



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 9, 2007

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9TH

CONCEPTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15TH

6:00p.m. Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16TH

HOLY FORE-FATHERS OF CHRIST

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour



Congratulations to Gerald and Camelia Melite on the birth of their new baby girl, Isabella Georgiana, who was born on Sunday, December 2nd, weighing in at 7 lbs. 13 ozs! The happy family is home doing well. May God continue to bless them!

New Christmas Cards

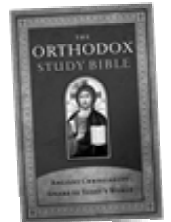
are available for purchase in our coffee hour room. These beautiful cards have been donated by Troika Cards for the benefit of our Mission. If we are able to sell them all we will bring in \$175!

The New Orthodox Study Bible

which includes both Old and New Testaments will be available this February. Our parish has preordered 10 copies. If you would like to reserve a copy please sign the list in the back of the church. If more copies need to be ordered we will certainly do so. The cost of the new Orthodox Study Bible will be approximately \$35.00.

About the Orthodox Study Bible

The first ever full-length Orthodox Study Bible in English presents the Bible of the early church and the church of the early Bible. Orthodox Christianity is the face of ancient Christianity to the modern world and embraces the second largest body of Christians in the world. In this first-of-its-kind study Bible, the Bible is presented with commentary from the ancient Christian perspective that speaks to those Christians who seek a deeper experience of the roots of their faith. The Orthodox Study Bible, published by Thomas Nelson, will soon be available from Conciliar Press. It uses the New King James Version of the Bible as the basis for a fresh translation of the Septuagint text. The Septuagint is the Greek version of the Bible used by Christ, the Apostles, and the early church. For more info please visit: orthodoxstudybible.com.



The Sacrament of Confession

is offered following any church service or at any other time by appointment. As a reminder, when we repent and confess our sins, then they are forgiven and forgotten – there is nothing which the Lord cannot or will not forgive, no matter how terrible we feel the sin is. In Confession not only are our sins forgiven but we also receive the grace to make a new beginning in our spiritual life. For this reason the Church sees the Mystery of Confession as a renewal of our Baptism. Such forgiveness is a real gift from God, but as with any gift we have to be willing to receive it.



READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Dec. 16th

Hours: Kathy Parrish
Epistle: Kathy Parrish

Sunday, Dec. 23rd

Hours: Jen Alexion
Epistle: Jen Alexion



The 2008 Annual Meeting of the Parish

will be held on one of the Sundays following our move to the new church. The date of the Annual Meeting will be announced at least three Sundays in advance. This meeting has two primary functions: 1) the pass the 2008 Budget, and 2) the nominate Council members to be confirmed by our hierarch.



ORTHODOX CHURCH CELEBRATES THE 'REAL' ST. NICHOLAS

Fr. Nick Kasemeotes of Holy Unmercenaries Greek Orthodox Church tells a bit of the history of St. Nicholas. As Father Nicholas Kasemeotes gestured toward the iconography on the sanctuary wall of Holy Anargyroi Greek Orthodox Church, a slight smile crossed his face when he came to the image of a bearded old man in a robe. "This is St. Nicholas," he said.

Except for the white whiskers, there is little in the image that would make one associate this 4th century bishop with his contemporary incarnation as ol' St. Nick -- or Santa Claus. Unlike the plump, jolly old elf, the saint's figure is lean, almost gaunt. Instead of a red suit and red stocking cap, he is clothed in liturgical vestments, complete with a mitre on his head. And in his hands, he carries not a bag of toys, but the scriptures.

"He was a very powerful figure in the life of the church," Kasemeotes said. Indeed, as tradition has it -- though some church historians dispute it -- Nicholas, the bishop of Myra in Lycia, was present at the first ecumenical council, the Council of Nicea, called by Emperor Constantine in 325. Nicholas remains one of the most popular of all saints, and both the Eastern and Western traditions of Christendom still honor him. His Feast Day is still celebrated on Dec. 6.

But for Father Kasemeotes, St. Nicholas holds a special place. "When you are baptized, you are given the name of a saint," he said, noting that he shares the same first name as Nicholas. The sharing of the name of a saint is important in the Orthodox tradition, meaning that a person shares a special relationship with or affinity to that saint. So important is that saint to the person, that the saint's Feast Day becomes a person's Name Day -- an occasion that is celebrated more than one's own birthday. Father Kasemeotes will celebrate his Name Day on Thursday, the Feast of St. Nicholas.

"The celebration of the Name Day is more important," he said, "because it marks our baptism, the

day of our rebirth. We say that the first birth ends in death, but the rebirth ends in life."

