



St. Michael the Archangel Eastern Orthodox Mission

Newsletter December 2009

**Christ is in our midst!
He is and ever shall be!**

Divine Liturgy 10:00 A.M.

“The Lord is everything to me: He is the strength of my heart, and the light of my intellect. He inclines my heart to everything good; He strengthens it; He also gives me good thoughts; He is my rest and my joy; His my faith, hope and love; He is my food and drink, my raiment, my hope and love; As a mother is everything to her infant, so likewise the Lord is everything to me, when I yield myself completely to Him. “

– St. John of Kronstadt

Important Upcoming Church Dates:

- Dec. 13th – St. Andrew the Apostle.
5:00 pm – **Dinner at Landry’s** and about 6:30 drive thru’ **Galaxy of Lights**. Let Joe or Helen Bergantz know if you plan to come.
- Dec. 17th – at 7:30 pm, the **Living Christmas Tree** performance at the Baptist Church. 14 tickets are available – see Hal or Viv Pastrick.
- Dec. 20th – St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan (397).
- Dec. 27th – Sunday of the Holy Forefathers (Ancestors of Christ).
- Jan. 3rd – Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Old Testament
- Jan. 6th – Eve of the Nativity – *strict fast*.
Holy Supper at 5:30 pm, followed by the **Vigil Service** at 7:00.
- Jan. 7th – **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.**
- Jan. 7th to Jan. 17th – Fast Free Period
- Jan. 19th – **THEOPHANY.**

Father Benedict’s contact info:

Home: 205-856-0154. Cell: 205-441-7118

Coffee Hour:

- | | |
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| Dec. 6 th – Pastrick | Jan 4 th – Bergantz |
| Dec. 13 th – Patterson | Jan 11 th – Buksa |
| Dec. 20 th – Platt | Jan 18 th – Demora |
| Dec. 27 th – Zarzaur | Jan 25 th – Ellis |

If you will be unable to serve coffee hour on your Sunday, please make arrangements to switch with another family. Thanks!

December Birthdays:

God Grant Them Many Years!

- 11th – Ron Waskerwitz
- 12th – Pat Darzi
- 12th – Adam Zarzaur
- 14th – Elaine Katsaros
- 30th – Dave Branham

Church Cleaning:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Dec – Platt | Jan – Kaiser |
|-------------|--------------|
- This is your Church – help keep it clean!*

News Items? Please send church news items to the Newsletter editor Rick Kaiser at rkmk2001@bellsouth.net.

Prayer Requests: Please remember in your prayers: Child Jovana (2 years old – leukemia); Anna with child; Angela with child; Katarzyna Bazylewicz; Tatiana Kukhtareva; Mariam & Tom Calache; Mary Kochoff; Glenn Dengler (friend of Jokich family) and daughters Haley (7) and Nicole (3); Dessie Jokich (mother of Mike Jokich); Sandy & Roger Ellis; Daniel Ellis (brother of Roger); Ted Gulas; Edythe Hales; Markela Hatzakis; Brian Jokich; Elena Meagher and her son Igor; Daniel & Anne Kobasa (parents of H. Bergantz); Rhonda Lovette; Tim & Ron Waskerwitz; Evangeline Pamfilis; Pat Darzy; Mary Zarzaur; Fryne McCreary; and Natalie (niece of Rick Kaiser).

For the Departed: His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia – May his memory be eternal.

Please Note: At the September Parish Council meeting, the council discussed how to best serve strangers who come to us asking for help. The Council decided that it was best to give those strangers the material thing they need instead of cash. We do not want to feed someone's addictions by giving them cash, so the council has purchased gift cards to have on hand for these occasions. If a stranger approaches you at church wanting money for food or gas, then please let a council member know so that we can give them a gift card. Fr. Benedict should be contacted concerning those who come to us with greater needs.

A Poem about Heaven

I was shocked, confused,
bewildered

As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
Nor the lights or its décor.

But it was the folks in heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp –
The thieves, the liars, the sinners,
The alcoholics and the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh
grade
Who swiped my lunch money
twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor
Who never said anything nice.

Herb, who I always thought
Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly well.

I asked Jesus, "What's the deal?
I would love to hear Your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here?
God must've made a mistake.

"And why is everyone so quiet,
So somber – give me a clue."
"Hush, child," He said, "they're all in
shock.
No one thought they'd be seeing
you."

Many people want to serve God, but only as advisers.

Flabby with Small Passions

[In C.S. Lewis' book, *The Screwtape Letters*] Screwtape reveals the Enemy's ploy – first make humans flabby, with small passions and desires, then offer a sop to those diminished passions so that their experience is one of contentment. They know nothing of great joy or great sorrow. They are merely *nice*.

Christianity has come to the point where we believe that there is no higher aspiration for the human soul *than to be nice*. We are producing a generation of men and women whose greatest virtue is that they don't offend anyone. Then we wonder why there is not more passion for Christ. How can we hunger and thirst after righteousness if we have ceased hungering and thirsting altogether?

As Lewis said, "We castrate the gelding and bid him be fruitful."

