



SS Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church
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Church Phone: 215-676-3311

Pastor: Father Stephen Siniari
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Church Bulletin ~ July/August 2003

Seminarian David Fox's Letter to the Faithful

Dear friends,

Greetings to you. My name is David Rodney Fox. I and my family, wife Kerri, sons Hurley and Maximos, and daughter Paris were all Chrismated and received into your Church by His Grace, Nikon, on the Feast Day of Sts. Peter and Paul. On July 5, Kerri gave birth to our fourth child, a son, David Nikolai James Fox ("Niko"). Father Stephen asked that I introduce myself and our family.

Kerri and I grew up in Millville, NJ, about 45 minutes from Philadelphia, and both of us come from pious Protestant homes. Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow once said, "we confess we know where the Church is, but we do not claim to know where the Church is not." There were so many Orthodox traits in my upbringing! Bishop Kallistos Ware, who so wonderfully blesses what is Orthodox in the West, writes, "we celebrate Orthodoxy everywhere it is." Growing up, the Orthodox who lived on the edge of town seemed imposing, foreign to me, like Russian Roman Catholics. I graduated from Wake Forest University in N.C., Kerri, from Villanova in 1990. We were married in 1992 and lived in student apartments in Princeton before I graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1994. In June, 1994, I was ordained a Deacon in The United Methodist Church before serving three years at a large United Methodist Church in Ocean City, NJ. While in Ocean City, I met Fr. Stephen, who reached out to us other clergy, and the two of us would regularly meet at the most ordinary diners to talk about spiritual questions. In the West, two things are respected: service to the poor and the smart. In Father Stephen, on the streets of Atlantic City, I saw these two things combined as I had never seen before. Between jokes, while leading me by abandoned buildings where he would rescue homeless kids, Father Stephen would say, "St. Basil the Great says, 'What would I do without a brother to rebuke me and a brother with feet to wash?'" Soon I began attending Vespers and classes Father Stephen taught at the little mission parish in Claremont, NJ. I had thought I had studied religion with some excellent professors, but what I discovered at this mission parish reminded me of the humbling discovery of St. Pachomios, a well-educated man, who was asked why he had run off to study Christianity from illiterate Egyptian monks: "I don't even know their alphabet," he responded. I had studied at great schools, tasted the great cultural treasures of Europe during a semester abroad, I had grown up in a terrific home and had so many of the great American gifts, but what I learned at this little Albanian mission Church was even more priceless: how to pray, and how through prayer, one could more truly know God.

Mostly I attended Vespers almost weekly for a year, but also Pre-Sanctified Liturgies and some Divine Liturgies. Nearly everything was in English. Father Stephen and his wife Margot would alternate singing during these services and as I watched and listened and smelled, it seemed I was in Eden with Adam and Eve. The sunlight would ebb while candles filled that little church with a quiet light. In our Protestant Churches, "worship" was mostly talking about God, but here, through the symbolism, the gestures, the direct prayer, I was experiencing the salvation story: we made prostrations during Lent in front of the Ikonostasis while singing about Adam being expelled from paradise and weeping outside the gates of Paradise. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, in declaring the Orthodox gift to other Christians, quotes the Fathers: *lex orandi, lex credendi*: what we pray matches what we believe. Very few Protestant services I have attended will actually pray "In the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Praying in an Orthodox way truly healed my belief.

