The Light of Orthodoxy

ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WINTER 2019

May He Who was born In a cavern and Lay in a manger For our Salvation sake, Christ Our true God, Bless you this Nativity Season And in the Coming New Year With every Good thing.

The Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord God And Savior Jesus Christ

' And when the fullness of time was come, God sent His only-begotten Son' (Gal. 4:4), to save the human race. And when the ninth month had come after the archangel Gabriel appeared to the most holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying: 'Hail, thou that art highly favored... thou shalt conceive and bear a son' - at that time a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and there be inscribed. Therefore righteous Joseph came with the most holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal House of David. But, there being a great many people in that small city for the census, Joseph and Mary could not find a lodging in any house, and found shelter in a cave which the shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave the most holy Virgin gave birth to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bearing Him without pain, as He was conceived without sin of the Holy Spirit and not of man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling bands, worshipped Him as God and laid Him in a manger. 'Then righteous Joseph drew near and worshipped Him as the divine Fruit of a virgin womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshipped Him as Messiah and Savior. The shepherds had heard a multitude of angels singing: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men' (Lk 2:14). At that time there also came wise men from the East, led by a wonderful star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh, and worshipped Him as King of kings, offering Him their gifts (Mt 2: 11). Thus He came into the world Whose coming had been foretold by the prophets and Who was born in the way that they had prophesied: of the most holy Virgin, in the city of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no longer in Jerusalem a king of the tribe of Judah, but Herod the stranger was on the throne. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind that could not be performed by His servants. May His be eternal glory and praise! Amen.

Extracted from the Prologue written by St. Nicholi of Zicha.

THE INCARNATION

From the Desk of Archbishop Melchisedek

St. Paul, writing to the Church in Rome says: "… when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:7,8) These words remind us about both why it is that we are observing the present fast in preparation for the feast of the Nativity of Christ and why it is that we celebrate this feast at all. What is the point of the birth of Christ?

At the beginning of the Scriptures, we are told that God created the heavens and the earth – that is, He created everything. We are further told that everything was "without form and void". That is to say, everything was shapeless. There was nothing identifiable. We are further told that the Spirit of God was over this shapeless mass, and that God spoke His Word. That is to say, over the shapeless void was the Holy Trinity: God His Spirit and His Word. Then we are told that as God spoke His Word, everything came into being out of the shapeless void. We are told further that God saw it and it was good. Finally, God says: " Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." He did not simply say "Let there be man, and He saw it and it was good" like he did for the rest of creation. Rather, He made human beings to be "in His own image". He created human beings to be Ikons of God. When we look upon another human being we are meant to see God Himself in that person.

However, one of the attributes or "energies" of God is His freedom. So, we were created to be free as God is free. But, because we were created free, we had the opportunity to use our freedom to both good ends and bad. Unfortunately, as the story continues, our first parents misused that freedom and disobeyed God. They did not only disobey God, but given the opportunity to repent, they not only did not take responsibility for their wrong doing, repent and express their sorrow, they blamed each other and the snake for their misuse of their freedom. Because of that lack of repentance, they cut off the relationship which they had with God, which made them subject to death, and bequeathed their humanity, without the relationship it was meant to have with God to their posterity.

So, what was God going to do about it? He could have simply wiped the slate clean. He could have destroyed the created universe and started over, or He could repair the damage that had been done. He could re-establish the relationship between human nature and Himself which He intended from the beginning. He chose to do the latter. He chose to send the Word by which He created the world to repair the damage by our first parents. As we are told by St. John the Theologian in the fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. . . as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (St. John 1:ff)

Thus, when we celebrate the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are celebrating the fact that God has come among us, as one of us, to restore our humanity in His own person. By restoring our humanity, He restores His image and likeness which is renewed in us at our baptism. As the Fathers of the Church expressed it: God became by nature what we are, so that we can become by grace what He is.

A NOTE ON FUTURE EDITIONS OF THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

As you read this Edition of the Light of Orthodoxy we wanted to make you aware of changes coming in the New Year.

Due to the increasing costs of mailing and printing the Archdiocesan Newsletter and the desire to insure wise stewardship of the funds you give the Archdiocese, a decision has been made to change how the newsletter is delivered.

Starting with the Spring edition, we will not be mailing it to individual homes, but rather we will provide bulk mailings to parishes and ask the priest to distribute it to you. We will also post a color copy on the Archdiocesan website.

There are three important reasons for making this change.

1) Very few parishes are faithfully updating their parish mailing lists with the Archdiocese causing a hundred plus editions returned at additional costs to the archdiocese.

