

SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH
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BULLETIN OF NOVEMBER 30, 2008

SUNDAY/NOVEMBER 30th
24th Sunday After Pentecost (Tone 7)
Apostle Andrew

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
 Coffee Hour; Church School
 6:30p.m. Vespers

MONDAY/DECEMBER 1st
St. Philaret the Merciful

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
 7:00p.m. Outreach Committee Meeting

WEDNESDAY/DECEMBER 3rd
 6:30p.m. Akathist with Akathist to
St. Barbara (Dec. 4th)

7-8:30p.m. Adult Study Class:
 "Why Did God Become Man?"

FRIDAY/DECEMBER 5th

6:30p.m. Memorial for Fr. Jaroslav Roman
 7:00p.m. Vespers; Confessions

SATURDAY/DECEMBER 6th
St. Nicholas of Myra

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
 5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 7th Sunday
25th After Pentecost (Tone 8)
St. Ambrose of Milan

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
 Coffee Hour; Church School
 Book-for-the-Month from Parish Library



Tropar To St. Nicholas Tone 4

You did appear to your flock as a rule of faith
 An image of humility and a teacher of
 abstinence.

Because of your lowliness, the heights were open
 to you

Because of your poverty, riches were granted to
 you.

O Holy Father Nicholas, intercede with Christ
 our God, that our souls may be saved.

Nativity 40 Day Lent

(November 15th – December 25th)

A Fast is held from meat, dairy, fish, wine and
 oil. Certain days allow for modifications, see
 your parish wall calendar or below.

Sunday	Nov. 30	Fish, wine and oil
Monday	Dec. 01	
Tuesday	Dec. 02	Wine and oil
Wednesday	Dec. 03	
Thursday	Dec. 04	Wine and oil
Friday	Dec. 05	Fish, wine and oil
Saturday	Dec. 06	Fish, wine and oil
Sunday	Dec. 07	Fish, wine and oil

Christmas Cookie Walk

On Sunday, December 14th at 11:00a.m., the Annual Cookie Walk will be held in our Lower Hall. This is a very good fund-raiser. Please sign-up on the sheet on the vestibule stand if you plan to bake something. For more information, contact Jill Peterson (908-541-9586).

Candle Offerings Increase

The last candle price increase was in June 2003, five years ago. As of December 1st, the small candles will be \$2.00; the large candles, \$3.00 and the 7-Day Vigils, \$5.00.

Memory Eternal!

To Anastasia Barna, who reposed in the Lord, November 22nd. Our sympathy is expressed to her sisters, Helen Perry and Sophie Barna.

Offerings for the week of Nov. 23rd

Olive Oil – in memory of Michael and Justina;

In memory of Joan; in memory of Emilia and Vaschen.

Wine – in memory of Anastasia.

Flowers - for the health and protection of Alexander (birthday and namesday).

Offerings for the week of Nov. 30th

Olive Oil – in memory of Michael and Justina; in memory of Vaschen.

Wine – in memory of Joan.

Green Tip

To save energy, set your water heater to 120 degrees or less. You might also wrap your water heater in an insulation blanket.

2009 Parish Wall Calendars

May be picked up in the church vestibule. One per household please.

2009 Weekly Offering Sheet

For donations of Olive Oil (\$5), Wine (\$10) or Flowers (\$20) is located on the vestibule stand. Please place your offering in an envelope with notation when you sign up.

Cancellations Due to Weather

The Parish Website will indicate any changes to the schedule as necessitated by the weather.

Parish Synodicon – Memory Eternal!

