

# The Protomartyr Newsletter

A monthly publication of St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral

## Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Stephen Cathedral,

As we begin a New Year we often think about opportunities to try to have new and fresh starts in our lives. We try to plan events during the upcoming year: vacation time, special celebrations, etc. We hope to do things a little better than we did in years past. But most importantly, we pray for good health for everyone and God's help in all our good works.

Our lives as Christians should always be marked with the realization that we need the grace of God to accomplish every task in our life. And before we begin any work, even a most basic one, we should take a moment to ask our Lord's help to do it for His glory.

As we look ahead to the upcoming year and all that we set out to accomplish, we should also seek the help of God to make this new start in our lives. Our Orthodox Christian tradition gives us a wonderful opportunity for this in the yearly blessing of our homes. The first Great Feast of January is Theophany, the remembrance of our Lord's Baptism by St. John the Baptist, when Christ entered the waters of the River Jordan and sanctified them. After this great event the waters of this world can carry the special blessing of God: to purify us from sin and to sanctify our life. This is why during each service of Baptism we first sanctify the baptismal water and ask the Lord to make it Holy Water. We also have the service of the Blessing of Water on the eve of Theophany, January 5th. We rejoice that the Lord gives us this blessing of the water of Jordan to have as a presence in our lives, and we take it home after the service and use this water throughout the year when we need the special help of God. We also bless our dwelling places with it asking the Lord to renew our lives. I will be calling all our parishioners to schedule this important service and to allow us an opportunity to talk about our lives and the life of our parish community.

I wish all of the parishioners and friends of St. Stephen's many blessings from God in the New 2016 Year. May the Lord give you and your family members good health, strengthen your faith and give us all joy of walking in His commandments.

With love in Christ,

*Fr. Victor*



### ***In this Issue:***

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## BLESSING OF HOMES

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It is a custom after the feast of Theophany, that a priest visits the faithful to bless their homes. Please get in touch with Fr. Victor to arrange for the day and time of the pastoral visit and blessing of your home.

To prepare for the priest's visit to bless your home:

- Make a list of the first names of those family members you wish to pray for with the names of the living and the names of the deceased in separate columns.
- On your dining room table or family altar, place a lit candle, a Theophany icon or icon of Christ, and a wide bowl (to hold the Holy Water). Be sure your prayer list is there as well!
- Turn on lights in each room.
- Turn off all TVs, computers, cell phones, etc.



When the priest arrives, everyone in the house should gather around the table or icon corner, and join in the procession and singing of the responses during the service of blessing of a home.

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## THE 79<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NOVOGODNY BALL

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On Sunday evening, January 17, St. Stephen's Orthodox Christian Fellowship will once again be sponsoring the NOVOGODNY BALL at the Radisson Hotel, located on US Route 1 in Trevoze, Pennsylvania. That is not a misprint! This is the 79<sup>th</sup> year that the Ball has been attracting friends from both far and wide to this wonderful event. Very few events can claim such longevity! Profits of the Ball are donated to Orthodox and other worthy charities. The Ball has also become *THE* winter event for teens and young adults to attend to renew their summer camp friendships. For a good time for a good cause, please contact Paul Fedoronko for ticket information. ***Please note that tickets are by reservation only! No tickets are sold on the evening of the Ball.***

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## A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

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### ***I WILL be a Parish Steward in 2016!***

Stewardship does not only mean financial stewardship. Stewardship also means helping around St. Stephen's when asked or, better yet, looking around for ways to help **without being asked**. There are plenty of ways to help, whether helping at the Food Festival, serving on Parish Council, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, working in the kitchen or at coffee hour, helping to clean the church or working around the grounds... you get the idea.

Many resolutions are easily broken. Make **this** a resolution that you will keep in 2016.

