SAINT NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
1607 West Union Boulevard Bethlehem, PA 18018

ORTHODOX WITNESS

Volume 30 Issue 323 January 2018

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A St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral Publication
1607 West Union Boulevard - Bethlehem, PA 18018
Phone: 610-867-1327, Fax: 610-867-9487, Kitchen: 610-867-5459
Under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, His Eminence Demetrios Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh. The mission of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church is to keep and proclaim, pure and undefiled, the Orthodox Christian Faith and traditions in conformity with the doctrine, canons, worship, discipline, and customs of the Church.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. Nicholas Palis, Protopresbyter</td>
<td>(Proistamenos) Dean</td>
<td>610-440-0995</td>
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<td>Fr. Nicholas Kossis Protosbytery</td>
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<td>610-694-0948</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. Alexander Petrides, Presbyter</td>
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<td>610-867-1327</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Despina Kotsatos, Secretary</td>
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**OFFICE HOURS:** Monday-Friday

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sunday Services</th>
<th>Weekday Services</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 πμ – 12:00 μμ</td>
<td>Orthros</td>
<td>Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>Paracesis</td>
<td>Great Vespers</td>
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<td>1:00 μμ - 5:00 μμ</td>
<td>Divine Liturgy 1 Greek</td>
<td>Divine Liturgy 2 English</td>
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Please see the calendar in the web page for weekday services.

**CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS**

**BUILDING ENDOWMENT TRUST**
George Vasiliadis
John Diacogiannis
George Glaros
Alex Alex
Nikolaos Varvarelis

**ACADEMY ST. NICHOLAS** Debbie Hrousisis

**CHOIR**

**Director** Dr. James Chiadis

**Organist** Nicos Elias:

**GREEK SCHOOL** : Theodore Evangelou

**MOMS & TOTS** : Presvytera Stephanie Petrides

**GOYA/YAL** Fr. Alexandros Petrides

**MISSIONS**

**Coordinator** : Nitsa Vasiliadis

**Secretary** : Eleni Pippis

**PHILOPTOCHOS** : Debbie Mouhlas

**SENIOR CITIZENS** : Mary Moukoulis

**SUNDAY SCHOOL** Thalia Schmidt, Stratoniki Hahalis

**WEBSITE:** www.stnicholas.org

**EMAIL:** secretary@stnicholas.org

Name of Publication: Orthodox Witness

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**Parish Council 2018**

Argeros William

Dectis Peter

Economedes Emmanuel,

Economou Dimitri

Fliakos Valante, **Vice President**

Garcia Joel,

Giambilis Demetrios,

Hristofas Kostas, **Treasurer**

Hrousisis Costas

Lazarou Marios

Lioudis George

Mouhlas George **President**

Pappas Dionysios

Quintana Joshua

Tatalias Hellen

Tatalias Emmanuel

**DEADLINES FOR PUBLICATIONS**

**WEIGHTLY BULLETIN** – Please submit announcements to church office by Thursday

**MONTHLY BOOKLET** – Please submit announcements to church office by the 15th of the prior month.

**Please Note** – All articles are subjected to approval and editing.
He has sent me to proclaim... 
The acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:19)

Feast of Saint Basil and New Year
To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the Holy Gospel of Luke we read about the beginning of our Lord’s earthly ministry. As He traveled throughout Galilee teaching in synagogues, He came to Nazareth where He had been raised. When Christ stood to speak, He read from the book of Isaiah: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

At the inception of this New Year of 2018, we affirm as Orthodox Christians that the words above offered by our Lord in reference to His divine work are also the focus of our worship and ministry. In all that we do as the Greek Orthodox Church in America, we look to Christ as our Savior and Guide, we offer the Gospel of life and truth, and we demonstrate the grace of God in our service to others. We preach the message of salvation. We speak of liberty in Christ to all who are in bondage to sin and the burdens of this life. We offer a witness of the healing and transformation that we find in Him. We proclaim constantly and consistently that this is the acceptable year of the Lord.

The emphasis on the Gospel of life and truth and on service to others is also the focus of the ministry offered at Saint Basil Academy. In an environment of love and faith, the staff nurture the children and youth. They constantly demonstrate the grace of God and reveal that Christ is present. Through faith they offer hope and healing, so that the promises of liberty in Christ and abundant blessings from Him are experienced by all who reside at Saint Basil’s.

In support of this vital ministry, our Ladies Philoptochos Society leads our parishes each year on this Feast and in our traditional cutting of the Vasilopeta. As we commemorate Saint Basil and anticipate the blessings of our Lord in 2018, I ask that you show your support through prayers for the residents, staff, directors and benefactors of Saint Basil Academy. I also ask that you give generously to assist this ministry. Your gifts will strengthen a ministry that reveals the promise and potential of life in Christ.

