



***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 ~ November 2006*

## **Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful**

### **The Word Became Flesh**

#### ***A Sermon by St John of Kronstadt on the Nativity of Christ***

The Word became flesh; that is, the Son of God, co-eternal with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit, became human – having become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. O, wondrous, awesome and salvific mystery! The One Who had no beginning took on a beginning according to humanity; the One without flesh assumed flesh. God became man – without ceasing to be God. The Unapproachable One became approachable to all, in the aspect of an humble servant. Why, and for what reason, was there such condescension [shown] on the part of the Creator toward His transgressing creatures – toward humanity which, through an act of its own will had fallen away from God, its Creator?

It was by reason of a supreme, inexpressible mercy toward His creation on the part of the Master, Who could not bear to see the entire race of mankind – which, He, in creating, had endowed with wondrous gifts – enslaved by the devil and thus destined for eternal suffering and torment.

And the Word became flesh!...in order to make us earthly beings into heavenly ones, in order to make sinners into saints; in order to raise us up from corruption into incorruption, from earth to heaven; from enslavement to sin and the devil – into the glorious freedom of children of God; from death – into immortality, in order to make us sons of God and to seat us together with Him upon the Throne as His royal children.

O, boundless compassion of God! O, inexpressible wisdom of God! O, great wonder, astounding not only the human mind, but the angelic [mind] as well!

Let us glorify God! With the coming of the Son of God in the flesh upon the earth, with His offering Himself up as a sacrifice for the sinful human race, there is given to those who believe the blessing of the Heavenly Father, replacing that curse which had been uttered by God in the beginning; they are adopted and receive the promise of an eternal inheritance of life. To a humanity orphaned by reason of sin, the Heavenly Father returns anew through the mystery of re-birth, that is, through baptism and repentance. People are freed of the tormenting, death-bearing authority of the devil, of the afflictions of sin and of various passions.

Human nature is deified for the sake of the boundless compassion of the Son of God; and its sins are purified; the defiled are sanctified. The ailing are healed. Upon those in dishonour are boundless honour and glory bestowed.

Those in darkness are enlightened by the Divine light of grace and reason.

The human mind is given the rational power of God – we have the mind of Christ (Cor. 2, 16), says the Holy apostle Paul. To the human heart, the heart of Christ is given. The perishable is made immortal. Those naked and wounded by sin and by passions are adorned in Divine glory. Those who hunger and thirst are sated and assuaged by the nourishing and soul-strengthening Word of God and by the most pure Body and Divine

Blood of Christ. The inconsolable are consoled. Those ravaged by the devil have been – and continue to be – delivered.

What, then, O, brethren, is required of us in order that we might avail ourselves of all the grace brought unto us from on high by the coming to earth of the Son of God? What is necessary, first of all, is faith in the Son of God, in the Gospel as the salvation-bestowing heavenly teaching; a true repentance of sins and the correction of life and of heart; communion in prayer and in the mysteries [sacraments]; the knowledge and fulfillment of Christ's commandments. Also necessary are the virtues: Christian humility, alms-giving, continence, purity and chastity, simplicity and goodness of heart.

Let us, then, O brothers and sisters, bring these virtues as a gift to the One Who was born for the sake of our salvation – let us bring them in place of the gold, frankincense and myrrh which the Magi brought Him, as to One Who is King, God, and Man, come to die for us. This, from us, shall be the most-pleasing form of sacrifice to God and to the Infant Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **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 - November/December 2006**

**ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S FEAST DAY - His Grace Bishop Nikon's Visit to our Sister Parish (Please note: NO SERVICES AT SS PETER & PAUL)**

**SATURDAY, 11/11 - 5 PM - Veneration of the Weeping Icon of St Anne**  
**6 PM - Vespers** (*Supper after Vespers and an opportunity to chat with His Grace Bishop Nikon*)

**SUNDAY, 11/12 - 10 AM - Hierarchical Divine Liturgy** - Celebrated by His Grace Bishop Nikon, Fr Matthew and former Priests of St John Chrysostom (*Light refreshments in the Social Hall following the Divine Liturgy*)

**NATIVITY OF CHRIST - SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25 - Divine Liturgy, 10 AM**

#### **Schedule of Other Services**

**AKATHIST SERVICE - EVERY WEDNESDAY - 7 PM**

#### **Church News & Reminders**

**MEMBERSHIP DUES 2007** - Dues are **\$115** per person and can be paid at any time to James Schaeffer, our Treasurer. *Thank you!*

**ICON PLEDGES** - Due by **the end of December** and can be paid at any time to our treasurer, James Schaeffer. **Please note:** *The Icons are due back to the Church ASAP. When returning your Icons, please return them to the treasurer, James Schaeffer.*

**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING** - To be announced. 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** - **In October:** *Harry Halkedis purchased 8 casseroles and made 11; along with the casseroles 1 bag of food was delivered.* 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.