# January 2016

8598 Verree Road, Philadelphia, PA 19111

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
NOTE: Light Grey denotes Fasting Days					<b>CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST</b> St. Basil the Great 9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy	5:00 PM - Great Vespers
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9:40 AM - 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours Reader: Megan Sisko 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy Epistle: Larry Skvir	THEOPHANY EVE 6:00 PM - Holy Supper 7:00 PM - Compline and Blessing of Water	THEOPHANY 9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy (NATIVITY O.C.) 6:00 PM - Vigil	(NATIVITY O.C.) 9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy			5:00 PM - Great Vespers
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9:40 AM - 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours Reader: Natalie Tapykoff 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy Epistle: Joseph Stearne						5:00 PM - Great Vespers
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
9:40 AM - 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours Reader: Janine McCartney 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy Epistle: George Englesson 7:00 PM - Novogodny Ball	(THEOPHANY O.C.) 6:00 PM - Vigil	(THEOPHANY O.C.) 9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 7:30 PM - Parish Council Meeting				9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM - Vigil
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
9:40 AM - 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Hours Reader: Emily Murphy 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy Epistle: Paul Fedoronko				DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY Jermyyn, PA		THREE HIERARCHS 9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM - Great Vespers 6:00 PM - General Confession
31	Slavonic Divine Liturgy Every Sunday at 8:30 AM in St Michael Chapel					
Please check the Cathedral website for any changes to the schedule. <a href="http://www.ststephenscathedral.org/calendar.html">www.ststephenscathedral.org/calendar.html</a>						

8598 Verree Road, Philadelphia, PA 19111

StStephenCathedral.org

StStephensCathedral.org

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# THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH

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## ***St. Stephen's Day Celebration***

This year, the Patronal Feast Day of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr (December 27) was on a Sunday. To celebrate the occasion, there was a combined Divine Liturgy, after which we enjoyed fellowship and a potluck meal. We thank all who joined us for the Divine Liturgy on the day of St. Stephen and special thanks to all who provided a covered dish, dessert or other refreshments to share with other parishioners and guests. Special thanks also to those who helped with set-up and clean-up.

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## ***This is YOUR Church Hall... Please Keep it Clean!***

Before the lights are turned off and everyone leaves the church hall every Sunday morning, the tables in the hall are always cleaned off and the chairs are put back in place. Before you head for home, please show some consideration by cleaning up the table where you sat and arranging your chairs the way you found them. If you spill something on the floor or the table, be courteous to your parish family and clean it up, just like you would at home.

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## ***Iconostas Project***

At the October Parish Council Meeting, the Council decided on the iconographer for the Iconostas Project approved at our Annual Parish Meeting. In the first phase of the project we will focus on the Iconostas in our main church and soon will be sharing

some information on the cost of each icon. We hope that many of our parishioners will be willing to sponsor the whole - or part of - an icon to beautify our church. Please talk to Fr. Victor if you are considering making such a donation.

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## ***Nov 2015 Financial Results***

For the eleven months ended November 2015, the Parish General Fund was reporting a surplus of \$5,879. Total General Fund income through November was \$195,194 and General Fund expenses through November were \$189,314. Through October, the General Fund was reporting a small deficit. Thanks to the cooperation of many volunteers, the Fall Food Festival which was held during the month of November raised income of over \$6,100 and turned a deficit into a surplus. Thank you for your continuing financial stewardship.

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## ***2016 Pledge Forms***

The Parish Finance Committee will be meeting later this month to begin working on the 2016 parish budget. If you are a straggler and haven't already submitted your 2016 pledge form, please complete it and return it to the candle desk or the church office as soon as possible. It is important that we hear from all of our parishioners before we begin the budget process. The 2016 minimum pledge is \$300 for individuals and \$600 for a married couple. Parishioners must fulfill their minimum pledge

commitment to be a full member of the parish. If your 2016 pledge is the same as your 2015 pledge, you still need to complete and submit a new pledge card. Thank you for your financial stewardship to support the work of our parish.

