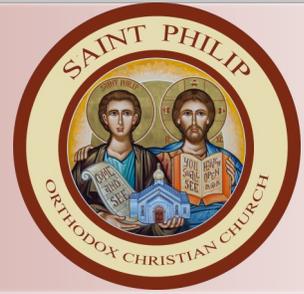


# THE PARISH PRESS

## St. Philip Orthodox Church

VOL. 21.12 — DECEMBER 2020



### Mark Your Calendar:

#### Nativity Fast

November 15-December 24

Daily Services during the Nativity Fast:

- + Liturgies – Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday (Mask Required), Sunday @ 10 a.m.
- + Advent Services – Monday, Wednesday, Friday @ 6:30 p.m.
- + Great Vespers, Resurrectional Orthros, and Feasts as usual.

#### Feast of the Nativity of Christ

Thursday, December 24

Royal Hours, 8 am

Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil, 9 am

Festal Orthros, 9:30 pm

Divine Liturgy, 11 pm

Friday, December 25

Vespers for the Synaxis of the Theotokos, 12 pm

Saturday, December 26

Orthros 9 am; Liturgy 10 am



#### Circumcision of Christ & St. Basil

Thursday, December 31

Vespers 6:30 pm & Orthros 7:30 pm

New Year's Eve Fellowship & Prayers

Friday, January 1

Liturgy of St. Basil, 10 am

#### Holy Theophany

Tuesday, January 5

Royal Hours 10 am

Vesperal Liturgy 6 pm w/ Great Blessing of Water

Wednesday, January 6

Orthros 9 am; Liturgy 10 am

Great Blessing of Water

#### Feast of Presentation

February 1-2, 2021

#### Beginning of Lent

March 15, 2021

#### We live Pascha to Pascha!

May 2, 2021

January 29,  
2021

Washington, DC

Tentative Plan/Schedule:

Gather at St. Philip—5:45am

Bus Departs—6:00am

Leave Washington, D.C.—4:00pm

Arrive at St. Philip—9:30pm

Cost — \$40/person (Includes Bus & Gratuity)

Registration is available on the St. Philip

website: <https://st-philip.net/prolife>



### A Message from Fr. Noah

Dear Saint Philip's Family, Christ is born!

The last nine months have been quite a trial for all of us. We've all felt the "vice-grips of Satan" in very different ways and have interpreted it quite differently. My experience has been excruciating as I've seen the scattering and division, the pulling apart, in society, churches, and even families. The devil's dance in the covid situation has emerged from the shadows and is more and more in our faces. So many of us have given in to the fear of death and that fear has made us afraid of each other; indeed that seems to have been the motivation of many of the changes and restrictions we are living with. As Christians we should fear God and fear sin because it separates us from God. This doesn't mean that we can be blocked-headed and fool-hearty; it doesn't mean that we take public health lightly; but it also doesn't mean that we jettison the traditions of our land and families; and it is certainly doesn't mean we abandon Holy Tradition.

Our Lord asks the question, "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Repeat this question to yourself; not in terms of success and wealth, but in terms of safety and health. The answer is easy, but the solution, the application, the way

forward will be difficult.

There is no question that our society has shifted recently. The secular, anti-Christian agenda has leveraged, or been leveraged by, our pandemic. And we must be mindful of our response. Are we being *more intentional* to identify with Christ and His Church? Are we becoming *stronger* in prayer and in trust in God's help during this time? Our commitment to Christ and His Church, to the saints and to each other, is truly the one thing needful.

We must also reject the temptation to become fatalistic. No! The spiritual battle is pitched, but it has been since the beginning. The cultural cards are stacked against us, but we have always known that we are strangers and sojourners here and fellow-citizens with the saints in heaven!

We do not fear, not because we don't think we can die, but because we know that our Lord, and God and Savior Jesus Christ has come to save us! As we celebrate the beginning of His earthly ministry, humble and vulnerable, we can remember that it was by humility and vulnerability that he came and destroyed death. We know that God wins! We rejoice that Christ is the champion of sin, the devil, and death.

The question is not "who wins." The question is "what side will I be on?"

In Christ,  
+Fr. Noah

### NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

#### +MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION:

Thank you for your generosity to the needy of our community! In **November & December**, we are collecting **Turkeys & Hams**.

#### +NON-PERISHABLE FOOD COLLECTION:

We continue to collect non-perishables of all kinds for the food pantries.

+If you are in the position to **make a special offering**, please consider the Building Expansion, Capital Improvement, and Pastoral Discretion Funds.

**MAY GOD BLESS ALL OUR  
FAITHFUL GIVERS!**

### CHRISTMAS CARDS TO THE ST. PHILIP FAMILY

As we prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Savior'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 in the Narthex.



**Births & Holy Mysteries**

Congratulations to **Rdr. Nathan & Rebecca Jekel** on the birth of **Baby Herman**, November 13th, at 8:42 pm, weighing 6lbs. 3.5 oz, and 20.4 ins.