As we look ahead to a year full of opportunities and blessings, may we join together in praising and thanking God for all that He has given us for our lives, our communities, and for the work of ministry. May this year be acceptable to the Lord through our worship and our offering of service through the message, programs, and resources of our Holy Archdiocese. May we stay focused on our calling and commitment to share our saving faith and our dynamic heritage, and above anything else to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory to the day of eternity, Amen. (II Peter 3:18)

Have a blessed and happy New Year.

With paternal love in Christ,

† DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America
Humility: The Garment of the Godhead
By Archimandrite Spyridon Petrou

Saint Isaac the Syrian says that humility is the garment of the Godhead! Christ came and left from this world with much humility. On the one hand, the humility of the poor Manger of Bethlehem, and on the other hand, the utter Humility of the Cross. Voluntary humility. A basic concern of Christ, while He was living, to make us communicants of His own humility: “learn from me that I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find comfort in your souls” (Mt. 11:29).

Just as man’s body is not able to live without clean oxygen, thus also the soul is not able to be comforted without humility. So for this reason also, in the Old Testament, despite the fact that it spirituality is greatly lacking as compared to the New Testament, nevertheless many things are said about this very high virtue. In the sacred book the Wisdom of Sirach, we read: “deeply humble yourself” (7:17), whereas elsewhere the wise author advises: “do not wait to become sick to be humbled before God” (18:21). That which with an emphatic manner is mentioned in the New Testament: “God opposes the proud, while he gives grace to the humble”, absolutely applies also in the Old Testament. For example, in the book Numbers we learn that the chosen one of God, the great Prophet Moses “was a very humble man, more than every other man on earth” (Num. 17:3). In the end, the conclusion comes out unforced and applies throughout time: great is the power of the Lord, but He is glorified by the humble ones”! (Wisdom of Sirach, 3:20).

It is important for us to denote that in the teaching, both of the Old as well as of the New Testament, humility walks together with the absolute realism of life. When a person is humbled, then he knows his limits, whereas when he recognize his limits, that he is becomes humble. On the contrary, pride deprives man of the capability for true self knowledge. In the book Wisdom of Sirach, God is presented asking: “why so much haughtiness in man who is dirt and ashes?” (10:9). Whereas in a thought of Job, with which he seems to doubt Him, He will answer: “where were you when I was founding the earth?” (38:4). Later on in the New Testament, God will become absolutely clear cut: “without me you are not able to do anything” (Jn. 15:5).

Things however become balanced in the truth, when man recognizes in his life, God’s existence. The Christian especially studying the Scriptures, but also illumined by the Holy Spirit, recognizes that no gift sets out from himself alone, but everything is a gift of God’s love. On a higher level, he feels in heart that “every good gift and every perfect gift” is not only a gift of God but also - most importantly –the reflection of the divine beauty within him. Thus he is humbled and obtains the relationship of a good dependence on God, since he recognizes that being cut off from Him results in being cut off from the source of life and of beauty. Man being in this condition, no longer lives his relationship with God as a coerced relationship, but as a relationship of freedom and trust, just as pretty much, a child feels toward the Father. God himself cultivates this type of relationship, when He says, for example, in the Old Testament: “Son give me your heart” (Prov. 23:26). Furthermore, Christ himself asked us to call God, Father and to speak to Him with the comfort of a son. Before the infinite majesty of God the Father, man remains ecstatic, when he realizes that not only the strength but also the love of God the Father to him moves on the same levels. This is also infinite! Then the already “graceful” man is not limited only in the feeling of humility before God, but he opens himself up unforced to the feeling of gratitude, something which fills his soul with inexpressible joy and rejoicing. In the widespread light of the divine outpouring of light, the Christian “yields” piously and mystically mutters: “Lord I’m not worthy to be called Your son, make me as one of Your hired servants”.
Obedience to the divine will, prayer, patience and afflictions, forbearance towards others, is lived as a “light burden”, since it is the least portion for the soul to remain in the warm nurturing of divine love.

Furthermore, when man through Christ-imitating humility soaks up the “humble and philanthropic heart of God”, gradually he is untrapped from the anxious bonds of space and time and opens up to a new dimension, that of eternity. Then he begins enjoying life, since everything obtains for him a completely new meaning. Saint Nikodemos the Haghiorite mentions related to this, that God gave nature to man as a sign of His love. In reality God, the Saint continues, through the beauty of this world, calls man to seek the Creator Himself, the lost Paradise. Then everything for him does not walk toward an end, but becomes tastes of eternity. In the charismatic condition of the earthly uncreated Church, past, present and future are united and become all the Kingdom of the Heavens. The only concern of the humble person, henceforth becomes how, not only he himself, but also every other person will not remain outside of this perspective. The Apostle Paul was saying that: “I consider everything to be refuse, so that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8) and the new Saint of our Church Porphyrios Kafsokalyvia urged: “love Christ and do not prefer anything to His love”.

