

# ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

Vol. 4 No. 11.5

ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH

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NOVEMBER 29, 2015

27TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. 8TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

HOLY APOSTLE & EVANGELIST MATTHEW

## PARISH CALENDAR

Sun., Nov. 29 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke. *Holy Apostle Matthew*  
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets  
Wed., Dec. 2 Prophet Obadiah  
8:00 AM *Pirohi Prep*  
Thu., Dec. 3 Monk Gregory the Decapolite  
8:00 AM *Pirohi Making*  
FRI., DEC. 4 ENTRANCE OF HOLY MARY THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE.  
9:00 AM Divine Liturgy – pp 118–122  
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM *Pirohi Sale*.  
Sun., Dec. 6 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke. Within the Feast of the Entrance. Bishops Amphilochius & Gregory.  
8:45 – 9:15 AM Confessions  
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets

## FEASTING...

The next Feast Day is the commemoration of Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonder-worker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycea, Dec. 19, patron of our parish.

## ...AND FASTING

**Filipovka (Philip's Fast, or Christmas Lent)** begins on Saturday, November 15/28 and goes until Christmas Eve, Dec. 24/Jan. 6. It is called Philip's Fast because it begins the day after the Feast of St. Philip

the Apostle on November 14/27.

- The **Traditional Fast** requires fasting from meat, eggs, dairy products, fish, oil, and wine. Fish, wine and oil are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, and oil and wine are allowed on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The fasting rules permit fish, and/or wine and oil on certain feast days that occur during the course of the fast: Evangelist Matthew (Nov. 16/29), Apostle Andrew (Nov. 30/Dec. 13), Great-martyr Barbara (Dec. 4/17), St. Nicholas (Dec. 6/19), St. Spiridon and St. Herman (Dec. 12/25), St. Ignatius (Dec. 20/Jan. 2), etc. There is no fast on the Feast of the Entrance (Nov. 21/Dec. 4). The Nativity Fast is not as severe as Great Lent or the Dormition Fast.
- As always, persons who are ill, the very young or elderly, and pregnant and nursing mothers are exempt from fasting. Each individual is expected to confer with their confessor regarding any exemptions from the fasting rules, but should never place themselves in physical danger.
- The MINIMUM Diocesan Rule is no meat on Wednesdays and Fridays. All are encouraged and expected to do more than the minimum.
- **CHRISTMASEVE** is a Day of *Fasting from Meat and Dairy* in preparation for the celebration of the Birth of Our Lord – this is why it is called the

“Paramony,” a word which means “Preparation. On this day no solid food should be eaten until the first star is seen in the evening sky. That’s why the *Vilija* or *Holy Supper* traditionally begins when the first star is seen.

- No dispensation has been granted from fasting on Dec. 24, 25, 31, or Jan. 1 (civil calendar).

**Confessions:** All are reminded that fasting from food goes hand-in-hand with fasting from sin. This is why the Church encourages us to receive the Holy Mystery of Confession is given during the Christmas Fast period. During the Christmas Fast, Confessions are scheduled for Sunday morning 8:45 – 9:15.

**Almsgiving:** Also, giving to the poor and needy is the flip side of fasting. The parish offers opportunities to fulfill this duty. See below.

### PEOPLE STUFF

*Please remember in your prayers:*

*Deceased:* Edward Hawley. Margie Pecuch.

*Living:* Fr. George Dursa. Fr. Donald Valasek. Stephanie Bonk. Owen Bonn. Gloria Bracey. Bob Chalk. Susan Danchak. Ricky, Rick & Sarah. Michael Danchak. Jada Eiden. Tammy Hall. Heather Harris. Robert Hawley. Lorraine Kacaba. Mary Kneiss. Anna Mae Kuklis. John Lange. Dee Lositski. Peggy Majcher. Rose Markiewicz. Dolores Naglak. Theresa Niester. Mary Phillips. John Polanichka. Karen Rolka. JoyAnn Scarnato. Amy Shimo. Faye Snell. Marion Sosnowski. Russell Spilka. Jeff Thomas. Ann Marie Tigue. Gary Wassel.

*At Home:* Michael Andreosky. Elizabeth Basalyga. George & Anna Senich.

*Assisted Living Homes:* Julie Roberts. Kathryn Stocoski.

*Eternal Light:* Memory of Tammy Lash by the Bonk family.

### PARISH STUFF

**Please welcome Fr. Myron Oryhon.** Fr. Myron is a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, recently retired and living in the area. We (the local clergy) are very happy to have him available and willing to help out!

