

# The Voice In The Wilderness

*"A voice crying in the wilderness:  
Prepare ye the way of the LORD..."  
Matthew 3:3*

The Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox  
Christian Church, the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, an  
Orthodox Christian witness to Cedar Park and Central Texas.



---

Volume 4 Number 3

November 2006



## WOMEN'S RETREAT NOVEMBER 10-11

### "WHAT DO WE DO WHEN OUR LIFE FALLS APART?"

The Women's Retreat is happening! And it will be  
Wonderful!

This year the retreat will be held at St. John  
the Forerunner Orthodox Church  
from

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 10  
TO  
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 11**

### **OUR RETREAT SPEAKER: THE VERY REV. FATHER MICHAEL KEISER MISSIONER FOR THE DIOCESE OF WICHITA AND MID-AMERICA**

Father Michael will be sharing the podium with his Khouria as they share their story of struggle, hope, and faith in facing the world after a major family catastrophic illness. Father Michael will also be the homilist for the Divine Liturgy served on Sunday November 12.

The retreat costs are \$25 per person. Some scholarships are available contact Father Aidan for more information. This will be a wonderful time for sisterhood and fellowship. Visitors are welcome.

**Our Father Among the Saints,  
RAPHAEL  
Bishop of Brooklyn**

*Good Shepherd of the Lost Sheep in America*

**November 8, 1860 – February 27, 1915  
Feast Day: First Saturday in November**



**Shrine and reliquary in honor of  
St. RAPHAEL AT  
St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox  
Cathedral of Brooklyn, New York**

## November 4 Feast to be observed at St John the Forerunner Orthodox Church

The parish of St John the Forerunner in Cedar Park will celebrate the Feast of Our Father among the Saints, Raphael of Brooklyn. The Great Vespers for St Raphael will be served on Friday November 3 at 7 pm. On Saturday, Orthros will be served at 7am with the Divine Liturgy being served at 9am. The parish is blessed to have an icon with a reliquary holding a relic of St Raphael. The relic of this Arab-American Saint will be displayed for veneration on the Feast day.

St Raphael Hawaweeny was born in November of 1860 to Michael Hawaweeny and his wife Mariam, a daughter of a priest serving in Damascus. His name day was chosen to be , the Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the Bodiless Powers of Heaven (November 8). He was born in a time of Turmoil, Christians were being actively persecuted in Syria by mobs of Moslem thugs. It became so violent that their parish priest, St Joseph of Damascus (July 10) and his companions were martyred, the Hawaweeny family was forced to flee to Beirut for their safety. It was here that the future saint first saw the light of day, and not in the city of his parents. Indeed, as the child's life unfolded, it was evident that he would have no continuing city in this world, but would seek the city which is to come (Heb 13:14).

On the Feast of Theophany in 1861, he was baptized with the name Rafla, and later that spring the family was able to return to Damascus. The child attended elementary school, where he did very well, but in 1874 Deacon Athanasius Atallah (later Metropolitan of Homs), who recommended to Patriarch Hierotheus of Antioch that Rafla be accepted as a student of the Patriarchate in preparation for the priesthood. By the age of 17, he was such a good student that he was selected to be a substitute teaching assistant. The following year he was appointed as a teacher of Arabic and Turkish. On March 28, 1879 at the age of 18, he was tonsured as a monk by Patriarch Hierotheus, and served as His Beatitude's personal attendant.



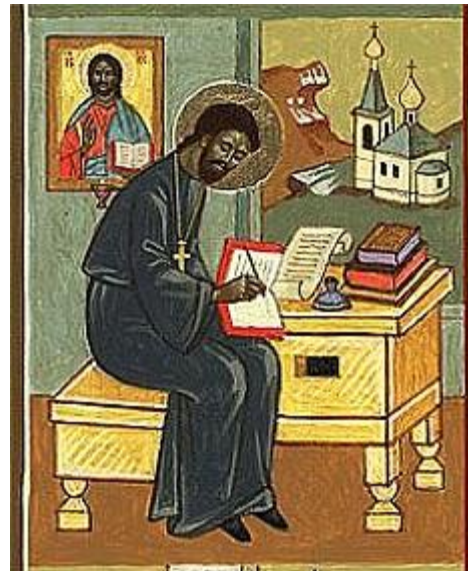
Since the Balamand Seminary had been closed in 1840, Patriarch JOACHIM III of Constantinople invited the Patriarch of Antioch to send at least one deserving student to study on scholarship at the School of Theology at Halki, and Saint Raphael was the one who was selected to go. On December 8, 1885 at the age of 22, he was ordained to the diaconate at the school chapel. In July of 1886 the young deacon received his Certificate of Theology, and returned to his homeland in the hope of serving the Church there. Patriarch Gerasimus of Antioch was impressed with Deacon Raphael, and often took him along on his pastoral visitations of his parishes.

Deacon Raphael was not satisfied with the extent of his knowledge, and thirsted to learn even more. The Patriarch gave his blessing to permit him to do graduate studies at a school in Russia, promising to return and serve as the Patriarch's Russian-language secretary. Deacon Raphael

was accepted as a student at the Theological Academy of Kiev. In 1889 Patriarch Gerasimus ordered the young deacon to take over as head of the Antiochian representation church in Moscow. He was ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop SYLVESTER, the rector of the Academy, at the request of Patriarch Gerasimus. A month later, he was raised to the rank of archimandrite by Metropolitan IOANNIKII of Moscow, and was confirmed as head of the Antiochian representation church. After two years, Archimandrite Raphael was able to reduce the representation's debt and he also arranged for twenty-four Syrian students to come to Russia to further their education, hoping that they would return to Syria and teach others.

When Patriarch Gerasimus resigned in order to accept the See of Jerusalem, Archimandrite Raphael regarded this as an opportunity to free the Church of Antioch from its domination by foreign hierarchs. Burning with love for the Church of Antioch, and wishing to restore the church to its own native clergy and people, Archimandrite Raphael began a campaign of writing letters to some Antiochian bishops and influential laymen. He also wrote articles in the Russian press, drawing attention to the plight of Antioch. His courageous efforts did not meet with success, however, and there was a price to pay for his outspoken criticism.

Due to some irregularities in the election, Archimandrite Raphael refused to commemorate the new Patriarch during services at the representation church. As a result, he was suspended from his priestly functions by Patriarch SPYRIDON. Saint Raphael accepted his suspension, but continued to write articles in Russian newspapers in defense of the Antiochian cause. The Patriarchs of Antioch, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem successfully petitioned the Tsar to forbid Russian newspapers from publishing his articles. With this door closed to him, Saint Raphael began to publish his writings in book form.



Eventually, Patriarch SPYRIDON wrote to the Assistant Overprocurator of Russia, a friend of Saint Raphael's, asking him to persuade Father Raphael to ask for the Patriarch's forgiveness. Father

Raphael did so, and the suspension was lifted. Saint Raphael was allowed to transfer from the jurisdiction of Antioch to the Church of Russia. He remained in Kazan Russia until 1895 when he was invited by the Syrian Orthodox Benevolent Society of New York to come to that city to be the pastor of the Arab Orthodox community.

Archimandrite Raphael arrived in New York on November 2, 1895, and was welcomed by a delegation of Arab Christians who were under the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States. On November 5, his first Sunday in America, he assisted Bishop NICHOLAS in serving the Divine Liturgy at the Russian church in New York city. Less than two weeks after his arrival, Archimandrite Raphael found a suitable place in lower Manhattan to set up a chapel, and furnished it with ecclesiastical items that he had brought with him from Russia. It was not long, however, before he heard of smaller communities of Arab Christians scattered throughout the length and breadth of North America.

