

THE FORERUNNER
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
 420 Laura Street
 Philipsburg, PA 16866
 (814) 342-2011
 V. Rev. Fr. C. Michael Simerick, Acting Rector
<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>



John Conkey-Council President; Tom Demchak-Vice-President; Judy Everly-Secretary; Garret McGraw-Treasurer
Members: Mark Ammerman, John Blake, Sonya Brennish, Mike Conkey, George Sura, Ivan Switala

NOVEMBER 2018

Service & Activity Schedule

Sat., Nov. 3, Diocesan Assembly
 Vespers @ 5:00 p.m.
Note: Turn back clocks one hour
 Sun. November 4
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – Everly & Donovan
 Sat., November 10
 Vespers @ 5:00 p.m.
 Followed by General Confession
 Sun., November 11
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Veterans roast beef dinner sponsored by
 St. Anne's Guild – 1:00 p.m.
 Thu., November 15 – BEGINNING OF ADVENT FAST
 Sat., November 17
 Vespers @ 5:00 p.m.
 Sun. November 18
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour - FAST – Foster & Conkey
 Parish Council meeting
 Tue. Nov. 20, 6:00 p.m.- Vespers – Entry of
 Theotokos into Temple
 Wed., Nov. 21, Divine Liturgy, 10:00 a.m.
 Feast of Entry of Theotokos into temple
 Thurs., November 22 – Thanksgiving Day
 Sat. November 24
 Vespers @ 5:00 p.m.
 Sun. November 25
 Hours @ 9:35 a.m.
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour – FAST – Brennish &
 Thompson

Readers:

Mark Ammerman, John Conkey,
 Mike Conkey, Tom Demchak,
 Doug Donovan, George Sura,
 Andrew Tocimak

Altar Servers:

John Blake
 Ivan Switala

Reader's Schedule

	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Epistle</i>
11/4	John Conkey	John Conkey
11/11	Mark Ammerman	Mark Ammerman
11/18	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
11/25	Tom Demchak	Tom Demchak

Notable Feasts in November

11/8	Synaxis of Archangel Michael & other bodiless powers
11/13	St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople
11/14	Holy Apostle Philip
11/16	Holy Apostle & Evangelist Matthew
11/21	Entry of Theotokos into Temple
11/22	Thanksgiving Day
11/30	Holy Apostle Andrew, the first-called

Birthdays

Svetlana Blake	November 4
Doug Donovan	November 27
Mike Conkey	November 28
Bonnie Fetcenko	November 30

Please contact Shirley Donovan (814-360-3615) or Mary Ann Conkey (814-867-2926) if there are changes with the Fellowship Hour. Cash donations go towards the purchase of coffee, cream, sugar, and donuts.

From the Desk of Father Michael

THE HALLOWEEN OBSERVANCE: THE NEED FOR CONTINUITY, DISCONTINUITY, CONTINUITY

In our Orthodox evangelistic practice, frequently there can be found circumstances where our holy Church in its effort to convert peoples of pagan religions of all nations to Christianity would not accept some of their traditions until the meaning of those traditions could be Christianized. As an example, although incense was used in the Old Testamental worship and even though the Christian faith is Judaic-Christian, the practice of using incense for a time was discontinued. The early Church needed time to teach that the real purpose of incense was as an offering only to the true God, the one God in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the Roman Empire, the practice was to offer incense to the pagan gods and also to the emperor who was considered a god.

The celebration of Christmas on the date December 25 derives from the pagan religion that celebrated the birth of the **sun** god on December 25. The Christian Church simply taught the new converts that December 25 was indeed the birthday of God but it was the birthday of God's **son**, Jesus Christ.

Halloween observed on October 31 derived as a pagan Druid celebration commemorating the fallacious temporary partial resurrection of the dead, who would supposedly appear in decaying bodies, after rising up from their graves in an attempt to return to their former earthly habitats. It is obvious that demons played to the superstition and demonic belief of the Druids who were members of pagan orders that developed in Britain, Ireland, and Gaul. People who supposedly encountered these half-decayed ghosts would offer them treats of nuts and sweets to dissuade them from damaging their livestock and property. Frequently people would dress in ghostly ghoulish apparel so that they would not be recognized and be considered members of the ghostly band, and thus not suffer at the hands of these ghoulish marauders.