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## ***WANTED: New Members for St. Stephen OCF***

January is the time of year for members of St. Stephen O.C.F., Chapter 82 of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America, to renew their membership in this fraternal/service organization which works for the benefit of the Orthodox Church in America and its seminaries. This would also be a good time for any interested parishioners to consider joining Chapter 82. Annual national membership dues are \$30. If you are interested in fellowship with other Orthodox Christians, please see Larry Skvir or Paul Fedoronko for more information about membership.

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## ***Offering Envelopes***

If you haven't already, please pick up your box of 2016 offering envelopes which you will find downstairs in the church hall. The envelopes cost approximately \$10 per box so they should be used and not wasted. The box also includes an Initial Offering envelope which is used to offset at least part of the cost of the envelopes. Any contribution toward the cost of the envelopes would be appreciated.

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# THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH (CONT'D)

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## ***Being Considerate of Others***

St. Stephen Parish is fortunate to be equipped with a Cry Room for the convenience of parents with infants and young children. While the purpose of the Cry Room is not for parents to spend the entire Divine Liturgy there with their children, it should be used when infants and young children become unruly and disruptive with crying and fussing, and distract worshipers from the service. If you are the parents of young children, please be considerate of your brothers and sisters.

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## ***Deciphering PECO Bills***

The Parish Council is actively seeking a person - or persons - who is skilled in the Art of Deciphering PECO Energy bills. No kidding. If you are such an individual, please contact Fr. Victor or any member of the Council as soon as possible.

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## ***Our Church Store***

Started in 1992 by Marge Pron and Helen Davis, the Church Store has one simple goal - to support the Church! The largest part of the store's inventory consists of fine imported and

domestic religious, liturgical, and educational items, as well as non-religious items. Feel free to ask Helen or Marge for assistance at any time. Your patronage is greatly appreciated!

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## **January Charity**

This month, with your generous support, we will direct our financial support to our pledges to various funds for the benefit of seminary education.

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# CHURCH ETIQUETTE

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## ***Part 3 - Preparing and Receiving Communion***

In our lives as Orthodox Christians there is no greater gift from God than to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. This gift should be treasured and by no means partaken of casually, without proper preparation and attention. It is a tradition of the Orthodox Church that in order for us to receive Communion we should be at peace with God and with each other, regularly (at least once a month) have examination of our consciousness in the sacrament of Confession and to make an effort of starting to prepare for this gift by coming to Vespers service on the evening before the Liturgy. It is important to read Pre-Communion prayers either the night before, or in the morning before coming to Church and to observe absolute fast (no food or drink) after you wake up and before you receive the Eucharist. If you have a medical condition that requires you to eat something or to take medicine, discuss your circumstances with your parish priest to agree on an acceptable rule of fasting before Communion.

- As you approach the Chalice, cross your arms on your chest in the sign of humility.
- Do not kiss icons right before or right after you receive.
- Do not make the sign of the cross near the Chalice.

After you receive Communion, go back to your place in the church. Please remain standing while Communion is being distributed. At this time it is important not to relax, but to meditate on Lord's love towards us and to thank Him for the gifts we have just received. It would be best to read Post-Communion prayers of Thanksgiving (found in most Orthodox Prayer Books) as you wait for the rest of the congregation to receive the Eucharist.

*(Read Part 4 in the February 2016 Newsletter)*



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# PRAYERS

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## ***Many Years to our January Birthdays!***

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, visitation, and furtherance in all good things to Thy servants, and preserve them for Many Years!