40 Days Dec. 27, 2008	Vaschen Sarichisian
40 Days Dec. 31, 2008	Anastasia Barna
November 30, 1930	Athanasius Klebanovich
December 05, 1941	Anastasia Rilik
December 05, 1978	Stephen Syubiak
December 06, 1997	John Suseck Jr.
December 07, 1929	Felix Kshanovsky
December 07, 1972	Gregory Hriniaik
December 07, 1999	Fr. Jaroslav Roman

Memorial Services

(+) Fr. Jaroslav Roman, Dec. 5th: Fri. 6:30p.m.
(+) Ann Kralovich, Dec. 10th: Wed. 6:30p.m.
(+) Fr. Alexander Schmemann, Dec. 12th: Fri. 6:30p.m. (25th anniversary of repose)

Remember in Prayer

Michael Warin, Richard Nevitt, and Alexandra Tereby. All are in their homes.

Adult Study Classes – Dec. 3rd and 10th: Wednesdays at 7:00p.m.

These two classes will focus on the Mystery of the "Incarnation," Why did God become man? How did this happen? What has been the result? A study to help us prepare for and celebrate the Nativity of our Lord.

Namesday Greetings

St. Andrew/Nov. 30th: Andrew Long, Andrea Hunchar, Robert Erkman and Andrew Keller.

St. Barbara/Dec. 4th: Barbara Kulick; Barbara Erkman.

St. Sabbas/Dec. 5th: Saba Kaliashvili.

St. Nicholas/Dec. 6th: Nicholas Kita, Nicholas Oliver, Nicholas Mattei.

Many Blessed Years!

Mid-Week Mailing

In the middle of the week – usually Wednesday or Thursday, an email is sent to some 50 of our parishioners and friends with information, latest parish news, prayer requests and a few inspirational words. To be added to the list, let Father James know or subscribe on the parish website: www.ssppoc.org

CAN YOU SLEEP WHILE THE WIND BLOWS?

Years ago, a farmer owned land along the Atlantic seacoast. He constantly advertised for hired hands. Most people were reluctant to work on farms along the Atlantic. They dreaded the awful storms that raged across the Atlantic, wreaking havoc on the buildings and crops. As the farmer interviewed applicants for the job, he received a steady stream of refusals.

Finally, a short, thin man, well past middle age, approached the farmer. "Are you a good farm hand?" the farmer asked him. "Well, I can sleep when the wind blows," answered the little man.

Although puzzled by this answer, the farmer, desperate for help, hired him. The little man worked well around the farm, busy from dawn to dusk, and the farmer felt satisfied with the man's work. Then one night the wind howled loudly in from offshore. Jumping out of bed, the farmer grabbed a lantern and rushed next door to the hired hand's



sleeping quarters. He shook the little man and yelled, "Get up! A storm is coming! Tie things down before they blow away!" The little man rolled over in bed and said firmly, "No sir. I told you, I can sleep when the wind blows."

Enraged by the response, the farmer was tempted to fire him on the spot. Instead, he hurried

outside to prepare for the storm. To his amazement, he discovered that all of the haystacks had been covered with tarpaulins. The cows were in the barn, the chickens were in the coops, and the doors were barred. The shutters were tightly secured. Everything was tied down.

Nothing could blow away. The farmer then understood what his hired hand meant, so he returned to his bed to also sleep while the wind blew.

Moral of the Story

When you're prepared, spiritually, mentally, and physically, you have nothing to fear. Can you sleep when the wind blows through your life? The hired hand in the story was able to sleep because he had secured the farm against the storm. We secure ourselves against the storms of life by grounding ourselves in the Word of God.