**Fr. Nik** will be out of town until tomorrow morning. If there is an emergency, please call Fr. Mark Leasure at 570-562-1170. You will also be able to reach Fr.

Nik on his cell phone.

**ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION!** Sunday, December 20! Divine Liturgy will be celebrated later that day. Details coming soon. Save the date!

**Stewardship Workshop Saturday, January 16.** Two Sobors ago, the diocese implemented a plan to develop and encourage a Stewardship Program on both the Diocesan level and the Parish level. Over the past few years, members of the Diocesan Stewardship Committee have been invited to parishes to explain and discuss what stewardship is, what it means, and what it means (hopefully) to you.

Instead of each of the parishes of the Pocono Deanery setting up their own workshop date, one Stewardship Workshop has been scheduled for all to attend. This is the letter of invitation:

YOUR GIFTS TO GOD AND HIS CHURCH	
	Nov. 22, 2015
\$460.00	General Collection
250.00	Heat Offering
81.00	7 Day Light
1775.00	Pirohi Sale
11.00	Holy Days
6.00	Taper Candles
153.00	Maintenance & Repairs
7.00	Eternal Light
50.00	Christmas Flowers
<b>\$2,793.00</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Renovation Fund to date: \$1000.</i>	

**Stewardship Workshop for the Pocono Deanery:** Dear Father Nicholas and Parishioners of St. Nicholas's, I would like to invite you to a Stewardship Workshop to be held at St. George's Orthodox Church (Taylor, PA) on January 16, 2016. Attendance is free, and the workshop is open to all clergy and parishioners in the Pocono Deanery. (Stewardship coordinators are especially encouraged to attend.) The workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m., and a lunch will be provided.

The workshop will give attendees a greater understanding of what Stewardship means for Orthodoxy, and ways that it can be incorporated into our churches. Attendees are asked to RSVP by December 26th.

For those persons interested in attending, I may be

contacted by phone (570-430-6749) or by e-mail at [michael.shimko@me.com](mailto:michael.shimko@me.com). Thank you. Sincerely, Michael Shimko

All members of the parish are encouraged to attend (free lunch!). This is an issue that affects all Orthodox Christians. Hopefully, everyone in the parish will understand and make their participation in the life of parish one which comes out of this Stewardship model.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

**A COLLECTION FOR ONE OF OUR OWN! On Sunday, December 6 at Divine Liturgy.** Many of you know that Sue Danchak suffered a major stroke a couple of months ago. She is, by the grace of God, slowly recovering and is currently in residence at Allied Rehab on Morgan Highway. Nevertheless, Sue's condition and her extended stay in hospital and now in rehab have placed a serious strain on Sue, her family and her finances.

All those present at the Annual Parish meeting voted to take up a collection on Sue's behalf on Sunday, December 6. We ask everyone to give generously to this collection, to help one of our own parishioners who is in serious need. Whatever we collect will go directly to Sue to help her defray her ongoing expenses, medical and otherwise.

We ask everyone to continue to keep Sue in your prayers. She has repeatedly told me how much she misses church: the prayer, the Divine Liturgy and all of you people. We hope that Sue will recover soon and be able to join us here in the church in prayer. Many years!

### Christmas Gift Tree for U.S. Veterans:

There are still gift stars available on the Veterans' Tree in the Church Hall. Please stop in and select a star. Make a happier Christmas for a veteran who bravely faced danger to preserve the freedom that we all everyday enjoy. Let them know that we are thinking about them and thanking them for their service especially during these turbulent times.

How? Parishioners can select a veteran star, with a name and wish list from the tree. The Center requested that the gifts be wrapped with the Veteran's Star attached to the wrapping.

Please return the gifts to the Church Hall by Sunday, December 13th. Remembering our veterans during the Christmas season is a way of thanking them

for their service to our country.

**Breadbasket of NEPA:** The collection bins are in the hall and filling up again! Please help support this ongoing charity by bringing in canned goods and dry goods to donate to those who need our help!

### RENOVATIONS PLANNED!

The Rectory and the Parish Hall both are in need of some serious repairs and renovations. At the October meeting, the Parish Board voted to accept a bid from S&H Construction Co., to do the following work:

#### Church Hall

Replace *Front Double Doors* and *Basement Door* at the bottom of the stairs. Paint *all exterior doors*. **Total cost: \$1644.**

*On hold* until funds are available: Painting of the *banquet hall* and *hallway*. Refinish the *wood floor*.