**MAY GOD GRANT THEM MANY YEARS!**

**Office Update**

The office Staff wish all of our St. Philip family and friends the blessings and joys of this Nativity Season. Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

In Christ, Celia-Marie (office@st-philip.net)

**St. Philip Cemetery Notes**



Our founding priest, Father Boniface Black, had the vision of St. Philip providing "cradle to grave" services for its Parishioners. This vision came to life in spring of 1998 when the Cemetery Task Force was formed. The original Task Force members included: Fr. Boniface Black, Greg Mondjack, Basil Roehner, Larry Shaheen, Helen Smekanic, Nancy Smerkanich, and Helen Tannous. Their charge was to determine the need for a cemetery, the availability of suitable cemetery sites, and assess the financial feasibility of such an endeavor. After completing their investigation, they concluded that St. Philip should provide "cradle to grave" services for its parishioners and pursue establishing a cemetery option.

In the October 1999 Parish Meeting, two cemetery options were presented to the Parish. The first option was to purchase a site at an existing cemetery. Candidate cemeteries included: Whitemarsh Memorial Park, Pine Grove Cemetery, and Rose Hill Cemetery. The second option was to purchase land and develop our own cemetery. The Parish preferred the second option of exploring the possibility of purchasing and developing our own cemetery. Ultimately, Fr. Boniface and Khoury Joyce Black donated six acres of undeveloped land on Sunny Road near St. Philip that would be used to develop the St. Philip Cemetery. The cemetery development plan received Metropolitan Philip's blessing in September 2000 and was consecrated in Spring 2001 after receiving the necessary Hilltown Township approvals and completing the development work required.

If you have any questions about St. Philip Cemetery, please contact either Fr. Noah or Jim or Doris Eggers (609-680-0907 / jdkceggers@aol.com) from the Cemetery Committee.

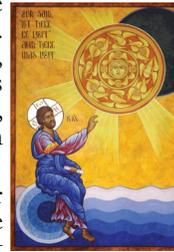
**"Making a Defense":**

Explorations in Orthodox Apologetics

REVISITING THE "COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT" FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE, PART 2

Last month we began to explore the cosmological argument for God's existence, proposing that this argument should be understood in its classical sense, not as a first cause *in or related to time*, but as a *hierarchical* first cause. God Himself is the First Cause of all that exists. Before proceeding further, we would do well to note how this completely sidesteps the modern debates over the beginning of the universe. In this light, the scientific study of the beginning of the universe, while intriguing, has little relevance to the question of or "proofs" for God. The primary logical, philosophical, and theological question is, why is there something instead of nothing?, and this question is by definition outside the scope of natural science.

To rejoin the flow of our argument from last month: The claim that there is a Necessary first cause leads to several implications as to what (or who) this Necessary Being must be, rationally speaking. 1) This first cause must be simple, absolutely One. If the first cause were a multiplicity, there would have to be a reason for the parts to be together and, therefore, there would have to be a cause logically or ontologically prior to the Necessary Being. 2) Similarly, it must also be immaterial and uncircumscribed, not being contingent or confined in any way, for if this were not the case, it would again mean that there is something—a substance or a space—more ultimate than the First Cause itself. 3) It also must be all-powerful, lacking nothing, such that it can supply to



everything the ability to exist at all. 4) It must be all-knowing and an intellect, containing all things in itself (and thus "knowing" them) since all things exist from it. This is because of the principle that effects must be, in some sense, a part of their causes, which means that the universe of created things, as "effects," must exist in their first cause, the Necessary Being, in a way that is analogous to how thoughts exist in a mind. These are all logical consequences of the fundamentals of being we previously laid out, and they are also, of course, the classical divine attributes. In short, again, this means that the Necessary first cause is God Himself.

While we have been using the language of philosophy and logic in the previous paragraphs, we might more clearly recognize the argument and categories if we were to use the prayers of the Church: *O heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art in all places, and fillest all things, Treasury of good things, and Giver of life, come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord.*

The Necessary First Cause revealed in creation is the One God eternally existing in Three Persons who is revealed in the economy of salvation, culminating in the Incarnation of our Lord and in the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. The God who is "never far from us" (Acts 17:27), assumes human nature, becomes one of us, unites the Church to himself in and by the Holy Spirit, so as to restore and re-create us that we might be able to fulfill the purpose for which God created us in the first place—to be in free, loving communion with God, each other, and all creation.

— by Zach Willits & Sdn Justin

**Did You Know?**

- **The Fast is Continuing** – Let us continue in prayer and preparation to receive the Savior.
- An Orthodox Christian ought to **come to confession** at least four times per year and as needed.
- If you spend less money on gifts, entertainment, food, etc., you'll have **more to give in alms**, special projects, and stewardship.
- You can **bring someone back to church**. Open the directory for someone you haven't seen in a while, say a prayer, and give them a call or shoot them a text or email. This holy season is a great time to help someone reconcile with God.
- The **liturgical offerings** of our parish (e.g., Altar Candles, Wine, Classic Olive Oil) are simple and profound ways to offer our talents to God and to each other.

**Parenting Suggestion**

**Teach children manners.**

The other day, two teenage boys walked into a door in front of me and let the door swing back in my face. They just kept talking and didn't even look back. While this seems minor, manners actually speak volumes about who we are and what we value.

Manners are like miniature cultural liturgies, that give structure, form, and meaning to human interaction. The divine wisdom of Proverbs recognizes this:

*He who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning, It will be reckoned a curse to him (Prov 27:14)*

When we teach our children to say excuse me when they bump into or walk in front of someone, or to hold a door for someone, we are teaching them habits of respect and honor, to treat others as divine image bearers, like our faith teaches.

(Adapted from <https://myocn.net/10-ways-orthodox-parents-set-children-up-for-moral-failure/>)