By an unknown author

SAINT PHILARET THE MERCIFUL

From a village of Paphlagonia (modern Turkey), Philaret was at first a man of some substance, but, as a result of his constant almsgiving, he became utterly destitute. He was not afraid of poverty, and went on with his charitable works with trust in the Lord who has said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy", paying no attention to the disapproval of his wife and children. Once, when he was ploughing in his meadow, a man came to him with the news of the death of his ox in harness, and of his inability to plough with only one ox, so Philaret unharnessed his own and gave it to him. He gave away his remaining horse to a man who was called away to battle, and the calf from his remaining cow - and, when he saw how the cow pined after her calf, gave the man the cow as well. And so the aged Philaret was left hungry in an empty house. But he prayed to God, entrusting himself to Him. God does not abandon the righteous man, allowing him to be shamed in his hope. At that time, the Empress Irene was on the throne with her young son Constantine and, in accordance with the custom of the time, the Empress sent men through the whole Empire to find the best and most distinguished maiden to wed her son. By divine Providence, these men happened upon Philaret's home and beheld his very beautiful and modest grand-daughter Maria and they took her to Constantinople. The Emperor was well-pleased with her and took her to wife, and brought Philaret and all his family to the capital, showering honor and wealth upon them. Philaret did not become proud in this change of fortune but, with gratitude to God, performed still greater deeds of charity than before, remaining thus for the rest of his days. At the age of ninety, he called all his children to him and, having blessed them and instructed them to cleave to God and His Law, foretold to each of them how their lives would develop, just as our forefather Jacob did aforetime. When he had done this, he went to a monastery and there gave his soul into God's hands. At his death, his face shone like the sun and a sweet fragrance arose from his body, and miracles were worked over his relics. This righteous man of God went to his rest in 797. His wife and all his children and grandchildren lived and died in the Lord.



From the Prologue by Saint Nikolai of Zicha

THE ADVENT SEASON



A season of six weeks opens the Christmas period. The season begins on November 15. It is said that this period originated in Gaul (today's France) in the fourth century and the duration of the season varied from four to seven weeks, until an ecumenical council established the season to be 40 days before Christmas as a fasting period — Advent).

Although as Orthodox Christians we do not call this period Advent as it is called in the Roman Catholic Church, the name seems to be proper; it consists of two Latin words: "ad venire", meaning "to come to." Advent's message is that God is coming to the World in the person of Jesus Christ.

This coming of Christ into the world can be understood as a past experience, a present experience or a future experience.

Past Experience

We may think of Christ Who came into the world 2000 years ago as the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament. This is a past experience and what we do every year at Christmas time is only a commemoration, an anniversary of that event. It is good to believe that God came to Earth on Christmas day, twenty one centuries ago; it is good to stress the divinity of Jesus at a time when many believe that Jesus was just a good guy, a revolutionist, a victim of the social condition of His time. Some call Him a genius, a superstar, but many do not even consider Him God.

Many Christians are not convinced of the necessity of God's Incarnation, which was not only for the salvation of the human race, because God could have saved the world in other ways too, but His Nativity is the crowning of God's act of creation. The entire Universe has been transfigured, sanctified, deified, for the entire Universe participated in His Incarnation. He included in His body all the physical and chemical elements that constitute the bodies of men, plants, animals and of all the Universe. When the Bible talks about the creation of man out of dust it involves necessarily the idea that man is comprised out of all the elements of the universe — he is a synthesis of the Universe, a crowning of God's act of creation. That is why God became man, so He can transform and sanctify the entire Universe.

St. Paul says that God did not want to become angel; He became man, making Himself like us in all aspects except sin. Sin was not given to us by God; sin is a fruit of our own choice.

The Bible also says that man was created in the image of God. It is a logical consequence of the act of creation. If man is like God than God had to become man in order to demonstrate the truthfulness of His creation.

As a young man I was revolted against God. I loved Jesus Christ very much, I loved His personality, His sacrifice, I loved the theology of love, but I could not understand the "Ten Commandments": "do not do this, do not do that, you shall not, you shall not, you shall not." It was easy for me to see why the Jews did not keep the Commandments. It was easy for God to say: "do this, do that, do not do this, do not do that." But we are people, we live in the flesh, we fight temptations. There seemed to be an abyss between man and God that could not be bridged. Only later I understood that Christ, through His Incarnation bridged the gap between man and God. He became man to show us that the "Ten Commandments" can be fulfilled even in our human condition; they are not impossible for us. "I am the Truth, I am the Way, I am the Life" If man was created in the image of God then God must resemble man, He must have everything man has, except He does not have sin.