Because of his connection with St. Nicholas, Kasemeotes bemoans the way the bishop's story has devolved over the years into the popular image of Santa Claus. Yet, he understands how the legends surrounding the saint have changed in the ways they have.

One popular story surrounding Nicholas tells of how a poor man, living in Lycia, who had three daughters and who did not have the money to provide dowries for the daughters. At that time, Kasemeotes said, if a man could not provide dowries for his daughters, he might sell off those daughters into slavery, even into prostitution. In order to protect the girls, Nicholas, or so the legend goes, visited their home on three separate nights and threw bags of gold through the window. Some legends say he threw the gold down the chimney. Others say the gold landed in the stockings or the shoes of the girls. From those



stories and others like it, Kasemeotes said, came the image of St. Nicholas as the protector of children and the bringer of gifts.

Although some Christian traditions celebrate St. Nicholas Day with the giving of gifts, Kasemeotes said that such gift-giving is not typical within the Greek Orthodox tradition. Instead, those within his congregation will celebrate as they do with other saints days -- by calling upon the saint to intercede for them and singing hymns to St. Nicholas.

The prayer for St. Nicholas Day is simple: "You did appear to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence. Because of your lowliness, the heights were opened to you, because of your poverty, riches were granted to you. O Holy Father Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved!"

*From DirectionsToOrthodoxy.org
and the Post-Bulletin, Rochester MN*

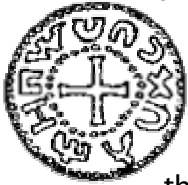


FOR CONSIDERATION

From the Prologue of Ochrid by St. Nikolai

God returns a loan a hundredfold, when it is lent to Him through the poor.

At one time, there was a Christian woman married to a pagan, and they lived together in love and poverty. When the husband, with much difficulty, saved up fifty silver pieces, he told his wife that this money should be given to someone as a loan with interest. Otherwise, he stated, they would spend their savings coin by coin, and again they would be left with nothing. His wife replied: "If you want to loan it out, lend it to the Christian God." "And where is the Christian God?" the husband asked. His wife led him to the church and told him to distribute the money to the beggars in front of the church, saying to her husband: "The Christian God will accept this from them, since all of them are His." They distributed all

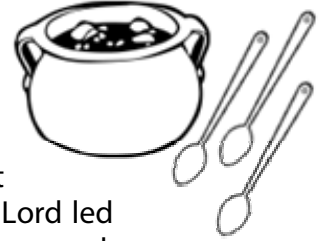


fifty silver pieces to the poor and returned home.

After a period of time, they were left without any bread in the house. Then the wife told her husband to go to the church, and he would receive the money that he loaned to God. The

man went to the church and saw only beggars there, and in his perplexity as to who would give him money, he walked around the church. Suddenly he saw a silver coin in front of him. He took it, purchased a fish with it, and brought the fish home. He complained to his wife that he had not seen anyone and no one had given him anything, but that he accidentally had found a silver coin. His wife replied: "God is invisible and works in an unseen manner." When the wife cut open the fish, she found a glittering stone in it. She gave this stone to her husband and he took it to a merchant to see what he could get for it. The merchant offered him five silver pieces, and the man began to laugh, thinking that the merchant was joking by offering him such a high price. However, the merchant, thinking that the man was laughing because of the small price he had offered him, then offered him ten, then fifteen, then thirty, then fifty silver pieces. The man, realizing that it was a precious stone, began to hesitate. The merchant raised the price higher and higher until he reached the price of three hundred silver pieces. Then the man accepted the three hundred silver pieces and went home joyfully. "Do you see how good the Christian God is?" his wife said to him. The amazed husband was baptized and, together with his wife, glorified God.

IS PLUMP A PREREQUISITE?



A holy man was having a conversation with the Lord one day and said, "Lord, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like." The Lord led the holy man to two doors. He opened one of the doors and the holy man looked in. In the middle of the room was a large round table. In the middle of the table was a large pot of stew, which smelled delicious and made the holy man's mouth water. The people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They were holding spoons with very long handles that were strapped to their arms and each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful. But because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths. The holy man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. The Lord said, "You have seen Hell."

They went to the next room and opened the door. It was exactly the same as the first one. There was the large round table with the large pot of stew which made the holy man's mouth water. The people were equipped with the same long-handled spoons, but here the people were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking. The holy man said, "I don't understand." It is simple," said the Lord. "It requires but one skill. You see they have learned to feed each other, while the greedy think only of themselves."