All Saints Day, a holiday that was celebrated in the Eastern Christian churches as early as the fourth century was commemorated on the first Sunday after Pentecost. The Western Christian churches celebrated this feast in conjunction with the East until the sixth century. In the seventh century, the Western Church began commemorating the Feast of All Saints on May 13. In the middle of the eighth century, the feast began to be celebrated on November 1 by some of the churches. In 844, Pope Gregory proclaimed the celebration of All Saints Day to be commemorated in all the churches on November 1.

Although it cannot be proven, the celebration of All Saints on November 1 in the Western Church with the elaborate preparation for this feast on the evening before appears to be an attempt to defuse the negative ghoulish connotation of the pagan celebration of Halloween on October 31. It appears that the Western Church employed the ancient practice of continuity, discontinuity, continuity in replacing the ghoulish feast of Halloween with the holy feast of All Saints.

Many Christians today are wrestling with the notion of whether Christians should celebrate Halloween at all. Should they, the parents, permit their children to dress up in costumes and to collect treats? It seems to me that if we could counter the ghoulish pagan aspects of this commemoration with the Western Christian apparent attempt to transform its meaning to that of commemorating the saints, their holy lives, and deeds, we could make this observance a positive experience for adults and children alike.

The key, however, to our success at breaking the pagan continuity of this commemoration and continuing it with a new Christian meaning is that parents, educators, and spiritual leaders not permit costumes, actions, or ambiance to reflect the ghoulish devilish elements descending from the pagan roots of this festival.

We must not take lightly Satan's ability to pervert and subvert what seems on the surface to be a benign social endeavor/behavior. We must always discontinue questionable practices and traditions and only permit them to resurface if we can truly change their character and meaning to reflect goodness and wholesomeness that ultimately leads to holiness.

Parents, don't permit your children to be influenced by the negative aspects of this seasonal observance. Dress them in Godly-acceptable costumes and explain that the treats they receive are for being found good children of a merciful God who continually lavishes His saints and us with good things. Let us pray that we might transform this commemoration of devilish darkness to one of Christian light. May the joy that our children experience from this feast be truly a Christian joy that is not short-lived but prepares us ultimately for the continuous joy we will experience in His heavenly Kingdom.



ENTRANCE OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

On Wednesday, November 21, we will celebrate the Feast of the Entrance of the Holy Mother of God into the Temple. Nothing that we celebrate in the liturgical life of the Church is accidental. All has been given to us by God that, through our participation in His holy Church, illumination and ultimately our deification might be accomplished. By entering into the eternal mysteries via our liturgical and sacramental commemorations, the salvation plan of God is revealed, and the Feast of the Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple is no exception. What we witness by this feast with regard to the holy Virgin Mary entering the Holy of Holies is her preparation for becoming the living temple via the incarnation of the Son of God. By the Son of God assuming flesh and our human nature from His mother, each and every human being is now capable of being a temple of the divine spirit, making it possible for God to dwell within us.

Father Hopko in his book entitled *The Winter Pascha* writes: "We are all made to be living temples of God. We are all created to be dwelling places of His glory. We are all fashioned in His image and likeness to be abodes of His presence. The first Christian martyr, the protodeacon Stephen whose memory is celebrated on the third day of Christmas, was killed for proclaiming this marvel when he bore witness that "the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands." For this, like Jesus Himself, he was accused of planning the destruction of the earthly temple at Jerusalem (Acts 7:48; 6:14). The apostle Paul proclaims this same doctrine clearly and without equivocation when he writes to the Corinthians and to us that "we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (I Cor 3:9).

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are." (1 Cor 3:16-17)

This same teaching is found in the apostle's letter to the Ephesians as the confirmation of the words of Jesus recorded in St John's gospel, that "if a man loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14:23).

The whole intent of the preparation for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is to make us aware of what the Lord has accomplished for us by His coming that we might be saved. In addition, the Advent season calls us to fasting, corporate and personal prayer, almsgiving, increased sacramental participation, so that we might be nurtured spiritually and not only benefit by illumination but ultimately by deification. Salvation comes by way of our communion with the living God, His indwelling in us in this life that we might inherit the life with Him forever at the end of time.

