



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

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Church Bulletin ~ January 2008

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

On God and Money

Excerpts from a sermon delivered October 21, 2007, by Fr David Fox

(Reprinted with permission from Fr David Fox)

Do we wish to know God? Then we have to consider what we do with our money. Many times in the Gospels, our Lord links our salvation to how we use our money. Judas Isacariot betrayed the Lord for money. A tax collector is saved because he gave half his money to the poor. A widow is blessed because she gave a penny but it was all she had. In today's Gospel about the Rich Man and Lazarus the point is perfectly clear: someday each of us will be judged by how we have used our money in this life.

Several months ago somebody gave me a Sunday bulletin that had many mistakes circled in red ink. "Fr. David, look at all these mistakes in the bulletin, this is embarrassing: think how we look to people who visit our church." At first, I felt embarrassed too. But a little while after that I heard a report done by our stewardship committee. It was eye opening. The report said that 60% of us at St. Nicholas Church give less than \$300 a year to support this Church. This is \$300 a year to pay for a Bishop, a priest, a secretary, a custodian, our seminaries, money for the poor, the church building, heat, Sunday school supplies for the children, and of course, church bulletins. Consider this for one moment: How much do our television(s) cost? How much we spend to go out to eat? Consider how much we pay to go to the dentist just once or even a plumber to come and fix our toilets, and compare this with the \$300 that most of us give to the Church for an entire year. This is less than \$1/day and not even half of what it actually takes to cover the current costs of St. Nicholas Church. Today, I am thankful for that bulletin with all the mistakes because it is a tool to help us look at ourselves, and to ask: what do we expect? We know the saying: "You get what you pay for." The Lord said, "Where your treasure is, there is your heart also." So if we compare how much we give to the Church vs. what we give for many other things in life, what does that tell us about the treasure of our hearts?

This may feel awkward for the priest to be saying this. We priests are tempted to feel as if we are putting our hat in our hand and begging for money. Shame on us priests! Because it's not about us at all!! Priests come and go. How much we give to the Church is about us, it is about how we value our own soul. The Lord said, "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" and "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?" I once heard someone say, "If you want to know the true theology of a Church, do not look at their Bibles or Liturgies: look at their financial statements." What are our financial statements telling us about what priority we are placing our own souls?

My calling as priest is not to be a financial expert. Others in our parish have this calling. These brothers tell us that it takes \$700 a year from each family to cover the costs of St. Nicholas Church. This is less than \$2 a day. If we are not giving at least \$700 a year to the St. Nicholas parish, we have to understand that somebody else is paying our share, that we are on a kind of 'welfare.' I am not begging you for money: I am asking

each family of this parish to invest a little less than \$2 a day collectively in their souls. I do not believe that this is too much, certainly not to most of us.

May the Lord bless our giving to His Holy Church, and make us worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Events & Announcements

Liturgical Schedule - January/February 2008

CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD & ST BASIL THE GREAT - TUESDAY, JANUARY 1 - No Services at SS Peter and Paul

THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD & GREAT BLESSING OF WATER - SUNDAY, JANUARY 6 - **Divine Liturgy, 10 AM**

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

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 January 13, 2008. When returning your Icons, please return them to the treasurer, James Schaeffer.*

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING - Monday, **1/7/08**, 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.*

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 - 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. **A container has been placed upstairs in the Church Hall for the tabs.** *Help RJ help the Ronald McDonald House! Thank you and remember to bring your tabs!*

Other Events at SS Peter & Paul



ICON PLEDGE SUNDAY - January 13, 2008 (*Inclement weather date: Sunday, January 20*) - 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 tentative 2008 Liturgical Schedule can be found on the outside back cover of this Bulletin. The Schedule will be included again in the February Bulletin with any final updates and/or revisions.

Ladies' Society News

MEETING - Sunday, January 20, 2008, after Divine Liturgy (Tentative)

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>**

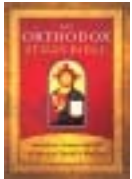
ALBANIAN FORUM ON THE INTERNET (FORUMI SHQIPTAR) - has a section on: Komuniteti Orthodhoks. It has extensive offerings on Orthodoxy in the Albanian language. They are divided into many themes, i.e. "The Birth of Christ," "The Church is One," a catechism and includes Fr. Thomas Hopko's entire Rainbow 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/alicaj17/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: 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: alicaj17@mac.com. The deadline for the next Bulletin is Sunday, **January 27**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday **2/3/08**. 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 **January** Birthdays: Lyudmila Chervinchik, Connie Douris, Kakhaber Okropiridze, Alexandra Pana, Liliya Skura-tovskiy, Paulette Steffa, Vicki Steffa

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 MOST SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO MARGIE & RIK KELLY on the birth of their son, Noah John, on December 15th, 2007, at 10:16 PM. Noah weighed in at 7 lbs., 10 oz. and his length was 20.5 inches.

