



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 ~ June 2004

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

The importance of maintaining and cultivating a solid relationship of love with Bishop Nikon... and the blessings that will come through obedience to the Gospel

As we prepare for the visit of our Bishop NIKON, let us keep in mind the words of Saint Ignatios writing to the Church at Smyrna in Asia Minor:

"...Avoid divisions as being the beginning of evils. Do ye all follow the Bishop, as Jesus Christ doth the Father, and follow the Presbyters (Priests) as the Apostles, and have respect unto the Deacons as unto the commandment of God.

Let no one, apart from the Bishop do any of the things that appertain unto the Church. Let that Eucharist alone be considered valid which is celebrated in the presence of the Bishop, or of him to whom he shall have entrusted it.

Wherever the Bishop appear, there let the multitude be, even as wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful either to Baptize, or to hold a love-feast without the consent of the Bishop; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that also is well pleasing unto God, to the end that whatever is done may be safe and sure.

It is reasonable for the future to be vigilant, and while we have yet time, to repent unto God. It is well to honor God and the Bishop, he who honors the Bishop is honored of God, he who doeth anything without the knowledge of the Bishop, serveth the devil."

Saint Ignatios was the little boy held in the arms of Jesus when Jesus taught us that childlike faith was a sign of those who would inherit the Heavenly Kingdom. Ignatios was a disciple of Saint John who wrote the Gospel. He was consecrated Bishop of Antioch in 69 AD and was taken as a prisoner to Rome where he was thrown to the lions for refusing to compromise the Christian faith.

Events & Announcements

Liturgical Schedule - June/July 2004

SS PETER & PAUL FEASTDAY - TUESDAY, JUNE 29 - Divine Liturgy - 9 AM

VISIT OF HIS GRACE BISHOP NIKON CELEBRATING THE FEASTDAY OF SS PETER & PAUL - SUNDAY, JULY 11 - Divine Liturgy - 10 AM

Church News & Reminders

ICON PLEDGES - A reminder that Icon Pledges can be paid at any time. Please see the treasurer, George Kendro.

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

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES - If you or someone you know has had a child baptized at SS Peter & Paul and have not received a Baptismal Certificate, please see Alicia.

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 - 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! In **April & May**, a total of **28 casseroles** were delivered. Also delivered were personal items, sheets, and towels. **Sincere thanks to all who donated!***

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.

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.

Ladies' Society News

MEETING - Sunday, **June 13**, after Divine Liturgy

Sunday School News

GRADUATION - **Sunday, June 6** - The children will receive their diplomas and there will be a small party after the Divine Liturgy. The tentative start date for Sunday School in the Fall is October 3.

OUR SINCEREST THANKS to **Priftesha Margot Siniari and all of the Sunday School Teachers** for all of their hard work and for making our Sunday School a growing and successful spiritual learning experience for our children.

Events

DEACON PERRY VISITS SS PETER & PAUL ON SUNDAY, JUNE 6 - Deacon Perry Angelos celebrated his 10 year anniversary of Ordination to the Diaconate on Saturday, June 5. Many of us fondly remember Deacon Perry and his wife Fran. After leaving SS

Peter & Paul, Deacon Perry was the Deacon and Head of the Sunday School at St. Thomas' Greek Orthodox Church. 4 years ago, when they moved to the West Coast, Deacon Perry transferred to the Greek Archdiocese. He is currently Deacon at St. Demetrios Church in Seattle. **God grant them many years!**

CELEBRATION OF SS PETER & PAUL FEASTDAY WITH HIS GRACE BISHOP NIKON - *Sunday, July 11*. Our annual parish meal with His Grace Bishop Nikon will follow the Divine Liturgy. More information to follow shortly.

Miscellaneous

PARISH DIRECTORY - Is being distributed with this June Bulletin. If you did not get one and would like to have one, please see Alicia.

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 next Bulletin will be a combined July/August Bulletin and **the deadline is tentatively scheduled for the middle of August***. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church in August. 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 **June** Birthdays: **Katherine Halkedis, Mary Jaxheimer, Donna Lane, Isabelle McGinley, John Siniari, Zinaida Zemlyanaya**

May God grant them all many, many years!

