



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 ~ September 2007

Father Stephen's Message to the Faithful

A Simple Conversation about Mercy

Mitya suddenly seized the driver by the shoulders from behind. "Are you a driver? A driver?" he asked furiously.

"Yes sir." said Andrey.

"Then you know we must make way. What sort of a driver is it who never makes way for anyone, who drives on regardless and runs over people? No, a driver must not run over people and spoil people's lives, and if you've ruined someone's life, punish yourself and go away."

"Quite right, sir, you're quite right. One must not run over people or torture them... for every living creature, sir, is created by God.. But some dash along regardless..."

"To hell?" Mitya interrupted suddenly... "Tell, me, Andrey, will Mitya Karamazov go to hell or not? What do you think?"

"Don't know, sir. It depends on you, sir... You see, sir, when the Son of God was crucified and died, He went straight down to hell and set free all the sinners who was tortured there. And there went up a great moan from hell, sir, for the devils, sir, they was thinking that nobody wouldn't come there no more, no sinners, I mean, sir. And then God says to them, He says, 'Do not groan, hell, for all the great men, the rulers, the chief judges, and the rich shall come to you, and you shall be filled up as you've been all through the ages, until I come again.' ...Them were his very words."

"A folk legend! Wonderful, Andrey!"

"So you see, sir, who hell's for, but you're just like a little child, sir, that's what we think of you. And though there's no denying you're hot-tempered, sir, the Lord will forgive you for your being simple-hearted like."

"And what about you, Andrey? Will you forgive me?"

"I got nothing to forgive you for, sir. You done nothing to me."

"No, no. I mean for everyone, will you - just now - alone here on the road - will you forgive me for everyone?"

"Lord, sir, you talks so strange that I'm afraid to drive you..."

But Mitya did not hear. He was praying frantically: "O Lord, receive me with all my lawlessness, and do not judge me. Let me pass by without Thy judgement... Do not judge me because I've condemned myself. Do not judge me because I love Thee, O Lord. I am vile, but I love Thee: if Thou sendest me to hell, I shall love Thee there, and from there I shall cry that I love Thee for ever and ever... But let me, O Lord, love to the end - love here and now."

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 - September/October 2007

ELEVATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS - FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 - **NO SERVICES AT SS PETER & PAUL**

CELEBRATION OF SS PETER & PAUL FEAST DAY WITH HIS GRACE BISHOP NIKON - SATURDAY/SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 - 16 - **Divine Liturgy - 9 AM (Sunday, 9/16)**; *Parish Meal after the Divine Liturgy.* Other details to be announced.

Schedule of Other Services

AKATHIST SERVICE - EVERY WEDNESDAY - 7 PM

Church News & Reminders

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2007 - ***Please note:*** THE CHURCH FISCAL YEAR ENDS SEPTEMBER 30TH; *if at all possible, please have your dues of \$115 per person paid by that time.* Dues can be paid at any time to James Schaeffer, our Treasurer. *Thank you!*

ICON PLEDGES - Can be paid at any time to our treasurer, James Schaeffer. ***Please note:*** *when returning your Icons, please return them to the treasurer, James Schaeffer.*

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING - To be announced (usually the 1st Mon of each month). 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 August:*** *11 casseroles, 2 bags of food, and 1 bag of personal items were delivered.* 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 (with the help of 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

SS PETER & PAUL ANNUAL CLAM BAKE - Saturday, October 6 (3 PM - 6 PM) – Rain or Shine. The Clam Bake is a fun tradition at SS Peter & Paul, but we all need to pitch in and help. If you can volunteer in any way, please see **David Lane** or sign the **Volunteer sheet in the Church Hall.** *There's lots of work to be done to make this Clam Bake a success one more time!*



Prices: Lobster, \$30; Steak, \$25; Child (11-14) Hot Dog/Burger, \$5; Children 10 & under Free (accompanied by ticketed adult)

*See Dave or Alicia (or call her at 215-742-0492 or e-mail aliciaj17@mac.com) to reserve your tickets now! Deadline for purchase of tickets is **Sunday, September 30!***

Sunday School News

START OF SUNDAY SCHOOL: TO BE ANNOUNCED - The Sunday School will be divided into two classes this year. Children between the ages of 5-9 will be taught *The New Testament* and children 10 and up will learn *The Sacraments* and *The Liturgy*.

General Interest

9/11 INTERFAITH CEREMONY OF PRAYER, PEACE, AND REMEMBRANCE - Tuesday, September 11, 7:00 PM - cohosted by Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church (BVM) and Temple Beth Ami Synagogue (TBA). *This ceremony will start promptly at 7:00 PM at BVM.* There will then be a candlelight procession to nearby TBA for the ceremony's conclusion. Refreshments will follow. *Please make an ef-*

fort to attend this most inspiring and memorable event. For further information, please contact TBA at: 215- 673-2511 or e-mail: bethami9201@yahoo.com

A DISCUSSION WITH FR PETER GILLQUIST - Sunday, September 23, 4 PM at St. John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church, 237 N. 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA - There will be light refreshments served to munch on after the discussion. For further information, questions or directions, please call **Fr. Matthew** at **856-227-6915** or email at **docandrn1@verizon.net** More information on Fr Gillquist can be found on Page 6.

