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Bulletin of December 3, 2006

SUNDAY/DEC. 3rd (Fish, wine & oil)
25th Sunday After Pentecost (Tone 8)
Prophet Zephaniah

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour;
Book-for-the-Month of Spiritual
Reading from the Parish Library
6:30p.m. Compline with Akathist to
St. Barbara (Dec. 4th)

TUESDAY/DEC. 5th (Wine & oil)
7:00p.m. Vespers

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 6th (Fish, wine & oil)
St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
7:00-8:30p.m. Adult Study Class: "*Christ and
the Cosmos*"

SATURDAY/DEC. 9th (Fish, wine & oil)
"Unexpected Joy" Icon of the Theotokos

9:30a.m. Akathist to Icon, "Unexpected Joy"
Confessions
2:30p.m. Church School – Middle Class
5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

SUNDAY/DEC. 10th (Fish, wine & oil)
26th Sunday After Pentecost (Tone 1)
St. Ioasaph of Belgorod

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour
Christmas Cookie Walk (Upper Hall)
Church School – Young Class;
Teen Discussion



THOUGHTS ON ST. NICHOLAS
By Fr. Thomas Hopko

On December 6th we celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, the 4th century bishop of Myra in Lycia (present day Turkey) who through the ages has come to be especially connected with the festival of Christ's birth.

Sad as it is to see St. Nicholas transformed into the red-suited Santa Claus of the secular winter "holidays," it is easy to understand why the holy bishop has become so closely connected with the festival of Christ's birth. The stories about the saint, in various times and places, all tell of the simple faith and love of the man known only for his goodness and love.

The extraordinary thing about the image of St. Nicholas in the Church is that he is not known for anything extraordinary. He was not a theologian and never wrote a word, yet he is famous in the memory of believers as a zealot for Orthodoxy accosting the heretic Arius at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea for denying the divinity of God's Son. He was not an ascetic and did no outstanding feats of fasting and vigil, yet he is praised for his possession of the "fruits of the Holy Spirit...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). He was not a mystic in our present meaning of the term but he lived daily with the Lord and was godly in all his words and deeds. He was not a prophet yet he proclaimed the Word of God, exposed the sins of the wicked, defended the rights of the oppressed and afflicted, and battled against every form of injustice with supernatural compassion and mercy. In a word, he was a good pastor, father and bishop, known especially for his love and care for the poor. Most simply put, he was a divinely good person.

LESSONS FROM MEDICAL SCIENCE: SIMPLE AND COMPOUND FRACTURES

A simple fracture is a break in the bone. A compound fracture is a sharp break in the bone and a puncture of the skin. This puncture allows exposure to organisms and a high risk of infection. Simple fractures heal faster than compound fractures.



In the spiritual life, we also experience simple and compound fractures. We experience hurt, trauma, pain and spiritual breaks. The causes can be many and varied. Sin is the break and the grace of God provides us with healing.

Compound fractures in the spiritual life are at a greater risk. Here infection and exposure take place. That is, the demons capitalize on our (simple) spiritual break and compound it. How? By making our spiritual state all the worse. One of the chief ways this is done is to convince us that 1) that the spiritual problem or break is not so great; 2) that we can take care of it ourselves without resorting to God.

How many souls there are that are fractured and only complicate their condition by not returning to God! A simple fracture will eventually heal itself. A compound fracture requires the skill of the physician. Jesus Christ is our Chief Physician and Healer. We need to see our condition and go to Him.

We must not compound our sins. We need to go to the Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion. When we think that we are okay and don't need to go to church; that we don't need frequent Confession; that we can manage on our own; when in moments of clarity we see our souls badly damaged and do nothing about it – we are victims of compound fracture.

The Church is the Hospital; the Physician is our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the place and He is the One to heal us.



