

SAINTS PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 15, 2013



THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 15

Holy Forefathers

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

Church School/Teens

11:15a.m. Mission Meeting for Parishioners

MONDAY/DECEMBER 16

7:00p.m. Vespers and Anointing with
Oil from tomb of **St. Dionysius of
Zakynthos (Dec. 17)**

TUESDAY/DECEMBER 17

7:00p.m. Adult Study Class:
"Guarding the Mind and Heart"

THURSDAY/DECEMBER 19

6:30p.m. 40th Day Memorial for
(+ Anastasia Sokol)

7:00p.m. Compline; Confession

FRIDAY/DECEMBER 20

Pre-Feast of Nativity Begins

3:00p.m. Confessions

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

SATURDAY/DECEMBER 21

9:30a.m. Akathist; Confessions

3:00p.m. Confessions

5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

SUNDAY /DECEMBER 22

St. Anastasia

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
Church School

5:30p.m. Compline; Confessions

On the Second Sunday Before the Nativity of our Lord, we celebrate the Holy Forefathers. These are the holy men and women of the Old Testament who shone forth in righteousness.

God worked great signs and wonders through our Holy Forefathers, to prepare for the Entrance into the world of His Son, born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary.

These righteous men and women responded to the call of God, served Him with devotion, and many of them fervently anticipated the coming of the Messiah, the Promised One.

As we remember them on this day, we too, seek to respond to God's call to us, to lift up our hearts in thankful prayer to Him for His promises and to expectantly prepare for the celebration of the coming of Christ into our lives, in an ever more profound and intimate way.

Mentioned in the hymns of this feast day are the following saints of the Old Testament: Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Issac and Jacob and his twelve sons, known as the Twelve Patriarchs. Among the women saints we find, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachael, Judith among others. All the Prophets are named such as Elias, Isaiah, Daniel, Moses, and others down to St. John the Baptist. The King-Priest Melchizedek, Job, David and the Three Youths – Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego are also hymned.

Offerings Week of December 15

Olive Oil: in memory of Michael, Justina, Rosalia, and Anastasia; in memory of Vaschen and Emilia; for the health of John and Vera.

Wine: for Ana and Mark (birthdays); for Sarah, Rachael and Rebecca (Names days).

Flowers: for the health of Nicholas (birthday); for the health of Antoniou and Nicholas.

Parish Synodicon: Memory Eternal!

Dec. 16, 1933 Vladimir Shultz

Dec. 16, 1993 Ann Warin

Dec. 18, 1980 Joseph Pituck

Dec. 20, 1962 Michael Popko

Dec. 20, 1980 Anna Martin

Dec. 21, 1946 Helen Shemoskovich

Dec. 21, 1997 Nadia Marchuk

Dec. 21, 2006 Nicholas Chabra

Coffee Hour Hosting

Dec. 15 (fast) Kita, Nevitt, Keller

Dec. 22 (fast) Inga, Eka, Marina & Nona

Dec. 29 Motoviloff, Torrisi, Kachek & Stone

Ushers Schedule

Dec. 15 D. Fedechko & C. Dunaenko

Dec. 22 E. Sarchisian & A. Moldoveanu

Dec. 29 E. Sarchisian & A. Moldoveanu

Javier Available – Work Projects

Speak with Fr. James.

Nativity Lent: Nov. 15- Dec. 24

This 40 Day Lent is observed to prepare us for the Nativity of our Lord Feast, Dec. 25th. A Fast is observed from meat, dairy, fish, wine and oil. On certain days, we are permitted fish, or wine or oil. You Parish Wall Calendar and the Monthly Bulletin indicates this mitigation. The Nativity Lent is not “an option,” but part of the expected discipline we adhere to. Questions or concerns you have may be addressed to your spiritual father. The Nativity Lent ends after the Divine Liturgy on December 25th.