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:

The url is: **www.forumishqiptar.com/forumdisplay.php?f=186**

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/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 leave the information in my wicker basket in the office. Or, call Alicia at **215-742-0492** or e-mail: **alicaj17@mac.com**. The deadline for the next Bulletin is Sunday, **October 7**. Thank you! Parishioners will be able to pick up the Bulletins at the Church on Sunday **10/14/07**. 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 **September** Birthdays: **Richard Burdumy, Brunilde Gepele, Elizabeth Hansburg, Angie Kozlowski, David Lane**

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, Matthew Murianka, Joyce Dorsey, Andi Steffa, Martha Murianka, John Palmerick, Thimi Daka, Al Rifkin, Sophie Bacon, Fr Stephen Siniari, Angie Kozlowski**

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

Father Peter Gilquist

Fr. Peter Gillquist is an Archpriest in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America and chairman of the Archdiocese's department of missions and evangelism. He is the author of numerous books, including "Love Is Now," "The Physical Side of Being Spiritual," and "Becoming Orthodox." He is project director of the Orthodox Study Bible.

Fr. Peter Gillquist, a former regional director of Campus Crusade, asks rhetorically in his book "Becoming Orthodox," "whatever would possess two thousand Bible-believing, blood-bought, Gospel-preaching, Christ-centered, life-long evangelical Protestants to embrace this Orthodox faith so enthusiastically ... [to] end up embracing historic ecclesiology, liturgical worship, and sacrament?" What indeed?

An Article about Father Gilquist's Work in Albania

When the Church functions rightly, there is absolutely nothing like her on the face of the earth.

I have just returned home from Albania, the most devastated of all former Communist countries. Most of the churches were either destroyed or heavily damaged. The Cathedral in the capital, Tirana, was leveled and a 13-story hotel was built on top of it. The other Orthodox Church was stripped of all Christian symbolism, including the iconostasis and the altar, and turned into a gymnasium.

The two-lane highways that link town to town are the worst I have ever navigated. With the infrastructure in such deplorable repair, the electricity may go off two or three times a day. The water supply is iffy as well, and hot water a luxury. Buildings put up under the Communist regime are only a decade or two old, and they are already falling apart. Despite all this, the Orthodox Church in Albania is being gloriously reborn.

The catalyst behind this modern-day resurrection is Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, a man who knows how to discern the will of God and then do it. Since the fall of Communism he has built 74 new churches, renovated five monasteries and 65 Church structures, and repaired 130 other Churches. In addition, he has built a seminary and a monastery on a hill overlooking the city of Durres, at which 110 men have been trained and ordained to the clergy. In mid-December, I spent a week teaching the Bible there to 57 students.

Two American missionary families are serving in Albania—Father Luke Veronis, with his wife Faith and toddlers, and evangelical converts Nathan and Lynette Hoppe (who fell asleep in the Lord in August 2006) and their two children.

Why do I call Albania an incredible Orthodox turnaround?

1. *The joy of the people.* I expected to find hopelessness. People have existed for years in poverty, both spiritually and materially. Even after Communism's collapse ruthless investment charlatans across the country introduced a Ponzi scheme in which tens of thousands of people lost their meager life savings. Widespread political unrest again swept the country. It was against this backdrop that 900,000 refugees from the NATO bombing of Kosovo streamed into Albania last Spring. The Albanian people opened their unheated and crumbling homes to them. It was especially moving for me to meet a newly widowed woman in her 20s, whose husband had been killed in the conflict, and her two small children. So I had expected despair, instead I found a vital joy among the Christians.

In the course of my visit, Father Luke hosted a weekend retreat in mid-December for college students and seminarians. Over 100 showed up to spend time in a dilapidated hotel with neither running water nor heat. These students responded with enthusiasm to the teaching and preaching of the Gospel. You should have seen the skits on Saturday night. The kids howled with laughter. What a stark contrast to what I had feared I would find.

2. *The Indigenous nature of the Church.* The Orthodox Church of Albania is self-governing (the term for this is "autocephalous"). Even though the Archbishop and one Metropolitan -- plus several missionary clergy -- are from Greece, all of the services, the literature and the teaching is done in the Albanian language. Because they are made to feel at home, a large number of people are coming to the Orthodox Church from other backgrounds. At both the seminary and the college retreat, the majority of the people were converts, many of them from nominal Orthodox or non-religious backgrounds, some have even come from a nominal Muslim upbringing.

3. *A theology of beauty.* One of the Archbishop's prime concerns is that the Church bring beauty back into a country that has been so long un-beautiful. Make no mistake: the topography of Albania is in many places breathtaking. From the windows on the third story at the seminary you can peek out between the hills and see the sparkling Adriatic Sea. Out the windows on the other side are snow-capped mountains far in the distance. But the landscape is littered with broken-down homes and barns, trash heaps of the hulks of old cars and mud everywhere because of poor drainage. In contrast, the edifices the Archbishop orders to be built are stunning, bringing fresh beauty to the land. I was amazed by the architectural beauty and interior warmth of the seminary. It is a refuge. And the new and reconstructed Churches are breathtaking. More than 200 are opened already; many are still under construction.