Without humility it is impossible for man to be saved. In a full converse of secular logic God preannounces great surprises in the future age: “the first shall be last and the last first” (Luke 13:30). Christ through a multitude of parables predetermined the resounding failure of every proud thought before the judgment seat of God. Saint Barbaros says that the door of Paradise is open for everyone, but it is low and only those who have learned in their life to bow, will pass through, in other words whoever is humble. In the parable of the future judgment, those “blessed ones of the Father”, who will be called by God to inherit the “prepared kingdom”, with much humility will ask: “Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you or thirsty and we gave you drink…?” and Christ with much love will tell them: “…So long as you did it to one of these least of my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt. 25:31-46).

Closed, even we Christians in the egotistical shell of soul, we are unable to many times to understand that, not only in our own life but also in the life of God, glory and humility are two conditions which proceed together. God, when he is humbled, then he is glorified and when he is glorified, he remains humble. The fathers of the Church note that the angelic powers then became absolutely firm in their glorifying disposition toward God, when they saw Him be humbled down to the manger of Bethlehem. Because then they fully realized His infinite love.

That however, which in the life of God seems wondrous, for us earthly people many times remains undesirable: how can it be, we say, that I’m joyous when they’re humbling me? Despite all that we said, we must admit that this question, in the beginning of spiritual life, is not easy to answer. It is true! The beauty of the humility of Christ, for you to understand it, you must first live it, taste it: “taste and see that the Lord is good”.

All the Saints were very humble! For this reason also, very joyous. The sanctified elder of our days, Eumenios Saridakis used to say that humility is the most beautiful thing. When we also really love Christ, then everything in us will seem different. The things which now distress us, afterwards will bring us joy. Because the soul will have found that which she longs for. The site of the Cross will no longer startle us, because the sweet light of the Resurrection will flood and will enlighten the heart. “Taste and see”.

What’s Happening at St. Nicholas Academy?

Happy New Year! We hope you all had a blessed holiday with your families and friends. This new year brings about new adventures for us at the Academy! This month we will be teaming up with the Sunday School of St. Nicholas Cathedral to support St. Barnabas Orphanage in Kenya. Please see the information below about how your donation will be used! Donations of any denomination can be turned in to your child’s teacher in a marked envelope through January 31st! A separate flyer with our school goal will be sent home with your child.

Last but not least a HUGE THANK YOU to those of you who donated for the December Toy Drive. The children at the hospital were so delighted by the gifts and the kind thoughts they came with. It was beautiful to see the outpouring of love from our Academy families. It was also amazing to hear our students talk about picking out gifts and understanding where they were going. For us, it is indescribable to watch these little people display the best of humanity. It is truly inspiring and makes for some of the best moments in our day.

MEET THE TEACHERS
Mrs. Gensis, Preschool 2s
Mrs. Gensis is a graduate of Moravian College and has been teaching at SNA for 9 years! She has 3 children, two are graduates of SNA and her youngest will graduate from Kindergarten this year!
Favorite Color: Blue
Favorite Flower: Lily
Favorite Activity: Bike Riding
Did you know?: Mrs. Gensis loves taking her children to Chocolate World!

FAITH IN ACTION
St. Barnabas Quick Facts:
$1 feeds 1 child/day
$35 provides food AND clothing for 1 child/month
$175 provides food for the entire center for 1 day (175 kids)
99% off funds come from outside the country
Please visit orthodoxmissionkenya.org

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Theodora Hahalis, SNA ’00
Theodora is currently a junior at St. Joe’s University in the Haub School of Business. She is an original St. Nick kid because attended SNA the year it opened!
Favorite Food: Sushi
Movie: Elf
Activity: Shopping & Exercise
Did you know?: Theodora is a master at impressions! Even though it is only January, she is already anticipating next Christmas because it is her absolute favorite time of year!

COMING SOON!
We are currently working on new spirit wear for the Academy. Keep an eye out for information and order forms. Our best advertisement is you! Wear your SNA gear with pride!
THE BIRD OF THE DESERT
THE HOLY FORERUNNER

In one of his troparia in the 6th ode, the inspired hymnographer who wrote the canons for the Synaxis of Saint John the Forerunner, offers a timely characterization of him:

We know you as the soul of the Prophets,
as mediating between the Old and the New
both a Baptist and Forerunner,
we declare of the Savior Christ.