The Mysteries of Confession & Communion

In this period of the 40 Days, all the faithful should prepare for the reception of these Holy Mysteries of the Church. Those planning to

receive the Holy Gifts (Communion) for Nativity of the Lord (Dec. 25), must go to Confession in the time period of November or December.

2014 Wall Calendars

Each household be sure to secure one calendar on the table in church. Thanks.

Forth-Coming Calendar

On our Parish Website, the 2014 calendar for the year is now posted – subject to changes. Please consult it as you arrange your own calendar.

Jan. 06 Theophany & Blessing of Waters

Jan. 07 thru Feb. 09 Blessing of Homes (short season – arrange your blessing early)

Jan. 12 Christmas Yolka

Jan. 23 Parish Council

Feb. 02 Meeting of our Lord

Feb. 09 Annual Parish Meeting

Feb. 22 Parish Workshop on Church Growth

Mar. 02 Beginning of Great Lent

Winter Weather Alerts

If it is necessary to change services, classes or events that are scheduled, due to weather, the information will be posted at least 1 hour prior to the event 1) on the parish website 2) on Face Book, “Friends of Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church,” and 3) by Parish Listing Group E-Mail. Although the roads may be good, concern must also be given to freezing-up on the church grounds. Before setting out, check for any posted changes.

2014 Coffee Hour Hosting In Preparation

Please speak asap with Jill Peterson (908-541-9586) (jap2002@optonline.net) in regard to changes in the scheduled team listings. We are seeking some new members to join or form teams. Our Coffee Hours are delightful! Please be part of this important ministry Many thanks to all our present team hosts!

Names Day: Many Blessed Years!

2nd Sunday Before Nativity/Dec. 15: Sarah Oliver, Rachael Oliver, Rebecca Oliver, Sarah Fedechko.

ADDRESS OF BISHOP MICHAEL
TO THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY
NOVEMBER 12, 2013
(Part One of Two)

My Beloved Con-celebrants, the Devout Clergy of our Diocese; Beloved Monastics, Deacons, Seminarians and Matushki; Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Faithful of the Diocese; Beloved Delegates and Observers to this Assembly, Friends and Guests: *Glory to Jesus Christ!*

As I was considering a theme for this Diocesan Assembly, I wanted to select one that would be equally as important to our life as a Diocese, and equally as compelling in our spiritual "life in Christ", as the two previous ones I offered – *"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many"* and *"To Know Christ – and To Make Him Known."* What could I use to define who we are as Orthodox Christians in New York and New Jersey; what ought I to say about what we ought to be doing as the local Church in this part of 21st century America? I have chosen the theme from a well-known song from some time ago: "WE ARE FAMILY."

Evidence from Scripture

In the New Testament, the Church is not referred to as "a building" – never referred to as "a business," for in fact, having been expelled from the Temple and the synagogues rather early on, Christians didn't have their own places of worship for three centuries; instead, they met "in the homes" of the faithful.

What the Scriptures and the Tradition of the early Christians present us with as "the Church" are the notions of a "living Body," a "household," a "family." When St. Paul was still the Jewish persecutor of the Church, Saul, he was en route one day to Damascus with authority to have arrested those who were known as Christians – for opposing the Hebrew faith and disrupting the Roman order. On that road, he was struck down and blinded by a great light, and a voice called out from Heaven: *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* In response, Saul replied, *"Who are You, Lord?"* And the Lord said, *"I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting."* The Son of God identified Himself, equated Himself, with His people – the first Christians – and from that Conversion Experience Paul came to understand in his thinking, and to equate in his writings, the Church, as the Body of Christ, with our Lord as the Head, and we as the members.

In explaining the relationship and the love between the members of the Trinity, our Lord revealed Yahweh as Father ... and Himself as Son. And He showed the Son's perfect obedience to the Father (something Adam had failed to do); because of His perfect love for the Father. Christ taught His disciples to pray, calling upon God as "Father." In the Incarnation, God the Son experienced the love of a Mother – the ever-Virgin Mary. In His childhood in Nazareth, He lived in the family of the Theotokos and Joseph the Betrothed. In His ministry He referred to His followers as His "brethren." The image and language of family.