2) Printing and mailing costs have risen significantly over the last few years and this will save the Archdiocese thousands of dollars annually.

3) The Archdiocese desires to produce an increasingly rich newsletter filled with color photos so you can more greatly see the work of the Church and be blessed by it.

It is our hope that with better use of print and electronic communications we can more greatly enrich the life of our Archdiocese and present an even greater witness to the Orthodox Faith in the areas served by our Archdiocese.

THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

is the Quarterly Newsletter of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America. News, and photos can be submitted by e-mail to

hieromonkpatrick@msn.com

or by mail to Igumen Patrick, 105 S. 19th St., Pittsburgh, PA 15203.

A SPECIAL NOTE ON THIS EDITION OF THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

This edition of the Newsletter focuses on the ongoing life of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. It makes a special emphasis on the Season of Grace that we are in highlighting the ongoing life of the Church throughout the Archdiocese.

It begins with the Account of the Incarnation of our Lord in the flesh, and takes us to short stories on the three ordinations to the Holy Priesthood. The newsletter then takes us into parish life and outreach focusing in on a recent parish anniversary, outreach efforts in the Archdiocese, education, on the production of Icons in the Archdiocese and the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America. The newsletter then moves into two ways that the faithful can volunteer to help others in the community around us. The newsletter closes with Holy Theophany.

In this edition are many photos which are best viewed by visiting the newsletter in the Archdiocesan Website where you can see them in color.

https://ocadwpa.org/

WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA?

We encourage you to watch the video on the webpage of the Archdiocesan Website that highlights the life and ministries of our Archdiocesan Church and its parishes.

ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICIAL CHANGES

LESKO, ARCHPRIEST DAVID, is released from his duties as Rector of St. Nicholas Church, Duquesne, PA, effective December 31, 2018, and granted retirement. He is attached in retirement to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA

REEVES, ARCHPRIEST JOHN, is released from his duties as Rector of Holy Trinity Church, State College, PA, effective December 31, 2018, and granted retirement. He is attached in retirement to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA

REEVES, ARCHPRIEST JOHN, is released from the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and W PA, to Archbishop ALEXANDER and the Diocese of the South (OCA), effective May 1, 2019

PARKER, DEACON JOHN, is accepted into the Archdiocese of Pgh and W PA after release by Metropolitan TIKHON, and is attached to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA, effective May 25, 2019

OLEYNIK, ARCHPRIEST JOSEPH, is released from his duties as Rector of St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA, effective June 17, 2019, and granted retirement. He is attached in retirement to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA

PARKER, DEACON JOHN, was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop MELCHISEDEK at the St. Nicholas Church, Donora, PA, June 22, 2019. He is released from the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA, and assigned as Acting Rector of the St. Nicholas Church, Donora, PA, effective July 1, 2019

STEHNACH, ARCHIMANDRITE PITIRIM, retired, reposed in the Lord July 10, 2019. Memory Eternal!

KOTALIK, DEACON JOHN, is accepted into the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and W PA, July 23, 2019, after release from Archbishop BENJAMIN and the Diocese of the West (OCA), and is attached to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA

SOCHKA, PROTODEACON MICHAEL, was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop MELCHISEDEK at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA, August 17, 2019. Archpriest Michael is attached to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA, effective that date

KOTALIK, DEACON JOHN, was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop MELCHISEDEK, at the St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA, August 24, 2019. He is released on that date from the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA, and assigned as Acting Rector of the St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA

OLEYNIK, ARCHPRIEST JOSEPH, is released from the Archdiocese of Pgh and W PA, to Metropolitan TIKHON and the Archdiocese of Washington (OCA), effective October 13, 2019

YATSKO, ARCHPRIEST GEORGE, is released from his duties as Rector of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Monongahela, PA, effective November 1, 2019, and granted retirement. He is attached in retirement to the altar of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA

Approved for distribution:
Archpriest William J. Evansky
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania
Orthodox Church in America
(2019-11-7)