Present Experience

Most people do not understand that the coming of God is a present experience. They think that Christmas is just a commemoration like Lincoln's birthday or Washington's birthday. Christmas is not a birthday. God must be understood eternally. Past and future do not exist in God's Person. When Moses asked God "what is your name", the answer was "I am

the Existing." He who lives eternally. And if God is infinite, His acts, His gestures, are like himself — eternal.

For instance, when we say that God has created the world, we understand that His work continues. The world is not finished and will never be; God knows no rest; He works continuously always creating new species of plants, animals, inspiring developments in science and so on.

When we say that God was Incarnate that means He Incarnates in each one of us, everyday, making us similar to Him. God may come to you this Christmas in the form of rebirth, either for the first time, if you did not believe in Him, or as a renewed birth with a deeper understanding of His divinity.

Future Experience

As a future experience, Christmas means that Christ will return unpredictably at the end of the world. "He will come again, in glory to judge the living and the dead."

Since Advent promises the sure coming of the Lord, its message is "prepare, be ready." The Lord is coming whether the world is ready or not. Then how does Advent suggest that we be prepared? Through repentance, prayer and patience.

Advent is a time to become aware of one's sins; it is a penitential season, originally known as the "winter lent." During this season weddings are not allowed, not for the wedding itself, because marriage is a sacrament, but because of the social aspect of the marriage.

In the Winter Lent period, before Christmas, we must be filled with spiritual joy and hope. Advent stresses; not so much fulfillment, as anticipation of fulfillment: the Lord is coming. We must be like a bride, anticipating the wedding day. It is the quiet joy of anticipation and not the joy of celebrating a past event.

Of all the seasons, Advent is the most difficult to observe because of the competition with the commercial world. The secular world, in fact, celebrates Christmas during Advent, not on Christmas day. On Christmas day everything is over. Even the churches fall pray to this secularization by decorating the churches and singing Christmas carols weeks before Christmas.

The coming of Christ is a culmination of a historical process coming down through the history of Israel. This is the climax of the plan of salvation. The Old Testament is a record of God's preparing the world for the coming of His son. So Advent is the Old Testament period of the church year. The child born in a manger in Bethlehem was none other than the Son of God, the promised "Messiah." Advent makes sense only as a time of preparation for the Messiah. This child is "very God of very God." In Him God invaded the history of mankind.

Because it is possible for Him to be born again in our hearts, at Christmas, it is important that we strictly observe this lent and be spiritually prepared for His coming. ■

Arhimandrite Roman Braga

THE BURNING BUSH

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TITHES AND FIRSTFRUITS: AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING

“Honor the Lord with your substance and with firstfruits of all your produce” (Proverbs 3:9).

In ancient Israel, the Church of the Old Testament, the law of Moses instituted the **“tithe”**, also called the offering of the **“firstfruits.”** “Tithe” is merely the Old English word for **“tenth.”** Israel’s tithe was an assessment of one-tenth of all produce for maintenance of the Temple, the support of the priesthood, and the sustenance of the poor (Numbers 18:24; Deuteronomy 12:11 and 26:12). Usually this portion was rendered from the first harvested of the crop, hence the title **“firstfruits.”**

These activities are still necessary parts of Church life. Parishes need suitable places for worship, education, and fellowship; we are still responsible for our priest’s livelihood; and the Lord continually reminds us of our obligation to the needy. Therefore, the practice of good stewardship, represented by the tithe, retains its importance.

The motive behind the old Testament tithe, however, was not merely pragmatic. For the ancient Hebrews tithing was never merely an efficient way to raise money. Rather, they understood that their relationship with God required them to dedicate a substantial portion of the fruit of their labor to His purposes.

Our basic understanding as Orthodox Christians, derived from the Old Testament, is that everything comes from God. All that we have or hope to possess, beginning with life itself, is His gift. We acknowledge this fact in our spiritual life through prayer and fasting and through our struggle to follow His commandments. With regard to our material blessings, we confess that he is their true source by **returning a portion to God**, to worship, the support of those called to His special service, and the aid for the poor. By thus giving a portion of our wealth for His purposes, we **sanctify the remainder**. Through offering a part, we bring the whole our lives into harmony with God’s will.