A VERY HAPPY AND BLESSED FATHER'S DAY to all of our Fathers, Grandfathers, Great-Grandfathers, Uncles, and to all of the men in our lives who have been like Fathers to us.

LT. COL. CHRISTOPHER P. COSTA BRINGS HONOR TO HIS FAMILY AND HIS COUNTRY - Lt. Col. Christopher P. Costa, son of Margaret (Shuttie) Costa, nephew of Jennie Speero and Helen Arndt, received the *Bronze Star Medal* for exceptionally meritorious service while serving as a Task Force Director of Intelligence Support of "Operation Enduring Freedom". Lt. Col. Costa led and conducted sensitive human intelligence operations in a combat environment and provided expertise that encompassed the full spectrum of intelligence support. He reflected great credit upon himself, his command,

and the United States Army. Lt. Col. Costa currently resides in Florida with his family. Family and friends are extremely proud of his accomplishments. May God always keep him and his family safe.

SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO NICK MUZEKARI AND HIS NEW WIFE, STEPHANIE - Nick and Stephanie were married on May 22 at St. Tikhon's Monastery Church and they honeymooned in Montana. Nick will be relocating to Pittsburgh to continue his studies. **God grant them many, many happy years!**

CONGRATULATIONS TO ELIZABETH HANSBURG who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in May and is out on job interviews. We wish Elizabeth much luck in her new career in Urban Development. Come back and visit us soon!

Let Us Keep Them in our Prayers

*** Please continue your prayers for the full recovery of *Presbytera Cleopatra Gregory*.

*** Please continue your prayers for the full recovery of *Nina Horowitz*. We miss seeing Nina in Church.

One Is Holy, One Is the Lord Jesus Christ

In the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist is the joyful celebration of Christ's presence and, as Father Schmemmann notes, in a very real sense, His Resurrection. Father Schmemmann goes on to write that Holy Communion is the essential food uniting us to Christ, making us partakers of His Life, Death, and Resurrection and the very means of our fulfilling ourselves as members of the Church and of our spiritual life and growth. While Holy Communion is the fulfillment of our spiritual efforts of preparation, it is also the source and beginning of the spiritual effort "for the Kingdom which is to come."

The Church becomes the Body Of Christ by the "sacrament of gathering", offering as one body united in faith, hope, and love, and by offering "with one mouth and one heart" the Eucharist.

There is now the need at SS Peter & Paul to purchase a new Chalice Set. This is an opportunity for each of us to contribute towards these sacred vessels and to be united in one accord with our offering to God. These vessels of consecration and distribution of the Divine Mysteries will be blessed and used for the first time when our Bishop Nikon visits us on July 11 and ordains Fr. Dn. David Fox to the Priesthood.

We have enclosed in this month's bulletin an envelope and are appealing for donations for a new Chalice Set. *Thank you for your generous contributions.*

Presentation of St George Icon

On May 16, 2004, a beautiful Icon of St. George was blessed by Fr. Stephen Siniari at SS Peter & Paul Albanian Orthodox Church and was donated to our Church. Mr. Tarieli Khrikuli had commissioned his relatives in Georgia to do the Icon so that he could present it to SS Peter & Paul.



His biggest problem was locating someone to bring the Icon to America and he was trying to find out within the Georgian community if anyone was coming over from Georgia in the near future. As it turned out, one of our Georgian parishioners, Mr. Kahaber Okopiridze, was going to Georgia and would be able to meet with Mr. Khrikuli's relatives and bring back the Icon of St. George. SS Peter & Paul sincerely thanks Mr. Khrikuli for this most generous gesture and we thank Mr. Okopiridze for being able to bring it to America. May God grant them both many years!

Georgia was enlightened with the Christian faith by the holy Equal to the Apostles Nina, a kinswoman of the holy Great Martyr George the Victory-Bearer. Georgia has special veneration for St. George as its patron saint. The name Georgia is derived from George. St. Nina established a feastday in his honor. It is celebrated in Georgia on November 10/23, in re-

membrance of the sufferings of St. George. There are 3 holy days in Georgia: Christmas, Pascha and the other 363 days belong to St. George. In every small town in the mountains of Georgia, there is a small Church named St. George.