Jack Ryder - 2

Faith Zlatkowski - 3

Andrew Stephen Yencha - 4

Robert Lutzick - 5

Anna Pron-Zwick - 5

Jude Linahan - 6

Ralph Rogers - 8

Jacob Sisko - 8

Janice Kolea - 9

Nicholas Forest - 11

Mat Anastasia Gorodenchuk - 13

Stephanie Hopkins - 17

Anna Ringe - 19

Alexander Cox - 20

Alekzei Hulayew - 23

William Hartzell - 23

Maryellen Jones - 25

Rob Phillips - 25

Evangeline Clausson - 26

Nancy Grabania - 27

Andrea Wendell - 27

Michele Decker - 29

Michael Hopkins - 31

## ***For the Sick***

O Christ our God, Who alone art our Defender: visit and heal Thy suffering servants, delivering them from all sickness and grievous pains and afflictions. Guide the hands of the physicians and nurses that attend to them so that all things may be done according to Thy Will. Raise them up from their bed of illness, so that they may continually offer hymns and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto Thee; through the prayers of the Most-Holy Theotokos, the Holy Apostle and Physician Luke, the Holy Greatmartyr and Healer Panteleimon, and all the Holy and Venerable Unmercenary Physicians and Healers who have been well-pleasing to Thee throughout all the ages. For Thine it is to show us mercy and to save us, and to Thee do we ascribe Glory, together with Thy Father who is from everlasting, and Thy Most-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen!

Mary Popelak

Bogdan Arutyunov

Andrew Wagner

Keivan Galaviz

Ersilia Maximo

Arnold Jensky

Dimitry Hubiak

Eric DeFrancesco

Antonina Ren

Michele Decker

Alice Kopistyanski

Lois Brautigam

Maria Sedorcheva

## ***For the Departed***

O God of spirits and of all flesh, Who hast trampled down Death and overthrown the Devil, and hast given Life to Thy world, do Thou, the same Lord, give rest to the soul of Thy departed servants, in a place of brightness, a place of refreshment, a place of repose, where all sickness, sighing, and sorrow have fled away. Pardon every transgression which they have committed, whether by word or deed or thought. For Thou art a good God and lovest Mankind; because there is no man who lives yet does not sin, for Thou only art without sin, Thy righteousness is righteousness to all eternity, and Thy Word is Truth. For Thou art the Resurrection, the Life, and the Repose of Thy departed servants who have fallen asleep, O Christ our God, and unto Thee do we ascribe Glory, together with Thy Father, who is from everlasting, and Thine All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever unto ages of ages. Amen! MEMORY ETERNAL!

**Ever-Memorable Matushka Mary**

**Ever-Memorable Archpriest Alexander**

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# MEDITATIONS ON THE DIVINE LITURGY OF THE HOLY EASTERN ORTHODOX CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH

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BY NIKOLAI GOGOL

## The Office of Preparation (The Proskomidia)

The priest who intends to celebrate the Liturgy should begin from the evening before to be abstinent in body and spirit, should be at peace with all, and should avoid harboring displeasure towards anyone. From the evening on, after reading the prescribed prayers, he should dwell with his mind in the altar (sanctuary)\*, thinking of the morrow's duties so that even his very thoughts may be duly consecrated and filled with sweet fragrance. When the time comes, he goes to the church with the deacon; together they bow before the Holy Doors and then kiss the icons of the Savior and of the Mother of God, after which they bow to all present, by this bow asking forgiveness of everyone. Then they go into the altar, reciting to themselves the psalm verse:

**"I will enter Thy house and in Thy fear I will worship toward Thy holy temple."**

*(Psalm 5:7)*

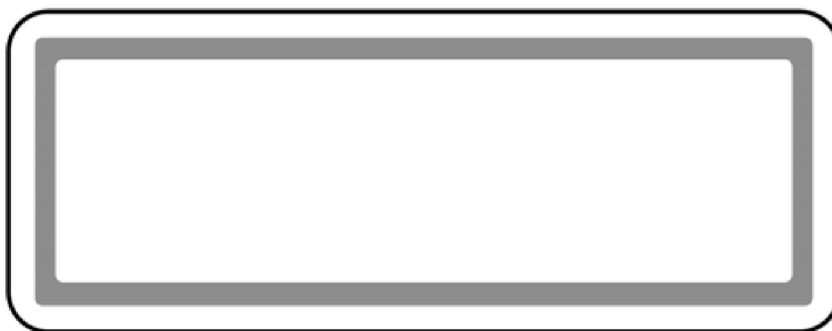
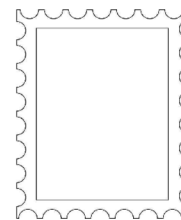
Approaching the holy table itself, they turn towards the East and make three prostrations, and kiss the holy table and the Book of the Gospels lying on it as if it were the Lord