Again, Father Hopko states: "As we go the way of the Winter Pascha the choice placed before us is clear. We can follow the "narrow way" that leads to life, or we can go on the "broad way" that leads to destruction (Mt 7:13-14). We can, like Mary, cleave to the Lord and become His dwelling place in the Spirit. Or we can through immorality and sin choose the death of the nothingness which we are unless the Lord Himself lives within us. "But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him" (I Cor 6:17).

May God grant that this holy Advent season nurture us that we might be enlightened to His divine mysteries regarding our salvation. May we be found worthy receptacles for His indwelling in this life that we may abide with Him forever in the life to come.

CHRIST, THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD MADE FLESH

On Thurs., November 15, we will begin the Advent fast, a six-week period of fasting and preparation for the feast termed Winter Pascha, the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on December 25. The prescription for this fast period is as follows: no meat or dairy products or anything that comes from an animal is permitted. Fasting is a spiritual exercise that must be taken seriously by those who consider themselves members of the holy Orthodox faith. **Those suffering infirmities and under doctor's prescription must follow their medical health regimen.**

This solemn six weeks of preparation is imperative if we are to enter into the eternal mystery of the "Word of God" becoming flesh through the Incarnation of the long-promised Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God the Son, the eternal Word, assumes flesh that all that was spoken by God for our salvation might be made even more manifest by all that Jesus said and did via His becoming one of us.

We will hear from the Holy Scriptures over these next several weeks and in particular during the feasts of the Nativity, Epiphany, and Jesus' Presentation into the Temple, about the holy mysteries that prepare the way for our salvation. These commemorations ultimately point to the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah commemorated in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and establishing His holy Church.

All that God has provided for us is made evident through His eternal Word; that is why the Word of God is given such great importance in our holy Church. Let us always reverence the Word of God by making every effort to hear, read, learn, and ultimately to submit our entire lives in service to it.

Archimandrite Justin Popovic writes the following regarding God's eternal Word:

"The Bible is in a sense a biography of God in this world. In it the Indescribable One has in a sense described Himself. The Holy Scriptures of the New Testament are a biography of the incarnate God in this world. In them it is related how God, in order to reveal Himself to men, sent God the Logos, who took on flesh and became man--and as a man told men everything that God is, everything that God wants from this world and the people in it. God the Logos revealed God's plan for the world and God's love for the world. God the Word spoke to men about God with the help of words, insofar as human words can contain the uncontainable God.

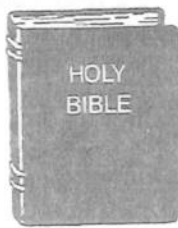
All that is necessary for this world and the people in it--the Lord has stated in the Bible. In it He has given the answers to all questions. There is no question which can torment the human soul, and not find its answer, either directly or indirectly in the Bible. Men cannot devise more questions than there are answers in the Bible. If you fail to find the answer to any of your questions in the Bible, it means that you have either posed a senseless question or did not know how to read the Bible and did not finish reading the answer in it.

WHAT THE BIBLE CONTAINS - In the Bible God has made known:

- (1) what the world is; where it came from; why it exists; what it is heading for; how it will end;
- (2) what man is; where he comes from; where he is going; what he is made of; what his purpose is; how he will end;
- (3) what animals and plants are; what their purpose is; what they are used for;
- (4) what good is; where it comes from; what it leads to; what its purpose is; how it is attained;
- (5) what evil is; where it comes from; how it came to exist; why it exists--how it will come to an end;
- (6) what the righteous are and what sinners are; how a sinner becomes righteous and how an arrogant righteous man becomes a sinner; how a man serves God and how he serves Satan; the whole path from good to evil, from God to Satan;
- (7) everything--from the beginning to the end; man's entire path from the body to God, from his conception in the womb to his resurrection from the dead;

(8) what the history of the world is, the history of heaven and earth, the history of mankind; what their path, purpose, and end are.

THE BEAUTY OF THE BIBLE



In the Bible God has said absolutely everything that was necessary to be said to men. The biography of every man--everyone without exception--is found in the Bible. In it each of us can find himself portrayed and thoroughly described in detail: all those virtues and vices which you have and can have and cannot have. You will find the paths on which your own soul and everyone else's journey from sin to sinlessness, and the entire path from man to God and from man to Satan. You will find the means to free yourself from sin. In short, you will find the complete history of sin and sinfulness, and the complete history of righteousness and the righteous.

