To the Protopresbyterate, the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, and the Pious Faithful of this God-Beloved Diocese:

Christ is Baptized!
In the Jordan!
Christos Krescajetsja!
Vo Jordani!

When our Lord was immersed into the waters of the Jordan River by the Forerunner, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove as a sign for all to see, and the Father’s voice rang out for all to hear, “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased”.

Thus did God reveal for the first time clearly to the understanding of man that His Nature is Triune. He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is Holy God, Holy Mighty and Holy Immortal.

And in that moment of revelation, which was the fulfillment of all prophecy and all the hopes and needs of man, at the very instant of the Theophany of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ the Son of God, completely God and completely Man, having two natures without confusion and division — at that Proclamation of the Trinity, this Son of God and Son of Man descended into the waters of the Jordan.

At His Nativity, as the Second Adam, He brought the restoration of human nature into the world, though He was hidden by the cave of the earth and shrouded in the obscurity of childhood. But at the Theophany, and at His historic Baptism, Jesus Christ descended into the waters not for repentance, because there was no need of change and transformation in His Person.

No. Instead, He descended into the waters of the Jordan to transform the Jordan itself. He descended into the Jordan River to change the waters from a sign of repentance to the sacramental virtue of renewal. He Who had no need to repent, to change, to turn away from sin since He had no sin — this same Jesus Christ, Son of God, Who turned the water into wine, turned these very waters of Baptism into the Sacrament of Salvation!

It was at Holy Theophany that He did this, at the beginning of His three-year Gospel ministry. Here was the beginning of the immortal ministry of Christ and His Church. Here was the spilling out, the gushing forth, of the flood of God’s redemptive love for mankind.

Here was the invasion of man’s dark history by the new River of Eternal Life. Here was the reversal of the Flood of Noah that brought judgment and death: this Flood of Theophany was the new latter rain, the spring-tide showers of salvation, joy, peace and the loving grace of the Holy Trinity.

Divine Grace, that which always fills the emptiness, that which always completes that which is lacking, is the Latter Rain of these Last Days. It is the latter rain that falls on the just and the unjust, the Grace of a Messiah Who came into the world not to judge the world, but to save and re-
T he far-reaching effect the com-
puter has had on our personal
lives is almost beyond comprehen-
sion. In addition to the immeasurable
wealth of information that is out
there for us to access, the computer
affords us the opportunity to do our
banking online, pay our bills, buy
stocks, make plane reservations, book
vacations, do our shopping—in some
cities you can even order your gro-
cerries online and have them delivered
to your door.

Yes, computers have made just about
everything in our lives easier to do. It
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deem. This is the water of eternal life that the Lord promised to the woman at the well, the water that gushes up from the Spirit in the soul, like a spring that shall never go dry. It gushes into the valleys of the shadow of death, and turns the desert into a garden, and makes the flowers bloom.

The River of Life descends from Theophany, and flows through the Apostolic Gospel that turned the world upside down. It flows through the Fathers of the Church, through persecutions and oppressions, through conversions of entire nations, and through the prayers of monastic fathers and mothers who prayed, who taught and who healed.

And it flows all the way from the Baptism of Jesus Christ into our midst at every ministration of Baptism, and at every supplication for Divine Mercy. For as it was once said of the Garden of Eden, so it is said of this God-saved Diocese: “and a river runs through it”, the River of Life that waters the world of man.

That River ran through the City of Kings - Constantinople - seventy years ago on September 18, 1938. On that day, Metropolitan Orestes of thrice-blessed memory was consecrated as our first Bishop. The following day — September 19 — His All-Holiness, the late Benjamin I, Ecumenical Patriarch, canonically established the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese by that name, sealed it and documented it for all time under Protocol number 1379.

And thus our community of congregations and families, priests and laity, were brought back into the healing stream of Orthodoxy. Once again, the Jordan of Theophany descended into our fellowship, into our ministry and into our hands.