Himself sitting on the throne. Then they put on their sacred vestments in order to be distinguished not only from others but even from themselves, so that there may be nothing in their appearance to remind people of men engaged in the everyday affairs of the world. At the same time this should put them in mind of the grandeur of the service which is about to begin.

From Apostolic times special vestment was in use, although the persecuted Church was not in a position to give it the beauty we are accustomed to. But from the very beginning there were strict rules that the priest might not serve in his ordinary clothing and that none of the clergy could go in the street in the vestments worn during church services. While they are putting on these bright vestments, the servants of the Church are obliged to clothe themselves also in the robes of the Spirit. For this reason, as each article is put on, verses from the Psalms are recited which disclose the deep meaning of the vestments, so that the thoughts of the clergy may not wander while they are doing something so simple and ordinary as dressing. Rather, even while vesting they collect themselves for their high service and like Aaron, splendidly clad both externally and in spirit, they step before the dread altar of the Most High.

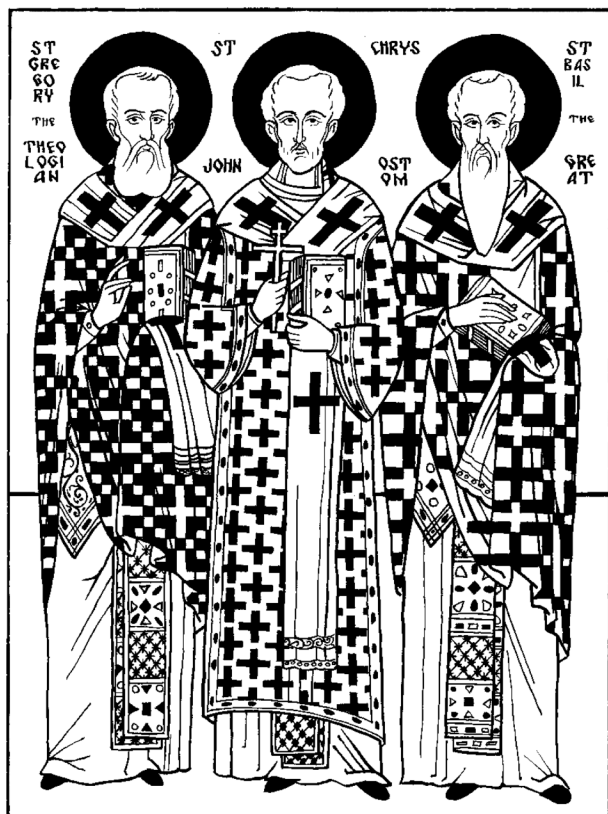
*\* The word "altar" means the floor area east of the iconostasis sometimes called the "bema" (sanctuary in Western usage). The word "holy table" means the table in the middle of the "altar."*





## SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY HIERARCHS AND ECUMENICAL TEACHERS: BASIL THE GREAT, GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

*Commemorated on January 30*



During the eleventh century, disputes raged in Constantinople about which of the three hierarchs was the greatest. Some preferred St Basil (January 1), others honored St Gregory the Theologian (January 25), while a third group exalted St John Chrysostom (November 13).

Dissension among Christians increased. Some called themselves Basilians, others referred to themselves as Gregorians, and others as Johnites.

By the will of God, the three hierarchs appeared to St John the Bishop of Euchaita (June 14) in the year 1084, and said that they were equal before God. "There are no divisions among us, and no opposition to one another."

They ordered that the disputes should stop, and that their common commemoration should be celebrated on a single day. Bishop John chose January 30 for their joint Feast, thus ending the controversy and restoring peace.