



THE PARISH PRESS

St. Philip Orthodox Church



BABY STEPS TO HOLINESS - SAY THE JESUS PRAYER CONSTANTLY

NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

GIVING UPDATES

Many thanks to all for your offerings included with your **Christmas Cards to the St Philip's family!** Your contributions help various Orthodox monastic communities, missionary situations and charitable services.

MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION: Thanks to all for your generosity to the needy of our community! Your contributions to the **St Nicholas collection for Laurel House** and the **Adopt-a-Family collection for Manna on Main Street** were greatly appreciated. For **January**, we are collecting **Oral Care** products (but no mouthwash, please.)



May God bless all our faithful givers!

HOME BLESSINGS

From **Theophany** to just before **Great Lent** is the season of **home blessings**. To schedule with Fr Noah or Fr James, please see the scheduling calendars on the table in the narthex. Instructions are posted and reminder slips are available. (If you'd like to schedule your home blessing with Fr Boniface, please contact him directly via phone or email.)

A Message from Fr Noah

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
 "Owe no one anything except to love one another." (Rom 13:8)

St. Paul's words above are especially important for our time, saddled with national and consumer debt. It is disheartening to learn that the Average credit card debt in our country is \$15,000. As Orthodox Christians we reject this lifestyle of spending beyond our means, just as we reject spending beyond our needs. It is not just a lifestyle, it is trap and a sin and even a passion. It must be confessed and resolved as quickly as possible before the strife and anxiety caused by it lead to even greater sins.

I beg you, if you are indebted beyond a reasonable mortgage, get out of debt! Don't keep up with the Joneses! Don't get more things. Simplify your life! Make and follow a budget! Lower your "standard of living"! Get an extra job!

Our true debt is the debt of love that we owe to God and to each other. Break the chains of debt so that you are free to be generous, to be rich in good works.

Pray for strength, get advice, get consensus from your family, and make this stressful time history!

Thankful to be freed from sin by our Lord Jesus Christ, I remain,

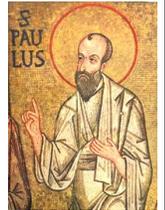
Your Servant in Christ, + *Fr. Noah*

Mark Your Calendar!

Outdoor Blessing of Water
 Sunday, January 12, 1 p.m.
 Lake Lenape Park
 Directions will be available.

Chanting Workshops
 Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.
 January 8 - February 26

Bible Study: Apostle Paul
 Saturdays at 5 p.m.
 January 11 - February 15
 Presented by Fred Kompass



Catechumens & Inquirers
 Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
 January 14 - February 25

Documentary Film Screening
 "Vintage Harvesters of Christ" -
 Winemaking in Georgia
 Saturday, January 18, following Vespers.

Pre-Lenten Retreat - Fr John Oliver
 'All Things are Thy Servants': Our Dark
 Emotions in the Light of Christ
 Saturday, February 22

Friends & Family Day
 Sunday, February 23
 Bring a friend or family member to liturgy on this beautiful "meatfare" Sunday. Roast beef donation luncheon hosted by the Women of St Philip's supports Syrian war relief.

Great Lent begins Monday, March 3

Choir Concert
 Sunday, April 6, 2 p.m.
 Invite a friend!

Pascha - April 20, 2014

Recipe for a Happy New Year

Take twelve fine, full-grown months; see that these are thoroughly free from old memories of bitterness, rancor and hate, cleanse them completely from every clinging spite; pick off all specks of pettiness and littleness; in short, see that these months are freed from all the past—have them fresh and clean as when they first came from the great storehouse of Time.

Cut these months into thirty or thirty-one equal parts. Do not attempt to make up the whole batch at one time (so many persons spoil the entire lot this way) but prepare one day at a time.

Into each day put equal parts of faith, patience, courage, work (some people omit this ingredient and so spoil the flavor of the rest), hope, fidelity, liberality, kindness, prayer, meditation, rest (leaving this out is like leaving the oil out of the salad dressing—don't do it), and one well-selected resolution.

Put in about one teaspoonful of good spirits, a dash of fun, a pinch of folly, a sprinkling of play, and a heaping cupful of good humor.

<http://www.appleseeds.org/newyear1.htm>

Wisdom from Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia

(A recently canonized Athonite archimandrite and spiritual father. His life and teachings are captured in the marvelous little book, *Wounded By Love*.)

- Take delight in all things that surround us.
- Christ does not wish insensitive souls in his company.
- Beautiful moments predispose the soul to prayer; they make it refined, noble, poetic.
- We once had a dog. Whenever it saw me outside, it would come and kiss my hand. It covered me in saliva and then ran off in case I scolded it.
- Stop caring about your problem if you want God to take care of it.

Holy Mysteries

Katie Bitner was received into the Holy Orthodox Church by Chrismation here on Saturday, December 21.