Many Arab and Greek immigrants had no pastor to care for them, it was not surprising that some should turn to other denominations, or completely neglect their religious duties. In the summer of 1896, Saint Raphael visited thirty cities between New York and San Francisco, seeking out the Master's lost sheep in cities, towns, and on isolated farms. He fed the spiritually hungry people with the Word of God in each place where he stopped. In 1898 Saint Raphael produced his first book in the New World -- an Arabic language Service Book of liturgical services and prayers was very useful to priests in celebrating the divine services, and also to the people in their personal prayer life. (Note: Archimandrite Seraphim Nassar published an English version of this prayer book that is still being used today. ) he worked hard to bring additional priests from the mother church to serve their children in America.

Archimandrite Raphael welcomed Bishop Tikhon when the latter replaced Bishop NICHOLAS as the ruling bishop in America. On December 15, Saint Tikhon came to serve the Liturgy at the Syrian church of St Nicholas. Raphael told his people that their new Archpastor was one who "has been sent here to tend the flock of Christ -- Russians, Slavs, Syro-Arabs, and Greeks -- which is scattered across the entire North American continent." The Church united those of diverse backgrounds under the omophorion of the Russian Archbishop.

In March of 1899, Father Raphael received permission from Bishop Tikhon to start collecting funds for a cemetery, and for building a new church to replace the chapel which was located in an old building on a dirty street. In the spring, he spent seven months in the northeastern, southern, and midwestern regions of the United States. Saint Raphael ministered to Greeks and Russians as well as Arabs, performing weddings and baptisms, and regularizing the weddings of Orthodox people who had been married by non-Orthodox clergy. He also chrismated some children who had been baptized by Catholic priests. He reconciled those whose personal enmity threatened to divide the community. Father Raphael restored calm.

When he was notified that Metropolitan Meletios (Doumani), had been elected Patriarch of Antioch. He was overjoyed that for the first time in 168 years, a native Arab had been chosen as primate of the Antiochian Church. Several times after this Father Raphael was offered Bishoprics in the Antiochian Patriarchate but declined the offers believing it was important that he finish the building of the Church in America.

Since the number of parishes within the Diocese of North America was growing, Bishop Tikhon found it impossible to visit all of them. The diocese had to be reorganized in order to administer it more efficiently. Since various ethnic groups required special attention and pastoral leadership, Bishop Tikhon proposed that Archimandrite Raphael be made his second vicar bishop (the Bishop of Alaska

would be his first).

In 1903, the Holy Synod of Russia unanimously elected Archimandrite Raphael to be the Bishop of Brooklyn while retaining him as head of the Syro-Arab Orthodox Mission in North America. The Holy Synod announced the election to Patriarch Meletios, who was pleased by their decision. Bishop Tikhon wrote to Saint Raphael to inform him of his election, and Father Raphael sent him a letter of acceptance. On the third Sunday of Lent in 1904, Saint Raphael became the first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated on American soil. Bishop Tikhon and Bishop Innocent performed the service at St Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn. The new bishop's vestments were a gift from Tsar Nicholas II. Following his consecration, Bishop Raphael continued his pastoral labors, ordaining priests and assigning them to parishes, and helping Bishop Tikhon in the administration of the diocese.



At the end of 1904, Bishop Raphael announced his intention to publish a magazine called *Al-Kalimat* (The Word) as the official publication of the Syro-Arab mission. Bishop Raphael knew that he could not visit all Orthodox Christians across North America in person, but through the ministry of the printed word, he could preach the word of salvation even to people he would never meet. The content was to be spiritual, moral, and churchly so that the magazine could reinforce people in their Faith. The current Antiochian Archdiocese magazine *The Word* continues to focus on five primary topics Bishop Raphael felt important to educate Orthodox America: dogmatic truths, ethical teaching, historical and contemporary ecclesiastical subjects, and official pronouncements.

In July of 1905 Bishop Raphael consecrated the grounds for St Tikhon's Monastery and blessed the orphanage at South Canaan, PA. For the next ten years Bishop Raphael tended his growing flock. With the growth of his New York community came an increase in the number of children, and he was concerned about their future. A number of children who did not speak Arabic were already going to non-Orthodox churches where Sunday school classes were conducted in English. Bishop Raphael saw the absolute necessity for using English in worship and the establishment of Orthodox Sunday School Programs. In order to do this, Bishop Raphael recommended the use of the Service Book of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church (translated by Isabel Hapgood) in all of his parishes.

In March of 1907 Saint Tikhon returned to Russia and was replaced by Archbishop PLATON. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy in 1911, Bishop Raphael was honored for his fifteen years of pastoral ministry in America. Archbishop PLATON presented him with a silver-covered icon of Christ and praised him for his work. In his humility, Bishop Raphael could not understand why he should be honored merely for doing his duty (Luke 17:10). He considered himself an "unworthy servant."

Toward the end of 1912, Bishop Raphael became ill while working in his office. Doctors diagnosed him with a heart ailment that eventually caused his death. After two weeks he felt strong enough to celebrate the Liturgy in his cathedral. In 1913-1914 this missionary bishop continued to make pastoral visitations to various cities. In 1915 he fell ill again and spent two months at home, bearing his illness with patience. At 12:40 AM on February 14 he rested from his labors. They called him, but he did not answer. They shook him, but he was gone.

#### Troparion of St. Raphael (Tone 3)

*Rejoice, O Father Raphael, adornment of the holy Church! Thou art champion of the True Faith, seeker of the lost, consolation of the oppressed, father to orphans and friend of the poor, peacemaker and good shepherd, joy of all the Orthodox, son of Antioch, boast of America. Intercede with Christ God for us and for all who honor thee.*



#### Kontakion from the Akathist to St. Raphael

*Loving God above all, and being sent to serve Him among the least brethren, like an apostle thou didst offer prayers day and night for their salvation. Thou didst raise up a holy Temple for the Orthodox Arabs, dedicating it to Holy Nicholas, Wonder-worker of Myra in Lycia. Now together with him in heaven thou dost exclaim: Alleluia.*

From his youth, Saint Raphael's greatest joy was to serve the Church. When he came to America, he found his people scattered abroad, and he called them to unity. He never neglected his flock, but traveled throughout America, Canada, and Mexico in search of them so that he might care for them. He kept them from straying into strange pastures, and he protected them from spiritual harm. During twenty years of faithful ministry he nurtured them and helped them to grow. At the time of his death, the Syro-Arab Mission had thirty parishes with 25,000 faithful.

He was also a scholar, and the author of several books. He wrote many, if not most, of the articles that appeared in *The Word*. He served his own Arabic community, and also reached out to Greeks and Russians, speaking to them in their own language. He became fluent in English, and encouraged its use in church services and educational programs. St Raphael came into contact with all sorts of people, and was a gentle father to them. He gained their love and respect by first loving them, and also through his charming personality and excellent character. He was always kind, merciful, and condescending with others, but was strict with himself. He did many good things during his earthly life, and now he joins the holy angels in offering ceaseless prayer and praise to God.

We would like to especially wish a Happy Feast Day to Raphael Nelson, a member of our parish whose names day is celebrated on this Saturday of St Raphael.

Our thanks to the websites of the Orthodox Church in America, The Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, and the Saint Raphael of Brooklyn website ([www.angelfire.com/pa3/straphaelcanonized](http://www.angelfire.com/pa3/straphaelcanonized)) for the information presented in this article.