St. George was a native of Cappadocia (a district in Asia Minor), and he grew up in a deeply believing Christian family. His father was martyred for Christ when St. George was still a child. When he became a man, St. George entered into the service of the Roman army. He was handsome, brave and valiant in battle, and he came to the notice of the emperor Diocletian (284-305) and joined with the rank of military commander.

The pagan emperor was concerned with the triumph of Christ, and intensified his persecution against the Christians. During the year 303 A.D., Diocletian summoned his aides and asked them to make pagan sacrifices as proof of their loyalty. All pledged, except for the Saint. He stood in front of Diocletian and admitted his belief in Christianity. The Emperor ordered a series of persecutions, including having St. George bound to the rim of a wheel set with sharp spikes. However, an angel of the Lord appeared, placed his hand upon the martyr, and St. George stood up healed. The persecution of St. George continued and, each time, he emerged unscathed. The Emperor had him locked up in a prison, but the people began to visit the prison and they there received healing and help from the Saint.

Again St. George appeared before Diocletian who ordered that the Saint accompany him to the temple and sacrifice to the gods. When they arrived, St. George made the sign of the cross and the idols were destroyed. The people and the priests were furious and demanded that Diocletian

have the Saint executed. St. George was taken out of the city and as he turned his head toward the executioner, he was beheaded.

One famous story of the apparition of St. George was when the Georgians were fighting with the Muslims. The Georgians believe that St. George came to their rescue and fought with them, side by side, and helped them win against unbelievable odds. St. George is known as Victory Bearer, not only for his military achievements, but for successfully enduring martyrdom.

History of SS Peter & Paul

Saints Peter and Paul was established in 1915, serving the first Divine Liturgy on December 25th of that year. The priest appointed to serve was Fr. Naum Cere, the building was a rented facility at 4th & Sharswood Streets. Three years later, the community had gathered enough funds to purchase the church building at Hancock & Oxford Streets. The new building was renovated by parishioners and was consecrated by then Archimandrite, Theofan S. Noli, on January 12th, 1919.

Fr. Marko Kondili served the parish from that time until 1928. Fr. George Suli endured the sacrifices of the Great Depression with the parish. Fr. Nikolla Prifti served the parish from 1934 until his falling asleep in 1941. From 1943 through the difficult years of the Second World War, the parish flock was tended by Fr. Christo Costa. In the postwar years, the parish was cared for by Fr. Haralamp Dode, Fr. Costa Belba, and Fr. Diogen Econom.

In 1949, another transition took place. Far ahead of many of local Orthodox parishes, the choir began to sing responses in English, thanks to the publication of the translation work of then Bishop Theophan Noli. Ordained to the priesthood in June 1949 by Bishop Noli, Fr. Stephen Lasko served the parish from 1951 to 1955. He was followed by Fr. Constantine Noni, formerly the Abbot of the Monastery of Kalishti, Albania. Many of our current parishioners received the sacrament of marriage or baptism through Fr. Noni.

Under the pastorate of Fr. Vangel Avgerinos, who served from 1958 to 1961, the parish made further progress, using English as the language of the Liturgy and for the reading of the Gospel. From 1961 until 1964, the pastor was Fr. Ernest Tsonis, among the first of the American-born clergy, and the first to use the Theological Fund for his seminary studies at St. Vladimir's in New York.

Through another transition, and the formation of the Albanian Archdiocese as a part of the soon to become autocephalous Orthodox Church in America, Fr. Gregory Fontaine served the parish from 1964 to 1969. The following year, Hieromonk Fr. Roman Serdynski came to serve SS. Peter & Paul. He had returned to Philadelphia for treatment of a kidney ailment. It was through the efforts of Fr. Roman that the seed was planted to find a new parish building, in the northeast part of the city. During Fr. Roman's extended grave illness, and after his falling asleep in Sep-

tember 1974, the parish was served by Fr. Basil Horsky. Fr. Basil was retired, but came to serve with saintly humility and great love. Shortly after celebrating his 80th birthday at the parish, he served the last Liturgy of his life with us.

It was then Fr. John Rachko, who traveled 62 miles each way from Bethlehem, PA, to serve the parish. But through his spiritual care and fatherly guidance, the parish finally achieved the goal of relocating to a new church facility. Once again, the parishioners gave of their time, efforts, talents, and finances to make the needed renovations.

