



THE PARISH PRESS

St. Philip Orthodox Church



BABY STEPS TO HOLINESS - DROP YOUR DEMANDS.

NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

CHRISTMAS CARDS TO THE ST PHILIP'S FAMILY



As we prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Saviour's birth, we help various Orthodox monastic communities, missionary situations, and charitable services. This is accomplished by asking members to forego sending cards to many within our St. Philip's family, and to send just one card to the entire church community - taking the savings from the cost of cards and postage, and enclosing a contribution which will be distributed among these groups. All cards will be displayed. Cards can be mailed to the Church or placed in the offering basket.



A NEW FACE? A NEW FAMILY?

We have many Visitors-Inquirers-Catechumens-Parishioners-Stewards who are new to our dear church community. Greet Them. Invite them to Sit with You at our Agape Meal of Coffee Hour. Get to Know Them. Invite Them to Dinner. Pray for Them.

NATIVITY FAST CONTINUES

Please make it a blessed and peaceful time by growing prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and ever seeking to turn your heart towards God.

MIRACULOUS ICON

It was a joy and blessing for us to host Fr. Mark and the Taylor Kardiotissa Mother of God Icon. I am praying for healing of body and soul through God's grace in this beautiful reminder of Christ's presence with His Mother. If you weren't able to attend and would like to be anointed, please ask me after Vespers.



A Message from Fr Noah

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am rejoicing in the visit of Fr. Gabriel and Kh. Gabrielle Tannous. Fr. Gabriel, "Jab" as we know him, is a dearly beloved son of our parish, raised here by his family in the early days of our church. Upon ordination and graduating from St. Vladimir's, they have been assigned to St. Philip's in Davie, Florida. Fr. Gabriel is a bright, dynamic, zealous, and loving young priest. It was a joy to welcome him back home!

Please pray for him and for all our clergy: our Metropolitan JOSEPH, our Bishop THOMAS, myself, Fr. James, Fr. Boniface, Dn. Herman. Also, please pray for Ben Daniel, a subdeacon who is enrolled in the St. Stephen's theology studies program in hopes of ordination and ministry here as a deacon. Also, pray that our parish would be worthy to send even more young men into ordained ministry as well preparing all our young people for fruitful lives, giving glory to God and growing ever closer to Him.

The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37).

+ Fr. Noah

Holy Mysteries

Alexander and Kait Ibrahim were united in Holy Matrimony on Saturday, November 29, at St Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Trooper.

MAY GOD GRANT THEM MANY YEARS!

GIVING UPDATES

MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION: Thank you for your generosity to the needy of our community! In **December**, we are collecting **turkeys, hams, & fixings for Christmas.**

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD COLLECTION: We continue to collect non-perishables of all kinds for the food pantries as well.

NEWSPAPERS: Salfid Rescue Kennel, our neighbor on Clearview Road, is always in need of old newspapers. Look for the box in the hallway.

MAY GOD BLESS ALL OUR FAITHFUL GIVERS!

Mark Your Calendar:

Bible Study: I Peter

Saturdays, December 12 & 19, 4:45 p.m.

Advent Paraklesis

Wednesdays & Fridays, 7 p.m.
Through December 23

Sunday School Christmas Program

Rehearsal - Saturday, Dec 19, 4:30 pm
Program - Sunday, Dec 20, 12 noon

Christmas Services

Thursday, December 24

Royal Hours, 8:00 am
Vespers of St Basil, 9:00 am
Matins for Nativity, 8:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, 9:00 pm

Friday, December 25

Vespers for Synaxis of the Theotokos, 12 noon

Saturday, December 26

Matins for Synaxis of the Theotokos 9 am
Divine Liturgy 10 am

Services for Circumcision & St Basil

Thursday, December 31

Vespers & Artoklasia 6 pm, Matins 7 pm
Talent show & fellowship 8 pm
New Year's Prayers -10 pm

Friday, January 1

Divine Liturgy & New Year's Prayers, 10 am

Services for Theophany

Tuesday, January 5 - Strict Fast Day

Royal Hours 10 am

Vespers of St Basil 6 pm

Great Blessing of Water

Wednesday, January 6

Matins 9 a.m., Liturgy, 10 a.m.

Great Blessing of Water

Sunday, January 10

Outdoor Blessing of Water, 1 p.m.
Lake Lenape Park

Pascha - May 1, 2016

Everyday Evangelist

"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21)
Go therefore and make disciples (Matt 28:19).

Baby Steps to Holiness

December: Number your days.

What does a successful life look like? Money... Beauty... Power... Possessions? All of these can be good if we use them thankfully for God's glory and the building up of His Church. But a successful life is one of wisdom, pleasing God at every step. In Psalm 89, the Lord tells us the key to wisdom: "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

"Number your days" means to consciously remember that you will be alive only so long... probably about 76 years.



Whatever the length of time is, it will end and you will give up your soul to God who will reward you for what you have done out of thankfulness for His Free Gift! It means to remind yourself that this may be

the last time you are blessed to speak to someone, clean something. If that is the case, you should make it the best!