In other words "we know you as the signet and perfection of all the Prophets, as a link, and a bridge, bringing us from the Old to the New Covenant, from the Law to Grace. And we preach it manifestly, that you are the Baptist and Forerunner of our Savior, of Christ". For this reason our Church celebrates the Synaxis of the holy Forerunner on the day after holy Theophany, "as serving the mystery of divine Baptism". Just as the day after the Birth of Christ, the Church celebrates the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos, "as serving in the mystery of the birth of Christ".

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John the Forerunner, was an amazing saint for believers, but also a tragic prophetic personality. His birth took place by the grace of God, and his conception was evangelized in the church, (as the Evangelist Luke mentions, 1:5:25), to his father Zachariah, while he was censing. There the archangel Gabriel told Zachariah that his barren and aged wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son: "And you shall call his name John. "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he shall be great before the Lord". This proclamation of the angel came true. The Forerunner was born "of the very barren womb of Elizabeth; simultaneously loosening his father Zachariah’s muteness. Even when he was in Elizabeth’s womb and leapt, he prophesied the incarnation of the divine Word in the virginal womb of the Panaghia. Without knowing sin, the Forerunner left the world for the desert while still very young, living with fearsome ascetic nourished by crickets and wild honey as if he were a bird. In many icons of Byzantine hagiography, the holy Forerunner is shown (for real) with two wings growing off his shoulders and with the ascription "the bird of the desert". There in the desert, in the great furnace where saints are tried and matured, he began preaching repentance. He thundered that "it has come" that the kingdom of the heavens has arrived and is very near -meaning that Christ was coming near him, and Who as God, "came before him". He does not cower in his preaching and censuring, even if he knew that this would cost him his life for he pointed out even Herod’s adultery. With his beheading, on the nefarious birthday gathering, the Forerunner opened the gates of Hades and evangelized the coming of the Savior as is also chanted in his apolytikion. "Whence becoming a martyr of the truth, rejoicing, evangelizing to those in Hades as well, God manifest in flesh, who bears the sin of the world and grants us the great mercy". And in the end he was granted to hear the encomium, which no man had ever heard, from the fearsome mouth of his Lord and God Himself, whom he baptized in the Jordan River. "Verily I say unto you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist" (Math. 11:11).

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John the Baptist is the most spiritualistic personality of Byzantine hagiography. He is portrayed according to the tradition that preserved him, "as a real bird of the desert". Behold, an image of him,
portrayed by the hand and the pen of Saint Nikodemos the Haghiorite: "He was in bodily appearance wild and simultaneously fearsome, and unlike other men, because of the many years he stayed in the desert. His hair was thick and uncombed. His face was sun burnt. He was so thin that his arms and sides looked like a spider and his legs were similar to those of locusts. His speech was coarse but also sweet - coarse with his reproaching, sweet with his preaching of repentance. Because he said to the Jews: "Race of vipers" (this is coarse and wild), "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (this is sweet and meekness of speech). Just as John's food was wild honey, thus his teaching was also mixed with sweetness and harshness".

On this tradition of the Holy Fathers is based the Orthodox hagiography of today as well as painted icons of the holy Forerunner. Behold his icon made "by the hand of Photios Kontoglou": "he stands on a rock, as a wild winged bird, with thin legs, wearing a camel skin cloak on his body reaching just below the knee, and above is wrapped an oil green garb. His hair is wind-tossed like a wild oak. His eyes are very sad looking far off and his mouth is melancholic. His expression is stern with calm vigilance. His hair lies tangled on his shoulders. The palms of his hands and feet are fleshless, like those of birds. His face is lean and dark from the heat of the desert, his hair and beard made wild from the hardship and wind. His eye is harsh and full of perseverance, his nose is turned up, his cheeks stand out, long chinned, long necked, with his chest bare, the bones protruding below the dark skin. With his right hand he makes the blessing sign, and with the left he holds a pike with a cross, and an open scroll. In the right corner of the icon on a rock is a vessel with his severed head, while in the left he holds a wild tree, an oak tree. Among its branches a wedged axe is shown symbolizing the prophet's words, "even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees." (Matt. 3:10). On his shoulders, wild eagle wings are implanted, according to the prophetic saying: "Behold I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way before thee" (Mark 1:3 Malachi 3:1). These wings appear to make this sacred bird seem supernatural" (Photios Kontoglou, "Ekphrasis," Vol. 1 p. 86-87).

