



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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JANUARY, 2019

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST AND US

by Fr. John

The image for the cover of this year's Christmas Card and the accompanying poem were based on the interaction between a series of candles (shown below) that I was transfixed by during the wedding reception for my nephew. Throughout the evening I imagined the ways in which the light was flowing through the water and the various glasses and how that happens in other circumstances. I thought about the ways that light plays such an important role in the spiritual and cultural experiences of almost all people, whether they are spiritual or not:



- the sustaining of light is the key theme that Jewish people remember in Hanukkah;
 - everyone looks forward to the coming of the shortest day of the year and the renewal of the slowly growing longer moments of light that come following the winter solstice;
 - Christians and Jews are familiar with the images of light from the beginning of the Old Testament ("And God said, "Let there be light; and there was light" – Genesis 1:3);
 - the star in Matthew's Nativity account was anticipated in the Book of Numbers ("a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" – 24:17);
 - Jesus speaks of himself as "the light of the world" (Jn 8:12);
 - He says to his disciples that: "You are the light of the world" (Matt 5:14) and that
- They should let their "light so shine before others, that they may see your good words and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16);
 - As I'm writing this on Saturday December 22, the assigned reading from Ephesians says: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (5:8).

There are the references in popular Christmas carols:

- Star of wonder, star of night
Star of royal beauty bright

Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light. (*We Three Kings*)

- Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.
Jesus, Lord at They birth.

There are the affirmations within our Orthodox Nativity hymns, particularly in the Troparion:

Your Nativity, O Christ, our God
has shown to the world the Light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a star to adore, You,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know You, the Orient from on High,
O Lord, glory to You.

Finally, all of the references are held together by the image of the candle brought out by the priest during the Lenten Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and by the words said at that time:

The light of Christ illumines all.

So, light at the origins of creation, light provided by the star (that expresses both the intense desire of those who are searching and the call and way by which they find what they are looking for), light as manifested both at the birth and in the person of Jesus, and light granted to his followers, so that they themselves may shine:

Light as longing, as leading, as making clear, as flowing, as finding, as bringing near, as searching, as showing, as transporting the call, as sharing, as shining, as illumining all.

As we approach the new year, I suggest that we explore all of the ways that can allow the light of Christ to illumine us as individuals and as a community. I always assume that as Christians we believe not in magic, but in the transforming work of God's grace in our lives — and that requires some effort on our part.

Sophie Blackall, in the children's book, *Hello, Lighthouse*, describes how the keeper who maintained a functioning lighthouse had various responsibilities:

Several times during the night, the keepers would have to wake up and wind the clockwork that turned the lens. They would trim the burned ends of the wick and fill the lamp with oil, which they carried in a heavy bucket from the tank in the cellar all the way up the spiral stairs. They kept the lens free of dust so it would shine brightly, polishing the soot away each morning. Curtains were drawn on sunny days to prevent a fire in the lens. The lantern room windows had to be kept spotlessly clean. In winter, this meant chipping away ice, which was a dangerous job. The keepers held tight to special handles attached to the outside, and sometimes tied themselves to the railing so they wouldn't be blown away in strong winds.

Here are some of the ways that can help us over this next year maintain the light within us that we would hope to share with others:

1. Re-examine and maintain a daily “rule” or practice of prayer. Fr. Sergius Bowyer, the Abbot of St. Tikhon’s Monastery, recommends the following rule, doing as much as one can, without rushing, and with attention. Copies of this “**Prayer Rule**” are in the vestibule or see me for more help or materials:

- *Begin with the “Trisagion Prayers”: O Heavenly King...Our Father*
- *Read Psalm 50/51: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your great mercy...”*
- *Read the Creed*
- *Recite the “Jesus Prayer – Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” (5-10 times)*
- *Prayers for our ourselves, our loved ones, or those with whom we are at enmity, crossing ourselves each time.*
- *Reciting the “Jesus Prayer” – 5 to 10 minutes.*
- *Prayers from a Prayer Book/Prayers before the Reception of Holy Communion/Prayers for Intercessions of Others.*
- *A chapter from the Gospels and from a small portion of Orthodox spiritual material.*
- *He offers a specific prayer for the morning and evening.*
- *Conclusion*

2. *Re-consider the Sacrament of Holy Confession:* In January and February we’ll have General Confession on two Saturday evenings that will hopefully offer some insights into this Healing Sacrament.

