recluse
- January 11 - St Theodosius the Great
- January 12 - St Save I, Archbishop of Serbia; Martyr Tatiana of Rome
- January 14 - St Nina of Georgia, Equal-to-the-Apostles
- January 17 - St Anthony the Great, Founder of Monasticism
- January 18 - St Athanasius the Great; St Cyril of Alexandria
- January 19 - St Macarius the Great; St Mark, Archbishop of Ephesus
- January 21 - St Maximus the Confessor
- January 23 - Martyr Clement of Ancyra; Martyr Agathangel
- January 24 - St Xenia of Rome; Blessed Xenia of St Petersburg
- January 25 - St Gregory the Theologian
- January 26 - St David of Georgia
- January 28 - St Ephraim the Syrian; St Isaac the Syrian
- January 30 - The Three Hierarchs: St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian, St John Chrysostom

Theophany of Christ



About the beginning of our Lord's 30th year, John the Forerunner, who was some 6 months older than Our Savior according to the flesh, and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then Our Savior also came from Galilee to the Jordan, and sought and received baptism though He was the Master and John was but a servant. Whereupon, there came to pass those marvelous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized and the voice was heard from the Heavens bearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9- 11; Luke 3:1-22). From

these events, the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," that is, the divine manifestation, God's appearance among men. On this venerable day the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth also began the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

~ Courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA ~
from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America web page



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**