Offerings for the week of Dec. 3rd

Olive Oil - in memory of Emila; in memory Of Michael; for the health and in Thanksgiving of Liliana & Laurentiu
Wine – for the health of Nicole (namesday)
Flowers - in honor of St. Nicholas

December Month Envelopes are -3

Please be mindful that three offering envelopes have been dropped for this month – Christmas Flowers, Church School and Church Restoration Funding for them is now secured in the regular Sunday envelope. Be mindful of this in making Your offerings.



Illness is a condition of brokenness sickness, disease, or some other ailment. *Spiritual illness is caused by sin (separation from God). Every sin is a repetition of Adam's sin, and with every sin we undergo the darkening and dying of the soul. If sin remains unconfessed, spiritual illness will remain untreated thus leading to death.*



Therapy is the treatment of illness or disability by means of a curative or rehabilitative process. *Spiritual therapy is found in the Church, where Jesus Christ is the Chief Physician. Healing is imparted when we ask the Physician for healing in Confession, follow the "doctor's orders" by keeping the Commandments, and with due preparation partake of His divine medicine in Holy Communion.*



Health is a condition of wholeness or soundness, free from disease or ailment. *To be healthy spiritually means to be free from the disease and brokenness of sin by being united to God and in good relation to our neighbor, and ourselves. Spiritual health was the condition of Adam before the Fall, and thanks to the redemptive work of Christ it can be our condition as well, should we desire to undergo the therapy offered by the Church.*



The Mystery of Holy Confession

Is offered every Saturday evening after Vigil (7:30p.m.) and most Saturday mornings after the Akathist (10:00a.m.). You may also make arrangement with Fr. James for Confession at another time. Call or email Father James. Anyone wishing to receive Holy Communion on the Nativity Feast (Dec. 25th) must avail themselves of Confession in this 40 Day Lent.

The Parish Synodicon: Memory Eternal!

Dec. 05, 1941 Anastasia Rilik
Dec. 05, 1978 Stefan Syubiak
Dec. 06, 1997 John Suseck Jr.
Dec. 07, 1929 Felix Kshanovsky
Dec. 07, 1972 Gregory Hriniaik
Dec. 07, 1999 Priest Jaroslav Roman
Dec. 09, 1965 Max Horebel
Dec. 09, 1970 Helen Horbel
Dec. 10, 1946 David Gerasemchuk
Dec. 10, 1956 Anthony Pawlik
Dec. 10, 1988 Michael Sofko
Dec. 10, 2004 Ann Kralovich

Helping A Mission Church to Grow

Christ the Savior Mission on Fenwick Is. In Delaware is six years old. To help them a little, we have agreed to sell their natural candles. A table is set up in the lower hall with a variety of candles and wax melt/tarts. Your offering may be placed in the basket on the table. For more information on the mission, see their website: www.orthodoxdelmarva.org. Fr. John Parsells is the Acting Rector.

Namesday Greetings

St. Barbara/Dec. 4th: Barbara Kulick, Barbara Erkman;
St. Nicholas/Dec. 6th: Nicholas Chabra, Nicholas Oliver, Nicholas Kita, Nicholas Mattei, Nicole Melnikov;
Many Blessed Years!

An Interview with Archbishop Job

On the crisis in our OCA may be found on www.ocanews.org It is dated Nov. 30th, and starts with the title, "Time is our enemy..."

Remember in Prayer

Archbishop Jovan of Ochrid (imprisoned); Lydia Seman (former parishioner); Jovanka Nestojko (former parishioner); Tatiana Onuschak (home); Mother Christophora (Ellwood City Monastery); Natalie Gripp (parishioner).

Christmas Cookie Sale – Dec. 10th

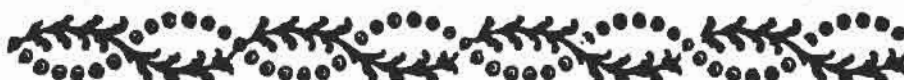
Please help us in this annual successful fund raiser. Bakers and helpers – both setting up and during the sale – are sought. Please speak with Terri Filippini.