Pray for the people of Albania. There is still such a long way to go. There are many hurt and Broken lives, but the turnaround is definitely underway.

When the Church functions rightly, there is absolutely nothing like her on the face of the earth. Thank God, the clergy and the faithful in Albania are getting it right.

Holy Days and Name Days in September

September 5	- Prophet Zachariah & Righteous Elizabeth; St Athanasius of Brest
September 8	- Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos
September 9	- Righteous Joachim & Anna
September 13	- Founding of Church of the Holy Sepulchre; Hieromartyr Cornelius
September 14	- Elevation of the Precious Cross
September 17	- Martyr Sophia & her Daughters: Faith, Hope & Love
September 23	- Conception of St John the Baptist; Virginmartyr Irais (Rhais)
September 24	- Protomartyr Thekla; Martyr Peter the Aleut; Martyr Juvenal of Alaska
September 25	- Repose of Ven. Sergius of Radonezh; Ven. Euphrosyne
September 26	- Repose of St John the Theologian
September 28	- Martyr Wenceslaus, Prince of the Czechs; Ven. Chariton
September 30	- Hieromartyr Gregory, Bishop of Armenia

Protomartyr & Equal of the Apostles Thekla

Commemorated on September 24

The Holy Protomartyr and Equal of the Apostles Thekla was born in the city of Iconium. She was the daughter of rich and illustrious parents, and she was distinguished by extraordinary beauty. At eighteen years of age they betrothed her to an eminent youth. But after she heard the preaching of the holy Apostle Paul about the Savior, St Thekla with all her heart came to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and she steadfastly resolved not to enter into marriage, but rather to devote all her life to preaching the Gospel.



St Thekla's fiancé complained to the prefect about the Apostle Paul, accusing him of turning his bride against him. The prefect locked up St Paul in prison.

During the night St Thekla secretly ran away from her house, bribed the prison guards by giving them all her gold ornaments, and made her way into the prison. For 3 days she sat at the feet of the Apostle Paul, listening to his fatherly precepts. Thekla's disappearance was discovered and she was brought home by force.

At his trial St Paul was sentenced to banishment from the city. St Thekla was urged to consent to the marriage, but nothing could separate St Thekla from her love for the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Her mother in an insane rage demanded from the judges a death sentence against her unyielding daughter, and St Thekla was sentenced to be burned. Without flinching, the holy martyr went into the fire and made the Sign of the Cross over herself. At this moment the Savior appeared to her, blessing her present deed, and inexpressible joy filled her holy soul.

The flames of the fire shot up high, but the martyr was surrounded by a light and the flames did not touch her. Thunder boomed, and a strong downpour of rain and hail ex-

tinguished the fire. The torturers scattered in fear. St Thekla left the city and searched for the Apostle Paul, who was hidden in a cave not far from the city.

After this, St Thekla went with them preaching the Gospel in Antioch. In this city she was pursued by a certain dignitary named Alexander, who was captivated by her beauty. St Thekla refused his offer of marriage, and so she was condemned to death for being a Christian. Twice they set loose hungry wild animals upon her, but they would not touch the holy virgin. Instead, they lay down meekly and licked her feet.

The Providence of God preserved the holy martyr unharmed through all her torments. Finally, they tied her to two oxen and began to chase her with red-hot rods, but the strong cords broke asunder like cobwebs, and the oxen ran off, leaving St Thekla unharmed. The people began shouting, "Great is the God of the Christians!" The prefect himself became terrified, realizing that the holy martyr was being kept safe by the Almighty God, Whom she served and gave orders to set St. Thekla free.

With the blessing of the Apostle Paul, St Thekla then settled in a desolate region of Isaurian Seleucia and dwelt there for many years, constantly preaching the Word of God and healing the sick through her prayer. St Thekla converted many pagans to Christ, and the Church appropriately names her as "Equal- to-the-Apostles."

When St Thekla was already a 90 year old woman, pagan sorcerers became incensed at her for treating the sick for free. They were unable to comprehend that the saint was healing the sick by the power of the grace of Christ, and they presumed that the virgin-goddess Artemis was her special helper. Envious of St Thekla, they sent their followers to defile her. When they came near her, St Thekla cried out for help to Christ the Savior, and a rock split open and hid the holy virgin, the bride of Christ.

The holy Church glorifies the Protomartyr Thekla as " the glory of women and guide for the suffering, opening up the way through every torment." From of old many churches were dedicated to her, one of which was built at Constantinople by the holy Equal of the Apostles Constantine. The Protomartyr Thekla, a prayerful intercessor for ascetics, is also invoked during the tonsure of women into monasticism.

~ Reading and Icon Courtesy of OCA Webpage ~