We put these two texts here for two reasons, first of all so that the continuity of the tradition of the Orthodox Church in its liturgical arts may show. Secondly, in seeing an icon of a saint with spiritual eyes" we are brought to contrition" and more readily approach his life, his example, and his teaching. We open the spiritual gates of our senses for the message of deliverance and salvation to enter within us according to the saying of saint John Damascene: "I saw the human image of God and my soul was saved" (The 1st Sermon in Support of Icons, ch. 22).

***

Saint John the Forerunner has many names in Holy Scripture and in the Tradition of our Church. In the Old Testament he is prophetically named "the voice of one crying in the wilderness"-according to the Prophet Isaiah who says "a voice crying out in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make His ways straight" (Is. 40,3). From this preparation of the way of the Lord he was also named Forerunner," "the voice of the Word," "the lamp of Light," "the Bearer of dawn) of the Sun," "the friend of the Bridegroom" etc.

The name "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" gives birth to certain problems in interpreting the Divine Word. The Evangelist Matthew writes: in those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judaea" (Matt. 3:1). While Luke notes: and he went into all the region about the Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3). It is very possible, then that the place in the surrounding area of the Jordan, where the people gathered and listened to the preaching of John was a desert: according to the word of the Evangelist Matthew; "then went out to Jerusalem and all Judaea and all the region about the Jordan" (Math. 3:5). An old interpreter
says that because "the word (i.e. the command) came to John in the desert," for this reason it is said, also that he preached his ministry in the desert. Efthymius Zygavinos says "we mean two deserts. One being the inner desert, from which John came and in which the word of the Lord came to him, according to Luke. The second being that around the Jordan from which he came out, which Matthew named the desert of Judaea, while Luke called it the surrounding area of the Jordan". Saint Nikodemos the Haghiorite makes a very subtle suggestion: "If one wants to understand the desert as being men absent of knowledge of God and good work, it is appropriate for "the voice crying in the wilderness" to refer to men. A later commentator on the gospel, close to the viewpoint of Saint Nikodemos, wrote, "John cries out in the desert. Because there is no desert more grievous than the hearing of men, who don't wish to hear, and from the eyes of the world, which don't want to see. There are no men blinder, than those who don't wish to see".

John is among the most beloved saints of Orthodoxy. Every village and every city will have at least one Church or a magnificent Church dedicated to the holy Forerunner. And they honor him with great piety, holding services, vigils, liturgies, celebrations in his memory, because he is close to Christ and the Panaghia, and because he works many miracles to whoever seeks his mediation, petition, and intercession to Christ with faith. And whoever hears and reads his life, is taught that they must be pure and totally immaculate, just as he who was granted to touch "the head of the Master," with his sanctified hands was. They are taught furthermore that they must be humble as he was who while he heard from the mouth of Christ that "no other who was born of a woman, was so great as John," he told them who heard him: "I am not the Christ, nor the Messiah, nor the sun of Righteousness. It is He who is coming and I am not worthy even to bow down and untie the cords of his sandals"! If the Forerunner bowed down lower than the Lord's footwear because he did not consider himself worthy how much lower should we bow down and how much more humble of an opinion should we have of ourselves!

However beyond this, the Forerunner is the "it is not permissible for you to have the wife of your brother". In other words, after the Baptist Forerunner, the fearless censurer Forerunner comes. How many "it is not permissible to you" does he not thunder today as well to each one of us separately: to a son and daughter for misbehavior; to a mother and father for carelessness and guilty negligence; to the worker for complaining and frivolity; and to the employer for evil exploitation and abuse. To the student and the teacher, to the country and the urban dweller, to the educated and uneducated, who tread on the Gospel and righteousness, so that their interests aren't harmed. To all of us the eagle of the desert has one or more "it is not permissible to you" to say. But we must first unplug our ears well, and then listen and come to our senses. Because the way we are now journeying, far from the Church, far from the way of God, the tragic voice of the great hermit will not echo except as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness".

From the Book “Eros of Orthodoxy”, Astir Publications

# January 2018

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<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 9 AM Orthros 10 AM Liturgy</td>
<td>2 8:00 AM Orthros/ Liturgy</td>
<td>3 8:00 AM Orthros/ Liturgy</td>
<td>4 5 AM Orthros 8 AM Great</td>
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<td>6 THEOPHANY 8 AM Orthros</td>
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<td>(St. Basil)</td>
<td>(St. Seraphim of Sarov)</td>
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<td>Liturgy 9:45 AM Sun.</td>
<td>4:45PM Greek School</td>
<td>17 8 AM Orthros/Liturgy (St.</td>
<td>(St. Theodosios Ceonobiarch)</td>
<td>19 8pm Men’s</td>
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<td>Liturgy 9:45 AM Sun.</td>
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<td>(St. Anthony)</td>
<td>(St. Athanasios)</td>
<td>8 PM Men’s Basketball</td>
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<td>Liturgy 9:45 AM Sun.</td>
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<td>5 PM Greek Letters Day</td>
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<td>28 7:15 AM Orthros 8:30 AM Div</td>
<td>29 4:45PM Greek School</td>
<td>30 8 AM Orthros/Liturgy</td>
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1. Opening Prayer & Spiritual Thoughts:
   - Fr. Nicholas Palis gave the opening prayer