ORDINATIONS TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

CANONSBURG, PA — On Saturday, August 24, at St. John the Baptist Church in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, His Eminence Melchisedek, Archbishop of Pittsburgh and the Archdiocese Western Pennsylvania, ordained Deacon John Joseph Kotalik to the Holy Priesthood. Born in raised in the area Seattle, Washington, Fr. John comes from 'Hunky' stock, even if his mother's family settled out West; while his father's family settled in the Dakotas and Minnesota. He attended Seattle University, where he received degrees in philosophy and psychology, and then began graduate studies in philosophy at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He left graduate school, however, to attend St. Tikhon's Seminary instead, graduating in 2015. He then returned home to Seattle and took the position of choirmaster at St. Spiridon Cathedral, as well as serving as the regional Slavonic choir director for the OCA parishes which did Slavonic Divine Liturgies on Saturday mornings. He met his wife, Matushka Janine of Freehold/Brick, New Jersey, while he was at seminary. Once she completed her graduate studies, she moved out to Seattle and they were married in 2018. Fr. John was ordained to diaconate that year, and took a pastoral assistant position at St. Seraphim Cathedral in Santa Rosa, CA, and Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco. Mat. Janine's job required her to move to Pittsburgh, and they are delighted to be serving here in the Archdiocese. Over 200 parishioners and friends were in attendance, including over 20 clergymen. It was a joyous and grace-filled occasion. Fr. John served in Canonsburg the next day for his first Sunday as the acting rector, and then served at various locations around the metropolitan area each day the following week, under the watchful eye of experienced priests. He is looking forward to getting to know the Archdiocese well, and to serve here for many years.

ELLWOOD CITY, PA — On Saturday, August 17, at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Elwood City, Pennsylvania, His Eminence Melchisedek, Archbishop of Pittsburgh and the Archdiocese Western Pennsylvania, ordained Protodeacon Michael Sochka presbyter. A graduate of Yale, Father Michael attended St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and served as a deacon for 22 years, most of those years at Holy Transfiguration Chapel at Princeton University, until he relocated to Pittsburgh. His wife, Matushka Leslie, also attended SVS where they were married in 1989. Father Michael is the son of the late Archpriest John Sochka and Matushka Marie, who was tonsured Nun Xenia at the Ellwood City monastery. Over 100 guests, including college friends, alumni from the Orthodox Christian Fellowship at Princeton University, and numerous clergy were in attendance for the joyous and blessed event. Fr. Michael served his first Divine Liturgy at the monastery the following morning.

ORDINATIONS TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

DONORA PA-- On Saturday, June 22nd, His Eminence Melchisedek, Archbishop of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, ordained Deacon John Parker to the order of the Holy Priesthood at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church. Father John is a recent graduate of St. Tikhon's seminary, with an undergraduate background in English Literature and Philosophy. Fr. John is joined by his wife, Matushka Nadia, whose brother and father both also serve as Priests in the Western PA and Midwest Diocese, respectively. Many family, parishioners, community members, STS alumni, and area clergy attended and served in the ordination, including Fr. Stephan Gresh of Holy Resurrection Church in Belle Vernon, PA, as well as deacon (now priest) John Kotalik of St. John the Baptist in Canonsburg. A brief reception and warm welcome was hosted by the St. Nicholas Society at the Donora Borough Hall. Fr. John immediately returned to St. Tikhon's to pack and move, receive additional liturgical training, and then returned to begin officially as parish priest in July.

100 YEARS OF SACRED MINISTRY

Over the weekend of 21/22 October, Holy Assumption Orthodox Church welcomed Archbishop Melchisedek and visiting clergy for the celebration of 100 years of Orthodoxy in Central City, Pa. With the assistance of the Archpriest Michael Senyo, Deacon Alex Cadman, and Deacon Matthew Prentice (Archdiocese of Washington DC), the celebrations commenced with Vespers on Saturday evening, and concluded with a Banquet at the Somerset County Country Club following Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Parish rector, Fr. Elijah Bremer, took the opportunity to commemorate the event with the publication of a book, "Grace in Thy Favour," a history of the OCA churches in Somerset County (both past and present). Parishioners of Holy Assumption were joined by members of our sister congregation St. Peter & Paul (Pine Hill). A hand-turned posok (bishop's walking stick) was made from wood recovered from three churches (Central City, Pine Hill, and Boswell), and metal recovered from the dome of the former Ss. Peter & Paul in Boswell, and presented by church officers to His Eminence. The event was well attended, and widely regarded as a peaceful, beautiful liturgical celebration.

St. Mary Southside Host Iconography Class

Southside Pittsburgh: In October through November, St. Mary Orthodox Church hosted the annual Iconography workshop ran by local Iconographer Olga Foight. This year's class had 10 students writing the Icon of the Holy Prophet Elijah.