In 1983, Fr. Antony Bassoline came to serve the parish for a six month period, which became ten years. He was a fiery preacher, a scholarly theologian, and a talented linguist. It was Fr. Antony who shaped the Liturgical form we now use, blending the Slavonic typicon, used in our Liturgy of the Word, with the Byzantine typicon, used in the Liturgy of the Faithful. At the untimely falling asleep of Fr. Antony, the parish was blessed to be served by Fr. George Gregory, who had only just retired. He too, came for a period of months, which became five years. And he too, traveled a considerable distance, often when a more cautious man would not have come. Through his steadfastness, the unity and stability of the parish was maintained. As Fr. George had so graciously agreed, when a priest became available for permanent appointment, he returned to retirement.

That came as a gift to us in the person of Fr. Stephen Siniari. Baptized at SS. Peter and Paul, his spiritual journey has been an extended and mission-oriented one. Even while Fr. Stephen continues his work of ministering to the needs of the poor and the homeless, we rejoice at the work of the Lord in bringing Fr. Stephen, Priftesha Margot and their family home to us.

SS. Peter and Paul is a parish of acceptance, diverse peoples, spiritual seeking, and great joy because it has been so well cared for by its pastors and people. We hope you will join with us singing the responses, and in sharing our full liturgical involvement.

Holy Days and Name Days in June

- June 1 - 3rd Day of the Trinity
- June 6 - Sunday of All Saints
- June 7 - Beginning of SS Peter & Paul Fast
- June 9 - St Cyril of Alexandria
- June 11 - Holy Apostles Bartholomew & Barnabas
- June 13 - All Saints of America; All Saints of Russia
- June 14 - Prophet Elisha
- June 19 - Holy Apostle Jude, Brother of the Lord
- June 24 - Nativity of St John the Baptist
- June 29 - Holy Apostles Peter & Paul

The Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos

The divinely-blessed Peter was from Bethsaida of Galilee, the son of Jonas and the brother of Andrew the First-called. He was a fisherman by trade, unlearned and poor, and was called Simon; later he was renamed Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. On being raised by the Lord to the dignity of an Apostle and becoming inseparable from Him as His zealous disciple, he followed Him from the beginning of His preaching of salvation up until the very Passion, when, in the court of Caiaphas the high priest, he denied Him thrice.



After many bitter tears, he received complete forgiveness of his transgression. After the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he preached in Judea, Antioch, and parts of Asia, and finally came to Rome, where he was crucified upside down by Nero, and thus ascended to the eternal habitations about the year 66 or 68, leaving two Catholic (General) Epistles to the Church of Christ.

Paul, the chosen vessel of Christ, the glory of the Church, the Apostle of the Nations and teacher of the whole world, was a Jew by race, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Roman citizen, fluent in Greek, an expert in knowledge of the Law, a Pharisee. From the beginning, Paul was a most fervent zealot for the traditions of the Jews and a great persecutor of the Church of Christ; at that time, his name was Saul (Acts 22:3-4). He went to Damascus with the intention of bringing the disciples back to Jerusalem in bonds. As he was approaching Damascus, about midday there suddenly shone upon him a light from Heaven. Falling on the earth, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And that heavenly voice and brilliance made him tremble, and he was blinded for a time. He was led by the hand into the city, and on account

of a divine revelation to the Apostle Ananias, he was baptized by him, and both his bodily and spiritual eyes were opened to the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness. And straightway, he spoke with boldness in the synagogues, proclaiming that "Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 9:1-21).

As for his zeal in preaching the Gospel, as for his labors and afflictions, the wounds, the prisons, the bonds, the beatings, the stonings, the shipwrecks, the journeys, the perils on land, on sea, in cities, in wildernesses, the continual vigils, the daily fasting, the hunger, the thirst, the nakedness, and all those other things that he endured for the Name of Christ, his care for all the churches, his fiery longing for the salvation of all, whereby he became all things to all men, that

he might save them all if possible - all these things are related incident by incident in the Book of the Acts, and as he himself tells them in his Epistles.

~ Reading courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA ~

~ Icon Courtesy of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Webpage ~