## **Sunday School News**

**YOUTH SUNDAY** - Sunday, **November 5th**

## **Ladies' Society News**

**MEETING** - Sunday, October 29th, after Divine Liturgy

**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR** - **December 3rd** (tentative), after Divine Liturgy. Donations of new, unused items for the raffle are welcomed. Monetary donations are also welcomed. *Please help with your time, donations, or special talents! Thank you!*

## **Other Events at SS Peter & Paul**

**SS PETER & PAUL COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD** - If you wish to have your name included in the Community Christmas Card, please see Jim Bachelor ASAP. This is a great opportunity to support your Parish! *The donation is \$10 and the deadline is Sunday, December 10th.*

## **General Interest**

**AFRICA'S ANCIENT CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CONFERENCE (PART OF ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND SCHEDULE OF NOVEMBER 11-12 AND VISITATION OF HIS GRACE BISHOP NIKON)** - **Saturday, November 11th** from 10 AM to 3:30 PM (*Registration at 9:30 AM - Lunch included*) - Location: **St Michael's Russian Orthodox Church** - Fr Moses Berry speaking, as well as Fr Paisius Altschul, and Seminarian Elias Mukasa

**DINNER WITH HIS GRACE BISHOP NIKON (PART OF ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND SCHEDULE OF NOVEMBER 11-12)** - **Sunday, November 12th** - *Hyatt Waterfront Hotel* - **5 PM** - Cocktails; **6 PM** - Welcome greetings, Chairman Andrew Subashi; Welcome remarks, Bishop Nikon; Salad, Course Dinner; Greetings, Fr Matthew, Fr Spiro Page, Former Priests; Music and dancing, the Band Atlantis

**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>**

## **Miscellaneous**

**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](mailto: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](mailto:alicia17@mac.com)**. The deadline for the next Bulletin is Sunday, **November 26**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday **12/3/06**. 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 **November** Birthdays: **Yelena Alekseyeva, Marie Antony, Jim Bachelor, Cathy Cappo, Spiro Costas, Alicia Jaroni, Joanne Johns, Sallie Muzekari, Al Rifkin, Fr Dn Gregory Vreto, Nick Zeo**

*May God grant them all many, many years!*

OUR MOST SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO KATHRYN & FR DN GREGORY VRETO on the birth of their daughter, *Grace Sophia*, on October 26th at 2:26 PM and she weighed in at 7 lbs., 7 oz.

*May God grant Grace Sophia many, many years!*

A SUPER HUGE THANK YOU to **David Lane and all the wonderful volunteers** who made this year's Clam Bake another spectacular success!

CONGRATULATIONS TO BOTH THE RE-ELECTED AND THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH COMMITTEE! OFFICERS: **President, Stephen Murianka; Vice-President, Joe Bacon; Secretary, Christina Murianka; Trustees: David Lane, Belinda Mentzer, Gregory Sialoka**

*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!*

### **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, Harry Cappo, Matthew Murianka, Joyce Dorsey, Andi Steffa, Martha Murianka, John Palmerick, Thimi Daka**

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

## **Excerpts from His Grace Bishop Nikon's Report to the Annual Assembly Farmington Hills, MI 2006**

### **Archdiocesan Changes and Assignments**

As you are already aware, the Holy Synod at last October's Fall Session, responding to the desires of the Diocese of New England, named me as their ruling hierarch. Although this did not significantly change my responsibilities, it became an official responsibility as a ruling hierarch. I was officially enthroned as Bishop of New England by His Beatitude HERMAN and Archbishop JOB of the Diocese of the Mid-West. Archbishop JOB served for many years as Bishop of New England. The ceremonies took place at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Boston.

In November of 2005 I represented us at the annual Flag Day celebrations in Boston Mass as well as a first for Stamford Ct. flag raising at city hall in that New England town. Having received an invitation from a Boston based television station; I appeared for an interview on a program called "Higher Ground".

## **Church of Albania**

During a visit to the United States by Metropolitan Joan of Korca, a meeting with him led to a semi-official invitation for me to visit the Church in Albania. In as much as we have a seminarian studying there, I made the trip in May. It was so gratifying to see the accomplishments realized in the 15 years that the church has been resurrected.