The Parish Website: www.ssppoc.org

An advanced calendar for the year 2007 is on line. If there are cancellations of parish life activities due to weather or other reasons, they will be posted on the website at least 1 hour before the scheduled time. Please make note of this for the Winter months and check the site before staring out.

A Reflection on Forgiveness

It seems much easier for God to forgive us than for us to receive His forgiveness. God's forgiveness needs to be accepted before it is of any value to us. It is useful to consider that forgiveness is a fact, a declaration, a piece of information, not a feeling. If we wait to feel that we have been forgiven, it often means that we have lost the sense that what we did actually needed to be forgiven in the first place. When we forgive each other, as we are asked to do frequently in our Church life, it is important to remember there too that forgiveness is likely to be more significant when it runs counter to our feelings. If we say "I forgive you" and feel nothing, it likely means that what we are actually saying is that we have forgotten some particular wrong, not that we are forgiving it. When our feelings are outraged, our decision to forgive is usually much more significant. Our feelings may (or may not) catch up with our decision – but they do not affect the forgiveness, or cause it in any way.





ABOUT BEING READY TO CHANGE

***I waited patiently for the Lord: And he inclined to me,
And heard my cry. (Psalm 40:1)***

Waiting for God to act, is in some ways, the natural state of the saints and the learned behavior of the person who is experiencing spiritual growth. Waiting is also the natural state of the Church. "My eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Psalm 69:3). We have been in the last days ever since the Holy Spirit descended at the Pentecost, and this is expressed in the Church waiting. The life of the Church is an eternal vigil, watching and waiting for the Bridegroom to return.

Even so, waiting is not a passive activity – simply a void which God, in His own time, will fill. Waiting is filled with activity, not something barren and sterile. Waiting is already full of the love of God. There is a constant and unending stream of information coming from God to the Church and to the individual during this period.

There is a good deal of information given and received about personal matters – matters of the head and matters of the heart – all the things that make up our life: feelings, thoughts, facts, and figures. Some of this information requires a response on our part; and much of it does not.

While we are waiting, God sustains and cares for us. He provides us with An environment for our physical life to develop, and endows us with what is needed for our spiritual lives to develop also. The correct atmospheric pressure is as much a result of God's love for us as it the opportunity to Learn patience from some particular trial in our lives. God is interested even in the tiny details; He certainly cannot be unconcerned with the things that Challenge us.

One of the paradoxes of human existence is that there is no where God is not. Even though we naturally assume that He is more concerned with Certain parts of our lives than with others. God is not nearly as restrictive as we are. One of the closest analogies I have come across is that God is fascinated with us – who we are and what we do. No detail of our lives is too small for His infinite interest.

We cannot brush against God without being changed. In the case of the woman who was healed when she touched Jesus surreptitiously in the crowd; the encounter with God changed her life. So it is with us. Every meeting with God, no matter how casual or seemingly insignificant, involves both judgment and transformation.

- from "Steps of Transformation" by Fr. Meletios Webber

A COMMENTARY ON PSALM 118 by ST. THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

v. 17: Give reward unto Thy servant; quicken me and I will keep Thy word.

At the beginning and also in the course of spiritual life, a certain weariness is felt: no results are seen, only hardships. A state of numbness of the soul prevails, as if God's grace has left; this state of insensibility is given to let a person realize its helplessness and to seek deliverance from God only, with patience and prayer.

The Creation



recognizes its Creator



When Jesus was crucified, this is how the earth reacted.

From Scripture

It is now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole and until the ninth hour, while the sun was eclipsed.

Luke 23:44-45

The curtain of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

Matt 28: 51-53

The church hymns speak of the horror and grief of every created thing.