## NATIVITY LENT BEGINS NOVEMBER 15

Whether one calls it the Nativity Lent, St Philip's Fast, Advent, or the Small Lent, we are talking about the same period in the Orthodox Christian Church from November 15 thru December 24. The Preparations and Celebrations of The Great-Feast of the Nativity according to the Flesh of Our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, have much in common with those that surrounding Pascha. For this reason, the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann coined the phrase "the Winter Pascha" for this period from the beginning of the Nativity Fast until the beginning of the Pre-Lenten Sundays. Fasting, Abstinence,

Prayer, and Acts of Mercy mark the 40 days before Christmas, much as the Great Lent precedes Pascha.

In this issue, we will look at some of the highlights of the preparatory period for the Nativity. Throughout the preparations, the themes of God's predilection for the poor and the role of the Church in carrying out this care are emphasized. Orthodoxy (in Faith) and Orthopraxis (in action) are shown to be inextricably linked. Nothing could be more appropriate as we prepare to celebrate the Birth of the Incarnate Word in a shepherd's stable.

## FASTING AND ABSTINENCE - THE FAST OF THE NATIVITY

Our Fasting is not so much penitential (although that aspect is present) as holistic: by fasting, we are "getting ourselves into shape" for the realization of the Incarnation. In so doing, we affirm the goodness of matter, and our composite nature of Body, Soul and Spirit.

What we do to one part of our nature affects all of our being, so Fasting is a medicine for the Spirit, as well as for the Body! If the physical world were not good -- indeed capable of Theosis or divinization! -- we would not bother with it at all! Seeing that God has become one of us in all aspects but sin, we can affirm that, if the human - physical, living and spiritual-- was good enough to be united to the Divine in Christ, it is good enough for us!

From November 15 through December 24, the following are some basic guidelines for fasting in the Antiochian Archdiocese:

- (1) On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the Nativity there are restrictions both on the **number** of meals taken daily and on the **types of food** permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the **quantity** of food to be eaten.
- (2) On **Saturdays and Sundays** in Nativity Lent, fish is permitted as well as wine and oil, but meat and animal products are not allowed. After December 12 at which time Fish is no longer permitted but wine and oil may be served on Saturday and Sunday.
- (3) **WINE AND OIL are** permitted on all Tuesdays and Thursdays of the Fast prior to December 12, and on the following days:
  - 12/4 -- Great martyr Barbara
  - 12/6 -- St. Nicholas of Myra
  - 12/9 -- Conception of the Theotokos
  - 12/13 -- St. Herman of Alaska
  - 12/20 -- St. Ignatius of Antioch, the God-bearer

Note: According to the strict observance, only two meals are usually eaten, it should be added at once that in practice today these rules are commonly relaxed to allow three meals. Shellfish, shrimp, crab, crayfish, squid, and octopus are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil, not made from olives.

It has always been held that these rules of fasting should be relaxed in the elderly or case of anyone in poor health. In present-day practice, even for those in good health, the full strictness of the fast is usually mitigated. Personal factors need to be taken into account, as for example the situation of an isolated Orthodox living in the same household as non-Orthodox, or obliged to take meals in a factory or school cafeteria. In cases of uncertainty each should seek the advice of his or her spiritual father.

Let us never forget that the Fast period of the 40 days before the Great Feast of the Nativity reminds us of the necessity of wholeness of being which the life of the Kingdom demands. The

Incarnation unites the Creator and His creatures in the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and demonstrates the goodness of matter and the interconnectedness of the whole cosmos: physical, living and spiritual.

Fasting allows us to become ever more aware that what happens to any one part of ourselves (body, soul, spirit) affects all the other parts as well. We cannot claim to have "a wonderful prayer life," and live a life of oppression of others, cruelty, or misuse of the body or mind.

## *From the Pastor's Desk:*



Brothers and Sisters  
Greetings in the Name of the Lord

This month, I want to use my column to highlight the importance of *Great Vespers* on Saturday evening. I spoke about this subject in a homily not too long ago, but I'm going to address it again because I feel that our participation in this service is critical to the health of our community. As Orthodox Christians, one of the things that make us truly distinctive is the fact that we attend worship services not only on Sunday morning, but also on Saturday night. However, over the past year, in our parish, attendance at *Great Vespers* had decreased at an alarming rate. Usually, there are less than ten people present—and, since we have our catechism class just before the service, many times, the majority of the people at the service are not even Orthodox!

This is not only embarrassing; it is also discouraging. Of course, many people in our community live a long way from the temple. Then there are always those folks who have to work. But even after taking into account all of those situations, we still are left with the fact that a lot of us simply are not attending this very important service.

To be sure, low attendance at *Great Vespers* on Saturday is not just a problem for our community. It is a problem in most parishes around the country. Some communities have simply stopped doing *Great Vespers* except for feast days; others have just accepted that low attendance is "the way things are going to be." But neither of those approaches represents what Christ Jesus wants for our community. What our Lord and Master wants us to do is to stay faithful to the Traditions of the Faith, and that means coming to *Great Vespers* on a regular basis.

Of course, that is going to look different for everyone. Families with small children may only be able to send one parent and one older child every other week. Folks who live a long way off may have to do the service at home and simply come a few times a year. Those people who have spouses or children that are not Orthodox will have to make specific and special arrangements to attend *Great Vespers*. But most of us who live within reasonable driving distance of the parish can make the service just about every week.

Will we have to give up things? Certainly. Will it involve sacrifice and inconvenience? Absolutely. But let's not forget: One of the things that initially attracted most of us to the Faith was the fact that Orthodoxy did not shy away from those sorts of requirements. If that was meaningful and important to us five or ten or fifteen years ago, it should be meaningful and important to us now. And if we are going to establish the Church on a firm foundation here in Central Texas, then we will need to show

the people around us that an essential part of our Orthodox Faith is Great Vespers on Saturday evening.

Your unworthy priest  
Aidan +

## *ORTHOPRAXIS: The Jesus Prayer Rope*

The Nativity Lent is a great time to fast, pray, and meditate. Many Orthodox lay people pray with the aid of a prayer rope. The origin of the prayer rope is attributed to the time of the founder of coenobitic monasticism, St. Pachomius the Great (4th century), who introduced it as a means to help illiterate monastics say their daily prayer rule by accomplishing a definite quantity of prayers and prostrations. Since then the prayer rope has gained wide popularity in Eastern monasticism and is in common use among laymen zealous for godliness. In accordance with his rule, each monastic is obliged to fulfill daily a set number of prostrations in conjunction with the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner") and the prayer rope by its very nature is the most convenient and simplest means of keeping track of the number.

By carrying the prayer rope in his hand, the monk is continually reminded of his main task: to pray unceasingly, something which the Apostle Paul required not only of monastics, but of all Christians in general (cf. I Thess. 5:17). This is why a newly-tonsured monastic is immediately entrusted by the abbot with "the cord" (the prayer rope) with the words: Accept, O brother ....., the spiritual sword which is the word of God in the everlasting Jesus prayer by which you should have the name of the Lord in your soul, your thoughts, and your heart, saying always: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

All those who are zealous for their salvation are invited to this unceasing remembrance of the saving name of Jesus, both laymen and monastics, for the spirit of life in Christ is one and the same for both. This explains why in old Russia the prayer rope, under a special name and with a somewhat unique form (the so-called "mini-ladder" which resembles a long strap of leather with rolls that form small steps), gained widespread usage among laymen and is now preserved in this form among the Old Ritualists. With the subsequent decline of the spirit of prayer and reverence in Russia, the use of the prayer rope disappeared among the majority of the laity.