I was greeted by his Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios and accorded all courtesy of a visiting hierarch. 185 churches have been refurbished; a new 8 million dollar cathedral in the center of Tirana is well under construction. Also, in Tirana, the church has built a state of the art, Medical Diagnostic center, a factory that housed wood carvers, iconographers from Albania and Greece, a candle making factory and their own printing presses. In addition there are 14 Summer Camps for children throughout the country, as well as schools and soup kitchens in Tirana and other towns and cities. Similar strides are evident in the Diocese of Korce. The Cathedral there is completed except for some additional iconography and it is located in the center of the city. Ten outlying churches are being refurbished in that diocese and there are plans for a women's Monastery in one of the nearby villages. Resurrection Seminary is fully operative. An impressive complex exists there and there are approximately 45 students attending including 14 female students. Adjacent to the Seminary is the Home of Hope, a home style orphanage and while there the Archbishop and I, plotted out the area for what will be a women's monastery and retreat center, on the property.

Our Archdiocese and St. George Cathedral sent me with a gift of \$2,000 for the Church of Albania and a gift of \$1,000 for the Diocese of Korce. Travel to Albania was funded by our Archdiocese. In addition, I was given \$1,000 for incidentals while there and at one of our Diocesan Council meetings I returned \$723 as all other needs were taken care of by the church of Albania.

## **Representations and Youth**

On several occasions I have met with the theological and exchange students currently studying at Holy Cross Seminary and college. In addition I attend the Orthodox Christian Fellowship which is the official campus ministry for all Orthodox in America. I have recently begun regular meetings with these students at the Univ of CT. Our cathedral once again hosted a visitation of Crossroads, a youth orientated program where college and high school students from around the country gather together and visit local churches and speak with the clergy and hierarchs.

## **Visitations & Representations**

Since my last report to you – I have visited every parish in our Archdiocese some more than once and every parish in the diocese of New England - along with the scheduled visitations - I also represented our Archdiocese at the awards banquets sponsored by the National Albanian American Council (NAAC) Recipients of the award have been former President Clinton, Madeline Albright, Senator Bob Dole among others.

## **National Church Crisis**

By now it is no secret that our national church is in the midst of a crisis not experienced since Orthodoxy first came to our shores more than 200 years ago. For many of our clergy and faithful, it has become an all consuming occupation and diversion from our responsibilities as Orthodox Christians. It has become the total of our involvement in church life.

With vigor and zeal, the internet, a tool that can be best used for spreading the good news of the Gospel has been inundated with much information and many truths; as well as has been sullied with half truths, innuendo and speculation. It has torn at the very fibers of our Church. A trust that we have enjoyed for decades no longer exists. Confidence in central administration and the Holy Synod itself has dissipated. The crisis has set clergy against clergy, laity against laity, and sorrowfully, hierarch against hierarch.

Archbishop's JOB's, simple question, "are the allegations true or false", is yet to be fully answered. On a personal level, I have been morally supportive of Archbishop JOB's desire for full answers and transparency.

There appears to have been procedures at the highest levels that point to gross mis-management, mis-appropriation of contributions, and malfeasance.

I was privileged to be invited to a meeting of the Lesser Synod where we were advised that there is an ongoing investigation of all of the allegations. I would like to have had a full report on the allegations for this assembly, but the Holy Synod is scheduled to meet next week and the agenda for that meeting includes a report from Proskauer Rose, the law firm that has been investigating the allegations over the past four months.

I know that some of our sister dioceses have issued statements about the crisis and I feel that as a diocese we too should voice our concerns. I say this as when one part of the body of Christ rejoices, the whole church rejoices and when one part of the body of Christ suffers, the whole body suffers. I know we will withstand, live through and survive this crisis and I offer for your consideration the following statement to be issued by our assembly in this regard.

The Annual Assembly of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese, gathered in Farmington Hills, MI on October 19-21, 2006 expresses continued concern with regard to the systemic crisis currently facing the Orthodox Church in America, including its moral and spiritual dimension. It is our fervent prayer that the Holy Synod, Central Administration in Syosset and the Metropolitan Council shall forthrightly continue to investigate the causes of the current crisis, take appropriate measures to implement the needed safeguards, correct all untoward procedural aberrations and make all necessary efforts to restore confidence among the faithful in the proper conduct of our national church administration.

As one of our pastors so beautifully stated: We need to work together and the first step of that togetherness is to recognize that the church is Christ's. That His vision is found in the whole church, not simply the few. Simply put, the Bishop appoints the priests, the priest sings "Blessed is the Kingdom..." and the response from the people is an AMEN. If this trinity, Bishop, priest and Laymen is not in synch on the parish level, the diocesan and archdiocesan level, the national level – we fail to reflect the Holy Trinity in all that we may do.

## **Conclusion**

We are approaching the 100th anniversary of our Archdiocese in a few short years. The next decade will be a turning point for us. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, has charged us and expects us to fulfill our mission on this continent. To grow, establish new parishes and communities, expand our existing parishes and spread the Good news, preaching the Gospel. We must develop and nurture a true missionary spirit, fulfilling the Gospel commands, to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in His name.