#### Rectory

Paint *all interior*. Refinish *wood floors on first floor, stairs and upstairs hall*. Install *paddle fan* in living room. **Total cost: \$4636.**

*On hold* unless funds are donated: replace *all vinyl shutters*, cost \$1128. We have an anonymous donor who will cover half the cost if the other half is also donated by parishioners.

If anyone wishes to donate toward any of these projects, please see Nick Polanichka or send your donation to the rectory.

## PARISH FUND RAISERS

**PIROHI SALE THIS WEEK!!!** We'll be working Wed, Dec. 2 and Thu., Dec. 3. Both days we will start around 8 AM. Only one more after this for the Fall Season!!! Yay!

**Christmas Bake Sale!** *Friday, Dec. 18, 10 AM – 4 PM.* As in the past few years, we will be holding a Bake Sale in conjunction with the last Pirohi Sale of the Season. We are asking all our parishioners to donate items for the Sale. They don't have to be Cookies; all donations accepted. A Christmas-y theme would be nice but not necessary.

Please contact Carol Pugh to let her know what you are planning on bringing: 570-489-2321 or [toots638@comcast.net](mailto:toots638@comcast.net).

### FROM THE DIOCESE & OTHER STUFF

**Advent Food Sale!** All Saints Orthodox Church 211 Willow Avenue 01yphant, PA 18447. Friday, Dec. 4,

2015 Noon - 5 pm. Pierogies: prepared-butter & onions. ALSO Pierogie: frozen by the dozen. Cabbage & Noodles: Bowl or Quart. Clam Chowder: Bowl or Quart. *Advanced orders are recommended!* To place an order, call 570-383-0785 or 570-561-8082. Thank You for your patronage!

INTERNATIONAL DINNER CLUB - St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church, 320 Mifflin Ave., Scranton, Pa. is having a Christmas Dinner on Thursday, December 10, 2015. This holiday meal is only \$20.00 per person. Seatings are at 5:30 and 6:30 and reservations can be made by calling 570-343-5151 before December 8th. The menu will start with a French Onion Tart (Caramelized onions and Gruyere Cheese in a Puffy Pastry Shell topped with Baby Greens in a Champagne Vinaigrette). The entree will be a Whiskey Glazed Stuffed Pork Tenderloin served with Maple Duchess Sweet Potato and Roasted Brussel Sprouts with Pecans, Cranberries and Bacon. The dessert will be a Red Wine Poached Pear served on a slice of Gingerbread Pound Cake and finished with Honey Mascarpone. Each meal will also be served with our own Homemade Orange Cranberry bread. Coffee, tea or soda is included and a cash bar is available. Call today for this wonderful holiday meal!

## APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST MATTHEW

November 16/29

The Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, was also named Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27); he was one of the Twelve Apostles (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:45; Acts 1:13), and was brother of the Apostle James Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). He was a publican, or tax-collector for Rome, in a time when the Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire. He lived in the Galilean city of Capernaum. When Matthew heard the voice of Jesus Christ: "Come, follow Me" (Mt. 9:9), left everything and followed the Savior. Christ and His disciples did not refuse Matthew's invitation and they visited his house, where they shared table with the publican's friends and acquaintances. Like the host, they were also publicans and known sinners. This event disturbed the pharisees and scribes a great deal.

Publicans who collected taxes from their countrymen did this with great profit for themselves. Usually greedy and cruel people, the Jews considered them pernicious betrayers of their country and religion. The word "publican" for the Jews had the connotation of "public sinner" and "idol-worshipper."

To even speak with a tax-collector was considered a sin, and to associate with one was defilement. But the Jewish teachers were not able to comprehend that the Lord had "come to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mt. 9:13).

Matthew, acknowledging his sinfulness, repaid fourfold anyone he had cheated, and he distributed his remaining possessions to the poor, and he followed after Christ with the other apostles. St Matthew was attentive to the instructions of the Divine Teacher, he beheld His innumerable miracles, he went together with the Twelve Apostles preaching to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 10:6). He was a witness to the suffering, death, and Resurrection of the Savior, and of His glorious Ascension into Heaven.

Having received the grace of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, St Matthew preached in Palestine for several years. At the request of the Jewish converts at Jerusalem, the holy Apostle Matthew wrote his Gospel describing the earthly life of the Savior, before leaving to preach the Gospel in faraway lands.