Carrying forth this imagery, and based on his theology of the Church as the Body of Christ – with the faithful as its members – and with the experience of Christians gathering in people's homes for worship and the Eucharist, Saint Paul uses the Greek word "oikia" – household – to define the Church ... a word that means those of faith in a given home ... the whole family – often, but not always – the father, the mother, the children, the grandparents and other relatives, and the

servants! The word “ikea”, which we use in modern America for the store where we buy household furnishings, comes from that Greek word.

Based on that Greek word for “household” – “oikia” – are the words “parokia” for parish – a group of households ... and “diokia” for the Diocese – a group of parishes. These are units of faithful, of families – brothers and sisters in Christ, each headed by a spiritual father – a bishop or a presbyter. Paul himself tells the Corinthians, “You have many teachers, but not many fathers ... today I have become your father through the Gospel” (I Corinthians 4:15).

The Family of Faith

It goes without saying that the Scripture presents with great reverence the ideal of “family.” For example, there is only one commandment that evokes a blessing: God tells us from atop Mount Sinai, “Honor your father and mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exodus 20:12).

The Christian Scriptures elevate Marriage to a Sacrament, a Mystery of God’s presence, comparing the husband-wife relationship to that of the Lord and His People, i.e. Christ and the Church. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Saint Paul elaborates upon the duties of Christian children to their parents ... and parents to their children: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) ... that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth ... And ... “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6: 1-4).

And great Saints of the Church, such as John Chrysostom of Constantinople and Theophan the Recluse of Russia, expounded upon the responsibility of raising our children in the faith, keeping our families in the Church: “This, then, is our task: to educate ourselves and our children in Godliness,” the golden-mouthed preacher of Byzantium tells us.

The Saint also encourages us to see the Church as our “home” where we come each Vigil and Liturgy – each weekend and on the feast days – to worship and pray to and have communion with Our Father, the Heavenly God, out of love for Him as His children. And, the Saint continues, each of our homes should be a “little church,” where we pray together, learn the Scriptures, sing the hymns of the day, and read the lives of the Saints, as a family every day.

I am often asked how it is possible to raise a family in the faith, keep them in the Church, in a rhythm of life that is so busy, so involved, so consumed with the things of the world. Certainly, in my time, parents could order their children to Church – this is my house, these are my rules; if you don’t like them, you can leave ... That rule of force might have worked long ago, but too many kids have left the house and the Church ... signifying that it no longer serves as a workable model.

Perhaps a better model would be that of example ... parents setting the tone ... and that of family tradition – keeping together, living together, the teaching of the Church taught in the pages of Scripture, and exemplified in the lives of the Saints. We need to say: this is our family tradition – we pray together before and after every meal; we pray each evening together as a family; we read together as a family from the Scriptures and discuss them; on Wednesdays and Fridays, we eat spaghetti or pirogi or shrimp, etc.; every Saturday, we clean the house or cut the lawn, and go to Vespers; every Sunday, we come to Church School, Liturgy and coffee hour, and then we go to visit

Grandma. That's our family's tradition; they may do something different next door, but this is what we do. But – both parents have to be the example; if one isn't, then the children will learn that they too can do something else.

This of course is an ideal ... but it can also serve as a foundation. Certainly the teen years will be challenging ones, and the college years even more difficult – which is why it is so important for parents to be sure that their children are connected to a parish and an OCF when they go off to college; otherwise, it will be like sending toddlers to play in traffic. And even if our children stray from the ideal, like in the parable, as the loving Father of the prodigal son, we need to keep the door of our home and our hearts ... and our Church ... “open” so that they know they can come “home” to a place where they will still be loved and will still receive the ring and the robe and the banquet. The ideal of family.

