October 2015

The Protomartyr Newsletter

A monthly publication of St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Stephen Cathedral,

September was a special month for us here at St. Stephen's. We celebrated the anniversary of the consecration of our church building and the beginning of the life of our community as the parish of St. Stephen the Protomartyr. On Sunday, September 20, we were joined by our Diocesan Hierarch, His Eminence, Archbishop Mark both for the services of the weekend and for the Anniversary Luncheon after Divine Liturgy. Every such celebration is another opportunity for us to reflect on the past, as well as on the vision of what we are trying to be as a parish community. The vision of our community should be based on the vision of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), of which our Cathedral always has been an integral part. The vision of the OCA is to be the local church in the United States, open to all Orthodox people, regardless of their ethnic origin or social status. As long as a person wants to live the life of an Orthodox Christian, our Church should be the place where such a person can find a spiritual home.

Even though St. Stephen Cathedral is a relatively young parish (many of our sister parishes have recently celebrated their 100th anniversaries), much has changed during the last 41 years. The Cold War had ended and the Soviet Union had collapsed, and many people from that part of the world who identify themselves as Orthodox Christians came to our country and are seeking a place to worship.

The world is continuing to go through unprecedented changes which creates much anxiety about the future abroad, as well as here. Our society is shedding any traces of Christianity and, as a result, there is much confusion in the people around us as to what is morally right or wrong. Not every way of life and behavior that is becoming acceptable for many in our society is acceptable for us. And we, as Orthodox Christians, should not look to the world of news media, entertainment or social networks to clarify this confusion or to give us answers. Rather, it is the teachings of Orthodox Christianity that give us a clear identity - not because we belong to a specific ethnic group, but because we recognize that in Jesus Christ we find eternal life. And so, we should commit ourselves to following the way of life that was given to us by the Lord in the Gospels and that has been practiced in the Orthodox Church since the times of the Apostles.

Our goal, as a parish, is to be a community of dedicated Orthodox Christians who support each other in following the way of the Gospel and welcome all those who realize that this is the way of eternal life. Let us continuously pray to the Lord to make us such a community and to ask intercessions of all the saints, and especially of the Theotokos, whose Protection we celebrate on October 1st.

With love in Christ,

Fr. Victor

In this Issue:

Letter from Father Victor
Upcoming Events
The Life of Our Parish
On Icons
Prayers
From the Church Fathers
October Calendar

Upcoming Events

What's in Your Closet?	Saturday, October 3
Halupki Making	Saturday, October 10
Pierogie Making	October 16, 17, 23, 24
Parish Council Meeting	Monday, October 19
Abbott Tryphon to speak at St. Mark's Church	Thursday, October 22
Ethnic Food Festival	Saturday, November 7

The Life of Our Parish

Flea Market

We had a wonderful turnout for the Flea Market on Saturday, September 12. Thanks to everyone who donated items for the church table and thanks to those who dedicated their time and energy to set up, to work at the various church tables, and to clean up afterwards. As a result of parishioner support and dedication, the Flea Market generated a profit for the church of $1,131.35. Any items donated, but not sold at the Flea Market will be donated to the What's in Your Closet collection drive on Saturday, October 3, which will generate additional income for the parish.

Food Festival

This year's Food Festival is scheduled for Saturday, November 7th. The Committee is asking for parishioner support by volunteering time or donating funds or products for this important parish fund-raising event. Please contact Kate Cox, Nina Rapak or Nancy Grabania. In preparation for the Food Festival, the next pierogie-making session will be on Friday and Saturday, October 16 and 17 and Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24. Thank you for supporting the parish!

Abbott Tryphon to speak at St. Mark's

On Thursday, October 22, Abbot Tryphon of All-Merciful Savior Monastery in Vashon Island, Washington will be with us at St. Mark's Orthodox Church (452 Durham Road, Wrightstown 18940, 215-860-9640) to talk about 'Engaging the Culture'. Compline at 6:30PM, Lecture at 7:00PM. All are invited, there is no charge.