The Old Testament Law embodied this admission of God’s sovereignty, in the tithe. Nothing in this is changed by the coming of Christ. Tithing is not a purely Old Testament observance revived by Protestants and, therefore, a thing we Orthodox Christians need not worry about. It is true that many Old Testament practices are now understood in a spiritual way fulfilled, transformed, or displaced by Christ’s coming, death and Resurrection. It is also true that, in recent times, some Protestants have stressed tithing as the norm of giving. But in reality, neither of these objections applies to the tithe or denies its validity.

Our Lord criticized the way in which his opponents tithed, but in so doing, He confirmed the tithe itself: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe your mint, dill, and cumin, but have omitted the weightier matters of the law judgment, mercy, and faith. These you ought to have done, without omitting the others” (Matthew 23:23).

Likewise, on of the earliest witnesses to Holy Tradition, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (also called, “The Didache), applies the firstfruits to the Church. “Every firstfruit of the produce of

the wine-vat and of the threshing floor, of cattle and flocks, you will take and give as the firstfruits to your prophets; for they are your chief priests...if you prepare food, take and give the firstfruit according to the commandment. Likewise, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take and give the firstfruit to the prophets. Take also the firstfruit of money and clothing and of every possession, as it may seem right to you, and give according to the commandment."

St. Irenaeus, writing toward the end of the 2nd century, notes that Christ Himself "gave directions to His disciples to offer the firstfruits of His own created things not as if He stood in need of them, But that they might be themselves neither unfruitful nor ungrateful."

St. John Chrysostom (+407) contends that the tithe is more binding on us than the Jews. In one of his sermons, he notes that under the Old Testament tithing was the norm. Among Christians, however, it has become a cause of amazement; we exclaim in wonder, "Why, so-and-so tithes!" St. John finds this a sad reflection on our piety and ends with the warning, "if it was a danger to neglect the tithe then, how serious, it must be now!"

As we said, the Old Testament saints did not see the tithe merely as a way of organizing fund-raising for the Temple and clergy, but as part of their relationship with God. Similarly, we cannot regard our giving merely as providing for our parish's material needs. We must appreciate the spiritual importance of tithing, as the return to the Lord of a portion of His blessings through which we sanctify the remainder for our own use. Thus we acknowledge the lord's claim upon the whole of our life and affirm that the focus of our existence is not of this world but the Kingdom to come.

The tithe, one-tenth, is the **ideal of stewardship** set forth in Scripture in the Old Testament tithe, and in Tradition, represented by the Didache, St. Irenaeus, and St. John Chrysostom. At first, for those not used to the idea of tithing, this amount may seem staggering. The best way to begin is to **adopt a lower percentage and then increase it over time**. First, we should accept the underlying principle behind tithing: that we should not give an arbitrary amount that our contributions should represent a proportion of our income. Once we establish a certain percentage (for example 3%-5%) as our starting point, we can then increase it by one percent a year until we reach the tithe. From the beginning, however, we must adopt the idea that we give a percentage of our treasure; we cannot base it on impulse, giving "a little something" from what "we have left over". Instead, our offering should represent "the firstfruits of our produce" offered because we want to show **our gratitude to God** for His blessings, and because we **acknowledge our part in His work** of redeeming the world.

Fr. Dmitri Cozby

The Time to Tithe is Now: It is a Spiritual Adventure

You will never be in a better position to tithe than you are today. Whether you can tithe has relatively little to do with the amount of your income or the number of your financial obligations. The person who says "After I pay all my bills, I can't afford to tithe," is telling the truth. He or she simply has the cart before the horse. None of us could afford to tithe with what's left. Tithing (10% giving) is a matter of putting first things first, taking our tithe out first, and then wisely managing the rest of our income in a way in which we still pay our bills.