From Church Hymns

The earth trembled... when Thou, O Christ, my Saviour, unsetting Sun, didst veil Thy body in the grave.....All creation cried out in deepest dread: There is none holy, save Thee, O Lord.... The sun and moon darkened, O my Saviour, and like

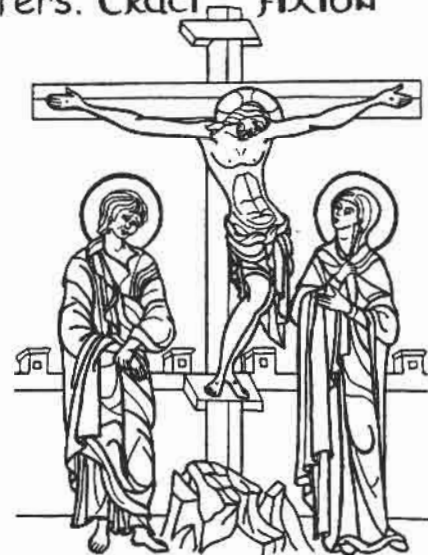
faithful servants they clothed themselves in the dark garments of mourning. The Praises

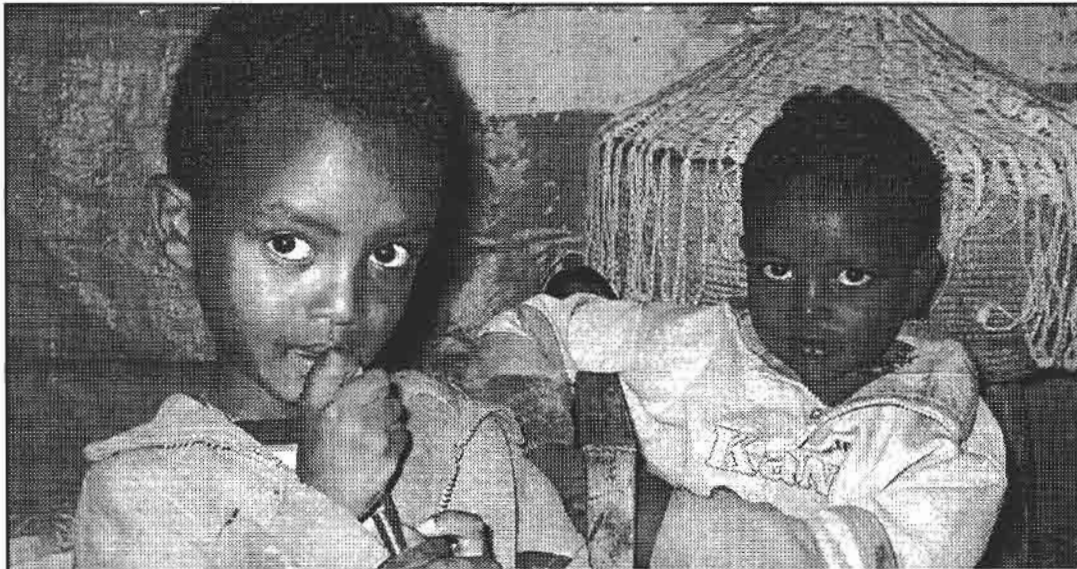
From Icons

In some icons, the sun and moon are pictured in the top corner covered as if in grief.

Nothing of the created world could comprehend how Christ could be crucified. Even inanimate nature seemed to be shaken by this terrible thing. Why?

Because Christ was the Creator of all, and here the Creator is slain and laid in a tomb. Nothing is more natural than for the creation to respond when its Creator suffers. CRUCIFIXION





Make Christmas a True Feast

As Orthodox Christians, we celebrate the birth of our Savior as the "Feast of the Nativity" and exchange gifts with one another. For too many children though, Christmas will be just one more day to endure in a life of hardship. But your support of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) brings life-sustaining programs to children and families suffering from war, poverty, disease and natural disasters. This holiday season, make Christmas a true feast for thousands of children by giving to IOCC.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation Amount:

\$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 other \$ _____

Enclosed please find my check made payable to IOCC.

Please charge credit card for the amount indicated above:

MasterCard Visa AmEx Discover

Card Number: _____ Exp. _____

Signature: _____



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