Some Internet Sites You Should Know

Here are some sites Orthodox Christians should be aware of. They are a great source of Orthodox information and education and you should refer to them frequently.

St. Stephen's Cathedral
www.ststephenscathedral.org

Orthodox Church in America
www.oca.org

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
www.doepa.org

St. Herman's Seminary
www.sthermansseminary.org

St. Tikhon's Seminary
www.stots.edu

St. Vladimir's Seminary
www.svots.edu

Ancient Faith Radio
www.ancientfaithradio.com

October Charity

To be announced

Homeless Outreach

The Twelve Baskets Full homeless outreach program is in urgent need of volunteers to provide donations of food, funds and/or time to help feed the homeless in Philadelphia. For more information, please contact Bob Lutzick at 215-356-9171.

The Importance of Being on Time

There seems to be a misconception that Sunday Divine Liturgy starts at 10:07, or 10:13, or 10:20. It does not. Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00AM. Please use your best effort to be in the pews on time to hear, "Blessed is the Kingdom..."

Thank You

If you would like to sponsor next month's newsletter, please specify "Newsletter" when making your donation. We are grateful for your continued support. And please let us know how you think we're doing.

On Icons

by Father Deacon George Zlatkowski

When a non-Orthodox visitor or inquirer enters an Orthodox Church, the first thing that strikes him are the icons. The saints on the walls, on the Iconostas, on the ceilings. Everywhere one looks, their serene faces gaze at us, as if in reproach, and ask: Do you really want to be here? As Orthodox Christians, what strikes you? Are you so used to them that you take them for granted and don't even give them a second thought?

Icons are not merely religious pictures that depict the likenesses of the saints, but rather they aid us in our worship and veneration. Moreover, it must be understood clearly that we Orthodox Christians do not venerate the "picture" itself, or the glass and paint.

The saints are always portrayed in the Light of Christ and are never depicted as individuals apart from Christ our Lord for all of them lived and died for Him. Hence, the gold light surrounding them. And so, we honor and venerate them. In the presence of these saints who stand in our Church, this House of the Lord, we become more reserved, more quiet and reverent in their presence.

As you may know, icons are said to be "written" not painted. But not everyone is capable of writing them. The "writer" having such talent, considers it a gift from God and always begins his writing only after fervent prayer, meditation and fasting. Writing icons is very different from painting portraits and landscapes. One might say "special effects" are utilized in the writing. For example, if you look closely at the eyes on the icon of a saint, you will realize that, no matter from which side or angle one views the icon, the eyes are always directed at you. This perspective is deliberate. *(continued on next page)*

On Icons, continued

Icons are the oldest Christian art from the early churches that depict the likeness of Christ and scenes from the Holy Scriptures. As time went by, this early iconography developed into a "tradition" and, again, not just to beautify our churches, but to enlighten and edify us, to bring us peace and comfort for the short time that we are in Church and in the presence of God, to lighten the burdens of our daily life. And to carry this peace with us out into the world.

Unfortunately, in today's society, the term "icon" is grossly misused. We hear it to describe popular sports figures, celebrities and others. For example, "He was a Hollywood icon." This terminology cheapens and trivializes the deeper meaning.

In our Orthodox Christian Faith, the word "icon" represents something most precious, "A sacred image that we honor and revere." The icon is strictly a spiritual depiction – a "communication tool" between the visible and invisible worlds, or between us on earth and heaven, between the Savior Jesus Christ and us who strive to be saved.

Every Orthodox Christian should have icons of Christ, the Mother of God and Patron Saints in their homes - preferably in every room, or in a special, quiet corner where one can say the daily prayers or, at least, cross themselves and utter "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Many Years

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things to thy servant(s) (Name), and preserve them for many years!