May God grant Noah John many, many years!

OUR SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO CONNIE VRATO on her retirement as a teacher from the Philadelphia School District after 15 years (this was Connie's 2nd career!).

May God grant Connie many, many years!

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.

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, Isabelle Meginley**

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

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 Sava, 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 20 - St Euthymios the Great

January 21 - Zaccheus Sunday; St Maximus the Confessor
 January 23 - Martyr Clement of Ancyra; Martyr Agathangelus
 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 - Sunday of Publican & Pharisee; St Ephraim, Syrian; St Isaac, Syrian
 January 30 - 3 Hierarchs: St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian, St John Chrysostom

St Nino (Nina), Equal of the Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia



The virgin Nino of Cappadocia was a relative of Great-martyr George and the only daughter of a widely respected and honorable couple. When Nino reached the age of twelve, her parents sold all their possessions and moved to Jerusalem. Soon after, Nino’s father was tonsured a monk, bid farewell to his family and went to labor in the wilderness of the Jordan.

Nino’s mother was ordained a deaconess and left her Nino in the care of an old woman, Sara Niaphor, who raised her in the Christian Faith and related to her the stories of Christ’s life and His suffering on earth. It was from Sara that Nino learned how Christ’s Robe had arrived in Georgia, a country of pagans.

Soon Nino began to pray fervently to the Theotokos, asking for her blessing to travel to Georgia and be made worthy to venerate the Sacred Robe that she had woven for her beloved Son. The Most Holy Virgin heard her prayers and appeared to Nino in a dream, saying, “Go to the country that was assigned to me by lot and preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will send down His grace upon you and I will be your protector.”

But the blessed Nino was overwhelmed at the thought of such a great responsibility and answered, “How can I, a fragile woman, perform such a momentous task, and how can I believe that this vision is real?” In response, the Most Holy Theotokos presented her with a cross of grapevines and proclaimed, “Receive this cross as a shield against visible and invisible enemies!” When she awoke, Nino was holding the cross in her hands. She dampened it with tears of rejoicing and tied it securely with strands of her own hair. (According to another source, the Theotokos bound the grapevine cross with strands of her own hair.)

When she finally arrived in Georgia, St. Nino was greeted by a group of Mtskhetan shepherds near Lake Paravani, and she received a blessing from God to preach to the pagans of this region. With the help of her acquaintances St. Nino soon reached the city of Urbnisi. She remained there a month, then traveled to Mtskheta with a group of Georgians who were making a pilgrimage to venerate the pagan idol Armazi. There she watched with great sadness as the Georgian people trembled before the idols. She was exceedingly sorrowful and prayed to the Lord, “O Lord, send down Thy mercy upon this nation ...that all nations may glorify Thee alone, the One True God, through Thy Son, Jesus Christ.” Suddenly a violent wind began to blow and hail fell from the sky, shattering the pagan statues. The terrified worshipers fled, scattering across the city.

St. Nino made her home beneath a bramble bush in the garden of the king, with the family of the royal gardener. The gardener and his wife were childless, but through St. Nino’s prayers God granted them a child. The couple rejoiced exceedingly, declared Christ to be the True God, and became disciples of St. Nino. Wherever St. Nino went, those who heard her preach converted to the Christian Faith in great numbers. St. Nino even healed the terminally ill Queen Nana after she declared Christ to be the True God. King Mirian, a pagan, was not at all pleased with the great impression St. Nino’s preaching had made on the Georgian nation. One day while he was out hunting, he resolved to kill all those who followed Christ. According to his wicked scheme,

even his wife, Queen Nana, would face death for failing to renounce the Christian Faith. But in the midst of the hunt, it suddenly became very dark. All alone, King Mirian became greatly afraid and prayed in vain for the help of the pagan gods. When his prayers went unanswered, he finally lost hope and, miraculously, he turned to Christ: "God of Nino, illumine this night for me and guide my footsteps, and I will declare Thy Holy Name. I will erect a cross and venerate it and I will construct for Thee a temple. I vow to be obedient to Nino and to the Faith of the Roman people!" Suddenly the night was transfigured, the sun shone radiantly, and King Mirian gave great thanks to the Creator.

When he returned to the city, he immediately informed St. Nino of his decision. As a result of the unceasing labors of Equal-to-the-Apostles Nino, Georgia was established as a nation solidly rooted in the Christian Faith. St. Nino reposed in the village of Bodbe in eastern Georgia and, according to her will, she was buried in the place where she took her last breath. King Mirian later erected a church in honor of St. George over her grave.