If you are mournful, you will find consolation in the Bible; if you are sad, you will find joy; if you are angry--tranquility; if you are lustful--continence; if you are foolish--wisdom; if you are bad--goodness; if you are a criminal--mercy and righteousness; if you hate your fellow man--love. In it you will find a remedy for all your vices and weak points, and nourishment for all your virtues and accomplishments. If you are good, the Bible will teach you how to become better; if you are kind, it will teach you angelic tenderness; if you are intelligent, it will teach you wisdom.

If you appreciate the beauty and music of literary style, there is nothing more beautiful or more moving than what is contained in Job, Isaiah, Solomon, David, John the Theologian and the Apostle Paul. Here music--the angelic music of the eternal truth of God--is clothed in human words. The more one reads and studies the Bible, the more he finds reasons to study it as often...as he can. According to St. John Chrysostom, it is like an aromatic root, which produces more and more aroma the more it is rubbed."

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM - The life and death of St John Chrysostom—a Priest, Bishop, and Patriarch of unequalled spiritual gifts whose commentaries on the Scriptures have fed many seeking eternal life over the centuries. His feast day is November 13.

St John Chrysostom was born in Antioch in the year 347, his father's name being Secundus and his mother's Anthusa. Studying Greek philosophy, John became disgusted with Hellenic paganism and turned to the Christian faith as the one and all-embracing truth. John was baptised by Meletius, Patriarch of Antioch, and, after that, his parents were also baptised. After their death, John became a monk and began to live in strict asceticism. He wrote a book: 'On the Priesthood', after which the holy Apostles John and Peter appeared to him, prophesying for him great service, great grace and also great suffering. When the time came for him to be ordained priest, an angel of God appeared at the same time to Patriarch Flavian (Meletius's successor) and to John himself. When the Patriarch ordained him, a shining white dove was seen above John's head.

Renowned for his wisdom, his asceticism and the power of his words, John was, at the desire of Emperor Arcadius, chosen as Patriarch of Constantinople. He governed the Church for six years as Patriarch with unequalled zeal and wisdom, sending missionaries to the pagan Celts and Scythians and purging the Church of simony, deposing many bishops who were given to this vice. He extended the Church's charitable works, wrote a rite for the Holy Liturgy, put heretics to shame, denounced the Empress Eudoxia, interpreted the Scriptures with his golden mind and tongue and left to the Church many precious books of sermons.

The people glorified him; the jealous loathed him; the Empress twice had him sent into exile. He spent three years in exile, and died on Holy Cross Day, September 14th, 407, in a place called Comana in Armenia. The holy Apostles John and Peter again appeared to him at the time of his death, and also the holy martyr Basiliscus (see May 22nd), in whose church he received Communion for the last time. 'Glory

to God for everything!' were his last words, and with them the soul of Chrysostom the Patriarch entered into Paradise. Of his relics, the head is preserved in the Church of the Dormition in Moscow, and the body in the Vatican in Rome.

SOCIAL EVENTS – DINNER FOR VETERANS



On Sunday, November 11, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. our parish is planning a roast beef dinner to honor our area vets who have served in all of our nation's wars and conflicts. This dinner will be of no charge to veterans and their families. We plan to have a brief program at the beginning of the event which would include, if possible, an honor guard and a guest speaker. This dinner is being sponsored by the St. Anne's Guild.

THANKSGIVING DAY

Thanksgiving Day is a day set aside each year for giving thanks to God for blessings received during the year. On this day, people give thanks with feasting and prayer. The holiday is celebrated in the United States and Canada.

The first Thanksgiving Days in New England were harvest festivals, or days for thanking God for plentiful crops. For this reason, the holiday still takes place late in the fall, after the crops have been gathered. For thousands of years, people in many parts of the world have held harvest festivals. The American Thanksgiving Day probably grew out of the harvest-home celebrations of England.

In the United States, Thanksgiving is usually a family day, celebrated with big dinners and joyous reunions. The very mention of Thanksgiving often calls up memories of kitchens and pantries crowded with good things to eat. Thanksgiving is also a time for serious religious thinking, church services, and prayer.

LET US
GIVE
Thanks