As Ruling Metropolitan of the Diocese, I therefore hereby declare that, from this Day of Holy Theophany until the close of the calendar year 2008, there shall be joyous and solemn commemoration throughout the community of this Diocese, celebrating the Grace, Mercy, Life, and Peace received for seventy years from the benevolent Hand of the Lord.

During this Jubilee Year - the “acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:19) — we humbly bow in glad thanksgiving for every remembrance of Grace. We cling to the mystic cords of memory that connect us still to our ever-remembered first Father, Metropolitan Orestes, and our beloved Fathers in the Faith, our departed Bishops + Peter, + Methodios and + John. We remain true to the specific traditions of our forefathers in the Carpathian Mountains: we returned to Orthodoxy through the gate of the Mother Church, the See of Constantinople, retaining our Plain Chant and the ways of our first spiritual fathers.

We continue to cleave to our strands of remembrance that call to mind the courageous dedication of our pioneering priests, most now gone on to their eternal reward. We remember with loving edification the legacy of our steadfast laity who struggled for the life of this great communion of Orthodoxy.

Thus we bow in gratitude, but also in fervent supplication, that this Diocese will remain faithful to its first-calling....that this Diocese will grow in “the river runs through it”, the River of Life that waters the world of man.

The Retreat opened on Friday evening with the Akathist to St. John Chrysostom celebrated by His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas. Father Prepelka gave the first retreat presentation at the conclusion of the service. The following day, Father Prepelka celebrated Divine Liturgy in Christ the Saviour Cathedral.

Opening of Retreat

F
ollowing breakfast, His Eminence introduced the guest lecturer for the weekend: the Very Reverend Fr. Patrick H. Reardon. Father Reardon is the pastor of All Saints Antiochian Orthodox Church in Chicago, the Senior Editor of Touchstone Magazine and author of numerous books. Father Reardon made two presentations on Saturday, and was the homilist at the Cathedral parish’s Sunday Divine Liturgy. In his sermon, Father Reardon noted the admirable qualities of St. Nicholas, which included his generosity and constant kindness. He also pointed out, however, that St. Nicholas strictly followed Church doctrine; that he was a cleric who was solidly dogmatic and stern kindness. He also pointed out, however, that St. Nicholas strictly followed Church doctrine; that he was a cleric who was solidly dogmatic and that his compassionate and mercy-filled lifestyle empowered others to imitate the Lord in their own lives. Responses to the Sunday Liturgy were provided by the St. Nicholas Church Choir of Homestead, Pennsylvania, under the direction of Professor Andrew Talarovich.

St. Nicholas Banquet

Following Divine Liturgy, a festive St. Nicholas Banquet was held at the Christ the Saviour Cathedral Educational Center. Despite severe wintry weather, over 300 Cathedral parishioners were in attendance. Children were treated to a visit from St. Nicholas and the Homestead Choir presented “The Bethlehem’s Visit.” The Arrangements Committee for the banquet included: Susan Kalcik, Nicholas Bocher, Donna Zizan, Carol Devine and Julie Gilchrist. They were assisted by Educational Center Officers Gary Ernest and Donna Yarina.

Sincerely yours in the gladness of this Jubilee.

Metropolitan Nicholas
THE WEEK OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

One of the events that many of our parishes participate in their respective communities is the ecumenical prayer service marking the “Week of Christian Unity.” At the same time, many Orthodox pastors and churches remain aloof or are even openly critical of any participation or cooperation with non-Orthodox Christians. Some have even gone so far as to label “ecumenism” a modern heresy, to wit, “the belief that the Church of Christ is only now being formed through the Ecumenical Movement out of the many different churches.” To further substantiate their point, the critics of the “Pan-heresy of ecumenism” will cite chapter and verse of canons that forbid prayer with heretics and condemn any and all who are seen at ecumenical affairs. Their solution is to “wall themselves off” into a pure world of their own making.