*\*For a complete copy of His Grace Bishop Nikon's Report, please see Alicia  
A copy is also posted on the Bulletin Board upstairs*



# SS Peter & Paul Annual Clam Bake

October 7th, 2006



*Much Better than Bookbinders!*







## **Holy Days and Name Days in November**

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|-------------|--|
| November 1  | - SS Cosmas & Damian; St Theodota; Martyrs John & James                          |
| November 8  | - Synaxis of Archangels Michael, Gabriel & All Heavenly Hosts                    |
| November 11 | - Great Martyr Menas of Egypt  |
| November 13 | - St John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople                               |
| November 14 | - Apostle Philip; Emperor Justinian & wife Theodora; St Gregory Palamas          |
| November 15 | - Beginning of Nativity Fast   |
| November 16 | - Apostle & Evangelist Matthew   |
| November 17 | - St Gregory the Wonderworker; St Lazarus the Iconographer                       |
| November 21 | - Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple                               |
| November 24 | - Great Martyr Catherine; Great Martyr Mercurius; Martyr Philotheus the Romanian |
| November 25 | - Leavetaking of the Entry of the Theotokos; St Clement of Ochrid                |
| November 30 | - Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called  |

### ***Holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenaries Cosmas & Damian*** (Commemorated on November 1)

The Holy Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Physicians Cosmas and Damian and their mother St Theodota were natives of Asia Minor (some sources say Mesopotamia). Their pagan father died while they were still quite small children. Their mother raised them in Christian piety. Through her own example, and by reading holy books to them, St Theodota preserved her children in purity of life according to the command of the Lord, and Cosmas and Damian grew up into righteous and virtuous men.

Trained and skilled as physicians, they received from the Holy Spirit the gift of healing people's illnesses of body and soul by the power of prayer. They even treated animals. With fervent love for both God and neighbor, they never took payment for their services. They strictly observed the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Freely have you received, freely give." (Mt. 10:8). The fame of Sts Cosmas and Damian spread throughout all the surrounding region, and people called them unmercenary physicians.



Once, the saints were summoned to a grievously ill woman named Palladia, whom all the doctors had refused to treat because of her seemingly hopeless condition. Through faith and through the fervent prayer of the holy brothers, the Lord healed the deadly disease and Palladia got up from her bed perfectly healthy and giving praise to God. In gratitude for being healed and wishing to give them a small gift, Palladia went quietly to Damian. She presented him with three eggs and said, "Take this small gift in the Name of the Holy Life-Creating Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Hearing the Name of the Holy Trinity, the unmercenary one did not dare to refuse.

When St Cosmas learned what had happened, became very sad, for he thought that his brother had broken their strict vow. On his deathbed he gave instructions that his brother should not be buried beside him. St Damian also died shortly afterward, and everyone wondered where St Damian's grave should be. But through the will of God a miracle occurred. A camel, which the saints had treated for its wildness, spoke with a human voice saying that they should have no doubts about whether to place Damian beside Cosmas, because Damian did not accept the eggs from the woman as payment, but

out of respect for the Name of God. The venerable relics of the holy brothers were buried together at Thereman (Mesopotamia).

Many miracles were worked after the death of the holy unmercenarys. There lived at Thereman, near the church of Cosmas and Damian, a certain man by the name of Malchus. One day he went on a journey, leaving his wife all alone for what would be a long time. He prayerfully entrusted her to the heavenly protection of the holy brothers. But the Enemy of the race of mankind took on the appearance of one of Malchus' friends, and planned to kill the woman. A certain time went by, and this man went to her at home and said that Malchus had sent him to bring her to him. The woman believed him and went along. He led her to a solitary place intending to kill her. The woman, seeing that disaster threatened her, called upon God with deep faith.

Two fearsome men then appeared, and the devil let go of the woman and fled, falling off a cliff. The two men led the woman home. At her own home, bowing to them deeply she asked, " My rescuers, to whom I shall be grateful to the end of my days, what are your names?"

They replied, "We are the servants of Christ, Cosmas and Damian," and became invisible. The woman with trembling and with joy told everyone about what had happened to her. Glorifying God, she went up to the icon of the holy brothers and tearfully offered prayers of thanksgiving for her deliverance. And from that time the holy brothers were venerated as protectors of the holiness and inviolability of Christian marriage, and as givers of harmony to conjugal life. From ancient times, their veneration spread also to Russia.

The Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Asia Minor should not be confused with the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Rome (July 1), or the Unmercenary Saints Cosmas and Damian of Arabia (October 17).

~ Icon & Reading Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~