Does this sound morbid? It really isn't, since we trust God's love and commend ourselves to His providence. It reminds us to "seize the day," to make every moment count, and not take anyone or anything for granted. Numbering our days also frees us from the poison of pride and the oppression of anger. When we submit to God's will, all of our passions will be extinguished. Rather than being morbid, it sears joy into our consciences and drives us to the joy of Pascha, expressed in this beautiful Psalm verse (117:24): "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

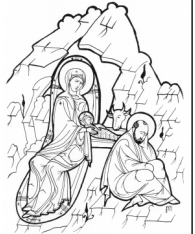
Please join me this most joyful month by growing step by step in Godliness so that all together we can experience a foretaste of the delight of heaven!

Ask Abouna

Previous Question: Is it okay to say "Merry Christmas"?

Answer: Thanks for asking this important question. My answer is No and Yes.

First, no. We don't greet each other with "Merry Christmas" because we have a more beautiful and ancient greeting.



The traditional Orthodox Christian greeting at the Nativity of Christ is "Christ is Born!" with the response "Glorify Him!" This comes from a 4th century sermon of St. Gregory the Theologian and has been incorporated into the first lines of the beloved canon of Christmas. This echoes the joyous Paschal greeting and reminds us that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been born as a man, the God-Man, to save the world from sin, the devil, and death.

Second, though, it is good to say "Merry Christmas" if with it we share a prayerful desire that their celebration of Christ's Birth would be blessed and joyous. It is shorthand for: God bless you richly in your celebration of His Son's Birth. This greeting is very similar to the traditional slavic Orthodox expression *spraznicum*, "the Joy of the Feast," and other similar festal greetings that translate as "blessed feast."

In our increasingly post-Christian world, to say "Merry Christmas" is evangelism. I encourage you to take this risk for Christ's sake with love for God and your neighbor. But don't just say, "Merry Christmas," proclaim with joy, humility, and peace, "Christ is born!"

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| Christ is born! | Glorify him! |
| Christ is come from heaven! | Receive him! |
| Christ is on earth! | Be ye lifted up! |
| Greek: Christos Yenate! | Doxasate! |
| Arabic: Al Maseeh Wolida! | Fa Majeedu |
| Slavonic: Christos Razdajetsja! | Slavite Jeho! |
| Romanian: Hristos sa Nascute! | Adeverat sa nascut! |
| Georgian: Kriste Ishva! | Gikharoden! |
| Ge'ez: Baeza kulou Alem, Yom Tewelde! | Ameen! |

New Question: Why are house blessings such an important part of our life in Christ's Church?

Did You Know?

- On November 8th **Niko Chocheli** gave a presentation on the life of St. Gabriel, Confessor and Fool-for-Christ at the Sacred Monastery of Saint Nina in Union Bridge, MD. Over 60 pilgrims from around the U.S. traveled to the monastery for this event, including a delegation from our own St. Philip's. Two highlights preceding the presentation were the opportunities to see and hear Saint Gabriel in a rare video, the only known filmed footage of this saint, and to be anointed with oil from his tomb in Mtskheta, Georgia. A similar opportunity to view this unique video will happen here at St. Philip's when Niko will give this presentation on January 16 following Vespers. Mark your calendars!
- Your **Amazon** purchases can benefit St Philip's! Simply start your shopping from the link at the top of every page of the **St Philip's website**.
- You can **bring someone back to church**. Open the directory, say a prayer, and give them a call. This holy season is a great time to help someone reconcile with God!



The Fathers on Holy Scripturę

Concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures; nor must we be drawn aside by mere plausibility and artifices of speech. Even to me, who tell thee these things, give not absolute credence, unless thou receive the proof of the things which I announce from the Divine Scriptures. For this salvation which we believe depends not on ingenious reasoning, but on demonstration of the Holy Scriptures.

- St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th c.)

It is not within our capacity, therefore, to say anything about God or even to think of Him, beyond the things which have been divinely revealed to us, whether by word or by manifestation, by the divine oracles at once of the Old Testament and of the New.

- St. John of Damascus (7th-8th c.)

Challenge for 2015: Build Up the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4)

The Church is God's vineyard. Christ is the vine, we are the branches. Without Him we can do nothing, can not bear fruit. We need to water, fertilize, cultivate, and prune the vineyard of St. Philip's with our faithfulness in continued repentance, generosity, ministry, education, worship, prayer, pilgrimage, and participation in the sacraments. As our bishop prays for us (from the great Psalm 118) in the Hierarchal Liturgy: "Lord, Lord, look down from heaven and visit this vineyard which Thou hast planted with thy right hand and establish it."

Missions Minute

The Orthodox Church in Africa traces its origins to St Mark, who planted a church in the city of Alexandria in about AD 42, around the time of Paul's first missionary journey. From there on Christianity spread rapidly among the Egyptian population. Alexandria was known for its Catechetical school, world-renowned as a great intellectual center of Christianity.