In the order of the books of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew comes first. Palestine is said to be the place where the Gospel was written. St Matthew wrote in Aramaic, and then it was translated into Greek. The Aramaic text has not survived, but many of the linguistic and cultural-historical peculiarities of the Greek translation give indications of it.

The Apostle Matthew preached among people who were awaiting the Messiah. His Gospel manifests itself as a vivid proof that Jesus Christ is the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and that there would not be another (Mt. 11:3).

The preaching and deeds of the Savior are presented by the evangelist in three divisions, constituting three aspects of the service of the Messiah: as Prophet and Law-Giver (Ch. 5-7), Lord over the world both visible and invisible (Ch. 8-25), and finally as High Priest offered as Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind (Ch. 26-27).

The theological content of the Gospel, besides the Christological themes, includes also the teaching about the Kingdom of God and about the Church, which the Lord sets forth in parables about the inner preparation for entering into the Kingdom (Ch. 5-7), about the worthiness of servers of the Church in the

world (Ch. 10-11), about the signs of the Kingdom and its growth in the souls of mankind (Ch. 13), about the humility and simplicity of the inheritors of the Kingdom (Mt. 18:1-35; 19:13-30; 20:1-16; 25-27; 23:1-28), and about the eschatological revelations of the Kingdom in the Second Coming of Christ within the daily spiritual life of the Church (Ch. 24-25).

The Kingdom of Heaven and the Church are closely interconnected in the spiritual experience of Christianity: the Church is the historical embodiment of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, and the Kingdom of Heaven is the Church of Christ in its eschatological perfection (Mt. 16:18-19; 28:18-20).

The holy Apostle brought the Gospel of Christ to Syria, Media, Persia, Parthia, and finishing his preaching in Ethiopia with a martyr's death. This land was inhabited by tribes of cannibals with primitive customs and beliefs. The holy Apostle Matthew converted some of the idol-worshippers to faith in Christ. He founded the Church and built a temple in the city of Mirmena, establishing there his companion Platon as bishop.

When the holy apostle was fervently entreating God for the conversion of the Ethiopians the Lord Himself appeared to him in the form of a youth. He gave him a staff, and commanded him to plant it at the doors of the church. The Lord said that a tree would grow from this staff and it would bear fruit, and from its roots would flow a stream of water. When the Ethiopians washed themselves in the water and ate the fruit, they lost their wild ways and became gentle and good.

When the holy apostle carried the staff towards the church, he was met by the wife and son of the ruler of the land, Fulvian, who were afflicted by unclean spirits. In the Name of Christ the holy apostle healed them. This miracle converted a number of the pagans to the Lord. But the ruler did not want his subjects to become Christians and cease worshipping the pagan gods. He accused the apostle of sorcery and gave orders to execute him.

They put St Matthew head downwards, piled up brushwood and ignited it. When the fire flared up, everyone then saw that the fire did not harm St Matthew. Then Fulvian gave orders to add more wood to the fire, and frenzied with boldness, he commanded to set up twelve idols around the fire. But the flames melted the idols and flared up toward Fulvian. The

frightened Ethiopian turned to the saint with an entreaty for mercy, and by the prayer of the martyr the flame went out. The body of the holy apostle remained unharmed, and he departed to the Lord.

The ruler Fulvian deeply repented of his deed, but still he had doubts. By his command, they put the body of St Matthew into an iron coffin and threw it into the sea. In doing this Fulvian said that if the God of Matthew would preserve the body of the apostle in the water as He preserved him in the fire, then this would be proper reason to worship this One True God.

That night the Apostle Matthew appeared to Bishop Platon in a dream, and commanded him to go with clergy to the shore of the sea and to find his body there. The righteous Fulvian and his retinue went with the bishop to the shore of the sea. The coffin carried by the waves was taken to the church built by the apostle. Then Fulvian begged forgiveness of the holy Apostle Matthew, after which Bishop Platon baptized him, giving him the name Matthew in obedience to a command of God.

Soon St Fulvian-Matthew abdicated his rule and became a presbyter. Upon the death of Bishop Platon, the Apostle Matthew appeared to him and exhorted him to head the Ethiopian Church. Having become a bishop, St Fulvian-Matthew toiled at preaching the Word of God, continuing the work of his heavenly patron.

## GREAT MARTYR CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

November 24/December 7

The Holy Great Martyr Catherine was the daughter of Constus, the governor of Alexandrian Egypt during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-313). Living in the capital, the center of Hellenistic knowledge, and possessed of a rare beauty and intellect, Catherine received an excellent education, studying the works of the greatest philosophers and teachers of antiquity. Young men from the most worthy families of the empire sought the hand of the beautiful Catherine, but she was not interested in any of them. She told her parents that she would enter into marriage only with someone who surpassed her in nobility, wealth, comeliness and wisdom.