Baptism

Ignatius Lee Clausson

Birthdays

October 1
Daria Yencha

October 2
Anna Jensky
Michael Popelak
Tom Rapak
Nina Gavula

October 5
Daniel Bondira
Aiden Waskovich

October 8
Janine McCartney

October 11
Tamra Wagner
Kirill Blyumin

October 12
Margret Englesson
Dumitru Rad

October 14
Andre Cox
Kristi Radu
Deanna Rapak

October 15
Louis Belsito

October 16
John Daniel Zwick

October 17
Veronika (Sara) Blyumin
Julia Gotowchikov
Tatiana Stephanowich

October 18
Peter Ren
Isabella Maschke

October 19
Alexander Linahan

October 20
Alexander Gordenchuk

October 22
Timothy Patrick Yencha
Lynn Anne Linahan

October 23
Michael Mariani

October 24
Ksenie Hulayew

October 28
Christine Bondira

October 29
Carolynn Stephanowich
Sergio Rabaca

October 30
Peter Simon

For the Sick:

O Lord our God, the Physician of our souls and bodies, look down upon Thy servant(s) (Name) and cure them of all infirmities of the flesh, in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy Most Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, always, now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Mary Popelak
Bogdan Arutyunov
Andrew Wagner
Keivan Galaviz
Ersilia Maximo
Arnold Jensky
Dimitry Hubiak
Ava Afanassiev
Barbara Afanassiev
Eric DeFrancesco
Michele Decker
Alice Kopistyanski
Lois Brautigam
Maria Sedorcheva
Tamara Poessl

For the Departed:

Remember, O Lord, the souls of Thy departed servant(s), (Name). Forgive all their sins, both voluntary and involuntary. Grant them participation in Thine eternal good things and the enjoyment of the eternal and blessed life.

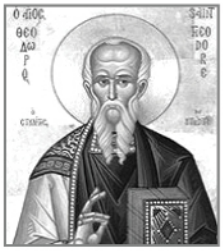
Ever Memorable
Matushka Mary

Ever Memorable
Archpiest Alexander

Newly Departed
Tamara Danyluk
Igor Bergners

Please submit prayer requests for the November newsletter to Father Victor by October 14

From the Church Fathers



". . . let us hold fast to love of him, hating and rightly turning away from the devil. For as our benefactor is loved and cherished in proportion to his benefactions, so the wicked one should be hated and rejected for his ways in equal proportion. For he is the destroyer of our life. In the words of the Master, he is a murderer from the beginning [John 8:44]. He is the one who has divided our race into ten thousand opinions, wounding it with many darts of sin and seeking to swallow down the inhabited world. If we do not hate him, there will be no escaping the punishment that will be meted out to us, because we joined to our foe and murderer. But, my brothers, let us fly from him! Let us fly most certainly. What is flight? The avoidance of wicked actions and thoughts, and also affinity with God, the assumption of good works."

— St. Theodore the Studite

"Adorn yourself with truth, try to speak truth in all things; and do not support a lie, no matter who asks you. If you speak the truth and someone gets mad at you, don't be upset, but take comfort in the words of the Lord: Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of truth, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:10)."

— St. Gennadius of Constantinople

"Beware of passionate attachments to the world. Although they deceive you with peace and comfort, they are so fleeting that you do not notice how you are deprived of them, and in their place come sorrow, longing, despondency, and no comfort whatsoever."

— St. Leonid of Optina

"If you want to serve God, prepare your heart not for food, not for drink, not for rest, not for ease, but for suffering, so that you may endure all temptations, trouble and sorrow. Prepare for severities, fasts, spiritual struggles and many afflictions, for "by many afflictions is it appointed to us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Acts 14,22); 'The Heavenly Kingdom is taken by force, and the who use force seize it.' (Matt 11:12)

— St. Sergius of Radonezh

St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral
Orthodox Church in America
8598 Verree Road,
Philadelphia, PA 19111

Postage