MAY GOD GRANT HER MANY YEARS!

Did You Know?

- The **Bushelli Family** welcomed baby **Anna Maria** on December 26. Congratulations and Many Years!
- **Antiochian Village Camp:** It's time to register for **Summer Camp!** Most of our youth attend **1st Session (June 15-27, 2014)**, but there are other sessions as well. Visit the camp website for more information and other session dates: <http://antiochianvillage.org/camp/>.
- Akathists on Wednesdays, January 8 - February 26. You can learn this ancient and sublime art of psalmodia!
- There are **many ministries** at our parish for you to be involved in. Ask Father Noah for a Holy Task and roll up your sleeves to God's glory.
- **It is not to late** to turn in your pledge for 2014 Stewardship.
- Pick up a **book** at the BookShelf or the library to start off 2014.
- Add **prostrations** to your prayer rule now (ask Fr. Noah if you need guidance how to do this safely), so you are in shape for Great Lent.

Baby Steps to Holiness

January: Say the Jesus Prayer Constantly

We all want peace and joy. These are elusive goals until we discover and use the key!

The key is right in front of us: "pray without ceasing!" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

As a child or a young man, I might have thought of this as boring. But now, when I am on top of it, it is a source of great joy and peace for me. If God is with us, who can be against us? If we are clinging to heavenly joy, how can we be sour?

How do I start? Ask for God's help, consciously remember His presence and love, and then under your breath, say: "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," or another form of the Jesus Prayer. Whenever you notice that you've stopped saying the prayer, just start again!

It will start as a struggle, develop into a habit, and flourish as an eternal joy!

If you are truly trying to pray, you will need help. Ask Fr Noah, Fr James, or Fr Boniface.

About Holy Water

A quantity of holy water is typically kept in a font placed near the entrance of the church where it is available for anyone who needs it. Holy water is sometimes sprinkled on items or people when they are blessed, as part of the prayers of blessing. For instance, in Alaska, the fishing boats are sprinkled with holy water at the start of the fishing season as the priest prays for the crews' safety and success. Orthodox Christians most often bless themselves with holy water by drinking it. It is traditional to keep a quantity of it at home, and many Orthodox Christians will drink a small amount daily with their morning prayers. It may also be used for informal blessings when no clergy are present. For example, parents might bless their children with holy water before they leave the house for school or play.



The use of holy water is based on Theophany, Jesus' baptism by Saint John the Baptist in the River Jordan. In this view, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, and the people came to have their sins washed away by the water. Since Jesus had no sin, but was God himself, his baptism had the effect of blessing the water, making it holy, that is used fully for its original created purpose to be an instrument of life.

adapted from OrthodoxWiki.org

Challenge for 2014: Be like the Bee, not like the Fly!

Bishop Thomas mentioned this when he visited, in his sermon for St. Philip's Day. (It was originally stated by Elder Paisios of Mount Athos.)

Flies always find the filth, even if they are surrounded by the most fragrant flowers.

Bees always find the flowers, even in the dirtiest wasteland.

Don't be like the fly, always focusing on the negative. Just ignore it. Just "play Pollyanna" and find something to be grateful for.

Be like a bee and buzz right over the trash-talk and gossip.

Focus on the positive, not the negative.

Rejoice in the sweetness and ignore the rest.



Ask Abouna

Previous Question: What is expected of me spiritually, as a lay person?

Answer: St. James tells us: "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27). There are two "poles" in the Christian life and we must find the right balance for ourselves: Service and Sanctity.

Service: - On the one hand, the average faithful Orthodox Christian must be "excellent in good works." There is so much good to be done, to pass along the bountiful love that our Father has showered down on so. Practically speaking this means:

Hospitality - be friendly and open to the people in your life. Open your heart and open your home.

Evangelism - Reaching out to others with good works and also the Good News.

Generosity - 10% Tithe to support the church PLUS money for special needs, drives, causes.

Sanctity: One the other hand, as Orthodox Christians we must be holy, "set aside." The Holy Fathers say that you extend a stick, not your hand, to a man in the quicksand. Practically:

Prayer - Your Grandmother's advice: "Go to Church, Say Your Prayers, Remember God."

Scripture - Open your Bibles, every day, and also the life of a saint. This will renew your soul.

Fasting - Following the dietary requirements, but also fast from media, self-indulgence, and self-will.

Sacraments - Meet Christ in the Sacraments. Confession. Communion...

Our Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is the great example for us. He showed us perfect Service and Sanctity. He spent the days serving through preaching, teaching, healing, pouring himself out for the people. He spent the nights praying. He went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he attended Synagogue.

"He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully!"

In Christ,
+ Fr. Noah

New Question: I am having trouble maintaining a prayer rule, how should I start again?