Catherine's mother, a secret Christian, sent her to her own spiritual Father, a saintly Elder living in a

cave outside the city, for advice. After listening to Catherine, the Elder said that he knew of a Youth who surpassed her in everything. "His countenance is more radiant than the shining of the sun, and all of creation is governed by His wisdom. His riches are given to all the nations of the world, yet they never diminish. His compassion is unequalled."

This description of the Heavenly Bridegroom produced in the soul of the holy maiden an ardent desire to see Him. "If you do as I tell you," said the monk, "you will gaze upon the countenance of this illustrious man." In parting, the Elder handed Catherine an icon of the Theotokos with the divine Child Jesus on Her arm and told her to pray with faith to the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of the Heavenly Bridegroom, and She would hear Catherine and grant her heart's desire.

Catherine prayed all night and was permitted to see the Most Holy Virgin, Who said Her Divine Son, "Behold Thy handmaiden Catherine, how fair and virtuous she is." But the Child turned His face away from her saying, "No, she is ugly and unbelieving. She is a foolish pauper, and I cannot bear to look at her until she forsakes her impiety."

Catherine returned again to the Elder deeply saddened, and told him what she had seen in the dream. He lovingly received her, instructed her in the faith of Christ, admonished her to preserve her purity and integrity and to pray unceasingly. She then received the Mystery of holy Baptism from him. Again St Catherine had a vision of the Most Holy Theotokos with Her Child. Now the Lord looked tenderly at her and gave her a beautiful ring, a wondrous token of her betrothal to the Heavenly Bridegroom (This ring is still on her hand).

At that time the emperor Maximian was in Alexandria for a pagan festival. Therefore, the celebration was especially splendid and crowded. The cries of the sacrificial animals, the smoke and the smell of the sacrifices, the endless blazing of fires, and the bustling crowds at the arenas defiled the city of Alexandria. Human victims also were brought, the confessors of Christ, those who would not deny Him under torture. They were condemned to death in the fire. The saint's love for the Christian martyrs and her fervent desire to ease their sufferings compelled Catherine to speak to the pagan priest and to the emperor Maximian.

Introducing herself, the saint confessed her faith in the One True God and with wisdom exposed the errors

of the pagans. The beauty of the maiden captivated the emperor. In order to convince her and to show the superiority of pagan wisdom, the emperor ordered fifty of the most learned philosophers and rhetoricians of the Empire to dispute with her, but the saint got the better of the wise men, so that they came to believe in Christ themselves. St Catherine made the Sign of the Cross over the martyrs, and they bravely accepted death for Christ and were burned alive by order of the emperor.

Maximian, no longer hoping to convince the saint, tried to entice her with the promise of riches and fame. Receiving an angry refusal, the emperor gave orders to subject the saint to terrible tortures and then throw her in prison. The Empress Augusta, who had heard much about the saint, wanted to see her. She prevailed upon the military commander Porphyrius to accompany her to the prison with a detachment of soldiers. The empress was impressed by the strong spirit of St Catherine, whose face was radiant with divine grace. The holy martyr explained the Christian teaching to them, and they were converted to Christ.

On the following day they again brought the martyr to the judgment court where, under the threat of being broken on the wheel, they urged that she renounce the Christian Faith and offer sacrifice to the gods. The saint steadfastly confessed Christ and she herself approached the wheels; but an angel smashed the instruments of execution, which shattered into pieces with many pagans standing nearby.

Having beheld this wonder, the Empress Augusta and the imperial courtier Porphyrius with 200 soldiers confessed their faith in Christ in front of everyone, and they were beheaded. Maximian again tried to entice the holy martyr, proposing marriage to her, and again he was refused. St Catherine firmly confessed her fidelity to the heavenly Bridegroom Christ, and with a prayer to Him she herself lay her head on the block beneath the executioner's sword.

The relics of St Catherine were taken by the angels to Mount Sinai. In the sixth century,, the venerable head and left hand of the holy martyr were found through a revelation and transferred with honor to a newly-constructed church of the Sinai monastery, built by the holy Emperor Justinian (November 14).

St Catherine is called upon for relief and assistance during a difficult childbirth. Pilgrims to her monastery on Mt Sinai are given souvenir rings as a remembrance of their visit.