The Model of the Parish

This basic unit of “household” or “family” is now multiplied in the membership of the parish. As mentioned above, with God as our Heavenly Father, we are brothers and sisters of Christ, related not by human flesh and blood, but by the Blood of Christ which purchased us as His own ... and which flows through our veins by our reception of the Holy Eucharist. It is in the Church that we are united to Him and to each other – in a communion of love, like the Holy Trinity – by eating the One Bread of Life and drinking of the One Cup of Immortality in the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist. This is what makes us “members” of His Church – not dues. And the closer we come to Christ, in the words of Abba Dorotheus, the closer we come to each other. The more we love Him, the more we “love one another” as He loves us.

This vision of the parish as a family in Christ continues the image of our theology. The family of the parish is headed by the priest – our spiritual father, our “father in Christ.” And as God's children, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. This language presupposes the basis of the “family” unit – the very basis of the Church – LOVE. For too long, the priest was seen as an employee of the Parish Council, a hired hand of the community, who did his work under the watchful eyes of laypersons, who paid his salary and often chose to cut it if parish giving was down. This is a far cry from the “spiritual father” model where the rector is the head of the household, and we are his spiritual children. In this latter understanding, in the family of the parish, Father's word is sought and respected; his views are taken under serious consideration and most often accepted because they are the teaching of the Church. There may be disappointments and disagreements, but as our father, he would never be thrown out of the family; his children will always provide for the welfare and needs of him and his family, as he provides for their spiritual welfare and needs.

At the same time, adopting this model means the bishop and the priest will not be a despot or dictator, a ruler or controller, but a servant-father, a loving father, a spiritual father – who cares for every one of his children – loves them equally (although not always the same) – and works tirelessly to keep them all in the safe haven of the Ark of Salvation – the Holy Church – the Family of Christ – and seeks endlessly to bring new souls to membership in the Body of Christ, the family of faith – on the path to becoming imitators of the Saints, closer to Christ, more like God – en route to the Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Germanos of Constantinople tells us that every bishop and priest's epitrachilion (stole) used to be made of sheep's wool – to remind them that each fiber

represented one of the flock – every one of whom is always to be close to his heart, always to be in his love.

The model can help us think “outside the box” of our difficult, at best, dues-assessment system for finances. In a family, those members in their prime, who are employed, have the responsibility of paying the mortgage, improving the house, providing human services, maintaining the grounds, etc., not only for themselves, but also for the youngest members of the family who are still students and the elderly who are now in retirement. In our parish family, we (who are in our prime, who are employed) need to joyfully give our “first offering unto the Lord” like Abel, who offered the first gift ever accepted by God. Each of us needs to offer, for instance, Monday’s first hour of wages – each week, every week, toward the expenses needed to keep our parish family afloat. And when we need a new roof, it is we who make the sacrifices to provide for that extraordinary expense. Yes, it is our turn now to be the chief providers for the family ... one day, when we are in retirement, our children will take their rightful place in caring for our needs.

Likewise, using this model, we can think of the great joy we experience in our own personal household, when each new person joins our family – our eldest child’s fiancée, their marriage, the birth of their children, their baptism, new neighbors we “adopt”, the orphan we adopt, etc. These are great moments of our life ... We should seek this same joy by inviting others we know and who are our friends, especially those who have no parish they belong to, to join our family in Christ – to share in the Marriage Feast of our Savior and His Bride, the Church. Parish growth is a labor of love, because it ensures the future of our family in Christ, until He comes again. After all, there will be those who are called, before us, to the portals of eternity; their work, their example, their faith need to live on in the generations to come. New members need to take their place. Life going on ... the true joy of a parish family.



The Church calls the family a *little Church*. The family reflects the Heavenly Fatherhood of God Himself. This world was created as a *family* of God. And sacramental marriage restores this integrity of love. What do we remember from our childhood? Whether it was good or poor or bad, we always remember childhood - and this means home, families, parents. And then we lost that paradise and the world became dark and cold. In marriage, as given by the Church, we are called to create a Christian family...

Liturgy and Life, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