A NOTE OF THANKS: In late September I suffered a shattered tibula and fibula requiring emergency surgery. The condition caused the temporary suspension of the St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry operations and caused me to be out of active service to the Church for eight weeks. During this time I was richly blessed by the love, prayers and support of a host of the Archdiocesan Clergy and faithful. Through your holy prayers, and the good labors of the doctors and nurses, I am back in service. The St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry will resumed operations on Dec. 19. I wanted to express my thanks for your love, prayers, cards, and visits. Your love made a difficult situation bearable. May God richly reward your kindness and love. Thank you and God bless you. Igumen Patrick (Carpenter)

STUFFED WITH LOVE

On Thanksgiving Day, St. Mary Orthodox Church in Southside Pittsburgh, together with the Pittsburgh area Rotary Clubs and the Pittsburgh Police produced 3556 Thanksgiving Dinners which were delivered by the Pittsburgh Police to area residents in need. This effort annually attracts hundreds of volunteers from through out the community, including numerous Orthodox Christians. Among the Orthodox Churches represented were St. Mary Orthodox Church—Pittsburgh, St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church—Canonsburg, Holy Virgin Orthodox Church—Carnegie, St. Gregory Orthodox Church—Homestead; St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral—Allison Park, Mission of St. Moses the Black—Pittsburgh, and St. John Carpatho Russian Orthodox Church—Pittsburgh, Dormition Orthodox Church-McKeesport.

UPDATE ON THE ONGOING WORK OF THE ST. CYRIL OF WHITE LAKE FOOD PANTRY

The St. Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry is normally open Thursdays from 5:45pm to 6:45pm. Everyone who seeks help is helped, and patrons are provided with three days+ of food. This year, the Food Pantry, has been seeing a large number of families weekly, with this number ranging from 60 to 100+ per week.. This number has remained high because of the closure of several food pantries around us. Each household is served through your generosity and receives food for three+ full days of meals. [Note: The average real cost of food provided at any one time to a household of three is $49.00. This number is higher than last year due to the increase in prices at the stores] We have been blessed with generous donors and volunteers who have helped maintain this sacred ministry of love. Thank you and God bless you.

Donations can be sent to:

St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry
105 S. 19th St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

OUR THANKS AND GOD'S BLESSINGS

A NOTE ON THE FOOD PANTRY OPERATIONS: Due to an unexpected injury to Igumen Patrick, the food pantry was forced to suspend operations in October and November. We are resuming operation on Dec. 19 with a holiday distribution of Gift Cards to allow the families we serve to purchase food for the Holidays, and we will resume full operations on Jan. 16, 2020.

The St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry and its staff thank everyone for their faithful support, and are happy that God has blessed the ministry to continue. We ask your holy prayers and continued support as we enter 2020.

A MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF ST. SOPHIA ORTHODOX ACADEMY

Throughout the year children gather at St. Sophia Orthodox Academy, Johnstown PA for Elementary Education. St. Sophia's is an Orthodox Elementary School and valued ministry of the Archdiocese. Mat. Faith Johnson is the headmistress of the school. St. Sophia Orthodox Academy has been in continuous operation since September of 2001. This is the first, of what we hope will be an ongoing look at this important ministry of the Church.

Recently, on Friday, December 6, the Feast of our Holy Father and Hierarch Nicholas of Myra and Lycia, students at the Saint Sophia Orthodox Christian Academy received a "visit from Saint Nicholas". This was part of an overall lesson plan dealing with the saints in general, and Saint Nicholas specifically. The students learned about the life of Saint Nicholas; they also learned about the need to be vigilant about the content of our Faith, and the need that can arise to battle against false teachings, or heresies.

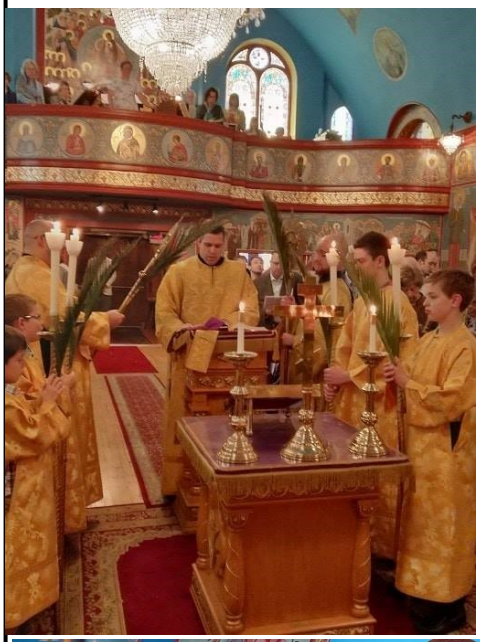
The students loved hearing about the kindness and generosity of Saint Nicholas; and they were moved as well by the account of how Saint Nicholas battled with Arius, because the content of our Faith was at stake. Some of the students are pictured with "St. Nicholas" in this photograph.

Saint Sophia Orthodox Christian Academy is located at 111 Alberta Aveneue, Johnstown, PA 15905.