There is no need to fear (as some erroneously believe) that prayer by this means need take on a mechanical character. Any prayer, even without the rope, can be said mechanically if those praying do not force themselves to struggle to pray with profound attentiveness and reverence in order to overcome their wandering minds.

The use of the Jesus prayer with prostrations is sanctioned by our Church, which directs at the end of certain service books (the Service Psalter, for example) that one can in cases of need replace all the common worship services with a definite number of prostrations and the Jesus Prayer (which would be difficult to carry out without the rope):

Instead of the entire Psalter: 6000 Jesus Prayers  
One kathisma: 300 prayers; for each stasis: 100  
Midnight Service: 600

Matins: 1500  
The Hours without the Inter-Hours: 1000;  
The Hours with the Inter-Hours: 1500  
Vespers: 600  
Great Compline: 700  
Small Compline: 400  
A canon or Akathist to the Blessed Theotokos: 500

Many of our spiritual elders, men of prayer, ascetics and directors in faith and piety, down to the most recent time have recommended the use of the prayer rope to laymen zealous for their salvation and at times have even given them their own prayer ropes as a blessing.

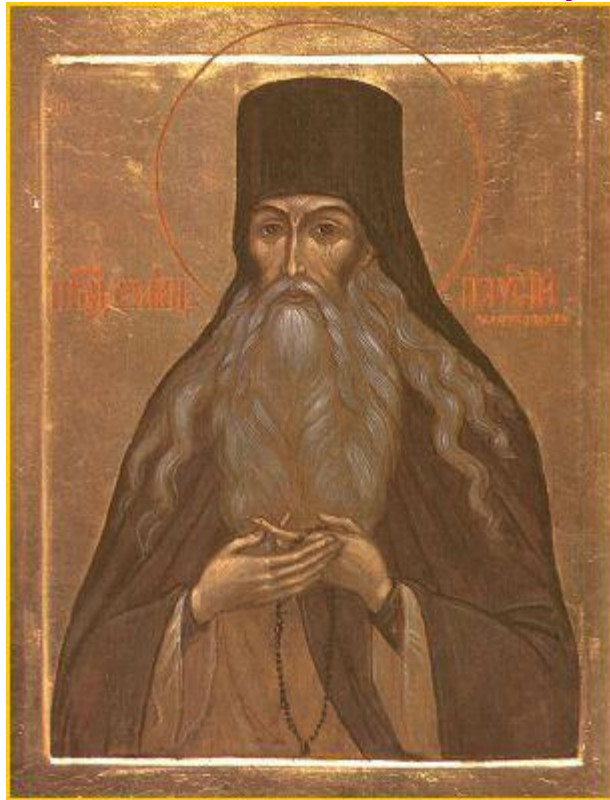
## Our Wondrous Monastic Saints

## November 15 Saint Paisius Velichkovsky

Saint Paisius Velichkovsky was born in Poltava in Little Russia on December 21, 1722, and was the eleventh of twelve children. His father John was a priest, who named him Peter at his Baptism, in honor of St Peter the Metropolitan of Moscow, on whose Feast he was born.

After the children's father died, their mother Irene raised them in piety. Peter was sent to study at the Moghila Academy in Kiev in 1735. After four years, Peter decided to leave the world and become a monk. At the age of seventeen, he went in search of a monastery and a good spiritual Father. For seven years Peter visited various monasteries, including the Kiev Caves Lavra, but he did not feel drawn to any of the monasteries of Ukraine.

After being made a rassophore monk (one blessed to wear the rasson, but not yet tonsured "into the mantle") at the St Nicholas Medvedevsky Monastery with the name Platon, he found that there was no experienced Elder there who could teach him obedience or give him spiritual direction. Not wishing to begin his monastic life without such guidance, he left the monastery a week after his tonsure with the blessing of his Elder.



At first, he went to Kiev, where he happened to meet his sister-in-law, the widow of his older brother Archpriest John. She informed him of his mother's sorrow when he left Kiev, and her mind seemed to be affected by her grief. Then one day an angel appeared to her and told her that instead of loving the Creator with her whole heart and soul, she loved His creation (her son) more. Because of this excessive love, the angel went on, she was thinking of starving herself to death, which would result in her eternal condemnation. The angel said that by God's grace, her son would become a monk, and that she should also renounce the world and become a nun. After this, she became calm and accepted God's will. She entered a convent and was tonsured with the name Juliana. After about ten years, she departed to the Lord.

While at Kiev, Platon met two monks from Romania who were about to return to their country. After crossing the border into Moldavia, they came to Vlachia and the Skete of St Nicholas, which is called Treisteny, around 1745. The Elder of the Skete, Hieroschemamonk Michael, was away on business in Ukraine, so Platon and his companions were welcomed by the Superior, Fr Demetrius. Platon was placed under a general obedience and given a cell near the Skete, from which the church was visible.

As he was sleeping one night, the semantron was sounded calling the monks to Sunday Matins, but Platon did not hear it. He woke up and ran to the church, only to find that the Gospel had already been read, and the Canon was being sung. In his grief and shame, he did not enter the church, but returned to his cell and wept bitter tears. After the Liturgy, when it was time for the meal, the Superior and the Elder were surprised that Platon had not been seen at the services. The Elder ordered that the meal be delayed while he sent a Fr Athanasius to find out what had happened to Platon. Fr Athanasius found him and asked why he was weeping. With difficulty, Platon was able to tell him the cause of his sorrow. Fr Athanasius tried to console him and urged him to come to the Skete, where the others were waiting for him. Finally, he was persuaded to go.

Seeing the brethren at table but not eating, Platon fell down before them weeping and asking forgiveness. The Elder and the Superior lifted him up and heard from Fr Athanasius the reason for his sorrow. The Elder told Platon not to grieve so over something that had happened involuntarily, and did his best to console him. From that time, however, the saint would not sleep lying down in bed, but sitting up on a bench.

One day the Elder Onuphrius of Kyrkoul visited the Skete and spoke about his Skete at Kyrkoul. Platon longed to see Kyrkoul, and so he returned there with Fr Onuphrius. He remained there for a time, conversing with Fr Onuphrius about overcoming the passions, the struggle with demons, unceasing prayer, and other soul-profitting topics. This seed fell on good ground, later bearing spiritual fruit a hundredfold.

The time came when Platon was filled with a longing to visit Mount Athos. He asked the brethren of the Skete, and those of other Sketes, for their forgiveness and blessing for the journey. He also thanked them for their kindness and their paternal instruction. They blessed him and let him go in peace. At that time he was just twenty-four years old.

Platon went to Mount Athos in 1746, arriving at the Great Lavra on July 4, the eve of the Feast of St Athanasius of Athos. His traveling companion, Hieromonk Tryphon fell ill and died after four days. Platon would have died from the same illness, if not for the care of the Russian monks. He recovered and lived in solitude in a cell called Kaparis near the Pantokrator Monastery. He went around visiting the ascetics and solitaries, looking for a spiritual Father, but was unable to find anyone suitable.

In 1750 St Basil of Poiana Marului (April 15) visited the Holy Mountain and spent some time with Platon, who asked him for monastic tonsure. Elder Basil granted his request, giving him the name Paisius. Then Fr Basil returned to his Skete at Vlachia. About three months later, a young monk named Bessarion came to the Holy Mountain from Vlachia. He went around to the monasteries searching for an instructor, but did not find one. He also came to Fr Paisius and asked him to tell him something about saving his soul. Fr Paisius sighed and told him that he himself had been looking for an instructor without success. Yet, feeling compassion for Fr Bessarion, he talked to him a little about the qualifications necessary for a true instructor, and about the Jesus Prayer. After hearing him, Fr Bessarion said, "What more do I seek?" He fell down at the feet of Fr Paisius, entreating him to be his Elder. Fr Paisius did not want to be anyone's Elder, wishing instead to be under authority himself. Fr Bessarion remained for three days weeping until Fr Paisius agreed to accept him as a friend, and not as a disciple. For about four years they lived together fulfilling God's commandments, cutting off their own will and obeying one another as equals.