2. Reports of Priests:
   - Fr. Alexandros Petrides Reports (Youth Report what’s new and upcoming):
     - All: With the visit of Stacey Statthulis to discuss stewardship, Fr. Alexey highlighted that being a part of the St. Nicholas GOYA includes a stewardship offering for the year. No matter how small, they understand that even as young members of the body of Christ, they are contributors with their time, talent and treasurer. By the time they turn 18, they will become full stewards themselves.
     - TOTS: Mothers met on Oct. 20th for a book study. Their next book study is December 8th.
     - HOPE: Camp Nazareth style HOPE retreat Sat, Nov. 11th 3pm-6pm.
     - JOY: Met for their monthly Synaxis Bible study and activity on Oct 15th. Their next event is Nov. 19th.
     - GOYA: Met for a GOYA dinner discussion on Oct. 15th, and GOYA basketball practices are every other Friday alongside men’s basketball. Their next event is the GOYA Fall retreat, which 6 GOYAn’s and Father Alexandros will attend.
     - OCF: No report.
   - Fr. Nicholas Palis Reports: No report

3. Role Call & Actions on Excuses for Absence:
   - Present: Nick Kapsalis, George Mouhlas, Kostas Hristofas, Manny Tatalias, Jimmy Giambilis, Manny Economides, Dimitri Economou, Valante Fliakos, Costas Hrousis, Joel Garcia, George Lioudis, Fr. Alexandros Petrides, and Fr. Nicholas Palis
   - Absent: Ellen Tatalias, Pete Dectis, Bill Argeros, John Zannakis

4. Reception of Petitions & Communications:
   - Thank you letter from His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America, for the warm reception and hospitality from St. Nicholas Centennial event last year.

5. Meeting minutes: Manny Economides made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Kostas Hristofas. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Stewardship: Kostas Hristofas provided the stewardship report for September. As of September 30, 2017, Stewardship for 2017 is $172,607.31 (76.71%) out of a budgeted $225,000.
7. **Treasurer's Report:** Kostas Hristofas reported that for the month of October, our income was $50,279.67, and our expenses were $80,345.06. Thus net income was $-30,065.39. Manny Economides made a motion to approve the October Treasurers report, seconded by Manny Tatalias. The motion passed unanimously.

8. **Special Reports/Standing Committees/Old Business:**
   - Stacey Statthulis, Metroplis Stewardship Coordinator, came and spoke to the council about ways to improve stewardship.
   - Special Projects - Photo directory almost finished.
   - Building & Grounds (Dome update, fire inspection, door/access system)
     - Dome Update: We are waiting on a template (window) to be 100% completed.
     - Door access system: Manny Economides provided details on the upcoming replacement of all the doors and key fab access system. All designated doors will be fabed and secured throughout the property.
     - Sat Nov 18th there will be a dumpster to purge old papers, etc.
   - Iconography: The latest phase is going to be completed by the end of October or beginning of November.
   - Fr. Nicholas Kossis celebration meal went extremely well. Many thanks to all who helped.

9. **New Business:**
   - Church Safety: We spoke about the recent mass shooting that happened at a Church outside Dallas, Texas. We will reach out to Pete Kandianis to talk about security and Costa Hrousis will also lead the efforts to have a crises management plan in place.
   - Church Finances: Talked about the importance of and reaffirmed commitment to transparency.
   - Approval of 2018 Budget: Manny Economides made a motion to pass the 2018 budget, seconded by George Lioudis. The motion passed unanimously.
   - The Iconographer Kostas Theodorou donated two icons downstairs hallway for the St. Nicholas Academy. Many thanks to his generosity and time.
   - St. Nicholas Vespers & Feastday: Tuesday & Wednesday, December 5 & 6, 2017.
   - November General Assembly-Sunday, November 19, 2017 @ 11:00 a.m.
   - Next Parish Council Meeting at Holy Protection Monastery on Thursday, December 14, 2017-4:00pm Vespers, 5:00pm Dinner, 6:00pm Meeting.