St Nicholas McKees Rocks Iconography Renewal Project

St Nicholas Church has been undergoing a renewal of the inside of their 105-year-old temple for the past six years. Beginning with the icons on the iconostasis, their goal is to replace every icon in the temple and entirely adorn the walls and ceiling with canonical iconography. The work began when they were preparing for their 100th anniversary celebration in 2014 in removing the carpet and painting the temple walls. They removed the paintings on the iconostasis which were placed there in the 1950s. These paintings were severely cracked, the canvases were tearing and they were smoked damaged and dirty.

The new canonical Orthodox icons on the iconostasis were painted by Cheryl Pituch, formerly of Johnstown PA, on wooden boards prepared with an iconographic surface. The subjects that were originally in place on the lower and middle level of the iconostasis were maintained. The icons of the top tier of the iconostasis were replaced with icons of the Mother of God flanked by the Holy Prophets. The iconostasis itself was repainted with a red mahogany faux wood finish, to permit the gold on the icon backgrounds as well as the now-vibrant colors of the subjects to stand out. This work was completed in three years.



After completion of the iconostasis, work began with Archpriest Theodore Jurewicz of Erie PA, along with his son, John, to begin adorning the walls of the temple with canonical iconography. There was a deliberate effort to place the new iconography that is appropriate for the space. In the lower walls of the temple icons of various saints have been painted. The lower back wall now has the life of St Nicholas the Wonderworker. The altar has been adorned with iconography of the Deisis (Christ with the Mother of God and various Saints) and biblical scenes of the Eucharist in the Old and New Testaments, as well as the Mother of God More Spacious than the Heavens in the Apse of the altar. Next year the altar will be completed with the Ascension of Christ over the Holy Table and work will begin on the ceiling of the temple with scenes from the life of Christ. All icons have been paid for by the generous offerings of the parishioners.

FELLOWSHIP OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA UPDATE

The Pittsburgh District of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America held its 93rd Annual Convention on October 20 at Holy Ghost Church in Ambridge. During the meeting, members of the District reaffirmed their annual commitment to support any Seminarian from the Archdiocese with a stipend of $300.00 per semester. The Archdiocese currently has one Seminarian. Members also reaffirmed the commitment to support the Youth & Young Adult Ministries of the Archdiocese through financial and organizational means.

The District reviewed plans for the National FOCA Youth Gathering which will be hosted by the Pittsburgh District in the Spring of 2020. This event will include youth gathering from around the country to participate in service, liturgical, and fellowship activities. This event will be open to all Orthodox youth. Look for additional details in the coming months.

The Convention also heard reports on the actions taken by the National Convention held over Labor Day weekend in Columbus, OH. The Gifts of Love campaign is a yearlong campaign that raises funds for a recipient designated by the Convention Body. The 2019-2020 campaign will benefit two recipients. The first $5,000 raised will be designated for St. Herman's House, a FOCUS North America homeless shelter in Cleveland, OH that provides shelter for homeless men. The remainder of the funds raised will be for the Archdiocese of Alaska for support of Pilgrims to the 225th Anniversary of the Alaskan Mission. The 2018-2019 campaign raised over $10,000.00 for Tabitha House Orthodox Orphanage in Kenya, Africa.

The Chapters of the Pittsburgh District also participate in the National FOCA Seminarian Support Programs. The St. Nicholas Project pairs Seminarian Family with a sponsor that provides St. Nicholas Day gifts from the wish list of the family. The Adopt-a-Seminarian program matches a Seminarian with a sponsor that provides a monthly monetary stipend to the Seminarian. The Seminarian Emergency Support Program provides one-time funding to Seminarians upon request to help offset unexpected or emergency financial needs.

The Spiritual Leader of the Pittsburgh District is His Eminence Archbishop MELCHISEDEK. The newly elected Board of Executives includes Spiritual Advisor, V. Rev. William Evansky; Governor Dr. John Schultz; Lt. Governor Mat. Danielle Ilchuk; Secretary Mat. Debra Evansky; Treasurer, Ms. Sonia Schultz; Imm. Past Governor, Mat. Danielle Ilchuk. The district has seven Chapters in Allison Park, McKees Rocks, Ambridge, South Side Pittsburgh, Donora, Weirton, WV, and Canonsburg.

Membership in the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America is open to all Orthodox Christians. Individuals may join as individual members or with the blessing of the Parish Rector, form an Parish based Chapter of a group of members. Please consider joining the Fellowship. By doing so, you can help support the various programs within the Archdiocese and Nationally.

For inquiries,
please contact
Governor John Schultz
jpswv@comcast.net
(304) 479-5071 (phone or text).