Other disciples began to join them, and their number continued to increase. Since they needed a priest and a confessor, they begged Fr Paisius to accept ordination. He did not want to hear of this, and repeatedly refused to consent. They did not give up, however. They asked him how he could expect to teach the brethren obedience and cutting off their own will, when he disobeyed the tearful entreaties of those who wanted him to accept. Finally, he said, "May the will of God be done."

In 1754 Fr Paisius was ordained to the holy priesthood and was given the Skete of the Prophet Elias, where he began to accept even more disciples. St Paisius remained on Mt Athos for a total of seventeen years, copying Greek patristic books and translating them into Slavonic.

In 1763 Fr Paisius went to Moldavia with sixty-four disciples, and was given the Dragomirna Monastery near the city of Sochava and on the border between Bukovina and Moldavia. Here he remained for twelve years, and the number of monks increased to three hundred and fifty. His friend Hieromonk Alexius came to visit him from Vlachia, and Fr Paisius asked him to tonsure him into the Schema. Fr Alexius did so, but without changing his name. While at Dragomirna, Fr Paisius corrected the Slavonic translations of patristic books by comparing them to the Greek manuscripts he had copied on Mt Athos.

The Russo-Turkish war broke out in 1768, and Moldavia and Vlachia saw many battles. Dragomirna and the forests around it became filled with refugees from the villages near the battlegrounds. Another catastrophe appeared in 1771 with the outbreak of plague. When Dragomirna and Bukovina came under the control of Austrian Catholics, St Paisius and his flock fled to Moldavia. In October of 1775, he went to Secu ("Beheading") Monastery, which was dedicated to St John the Baptist, with many of his monks.

Secul was too small for the number of brethren, who were crowded with three to five monks in a cell. In the spring, more brethren were due to arrive from Dragomirna, so new cells had to be built. After three years of labor one hundred cells were completed, and everyone had a place. Still, the numbers increased and they had to look for a larger monastery.

Prince Constantine Muruz wrote to the Elder saying that there was no larger monastery than Neamts, about two hours from Secul. On August 14, 1779, St Paisius moved to Neamts Monastery where he spent the last fifteen years of his life translating the writings of the Holy Fathers. He organized the community according to the Typikon (Rule) of Mt Athos. He gathered about a thousand monks in the monastery, instructing them in the unceasing prayer of the heart.

Archbishop Ambrose visited St Paisius at Neamts in 1790, staying for two days to converse with the Elder. During the Sunday Liturgy, he raised St Paisius to the rank of Archimandrite. He remained two more days, then departed after blessing everyone.

St Paisius fell asleep in the Lord on November 15, 1794 at the age of seventy-two. It is possible that God revealed the date of his death to him beforehand, for he stopped translating books. He only reviewed and corrected what had already been translated.

He was ill for four days, but felt well enough to attend the Liturgy on Sunday. After the service, he asked everyone to come and receive his blessing. He said farewell to them all, then returned to his cell and would not receive anyone. A few days later, on November 15, he received the Holy Mysteries again and surrendered his soul to God. His funeral was conducted by Bishop Benjamin of Tuma, and was attended by multitudes of priests, monks, laymen, nobles and ordinary people.

The holy relics of St Paisius were uncovered in 1846, 1853, 1861 and 1872, and were found to be incorrupt.

St Paisius has had an enormous influence, not only in Romania, but throughout the Orthodox world. His disciples traveled to Russia, sparking the spiritual revival of the nineteenth century with Slavonic translations of the PHILOKALIA and the tradition of eldership which they had learned from St Paisius. This influence has been felt even in America through St Herman of Alaska (December 13). St Herman was taught by Elders whose spiritual formation was guided by St Paisius. He first met Fr Nazarius, who became his Elder at Valaam, at Sarov, then followed him to Sanaxar when St Theodore (February 19) was their igumen. One of the books that St Herman brought with him to America was the Slavonic PHILOKALIA, printed in 1794. He absorbed the spiritual wisdom that it contained, and imparted it to others.

## THE NATIVITY LENTEN PERIOD IN HOME LIFE

*By Subdeacon Thomas Wilson*

What is the meaning of the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord in our family life? How can we live through the preparatory period of the Nativity Lent as an Orthodox Christian family? Can this meaning be truly and naturally, unpretentiously, embodied in the experience of a family, a home with children, teenagers, adults and old people?

In the past, individual Orthodox families lived within Orthodox societies and certain traditions were part of a general way of life, but today every family has to find its own **AUTHENTIC** way of living its own church life in a generally secular world.

We must all remember that, first of all, Christmas is a FEAST, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As such it should be a feast that is fully a celebration, an occasion for joy. As a feast it is second only to the Feast of Pascha in Joy. A Christian understanding of the real meaning of this joy (God coming to us to share our humanity) comes to every individual gradually, within the measure of his or her spiritual development. Christmas is special in that this particular time of rejoicing, of joy, of having a very happy time is precisely because Christmas is something that can be experienced by all members of the family, whatever their age, whatever their level of spirituality . . . if only there is someone within the family who remains a witness of the true meaning of

this joy. The experience of a joyous celebration remains the foundation stone of understanding the meaning of the Lord's Nativity.

Most parents realize that just attending church services is not sufficient to have children and young people sincerely experience joy. The real challenge for the Orthodox Christian family is to find a form of home celebration that will be enjoyable and creative for all its members, young and old and will yet keep a kind of transparency, through which the true meaning of the feast can be perceived within the spiritual capacity of each one. For some this will be the festive holiday meals, the distribution of presents, lighting the Christmas tree, carol singing, or many other things. We should remember that it is the most natural and spontaneous things that bring about joy, not those things which are artificially imposed upon the family.

If you are a convert, you may well ask how can I observe a truly Orthodox Feast of the Nativity? It begins with the establishment and adaptation of family customs or traditions during the Nativity Fast. Family traditions and customs such as the lighting of Nativity Lent candles, the hanging of wreaths, decorating the Christmas Tree, and the sending of greetings to far-away friends and relatives can be a focus of the Christmas Fast; even the selection of gifts for others can be a meditation on the Coming of Christ, God's Gift of Himself for all mankind. Here are various resources that may enrich your own family activities to make a more spiritual Christmas Season. As a convert, remember that in order to create your Orthodox traditions for the Christmas Season look first to what you bring with you.

For example, converts from the liturgical western Churches (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican traditions) often used the four candle advent wreath in their homes before they became an Orthodox Christian family. This tradition is easily adapted to Orthodox use. The western advent wreath contains four candles; the Orthodox Nativity Lent Wreath has 6 candles one for each Sunday of the Nativity Lent, and Nativity Eve. A suggested family service for an Orthodox Advent Wreath may be found in Father Anthony Conaris' book, *Making God Real in the Orthodox Home*, available through Light and Life Publications. Using Father Conaris' service, you will be able to continue a meaningful family tradition as an Orthodox practice.