3. *Re-consider the Holy Scriptures:* Throughout the Spring, Ed Sicienski and I will offer several sessions on reading the Scriptures. Mine will take place on Sunday mornings before the Divine Liturgy and Ed’s will be on weekday nights. More info will be coming.

4. *Re-consider Time and our Experience of Worship:* Each week an email is sent out in advance of Sunday’s Liturgy that provides information of upcoming events and the Scriptures and liturgical texts that prepare us for the Service. Please try to look at these in advance as they will usually be the basis for the themes of that week’s Liturgy and for the Sermon.

Also, put away your watch and turn off your phone. Try to stay attentive — “putting aside all earthly cares” — and don’t worry about how long the Liturgy is lasting. Rather than hope for a short sermon, pray rather that the message that our community needs to hear will be what is discerned by me and heard by the community. In that sense, I would welcome your prayers, encouragement, and effort in preparation.

5. *Consider Preparing for our Lenten Retreat:* I recently asked Fr. Adrian Budica who teaches at St. Vladimir’s Seminary and coordinates pastoral training to recommend a book that should be read at this time. He recommended: “*How to Be A Sinner*” by Peter Bouteneff. As it turns out, I had already invited Peter several months ago to present a Lenten Retreat to our community on his book. This will take place on Saturday, April 6. Copies will be available soon and it will be the basis of our Lenten Reader.

So, these are some ways that we all can encourage the Light of Christ to Illumine us.

On the Way to Emmaus Icon Project



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **SATURDAY, JANUARY 5: COMMUNITY LUNCHEON — 9 AM**
- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 6: EPIPHANY — BLESSING OF WATER AT THE END OF LITURGY**
- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 13: CALENDAR PLANNING MEETING, following the Liturgy**
- **THURSDAY, JANUARY 17: PARISH COUNCIL MEETING at 7 PM**
- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 27: INREACH MEETING, following the Liturgy**

THANKS: Before and during Advent we had a number of collections and projects and we're grateful for all those who participated and helped in coordinating these efforts:

- **CAROLING to Shutins (Josef Gulka, Nicole Delarato with Aaron, and Benjamin, Julia, Nikolai & Sophia Gotowchikov, Val Olesnovich, Jessica, Anna, & Julia Siragusa, & Mark Skuby)**



- **ADVENT VESPERS** (Josef & the Choir & to those who provided refreshments: materials from our speaker Fotini Birbilis have been sent out by email & are available in the vestibule).
- **CHRISTMAS CARDS TO SERVICE MEMBERS** (Anne Marie Piotrowski)
- **COOKIES** (given to shutins and local support services: EMT, Fire, & Police — Genie Skuby & Woman2Woman)
- **COVENANT HOUSE STOCKINGS** (Diana Pasca, Barbara, Michelle and Demetrius Zissimos sorted and filled 60 stockings – Thanks to everyone who brought donations!)



- **PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD** (Wally Loza, coordinator; design support — Michelle Wash and Lee Ann Detwiler; and Trudy Ellmore, stuffing and mailing)
- **THANKSGIVING COLLECTION FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES & ST. VINCENT DE PAUL** (Diana Pasca)
- **WEEKLY BULLETIN** — (Trudy Ellmore)

PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES — THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6 by Phyllis Pritchard:

Treasurer's Report- Michelle Zissimos and Mark Skuby presented the financial report to date.

- A) The account balances are as follows: **General Fund** \$6,945.27, **Memorial Fund** \$18,226.01, **Capital Improvement Fund** \$7,455.69, **Food Coupon Fund** \$5,771.31, **Choir Fund** \$4,149.48, **Father's Supplemental Checking** \$1,598.94, **Fund Raising Account** \$183.94
- B) The **Mortgage Balance** as of 12/5/2018 was 69,680.67
- C) Pioneer Investment Accounts: **Capital Improvement**-\$30,000, **Memorial Fund**-\$20,000