Exploring Parish Vision and Values

By Joseph Kormos

Parish Development Ministry

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania

Parishes need to have a defined concept of their future. What they would like to *be* like in three, five, ten or more years. Without that a parish on a plateau or in early decline can feel helpless and without direction. Scripture reminds us that "Without vision the people perish" and "If the trumpet blows an uncertain sound who then shall follow?" *I Cor 14:8.*

However for a variety of reasons true dialogue about what it will take to be an Orthodox parish that has a bright future in a society in which churches face severe headwinds is difficult for most parishes. Big picture discussions are often limited because:

- Vision is limited by current circumstances or nostalgia for the past.
- Most people naturally gravitate to specific concrete topics (fixing the steps) while avoiding fuzzy longer range topics.
- Fearing painful discussions dominated by 'loose cannons' or 'squeaky wheels' open discussions are avoided at all costs.
- Apathy limits "church" to a limited time slot on Sunday morning.
- Having been stung by aimless, ineffective 'vision' efforts at work many parishioners quickly move toward the door.

A Tool for Opening Discussion

The worksheet below can help your parish and its leaders to think about new aspects of a healthy parish. Some are "big picture" issues while others are highly practical. The worksheet can help to inspire dialogue about *where we want to head* and *what we want to be like in the future*. It provides a contrast between the de facto vision of many plateaued and declining parishes and a more hopeful, Gospel centered vision of an admittedly smaller cluster of vibrant and often growing parishes.

Have each participant in a group (adult class, existing ministry group or other) review the model below. Then ask each participant to circle 2-4 lines in the chart that they feel the parish can improve upon. Likewise ask them to put a star next to traits that they feel the parish does well.

Listen Don't Advocate

Then… discuss! Explore potentially differing views –*without becoming polarized*. Listen to what others have to say. Don't plan retorts as people with alternative views express them. Just listen. Ask for clarification. Nudge people to support their feelings with observable behaviors or facts. Which items in the right hand column can we *live* better as a parish? Look for underlying causes by recursively asking "why"? Assign Parish Council members to take an active role in moving discussions forward. See if you can build consensus around 1-2 areas of potential effort. Talk about manageable first step actions. Find people with energy for change and enlist their active participation. Get started.

Or… simply stay with status quo. That works soooo well.

Contact Joe Kormos at joekormos1@gmail.com or 513-518-5878

see chart next page

What Kind of 21st Century Orthodox Parish Do We Envision?
Which Parish Do *You* Prefer?
Which Parish Will Be Blessed with Growth?

A Model of Decline *Burying Our Talents*	A Model of Vibrancy & Hope *Providing a Return to the Master*
We exist for us and our needs	We exist to proclaim Christ; To do His work in the world; To bring others to Him. We have a sense of mission and outreach.
We are Orthodox by birth & heritage	We are Orthodox by choice
We are trying to reproduce "Old World" Orthodoxy	We are trying to Bring Orthodoxy to America; Local & Indigenous
Ancient; Foreign	Apostolic, Authentic, Alive
Let's attract people "like us" Ethnic/demographic consistency	We serve all in our locale. Openness, Increased diversity
Complacent & comfortable	Seeking & Reaching
Good enough	Sense of excellence; Our best
Stern & sober	Cheerful & Hopeful
Water it down; Make it easier	Meaningful, important, Understandable, Challenging
Worship: Dead; Austere; Foreign	Energy, Participative, Joyous
Sunday Liturgy	Active Weekly/Annual Worship Cycle
Plateau; I can't answer that question; Ask Father	Understanding and growing in our faith
Social Events & Clubs	Social Events & Ministry Charitable Outreach: Time & $
We don't do it that way! Won't work	Let's try it
Control & Power Rules & Battles	Teamwork & collaboration Discernment & dialogue
No risk; conserving; protecting; maintaining	Hopeful risk taking; "investing"; creating; "building"
"Ownership" Voting; majority; "Robert's Rules"	"Stewardship" Consensus; conciliarity
Dues, minimum, equal share Compulsory, fund raising, "appeals"	Proportional, meaningful amounts, Personal generosity; from the heart
Free agents; Parish Autonomy & Independence; Optional participation	Constitutive element of diocese Shared responsibility

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITES THAT EVERYONE CAN DO

LITTLEST ANGELS HELPS PARENTS REMEMBER LOST BABIES: A special outreach of love exists in our area and the nation that helps to console families in the deepest crisis of losing a child by an act of love born through love. They take wedding dresses and transform them into burial garments for babies departed this life. If you would like to help, please visit **www.littlest—angels.org.**

NURSING HOME VOLUNTEERS: There is a constant need in our communities for volunteers to help out at nursing homes as visitors and companions for people who have no one. This opportunity for ministry can take many various forms. Contact a nursing home near you for more details on how you can make a difference.

FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS: Area food pantries and soup kitchens need a ready supply of volunteers to help and function. Whether it is our St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry or a local community kitchen or food pantry there is a constant need for volunteers. Your donation of a couple of hours a month can work miraculous changes in the community around you.

WOMEN'S CHOICE NETWORK: St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral parish has set an excellent model of service by "being a voice for life" by offering our time and talents to the Women's Choice Network (WCN), whose mission is "empowering abortion vulnerable women to choose life". WCN is an outreach ministry of Jesus Christ through His church and is committed to assisting women to carry their babies to term by providing emotional support and practical assistance.

THE SYNAXARION OF HOLY THEOPHANY

On the 6th of the month, we keep the
Feast of the Holy Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

At the completion of the thirty hidden years in which He had passed through all the stages of the common life of man and had shown exemplary humility in all that he did, obedient to his parents, and submissive to the Law, our Lord Jesus Christ entered upon His public ministry - the path that would lead to His Passion - by a dazzling revelation of His divinity. For the Father and the Holy Spirit then bore witness that Jesus is truly the Only Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Word made flesh for our salvation, the Savior foretold by the Prophets; and that, in His Person, the Godhead is united without admixture to our humanity and has made it shine with His glory. Hence this feast of the Baptism of Christ has been called the Epiphany ('manifestation') or the Theophany, that is to say, the showing forth of the divinity of Christ and the first clear revelation of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Jesus went at this time from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethany in Judea on the banks of the Jordan. This was the place where John the Baptist, having come out of the wilderness after thirty years of preparation by mortification of the flesh, ascesis and prayer, was preaching repentance to the crowds of Jews who came, drawn his renown as a righteous man and a great Prophet, to be baptized by him in the waters of the River. Even though the baptism of John surpassed the washings and purifications that the law ordained for bodily uncleanness (Lev. 15), it did not grant remission of sins, which could be obtained only by the Cross and sacrifice of Christ. But, in condemning the unrighteous ways and the transgressions of the people by reference to the imminence of the divine judgment, St. John the Baptist led them to recognize their sins, to desire to repent, and to prepare their hearts to seek Him of whom he, the greatest of the children born of women (Mt. 11: 11), had been appointed the Forerunner. I baptize you with water for repentance, he said, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy, to unloose - namely, to explain the mystery of the union of the divinity and of the humanity. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Mt. 3:11-12, Lk 3:16; Mk 1:8).

Amid the crowds intent on confessing their sins and plunging into the water, Jesus came up to John and asked to be baptized. For the Son of God, in His infinite love for mankind, not only put on our mortal flesh but He, the innocent and spotless Lamb of God, even took on Himself the condition of a sinner. And John, who, on recognizing Him as the Messiah had leaped for joy in his mother's womb (Lk 1:41), began to tremble in fear of such presumption: “How could the servant dare to purify with water the King of the Universe? How could the creature of clay have the temerity to draw near the incarnate Word without fear of being burnt by the Godhead like straw by fire? Had not Moses and the greatest of the Prophets only seen Him from afar (Ex. 33:20-3) or under the form of figures and symbols? How could he dare to impose his hand on the bowed head of his Creator in order to immerse Him in the water?” But Jesus said to him: “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness (Mt. 3:15).”

Just as on the threshold of His Passion, He ordered Peter to let Him wash his feet (Jn 1:6-9), so today Christ dispels the very human fear of the servant, terrified in the presence of such an abasement of the Divinity, and He thereby makes known that, by His Incarnation, He has come not only to fulfill the ordinances of the Law but to bring in a new and more perfect righteousness: that of humility, of voluntary sacrifice and of love. John, the representative of the Old Covenant, obeys the command of the Lord and thus becomes the minister of the act that initiates the New Covenant.

Pure and innocent of all sin and so without Adam's shame (Gen. 3:7-11), Christ, the New Adam, went down naked into the watery grave to signify His impending descent into the darkness of death and His sojourn in the tomb. As the Prophets foretold, in going down into the waters He trampled on the power of Satan who had made his lair in their depths-He broke the head of the dragons in the waters (Ps. 73:13) - and then emerged victorious, thus foretelling His resurrection on the third day and the raising up of humanity, washed clean of sin. The heavens, shut since the fall of the first man, then opened above Him, and from on high the voice of the Father bore witness to Him before them an: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (Mt. 3:17). The Holy Spirit too brought His testimony, appearing in the form of a white dove-the emblem of peace, meekness and reconciliation between God and man (cf. Gen. 8:8-1 l) - and indicating, like the 'finger of God', that this naked man was the incarnate Only Son of the Father and that He, and not John as the Jews supposed, was the Savior promised by God. By His baptism in the Jordan, Christ disclosed beforehand that He would deliver mankind from death and bring it to knowledge of the Holy Trinity by His death and His Resurrection.