10. **Closing Prayer:** Motion to adjourn by Joel Garcia, seconded by Costas Hrousis. The motion passed unanimously. Fr. Alexandros Petrides gave the closing prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Fr. Nicholas Palis  
Nicholas Kapsalis  
George Mouhlas  
Dean Protopresbyter  
Secretary  
President
Homily on the eve of Lights
By Saint Theodore the Studite

What should we say also about John who came from the desert, this strange and very longed for, for the Israelites site, the angel of God, was ordained an apostle before the Apostles?
However they had to have such a great king, such a soldier, this so great Prophet, the most great High Priest.

And let us understand what and how great a mystery we have before us: because it was improper, while the leader of the bride is present, for the bridegroom to be absent, and whereas the voice is shouting, the Word to not be heard, what happens, how God provided them? John retreats somewhat into obscurity, even from his infant age, living supernaturally like some “lantern under the bushel” in the desert. And there he hears divine voices and is granted to see divine visions. He’s initiated into the ineffable things and is taught, as then when he was still an embryo, who Jesus is, that, in other words, He is the Son of God, and that him on whom he will see, in the form of a spirit, a dove descending and remaining on him, this one is he who shall baptize in the Holy Spirit”.

And when “the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ” was fulfilled and the period of the 30 year extension received an end, then “also the lantern upon the lampstand burning and shining to all who are in the home, in a rejoicing manner” – if we understand as home, the Israelite Synagogue. While the true light also appeared then, which enlightens the world.

Oh what a miracle! The sun before the star, the word before the voice, the bridegroom before the friend, because this was the plan of the Divine Economy, so that in this manner of approaching, in the person of Jesus “every righteousness” be fulfilled, and for us to speak evangelically “for the one to increase, on the one hand, while the other to decrease, on the other hand”.

Really, how would it be possible for the light of the lantern to not decrease, or to be completely withdrawn, since already the Sun of righteousness with its miracles was shining brightly, wondrously?
Do you see what a time period was needed for Jesus to be completed physically, during which time he was submitting to his parents?

“O depth of wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God!”

Why, I wonder? Whoever is high in theoretical ascents and knows the depth of the Spirit, let each one of them give his own explanation. In my own opinion however, for two reasons: for the lawgiver to legislate all the legislators with his own submission, the obedience of the children to the parents and to sanctify all the stages of age and thirdly for the all-perfect-one to not show off some unsimilar lifestyle to our own, since furthermore he wanted to present us the perfect way of life. Since now also, even though he had reached to the perfect male age, Arius dared to proclaim that his body was lifeless. While Apollinarius, following the previous one, as regards the impiety, let him babble that our Lord did not have a mind. While the new Manichaeans reaching to the height of impiety, to dogmatize that he ought not to be depicted. And let us see how much is the difference of the one from the other. He, on the one hand, who gives that characterization of the lifeless, takes the life away from the body of the Master, because whatever is deprived of a soul, is of course, also outside of life.

While he who babbles that the Lord is without the mind, numbers him with the irrational nature, because everything that does not have a mind is also irrational. While the other one, who maintains that he should not be depicted, completely denies the physical nature of the Master’s body. Because since he is not depicted it means that he is bodiless. Really if he has a body, and you are able to touch every body, and it has some color, by necessity it follows that it can also be depicted, unless, of course,
we are speaking in vain. Because if he is not possible to be depicted, then undoubtedly he comes out of the boundaries of the physical and belongs in the nature of the bodiless. Nothing, as it seems, is able to restrain the tongue that is impious, when it is supported also by the power of authority.

Let us elevate however, our gaze to the prophetic visions of God and let us see how the most sacred baptism is foreshadowed in them. Because the continuation of the word invites us to this. So what does Isaiah say? Let’s mention selectively. “Rejoice thirsty desert, for water will spring forth in the desert, and a valley in a thirsty land”. He addresses himself, in other words, to the human nature, that which is a desert as regards fruitfulness, which presupposes faith and good works. And therefore, because it thirsts for the water of adoption, the water of Baptism in the Jordan springs forth for its sake. And then what happened? “And it shall be the waterless one in the marshes”, this fountain of adoption, in other words. “And there shall be gladness of birds” in other words, who were reborn with baptism, who as regards the way of life resemble the birds, since they also by nature are pleased to live in the waters. But also according to Gideon what is the full pot of water? And here the word means the baptismal font similar to a womb, which has a circular shape and is lathed all over, just like sinlessness. In this the healing dew of the noetic fleece poured out, full of the Holy Spirit. Here the “newly formed children”* of God are reborn replacing in this way their birth «from flesh and blood». And they’re lifted up «unto a perfect man» so much, that they completely defeat with the Triune worship, the race of the demons. And according to Elijah however, what is the triple pouring out of water upon the altar and on the holocaust? I consider that it reveals the triple hypostasis of the divine blessedness, which the priest invokes during baptism, or the triple immersion of the baptized person. And Neeman ascends from the water, according to the command of Elisha, fully cleansed. His “flesh,” it says, “returned as the flesh of a young child, and he was cleansed”. This miracle symbolizes the full deliverance of the baptized person from the wounds of sins, and means that he ascends from the water with a soul cleansed from every soil of previous transgressions. If furthermore, you want to learn also the unpaid of spiritual rebirth, listen to Isaiah who says «Ye who thirst, proceed upon the water and whoever does not have coins, having traversed, buy and eat and drink without coins and cost”.