But actually going to an Orthodox Church with my family was difficult. The cultural and spiritual barriers were great. There was an older Albanian man who attended that Church, Hercules, who could barely bend down to make the sign of the cross, but who welcomed us every time we came. This was such a gift, because it was hard for my wife to come, her husband being so captivated by a group of people who were foreign to her. Hercules had made the Iconostasis of that Church by hand, he brought us chairs to sit in when we came, he gave us the antedoran during Liturgy, he made faces at our baby, took interest in our lives and even got yelled at by the priest for talking to us during Liturgy. Hercules was a regular guy whose great strength was in his being a regular, simple man. He would ask for prayers for his sick wife with tears in his eyes, he would have everyone over his home for something to eat, he would go out with us for pizza after Vespers. Hercules confessed that growing up, the ritual of the Church did not mean much to him, but that through this mission parish, he had truly come to Faith. I remember once during a pot luck meal after a Presanctified Liturgy, Hercules said to me (who was trying to starve himself to become holy) with complete sincerity: “Boy, I really love these Lenten dishes. After Lent, I will definitely have to go on a diet.” Likewise, when our family came to Sts. Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia, we received the same simple, humble treatment we received from Hercules. You brought us the antedoran, you gave up your pews up front and would stand in the back, just so our family had a place to sit; you offered us food and welcomed our children. Because of this, our entire family, including three young children, sat/stood through an entire Hierarchical Liturgy last summer. Afterwards the women of the parish joked with my wife Kerri that they used to have to either take their children out for awhile or tie them to the pews in order for them to last through the Liturgy. “Your children are so well behaved!” they said. This humble kindness did much to bring us closer to the Faith, and gave my family something I could never offer as husband and father. In arguing for Christ being both fully human and fully divine, the Fathers said, “what is not assumed is not saved.” What saved our family was a priest and laypeople who ‘assumed’ our North American way, who were regular Americans sharing our regular American joys and burdens.

Thank you for giving us “the pearl of great price,” this Orthodox Faith you have kept through two thousand years, through wars, communism, emigration and American secularism.

May God grant you all Many Years!

Sincerely yours,
David Rodney Fox

Events & Announcements

Church News & Reminders

ICON PLEDGES - Your Icon Pledges for 2003 are being accepted by George Kendro every Sunday. Please begin fulfilling your pledges as soon as possible.

TIME TO RETURN YOUR ICONS - This is a reminder that your icons need to be returned by Sunday, August 31. Thank you!

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.

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 POLICY - Having sought guidance from our Bishop regarding the limited space in our Church building, Father Stephen and the Church Committee ask, for the sake of our children and the health of everyone, that we cease all forms of smoking: cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc. as of Pascha 2003. Thank you.

CELL PHONES - Please be respectful of the Divine Liturgy and courteous to Father Stephen and other members of the congregation and turn off the ringer of your cell phone. Thank you.

The Joy of Giving

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

COLLECTION FOR THE POOR - On the 1st Sunday of every month SS. Peter & Paul will hold a special collection for the poor. Please plan to give generously every month to those whose lives are less fortunate than ours.

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.

Sunday School News

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS - Priftesha Margot Siniari is looking for a few good people to volunteer to be teachers for next year's Sunday School. No one would have to commit to every Sunday, but if you feel that you may have a special talent for sharing the Orthodox faith with young people, please see Priftesha Margot and volunteer! Any ideas for the Sunday School are always welcomed.

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, August 17**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on **Sunday 8/24/03**. 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 **July** Birthdays: **Andrew Cappo, Charles Daka, John Douris, Michelle Murianka, Nick Muzekari, Ted Muzekari, Alivan Rifkin, Viktor Skuratovskiy, Jennie Speero, Lester Speero**

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY is wished to the following parishioners and friends who are celebrating **August** Birthdays: **Alvin Antonescu, Sophie Bacon, Denise Gormley, Anna Jeka, Evanthia Jeka, Oleg Petrenko, Autumn Rifkin, Christine Schaeffer, Gregory Shaloka, Jayne Siniari, Sandy Speero, John Vesho, and Connie Vrato**

May God grant them all many, many years!

His Grace Bishop Nikon's Visit

A MOST SINCERE THANK YOU to **His Grace Bishop Nikon** and to **Reverend Deacon & Mrs. Mark Doku** for joining us in the celebration of our Feast Day. **A special Thank You** to all **parishioners and Council Members** who helped out with the Bishop's visit.

SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS to the **Fox Family**, the **Shaloka Family**, the **Rubis Family**, the newly tonsured Readers (**Stephen Murianka, Nicholas Muzekari, Kakhaber Okropiridze, Viktor Skuratovskiy and Gregory Vrato, Jr.**), and the Theotokos Award recipients (**Hope Vrato and Edna Bachelor**). May God grant them many, many years!



His Grace Bishop Nikon's Visit Our Parish Feast Day Celebration was a great success!

There was so much that occurred and so much to be thankful to God for. The day was highlighted by the hierarchal visit of His Grace, Bishop Nikon, who was accompanied by Father Deacon Mark Doku. Father Deacon Mark drove to Philadelphia from his parish, and, our sister parish, of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Worcester, Massachusetts. We had a full agenda prepared for His Grace and thank him for archpastoral love. In addition to the traditional celebration of the Divine Liturgy, there were eleven new converts received into the Orthodox Church through Holy Chrismation, five readers were tonsured, the churching of an infant was celebrated, and two Theotokos awards were given.

May God grant many, many years to all!

We welcomed parishioners of St. John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church, the Council Chairman Mr. David Biando and many other guests and visitors for the Liturgy.

We also welcomed as an honored guest the Reverend Father George Majoros, who has recently been assigned as Pastor to our neighbors at Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church. Father Majoros was most gracious in greeting Bishop Nikon and remaining in attendance throughout the Divine Liturgy.

Our luncheon following the Divine Liturgy was a relaxing and enjoyable way to conclude our celebration. The attendance of 120 was the most people that we have had in recent years.

I wish to thank everyone who helped prepare for the day, those who cleaned, decorated, beautified, or otherwise helped to make our feast day a wonderful celebration.

Stephen Murianka



**His Grace Bishop Nikon
with
Theotokos Award
Recipients,
Edna Bachelor
&
Hope Vrato
June 29, 2003**

Holy Days and Name Days in July

- July 1 - Unmercenary Wonderworkers Cosmas & Damian
- July 4 - St Andrew of Crete; Ven Andrew Rublev
- July 10 - Ven Anthony of the Kiev Caves
- July 11 - Gr Martyr Euphemia; The All-Praised Blessed Princess Olga
- July 15 - Great Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles
- July 17 - Great Martyr Marina
- July 18 - Martyr Emilian
- July 19 - Ven Seraphim of Sarov; Ven Macrina; Bl Stephen of Serbia
- July 20 - Holy Prophet Elijah
- July 21 - Prophet Ezekiel
- July 22 - Myrrhbearer & Equal-to-the-Apostles, St Mary Magdalene; Martyr Marcella
- July 24 - Martyr Christina of Tyre; Martyrs Boris & Gleb, Passionbearers
- July 25 - Dormition of Righteous Anna
- July 26 - St Jacob Netsvetov; Martyr Parasceva



Holy Days and Name Days in August

- August 1 - Beginning of Dormition Fast; Procession of the Life-Giving Cross
- August 6 - Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord
- August 9 - Ven Herman of Alaska; Apostle Matthias
- August 12 - Martyrs Anicletus & Photius
- August 13 - St Tikhon of Zadonsk; St Maximus, Confessor; Ven Maximus of Moscow
- August 15 - Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos
- August 16 - Image of Christ “Not Made by Hands”
- August 18 - Martyrs Florus & Laurus; Ven John of Rila
- August 20 - Prophet Samuel
- August 21 - Apostle Thaddeus of the 70
- August 24 - St Kozma of Berat; St Cosmas of Aetolia
- August 25 - Relics of Apostle Bartholomew; Apostle Titus of the 70
- August 26 - Martyrs Adrian & Natalia
- August 27 - Ven Poemen the Great
- August 28 - Ven Job of Pochaev; Ven. Moses the Black; Righteous Prophetess Anna

- August 29 - Beheading of St John the Baptist
August 30 - St Alexander Nevsky
August 31 - Sash of the Theotokos; Hieromartyr Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage



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**