The greatest enemy of holiness is not passion. It is apathy. Look at Jesus. He was no milksop. His life was charged with passion. After He drove the crooks from the Temple, "His disciples remembered that it is written, "Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17). This isn't quite the picture we have in Sunday school, Jesus with a lamb and a child or two, looking for all the world like Mr. Rogers with a beard, the world's nicest guy. He was something far more powerful. He was holy.

(John Eldridge, Ransomed Heart Podcast)

We were saddened to hear news of the repose of His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia on Sunday, November 17. Below is a message about Patriarch Pavle from Fr. Demetrios Carellas of Saxonburg, Pennsylvania, who is the chaplain at the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery there:

"The memory of the righteous man calls forth for praises, and the blessing of the Lord is upon his head." [Proverbs 10:7]

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Early this morning, our Lord Jesus Christ called the soul of His true servant, PAVLE, Patriarch of Serbia, into His Kingdom. As I was reading names during the Proskomidi for the Holy Liturgy, one of the sisters brought me a little note as to His Holiness having fallen asleep.

At first I was startled by the news. I had only met this holy Hierarch once, but he made an everlasting impact on my life. As I read the Holy Gospel of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, I could not hold back the tears; once I came to the Lord describing how the Samaritan had deep compassion of the wounded man, and how he took him the Inn and placed him in the care of the Innkeeper. St. John Chrysostomos tells us that the Inn is the Church, and the Innkeeper represents the Holy Bishops. Indeed, my brothers and Sisters in Christ, Patriarch Pavle is a living icon of the Christ-like Innkeeper, who cares for all the wounded souls in need of healing and forgiveness.

On July 22, 2001, I had the sacred honor to co-celebrate the Holy Liturgy with Patriarch Pavle, when he made a visit to Pittsburgh. Never before have I met a Hierarch so totally focused on worshipping the Holy Liturgy! It was as if I were in the presence of Christ Himself! When, during the Great Entrance, and the serving priests were assigned to carry the miters of the several Hierarchs, this sinful priest rushed to grab the one of the holy Patriarch. I cannot describe in words what joyful sadness I experienced within my heart: joy, because I held the crown of a saintly Bishop; sorrow, because of the realization that I was filled with sin and unworthy to have literally seized His Holiness' Miter from the Holy Altar Table.

At the end of the Holy Liturgy, His Holiness offered a homily in Serbian. Although



I have absolutely no knowledge of the Serbian language, the Patriarch's words caused spontaneous tears to flow from my eyes to such a great extent that I began to sob! I know that those Spirit-filled words, which were totally unintelligible to my brain, brought healing and living Water into my wounded and parched soul!

During the meal that followed, I went up to His Holiness (who has a Theological Degree from the University of Thessalonica in Greece) to greet him on my Spiritual Father, Geronda Ephraim, and Gerondissa Theophano and her Sisterhood. After blessing me, His Holiness patted my sinful head; and my heart overflowed with joy!

I think that one of the main reasons that I wept during today's Gospel, was from recalling a story that someone had recently told me --- an event in which the Samaritan's holy compassion was incarnated by the words and actions of His Holiness. When he was the Bishop of Kosovo, he was brutally and severely beaten by a young Muslim man. So intense was this beating, that the frail Bishop almost died; and was in the Hospital for a few months. Upon his dismissal from the Hospital, the then Bishop Pavle went to the prison where the young man was incarcerated. He told the one who

had almost killed him that he felt he needed to go home to his parents; because they needed him!

Then he called the warden of the prison and demanded the young man's release. When the warden refused, Bishop Pavle told him, "I have nothing against this young man; and I will not speak against him. Therefore, you must release him now!"

What true Christ-like love, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ --- love which bore a very special fruit: the young man was soon Baptized into the Orthodox Faith!

From that glorious day in the Summer of 2001, I have entreated the Patriarch's holy prayers everyday! Now that his soul is in Paradise, may our All-Merciful Lord Jesus grant him the grace to be His Good Samaritan to all of us --- healing the wounds in our souls, and giving us the grace to - at least in some small way - become vessels of compassion to our wounded brothers and sisters.

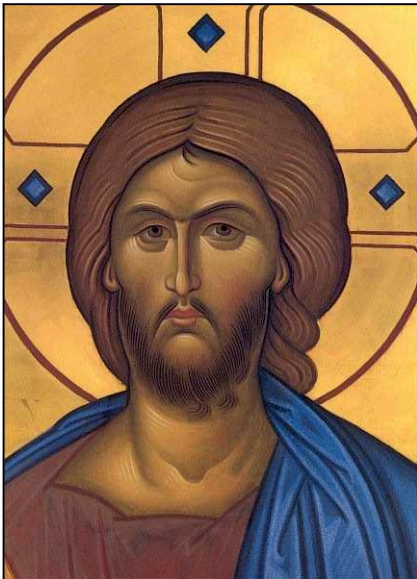
BLESSED PATRIARCH PAVLE, PRAY FOR US!

Sinful priest, +Demetrios

Don't Tarry . . .

One of my professors at seminary said to us in class one day, "When you wake up in the mornings, if you are not giddy and don't sprint to the chapel to see Christ every morning, you might want to see the registrar about getting a refund." **We should be excited about encountering Christ every Sunday morning, and not tarry . . .**

Fr. Elias Stevens, Mobile, AL



*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
have mercy on me, a sinner.*