Caroling is a popular activity in the west for Advent, where as in the orthodox cultures it is normally done during the Nativity season. We often ask our non-orthodox family members over to the house for hot cider and a caroling rehearsal during the Nativity Lent. We sing the western advent carols "O Come O Come Emmanuel", "Lo how a Rose Ere Blooming" and others along with teaching the entire family traditional Orthodox carols. We then go out on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, caroling to our neighbors. Another Orthodox Family goes the week after Christmas to a neighborhood nursing home with cookies and sings carols to the residents who enjoy the singing and the visit from the family's children.

The use of "Advent Calendars" can be fun for children to make and use during Nativity Lent. Its use of scriptures, stories of Orthodox Saints and symbols bring about a feeling of anticipation for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. While you may readily purchase the western style advent calendar (December 1 thru December 25), there are instructions for making an Orthodox Advent Calendar with peek-a-boo windows found in *The Season of Christmas* by Constance Tarar (Available thru Light and Life Publishing, 4818 Park Glen Rd, Minneapolis MN 55416 (612) 925-3888.] Another "Family Advent Calendar" that integrates the scriptures, hymns, the Sundays of Advent, and feast days may be found in *How About Advent: An Advent Calendar for the Orthodox Family* by Fr. Kurt Speier and Deacon John Finley; edited by Dr. John Boojamra [this also may be gotten from Light and Life].

Another fun activity for children in the family is the making of the Nativity Chain. This provides a way to encourage increased personal prayer in your children, as well as, teens and adults. It is an excellent introduction to children of a physical activity associated with prayer (much like a prayer rope or prayer beads) This chain is a variation of a simple paper chain made out of strips of paper that are looped together. To make this chain, each day of Nativity Lent, every family member can make one or more links for a chain during his/her normal time of personal prayer (or during a time for family prayers). On a strip of paper, write the name of the person(s) for whom the prayer is intended, or, the whole prayer that is said [i.e., if it is a short prayer such as the "Jesus Prayer" ---Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner]. The links might also include a biblical verse or reference read each day, or a good deed done for someone, or something done to better their life. Loop the new strip through the last link on the chain and join at the ends with glue. At Christmas, the colorful chains can be used to help decorate the tree or the house.

Nativity Lent is also more than just finding family activities that are entertaining and fun to do. Nativity Lent focuses on the three traditional values of the Orthodox fasting---prayer, fasting, and acts of mercy. Fasting as a Family is very important if you are to send to your children the fact that fasting is an important aspect of the Orthodox Faith. You should assure that some form of spiritual fasting and dietary discipline should be observed by each family member, as decided by the parents. Notwithstanding the dispensation granted by the Holy Synod for eating turkey on Thanksgiving Day, abstinence from meat-products should be kept at other times, as noted in the fasting guidelines of this handout. Time-off should be taken from usual TV viewing schedules in order to make time for family reading of the Scripture passages concerning the Messiah (portions of Isaiah, the birth and infancy narratives, or the daily study guide above) as well as for short prayers in common at home, such as before or after the evening meals. This will start your family on having a Holy Christmas by preparing them for the Feast.

You may wish to "Enthroned the Nativity Icon" at the beginning of Nativity Lent. Some families place this on a table prominently placed in their home with a vigil lamp burning before it. Other families have a special holder with flowers surrounding the Icon during the Nativity Lent and place it in the family Icon Corner. Before the Nativity Icon, the family says their family prayers and read daily scripture readings. The icon becomes the focal point as the "reason for the season."

These are but a few things that you can do to create a more spiritual atmosphere for your family to naturally find its own **AUTHENTIC** way of living its own church life in a generally secular world. So that all members of the family, whatever their age, whatever their level of spirituality may gain a witness of the true meaning of this joy and experience the joyous celebration that remains the foundation stone of understanding the meaning of the Lord's Nativity.



## Bible Readings (one for each day of the Nativity Fast)

The following readings provide a summary of the major events in the history of salvation, which led to the Nativity of Christ.

Day 1: Luke 1:26-35	Day 2: Matthew 1:18-24	Day 3: Genesis 12:1-2	Day 4: Genesis 17:5-6
Day 5: Genesis 17:15-16	Day 6: Genesis 21:1-3	Day 7: Genesis 26:1-5	Day 8: Genesis 28:1-4
Day 9: Genesis 28:10-17	Day 10: Genesis 35:9-12	Day 11: Genesis 46:2-4	Day 12: Genesis 48:1-5
Day 13: Genesis 48:15-16	Day 14: Gen. 49:1-2, 8, 10	Day 15: Genesis 49:28-33	Day 16: Genesis 50:22-26
Day 17: I Samuel 16:1, 1-13	Day 18: II Samuel 2:1-4a	Day 19: II Samuel 5:1-5	Day 20: I Chron. 13:1-4
Day 21: I Chron. 16:7-36	Day 22: I Kings 2:1-5	Day 23: I Chron. 22:1, 6-11	Day 24: I Chron 29:23-30
Day 25: Psalm 132:11-18	Day 26: Isaiah 2:1-5	Day 27: Isaiah 7:3, 10-15	Day 28: Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7
Day 29: Isaiah 11:1-5, 10	Day 30: Isaiah 40:1-2	Day 31: Isaiah 42:1, 6-9	Day 32: Isaiah 49:5-7
Day 33: Isaiah 56:1-2, 7	Day 34: Isaiah 60:1-6	Day 35: Isaiah 60:19-22	Day 36: Micah 5:2-4
Day 37: Isaiah 66:22-23	Day 38: Zephaniah 3:14-20	Day 39: Luke 1:39-56	Day 40: Matt. 1:1-17, 2:1-12

If you choose to use an Advent/Nativity Lent Calendar, have the children open a window of the calendar and then read the scripture reading for the day. You may also choose to read these scriptures before your evening meal as a family or at family prayers. You will find that the daily walk through the prophecies of our Lords advent on earth will set your family to have a spiritual Nativity.



## Food For The Kingdom



As we head into the Nativity Lent, here are some nice fall harvest recipes that make great main courses. Several people have also asked us for the recipe for Tofu Pumpkin Pie, a favorite at our house and a holiday dinners we attend over the Lent period. We always get rave reviews. Most family members can't believe it is fasting. Try it I think you will like it!

### Pumpkin Tofu Pies

#### Ingredients:

- 1 29oz canned pumpkin
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 16oz silken tofu (firm)
- 2 unbaked 9 inch pie shells

#### Directions:

1. Put into a clean bowl salt, sugar, and pumpkin pie spice.
2. Blend or food process the tofu until smooth.
3. Stir into the pumpkin mixture, and pour into the pie shells.
4. Bake in preheated oven at 425 degrees for 15 minutes.
5. Turn down the temperature to 375 and continue to bake for 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean.

Makes 2 pies

## St. John's Community News

#### Special Services:

**November 3** Great Vespers for St Raphael 7pm

**November 4** **Feast of St Raphael** Orthros 7am Liturgy 9am

**November 15** Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

**November 20** Great vespers for Entrance of the Theotokos 7 pm

**November 21** **Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos** Orthros 7am Liturgy 9am

**November 22** Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

**November 29** Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

## Parish News:

**Potluck & End of 2006 Stewardship Campaign** will be served November 12 after Divine Liturgy. Bring your favorite dish to the potluck. It is the last Potluck before Nativity Lent so make it meat or some other non-fasting goodie.

**Parish Council** will meet on November 12 after the Potluck. All members of the Parish are welcome to attend the council's meetings.