Open Action Items: Old Business

- A) **Parish Bylaws/Standing Rules update**—Fr John will review with Leslie Lane the recommended changes (since she prepared them while she was a member of the Council) and work with her in creating a summary page to help in the discussion of the revisions. An email of this will be sent out to parishioners. Hard hard copies will be placed in the vestibule for the Annual Meeting.
- B) **Exterior siding project status/updates**- Repairs will shortly be made to siding around the church's entrance.
- C) **Various other maintenance issues were reviewed.**
- D) **Bible Study update**-Fr John and Ed will discuss a plan for continuing classes.
- E) **Emmaus Icon Project**-(entry) status/updates-Fr John/Mark-Fr John mentioned James quoted \$1,500 for the stucco. James R Slim Plastering was contacted and asked if they would beat or match quote, they will match James's quote of \$1,500 and can start in the spring.
- F) **Parish Christmas Cards**-Wally- Wally collected \$760.00 so far and is still collecting.
- G) **Russian Study Group**-Fr John/Mark- Fr John and Mark met with the coordinator of a children's program for the study of Russian language and culture about using our social hall for classes. More information is needed.

New Business

- A) **Council members stepping down**-Mark Skuby, Wally Loza, Marie Clifton, and Joe Pritchard
- B) **Weekly Bulletin**-First copy came out this Sunday Please have all information to Trudy by Wednesdays. Thank you Trudy!
- C) **Charitable Donations for this year**-Fr John-Discussion occurred on distribution of charitable donations for this year in the amount of \$2,172.00 More discussion needed.
- D) **Publishing of Jacobs Well**-Wally asked the Council to adopt a resolution congratulating Fr John for his 28 years as the editor of our Diocesan magazine, *Jacobs Well*. All in favor.

Next Meeting- The next Council meeting - **Thursday, January 17, 2019.**

WOMAN2WOMAN ACTIVITIES:

- **Monday evening, January 7, 7-9 p.m.**, regular support group meeting at the home of **Phyllis Pritchard** (68 Bortons Road, Marlton, 08053). Please let Phyllis know if you can attend (609 315 1258).
- **Tuesday, January 22, Ladies' Luncheon** — **Cracker Barrel Restaurant**, Rt. 73 in Mt. Laurel, noon.

STEWARDSHIP KICK-OFF FOR 2019:

Pledge cards are still available for parishioners to use in prayerfully considering your financial commitment for 2019. This affirmation helps us to better prepare the budget for our annual meeting in February. In 2018 we saw about 35% of our parish use the pledge card system. These pledges accounted for around 50% of our annual budgeted income for calendar year 2018. This means that 50% of our income came from 60% of our parish family who did not communicate their anticipated contributions, but still gave through cash donations or the envelope system.

Our goal for 2019 is to have 50% of our parishioners utilizing the pledge system. Again, by using the pledge system you are just formally communicating your financial commitment to the parish for the

calendar year. The suggested proportional giving percentages on the back of the pledge card are just that – suggested giving guidelines.

Why complete a pledge card? First it allows parishioners to review their giving practices from year to year and formally communicate their commitment to the parish. Secondly, it allows the treasurer and parish council to better plan and meet our financial obligations.

Our envelopes for 2019 will continue to look like those used in 2018 – no minimum amounts printed on the envelopes, allowing you to give proportionately according to your means. The amount pledged in 2019 will continue to go toward our operating expenses including our commitment to the diocese / national church and mortgage.

What ever your giving pattern was in 2018, we hope you will consider increasing that in 2019. If not, we hope you will communicate to our treasurer or Fr. John that your financial commitment will be the same as in 2018. It is anticipated that semi-annual statements will be sent out during 2019 to advise parishioners of their pledge status.

If you have any questions relating to this proportional giving model, contact Fr. John or any stewardship committee member (Mark Skuby, Wally Loza, or Michelle Zissimos).

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 2019 COFFEE HOUR ASSIGNMENTS:

If you are unable to host the coffee hour on the scheduled date, it is your responsibility to contact someone else on the list and arrange to switch your date with that person. Please mark the switch on the list so we can keep the list current. **VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO WELCOMED FOR OTHER SUNDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR — MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THAT WILL BE FORTHCOMING.** Veteran coffee hour hostesses will help you. **Contact A Member of St. Helena's Guild.**

RESPONSIBILITIES:

On your Sunday, you are host/hostess for the day. You will be responsible for setting up the coffee hour, making the coffee & hot water for tea, and cleaning up (sweeping the floor, wiping down the tables, cleaning the coffee pot, and **taking out the trash**) afterward. A suggested coffee hour could include 3-4 dozen bagels, cream cheese, butter/margarine, fruit (such as sliced apples or oranges, grapes, fruit salad, etc.) and cookies or cut-up cake. Please bring 1 pound of coffee (to replace what was used that morning), creamer, and juice (2-64oz. bottles of juice). Please take home all items that are not consumed. **KEEP IN MIND THAT COFFEE HOURS SHOULD BE SIMPLE AND SERVE AS A SNACK AFTER CHURCH AND NOT A MEAL.** Also, if anyone plans on bringing a cake or anything additional to celebrate an occasion during coffee hour, please contact that week's host and inform them of your plans. This will avoid duplication of refreshments.

JANUARY

6	Maureen Sapnar	(609) 410-0896
13	Carol Ann Curry	(856) 985-4649
20	Barbara Mosser & Nellie Kuzmenchuk	(609) 268-1871

27 Val Olesnovich

(856) 81-9771

FEBRUARY

3 Genie Skuby

(856) 802-1664

10 Ellie Kuzma & Daughters

(856) 858-6035

17 Marie Clifton

(609) 413-6718

24 Jessica Siragusa

(609) 654-8919

2019 HOUSE BLESSING SCHEDULE

As has been the usual practice, Fr. John will assume that he will be visiting all parishioners. If, for any reason, someone would not want to be visited please give him a call or leave a message in the church office.

Each home will be called in advance and those who are home during the day may be called on a different day. Homes not included in the general areas listed below will be contacted to set up a time.

Jan 6: Medford / Tabernacle
7: Cherry Hill
8: Folsom
10: Haddonfield / Collingswood
11:
12-13: Marlton / Mt. Laurel
13:
14: Willingboro
15: Voorhees
17: Atco
19: Bordentown

+

Here are some ways of preparing for the blessing of your home:

- * Set aside a place for the service (usually a table in the dining room or kitchen).
- * On the table place an icon, a candle, a bowl for Holy Water, and a list of names to be remembered – divided into two lists, living and departed.
- * A person holding the candle may lead Fr. John throughout the home.

TROPARION

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You
and called You His beloved Son.

And the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.

O Christ, our God, who have revealed Yourself / and have enlightened the world, glory to You.



CROSSWALKS

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross Youth Ministry Newsletter
December 2018



In November our Youth Group made Thanksgiving cards and turkey treats that were sent to the homebound and those in need of a little cheer. Also collected canned goods to donate to those in need, and the group discussion was centered on why and how they can help those in need and show the people in their lives that they are thankful for them



Advent -- We are lighting the Advent candles on each Sunday during the Nativity fast.

Friday December 21 -- **Youth Activity Meeting** 6:00 -- 9:00 PM.
Sign Up Genius invites will be sent. Please join us!

Community Service Opportunities

Monthly Community Luncheon with Diana Pasca to help prepare food for a shelter in Mt. Holly, NJ. They are usually about 2 hours on a Saturday morning. All dates are listed in Crossroads on the church calendar.

(eligible for community service hours)



Christ Is Born - Glorify Him!

Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross – JANUARY, 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
		1	2	3	4	<p><i>5 Community Luncheon – 9:00</i></p> <p><i>Great Vespers: 5</i></p>	
<p><i>6 EPIPHANY DIVINE LITURGY—10:00 Blessing of Water</i></p>	<p><i>7 Woman2Woman Meeting at Phyllis Pritchard's — 7-9</i></p>	8	9	10	11	12	<p><i>Great Vespers: 5</i></p>
<p><i>13 DIVINE LITURGY—10:00 Calendar Planning Meeting</i></p>	14	15	16	17	18	19	<p><i>Parish Council Meeting 7 PM</i></p> <p><i>Great Vespers: 5</i></p>
<p><i>20 DIVINE LITURGY 10:00</i></p>	21	22	23	24	25	26	<p><i>Woman2Woman Luncheon — at Crackle Barrel Noon</i></p> <p><i>Great Vespers: 5</i> <i>General Confession</i></p>
<p><i>27 DIVINE LITURGY—10:00 Inreach Committee</i></p>	28	29	30	31	1 February	2	<p><i>Vesperal Liturgy for the Meeting of the Lord – 7 PM</i></p> <p><i>Great Vespers: 5</i></p>