Whoever, in other words, desires some gift, even if he does not receive it, he gained life. But these, one way or another, are received and are partaken here in part. And my own poor mind brought analogous with its receptivity, a dedication to the forefeast. You however, please, look at what wondrous events are observed. The baptismal fonts have been filled with water. We see the springs and the fountains, the rivers and the lakes having become vessels of the Spirit. May, with their partaking, we also be sanctified and be illumined on this day from this Spirit full of light “in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and the dominion, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen”.

From the book Patristic Kyriakodromion, Publication of the Sacred Cell of Saint Nicholas Bourazeri, Holy Mountain.

Stewardship is like oxygen for our church! Stewardship is the most important financial source we have to sustain our church, and our church needs loving and heartfelt support! Our fixed monthly costs at St. Nicholas are around $48,000.00. This means that the treasurer (rain, snow, or sunshine) must find $48,000.00 to pay the obligations of the church each month. Currently, one third of our parish’s income is derived from the stewardship pledges. This means that we depend on other, external, sources to sustain 70% of our church needs. If this is OUR community, why should we expect someone else to pay for it?! We thank you for your continued stewardship effort, by giving of your time, talent and treasure as God has provided you the ability to.

Community Social Events

Weddings

Wedding Congratulations to Newlyweds George Lousos and Christina Xenakis for their Marriage on Saturday December 31st. Best wishes to Koumbarous Anthi and Tom Gentis, and their parents Angela Xenakis Dimitri & Kyrialki-Kay Lousos. May God bless you all!

Births

Baptisms

Congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. John & Ala Hatzis for the baptism of their daughter Anastasia. Best wishes to Godparent Katerina Hatzis-Tribuzio and grandparents Chrysostomos & Anastasia Hatzis. May God bless you all!

Deaths

Don’t forget our non-perishable food collection bins! One is located near the elevator and another in the hallway entrance of the Narthex.

The Barros family continues to deliver the food to nearby food pantries and they are very thankful and appreciative of your support.

Congratulations to Newly Elected Parish Council Members: Dimitri Economou, George Lioudis, Mario Lazarou, Dionysios Pappas, Joshua Quintana, Emmanuel Tatalias. Mario Lazaroy and Joshua Quintana are tied to the same number of votes. The tie breaking will occur at the first meeting of the Parish Council.

Blessing Of The Homes: As is the practice of our Holy Orthodox Church during this time of the year, the priests visit the homes and businesses of our parishioners to have them blessed for Theophany (Epiphany). Fr. Nicholas Palis, Fr. Alexandros Petrides and Fr. Nicholas Kossis would like to visit this year all the homes and businesses of our community. For the necessary arrangements to be made, you are requested to please fill out the form that you can get from the Narthex and return it to the Church Office or fill out the sign up sheet in the Narthex.

Annual Ahepa Lehigh Chapter #60 Vasilopita Party on Saturday January 13th 2018 at 5:30 PM in the Cambanes Hall of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral. No admission fee. All Ahepan and their Guests are invited. A buffet meal will be offered. All priests and their families are welcome! (If weather doesn’t permit we would have it the following Sunday.)

Senior Citizens: Senior Citizens resume their monthly meetings every second Monday of the month at 12 PM. So the next meetings will be held tomorrow January 8, 2018 and February 12.
FEBRUARY 16TH
DAUGHTERS OF PENELope
BETHLEHEM PAEOu CHAPteR
#253 COACH BAG/PANDORA AND
ALEX & ANI BRACELET SOCIAL!
6:00 pm doors open
7:00pm games begin

Place: St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral 1607 W. Union Blvd.
Bethlehem, Pa. 18017

$20.00 donation
$25.00 at the door
Everyone who enters needs to purchase a ticket.

Delicious food served
Proceeds go to Annual Scholarships and Charities
Get out of the cold and get into the games!

Contact Paula Zumas
963 Place Road
Bethlehem, Pa. 18017
610 597-1265
pzg588@msn.com