**2006 HCCM THANKSGIVING BASKETS.** **Thank You** for your continuing support of the Outreach Ministry to Hill Country Community Ministries. We have additionally pledged 200 pounds of CRANBERRY SAUCE for the Thanksgiving Baskets. If you would like to participate in this offering please put your CRANBERRY SAUCE in the box provided in the Narthex of the Church. We have until Sunday November the 12<sup>th</sup> to collect CRANBERRY SAUCE.

**Orthopraxis of Nativity Lent Workshop** will be held on Saturday November 4 at 1 pm. We will be sampling of fasting dishes, discussing Nativity Lent practices, and work on some family activities to enrich your Nativity Lent observances. This is the Third of 12 workshops for those who wish to deepen their understanding of living an Orthodox Christian life or the practices of the orthodox. These classes are meant to educate catechumen and the newly illumined of the church in the daily Orthodox practices of living the Orthodox Christian life. Anyone interested in living a more traditional Orthodox Christian life is welcome to attend.

**Tuesday Evenings Soup and Saints** will be held at 6:30 pm. Come for the Life of the Saint, fellowship, and a free fasting meal of delicious soup. For more information contact Reader Mark.

**November 30 - Jesus Prayer Service.** Adapted from a monastic devotion for use in group worship, the Jesus Prayer service is an excellent introduction to this very Orthodox method of prayer and meditation.

**AMERICAN THANKSGIVING DAY-** On the Fourth Thursday of November, the people of the United States gather in their families to thank the Lord for all that He has done for us, and for our world. Many Orthodox Parishes serve the American Thanksgiving Service written By St. Tikon when he was a bishop in the United States. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Self-Ruling Archdiocese of The Antiochian Orthodox Church of North America has granted to Antiochian Orthodox Christians the oeconomia of eating a traditional Thanksgiving Feast including Turkey on this day despite it being in the Nativity Lenten fast period. Your non-fasting recipes that have leftovers will need to be packaged and frozen awaiting the feast of the Nativity to finish enjoying them.

### PRAYER LIST:

**Pray for the Catechuminate:** Carol Lockett, Yvonne Hyma, Katrina Barnard, William Barnard, Rebekah Johns, Gregory Parsons, Kevin Shaw, David Jenks, Mary Anne Harding, and the Easley family [Gregg, Gayla, Evan, Kate, and Grace]

**Pray for the Health of Body and Soul** of those who have requested your prayers: Nun SERAPHIMA Cramer Landon Lockett, NADIA Onjanow, Teresa ANNA Sisko, Hannah NICHOLE & Todd Montgomery, MARY Laverne Hollapeter, and those who serve in the Armed Forces .

### Blessed Name Day:

RAPHAEL Nelson - Nov 4 St Raphael of Brooklyn  
GABRIEL Montgomery - Nov 8 Holy Archangel Gabriel

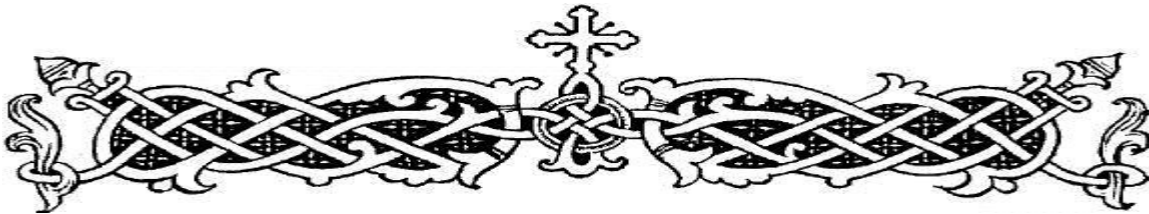
MICHAEL Galloway, MICHAEL Montgomery, MICHAEL Strong - Nov 8 Michael the Archangel  
MATTHEW Carmack - Nov 16 Apostle Matthew  
KATRINA Jones - Nov 25 St Catherine the Great Martyr,  
ALEXANDER McDonald - Nov 23 Alexander Nevsky

**BLESSED SLAVA (Family Patronal Saint)**

The Long Family - Nov 8 St Michael the Archangel

**Happy Birthday**

Anna Nelson Nov 1, Caryn McDonald Nov 30



**BLESSED IS HE WHO GIVES WITHOUT REMEMBERING**

**Blessed is he who gives without remembering and he who receives without forgetting**

It is with much thankfulness and gratitude that I would like to take this opportunity to thank my brother bishops, the clergy, esteemed members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, members of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the Antiochian Women, Fellowship of St. John the Divine, SOYO and the parishes and laity of this God-protected Archdiocese for your wonderful generosity on the occasion of my 40th anniversary as your Metropolitan. It is hard to believe that 40 years have passed since my election, consecration and enthronement.

Words cannot express the joy I felt this past weekend in Detroit as I, or rather we, celebrated 40 years of working together to build what we have today for the glory of God and His Holy Church! The warmth of the entire weekend culminated in the gift of love presented to me by all of you at the banquet on Saturday evening. This gift, a check in the amount of \$250,000 from all of your generous donations, was too much for any one man. Therefore, I felt compelled to do as I did on my 25th anniversary in 1991 when I established the endowment for the Antiochian Village with my monetary gift on that occasion. This endowment has grown to over one million dollars and is currently being used to fund various projects for the Antiochian Village.

This time, I am donating the \$250,000 I received into a fund I have started that will become part of the Clergy Retirement Fund of the Archdiocese in the future. This fund, which I also hope will grow to one million dollars, is made up of the many gifts and honoraria I have received over the years from the generous people of this Archdiocese. It is my fervent prayer that our clergy who serve this archdiocese faithfully all of their priestly lives will be able to retire with dignity and I hope to do everything I can to make this a reality.

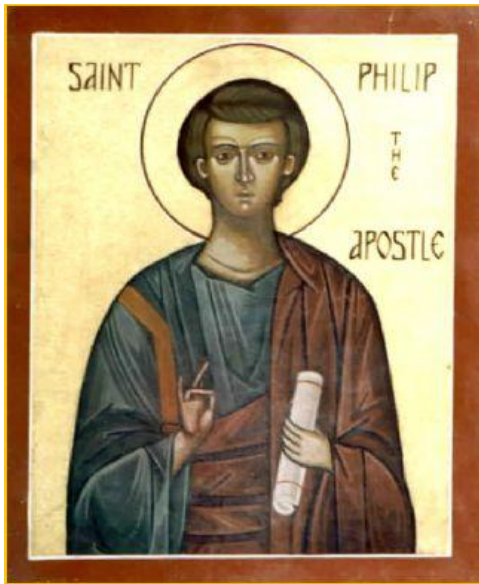
Finally, I would like to thank Archpriest Joseph Antypas and the entire community of St. George of Troy, MI, especially the members of our Archdiocese Board of Trustees in Detroit, Mr. Nicola Antakli, Mr. George Darany, Mr. Walid Khalife and Mr. Robert Koory for their generosity and hospitality. May God bless them and their families.

**Your Father in Christ,  
+Metropolitan PHILIP**

# ORTHODOX KIDS PAGE

## Family Helps for Nativity Lent:

- 1) Plant a wheat Garden on the First day of Nativity Lent so that on December 6, you may place a votive candle into the wheat garden symbolizing the light of Christ that shone thru St Nicholas as he strove to feed hungry people.
- 2) Make a Nativity Bank for Children to place their sacrificial offering to give to Jesus on December 25 for his Birthday. To make the bank get an empty Kool-aid can, formula can, or other can with a plastic lid--- paint it with a color appropriate to the season [Purple, Green, or Red] Put a nativity Card or a Icon Card of St Nicholas on the can. Cut a slot in the plastic lid large enough for the children to put their coins and dollar bills thru. Take the can to Nativity Eve or Nativity Liturgy as an offering to the Baby Jesus from the child.
- 3) As a family take the journey to Bethlehem by using the Bible Readings for Nativity Lent presented earlier in this newsletter.
- 4) You may wish to study the lives of the saints as a spiritual exercise with your family during Nativity Lent. Here are some of the more prominent ones that are observed in November during Nativity Lent with a simple description and an Icon. You may find a more detailed story of these saints on website [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).