Interesting Facts: A "Did You Know?" About Delaware State Law

- ❖ Delaware prohibits horse racing of any kind on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
- ❖ In Delaware it is illegal to get married on a dare.
- ❖ In Delaware you may not sell dead people for money without a license.
- ❖ It is illegal to fly over any body of water, unless one is carrying sufficient supplies of food and drink.



THE SACRAMENT OF REPENTANCE

From *"The Inner Kingdom"* by Bishop Kallistos Ware

The experience of repentance is felt with especial force in the sacrament of Confession. The meaning of this "mystery" may be found summed up in the short exhortation addressed by the priest to the penitent in the Russian rite (the italics are my own):

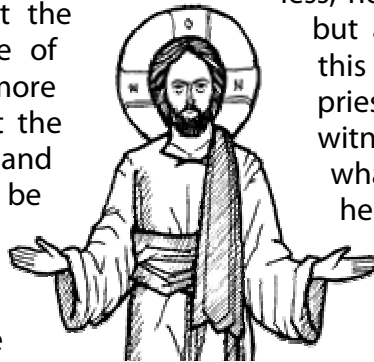
Behold, my child, *Christ invisibly stands here to hear your confession*; therefore, neither be ashamed nor afraid, and hide nothing from me; rather fear not to tell me all that you have done so that you might receive forgiveness from our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold His holy icon is before us; and *I am only a witness*, that I may bear witness of all that you tell me. If you hide anything from me, you shall have the greater sin. Take heed, therefore, that *having come to the place of the Physician* you do not depart unhealed.

In Confession we are to see Christ the Judge lifting from us the sentence of condemnation; but also, and more fundamentally, we are to see Christ the Physician, restoring what is broken and renewing life. The sacrament is to be envisaged not primarily in juridical but in therapeutic terms.

Above all it is a *sacrament of healing*.

It is significant that in some of the Byzantine liturgical commentaries Confession and the Anointing of the Sick are treated not as two distinct sacraments but as complementary aspects of a single "mystery" of healing. What we see in Confession is much more than external, forensic absolution; above all we desire spiritual medicine for our chronic spiritual wounds. Indeed, what we bring before Christ is not just specific sins but also the fact of deep sinfulness within us – the profound corruption that cannot be fully expressed in words, that seems to elude our conscious brain and will. It is of this, above all else, that we ask to be cured. And as a sacrament of healing, Confession is not simply a painful necessity, a discipline imposed on us by church authority, but an action full of joy and saving grace. Through Confession we learn that God is in full reality "the hope of the hopeless" (The Liturgy of St. Basil).

"There are only three of us here" – priest, penitent, and Christ the Physician. What does each of these three do, and whose action is the most important? Many people tend to put the greatest emphasis on what the *priest* does, on his words of counsel and encouragement; and if the priest fails to say anything eloquent or unexpected, they tend to as-



sume that little or nothing has been achieved. Or else they overstress the second aspect, what *they themselves* are doing. They imagine that they must be deeply stirred on an emotional level – even though, as we have said, repentance is not primarily a matter of the emotions. And because they put the main emphasis on their own efforts, they are in danger of regarding Confession in bleak and discouraging terms, as something to be got over and done with, necessary yet disagreeable, like a cold bath. But in reality the most important action is not that of the penitent or the priest, but that of *God*. While the penitent is required to prepare himself by self-examination and to conduct a searching scrutiny of his conscience, in the last resort he comes to Confession empty-handed, help-

less, not claiming to be able to heal himself, but asking for healing from another. And this other whose help he invokes is not the priest but God. The priest is simply a witness, bearing testimony before God of what we have to say. To vary the analogy,

he is no more than "God's usher," introducing us into the divine Presence; he is merely the receptionist in the hospital waiting room or the attendant in the operating theatre, whereas the surgeon is Christ Himself. It is to Christ, not to the priest, that the confession is made ("Christ invisibly stands here to hear your confession"); and it is from Christ, not from the priest, that forgiveness comes ("so you will have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ").

Once we regard Confession as fundamentally Christ's action rather than our own, then we shall begin to understand the sacrament of repentance in a far more positive way. It is an experience of God's healing love and pardon, not merely of our own disintegration and weakness. We are to see, not just the prodigal son, plodding slowly and painfully upon the long road home, but also the father, catching sight of him when he is still a long way off and running out to meet him (Lk 15:20). As Tito Colliander puts it, "If we take one step towards the Lord, He takes ten towards us." That is precisely what we experience in Confession. In common with all the sacraments, Confession involves a joint divine-human action, in which there is found a convergence and "cooperation" between God's grace and our free will. Both are necessary; but what God does is incomparably the more important.