On many occasions before this time, God had made Himself known by miracles, signs and wonders, in dreams and visions, through the mediation of Angels, in the inspired messages of His servants the Prophets, or by His providential interventions in the history of Israel, in order to teach, to punish or to console His stiff necked people, which was always inclined to idolatry and to polytheism. Consequently, it was His UNITY that He made known to them in those days, with power. I am He Who is, He said to Moses in the bush (Ex. 3:14); and when He revealed Himself in fire on Sinai, He said: Hear, 0 Israel The Lord your God is one Lord, Son and Word of God, Who, by His Incarnation, has revealed to us the Glory of God and has given us to know that the unique divine nature is, in a manner beyond all utterance, shared-without being divided-by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God: not three Gods, but three Persons (hypostaseis) in a single nature (essence). Like three suns or three luminaries, they are united without confusion in their single light. This mystery of mysteries, inaccessible alike to human thought and to the contemplation of the angels, has been made known to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ through His baptism in the Jordan and His 'baptism' into death, and not simply in an external manner, for He has made us participants in it. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1: 14). Going back to God after His resurrection from the dead in order, with His body, to take His seat at the right hand of the Father, He has once and for all opened Heaven to the whole of human nature, and has made it capable of participating, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, in the glory and in the undivided and everlasting light of the Holy Trinity Some say that this blaze of Divine Glory, this light brighter than any light of this world, became perceptible at the moment of Christ's baptism, like as it appeared at Tabor on the day of the Transfiguration (Aug 6),

for it is actually in the brilliant light of the divinized humanity of Christ that we are initiated into the Light of the holy Trinity.

0 Word all-shining, sent forth from the Father, Thou art come to dispel utterly the dark and evil night And the sins of mortal men, and by Thy Baptism to draw up with Thee, 0 blessed Lord, Bright sons from the streams of Jordan.

Accordingly, the feast of Theophany is also known as the Feast of lights. This first revelation of God as Trinity (Tri-unity) is also the manifestation of the final vocation of man, who is called to become the adoptive son of God, the anointed (Christ) of the Holy Spirit and partaker of the threefold Light through being made conformable to Christ in the sacrament of holy Baptism, which finds its Origin in today's feast.

God had made known to John that his baptism of repentance would be concluded on the day of the Baptism of Christ, saying: He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:33). Today, therefore, the baptism of John comes to an end in order to make way for the Baptism which will conferred by the Apostles 'in the Name of Jesus Christ', and which has power to remit sins and to impart the Holy Spirit. By their immersion in the waters which, by the prayer of the Church, have become identical with those of Jordan, the neophytes enter the Church in the same way as the Savior began his public life; moreover, by their imitation of His death and of His descent into the grave - whereby they also become partakers of His Resurrection- they have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27) and are initiated into a new life in the light of the Holy Spirit: All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death. So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Just as Moses, prefiguring Christ, parted in two the waters of the Red Sea by striking them crosswise with his staff, and, after the people had crossed dryshod, caused the waters to resume their normal state, swallowing up Pharoah and his army (Ex. 14); similarly, when Jesus went down into the waters of the Jordan, they were unable to endure the fire of His divinity and, in accordance with the prophecies, they turned back (Ps. 113:3): that is to say, they reversed the laws of the fallen order of nature that is a consequence of Adam's transgression. The waters, which had been bearers of death and corruption and the abode of impure spirits, became bearers of tight and of purification of sins when the Sun of Righteousness descended into them. Christ is made manifest in the Jordan to sanctify the waters and the world. In bringing mankind, which sat in the shadow of death, up out of the waters to the knowledge of the light of the Trinity, the Savior has today overturned and transformed all the laws of the material world and of the cosmos to their very depths. As the Prophets foretold, the material world (symbolized by the Jordan), made new and penetrated by Light in the mystery of Christ, partakes of the salvation and of the joy of humanity, made new by the Holy Spirit. The wilderness of Jordan shall be covered in flowers and shall rejoice with joy... and my people shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God (Is. 35:2 LXX). Lo every one who thirsts, come to the waters (Is. 55: 1).... For thus says the Lord, the Almighty. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day. Sing to the Lord, call upon his Name; make known His glory among the nations, remember that His Name is exalted (Is. 12:34 LXX).

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