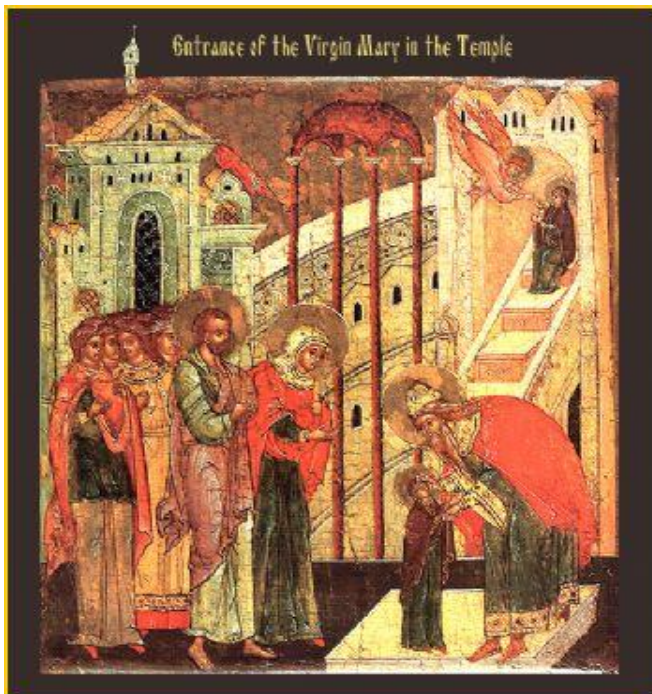
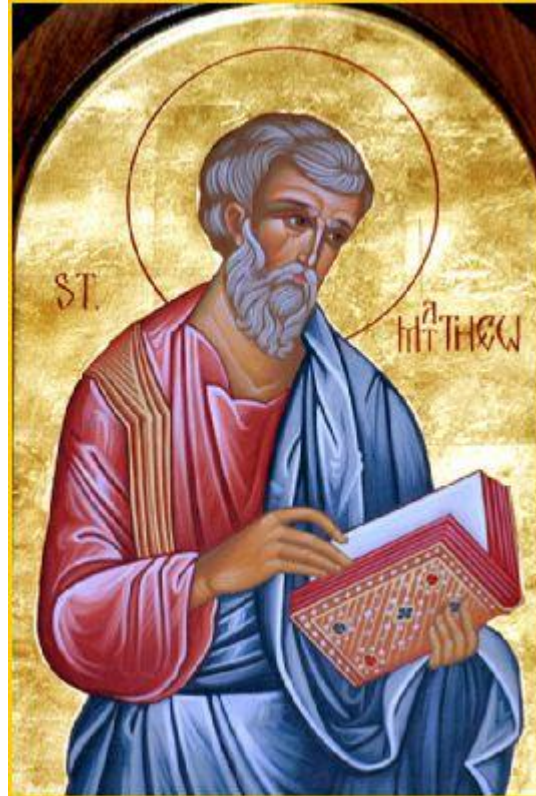
November 14 Apostle Philip the Holy and All-Praised

St Philip's Feast Day is the day prior to the beginning of the nativity Fast. For this reason, many people call the Nativity Fast, St. Phillip's fast. This is in recognition of the fact that St Phillip was instructed in the teachings of the Law, and devoted himself to the study of the prophetic books. A worthy example of how one may learn about the Savior whose Nativity we will celebrate next month.

When the Lord Jesus called him to the dignity of apostleship, he immediately sought out and found Nathaniel and said to him, "We have found Him of Whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1.45).

**NOVEMBER 16**  
**HOLY APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST**  
**MATTHEW**

It seems appropriate that the second day of the Fast commemorates the Evangelist Matthew, whose account of Christ's birth, together with Luke's gives us all the information we have about this Great-Feast. The Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, was also named Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27); he was one of the Twelve Apostles (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:45; Acts 1:13), and was brother of the Apostle James Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). He was a publican, or tax-collector for Rome, in a time when the Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire. He lived in the Galilean city of Capernaum. When Matthew heard the voice of Jesus Christ: "Come, follow Me" (Mt. 9:9), left everything and followed the Savior.



**November 21 The Entry of the**  
**Most-Holy Theotokos Into the Temple**

This Great-Feast is taken from the Protoevangelium of James, a highly revered Christian writing from the 2nd Century AD.

It demonstrates Our Lady's complete dedication of her entire life to the service

of The Lord, and invites us to imitate her. Thus, as she uniquely said "Yes" to God and became the God-bearer, so too we might

show forth Christ to the world by our lives! It is at the Matins of this Great-Feast that we begin to sing the Christ Canon in preparation for the Nativity.

Saint Catherine, who was from Alexandria,

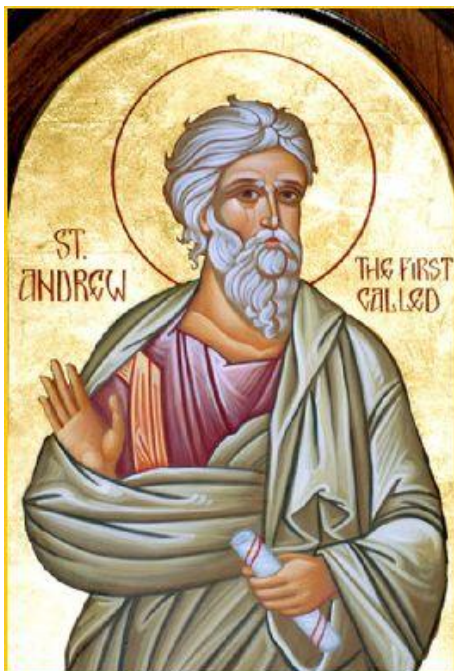
a beautiful, chaste maiden, who was well educated. By her eloquence, she stopped the mouths of the philosophers who had been gathered to dispute with her.

St Catherine firmly confessed her fidelity to the heavenly Bridegroom Christ, and with a prayer to Him she herself lay her head on the block beneath the executioner's sword.

The relics of St Catherine were taken by the angels to Mount Sinai. In the sixth century,, the venerable head and left hand of the holy martyr were found through a revelation and transferred with honor to a newly-constructed church of the Sinai monastery, built by the holy Emperor Justinian (November 14).



November 24  
Great martyr Catherine of Alexandria



November 30 Apostle Andrew, the Holy and All-Praised First-Called

St. Andrew, the first of the Disciples to hear the Call of Christ, is the patron of all the Missionaries to the Slavic Lands. The Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called was the first of the Apostles to follow Christ, and he later brought his own brother, the holy Apostle Peter, to Christ (John 1:35-42). The future apostle was from Bethsaida, and from his youth he turned with all his soul to God. He did not enter into marriage, and he worked with his brother as a fisherman. When the holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John began to preach, St Andrew became his closest disciple. St John the Baptist himself sent to Christ his own two disciples, the future Apostles Andrew and John the Theologian, declaring Christ to be the Lamb of God. In the Gospel, we hear how he immediately went out and began to bring others --his brother Peter, and their friends James and John -- to the Lord. This is true Discipleship, which we are called to follow.