In the ancient Church there existed a schismatic movement that also believed in “walling themselves off” from the rest of the Church and society. They were known as the Novatianists, named after their founder, Novatian.

The Novatianists, who otherwise were Orthodox in their beliefs, denied the possibility of penance after Baptism. They believed that those who had committed serious sins after Baptism should pray and live in repentance in the hope of God’s mercy, but they were unprepared to accept them into the Church as communicants again. They believed that their own purity took precedence over God’s mercy.

It is recorded that at the First Ecumenical Council the Novatian bishop, Aceius, explained this doctrine of purity to the Emperor Constantine when he inquired how their beliefs were different from the rest of the Church. The Emperor, probably with a laugh, responded by saying, “Plant a ladder here, Aceius, and climb up to heaven yourself!”

However, there is very often a great difference between the heretics of the ancient Church and the non-Orthodox Christian churches of today. The heretics of the past often denied the existence of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, or the reality of the Incarnation. The Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Unitarians and extremely liberal Protestant churches represent these groups today with whom an ecumenical relationship is simply not possible.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church and many “mainline” Protestant churches, such as the Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists, and others, all share in the Orthodox heritage that is preserved in the Ecumenical Councils concerning the Trinity, the Person of Jesus Christ, the Canon of the New Testament, the meaning and necessity baptism and a sacramental life and the possibility of penance after Baptism. They believed that those who had committed serious sins after Baptism should pray and live in repentance in the hope of God’s mercy.

How refreshing it is to discover people in the other Christian churches who practice the tradition of the Orthodox Church Fathers of actually reading the Scriptures. We all know that contemporary Orthodox Christians, including many clergy, show their great respect for the Bible by leaving it closed out of the many different churches. Their solution is to “wall themselves off” into a pure world of their own making.

Yes, I know well that Orthodoxy “is the faith that created the universe” as we proclaim every Orthodox Sunday. What can we possibly learn from the others? We can re-learn the practice of those aspects of our faith that we have often left “lying in the tomb of negligence.”

We all hear that Orthodoxy is the Church of the Bible; most Orthodox homes have a Bible in them. Certainly our worship is replete with quotes from the Bible, “more than any Protestant Sunday service,” according to one reviewer.

Many centuries ago St. Evagrios wrote, “May the rising sun find you with a Bible in your hand.” Closer to our own time St. John of Kronstadt tells us:

If you read worldly magazines and newspapers, and derive some profit from them, as a citizen, as a Christian, a member of a family, then you ought still more and still oftener to read the Scriptures. We all hear that Orthodoxy is the Church of the Bible; most Orthodox homes have a Bible in them. Certainly our worship is replete with quotes from the Bible, “more than any Protestant Sunday service,” according to one reviewer.

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Protocol Number 1379

The Most Esteemed Members of the Consistory of the Orthodox Carpatho-Russian Parishes in America, beloved Children in our Lord, Grace and Peace from God be with you.

We received through His Eminence the Archbishop of North and South America, Athenagoras, copies of the official minutes of the Clergy-Laity Assembly which took place in November 1937 in Pittsburgh comprised of the Carpatho-Russian Parishes which were separated from the Unia. In a meeting of the Holy and Sacred Synod, We read with particular joy from the minutes of your assembly the decision regarding your return to the bosom of the Holy Orthodox Church. Consequently, we have accepted the above mentioned Presbyter for the purpose of electing him as Bishop for the needs of the Carpatho-Russian Parishes entering the Holy Orthodox Church. Since these parishes requested him at the General Clergy-Laity Assembly which took place, he was elected a Bishop on the 16th of this month with our personal Patriarchal exhortation and permission by a canonical election of the Holy and Sacred Synod in the Venerable Patriarchal Temple of the Holy, Glorious, Great Martyr George the Tropaios, with the title of the ancient and glorious Diocese of Agathonikeia in the Metropolis of Philippopolis of the Most Holy Patriarchal and Ecumenical Throne. He was ordained in the Most Holy Patriarchal Temple by our direction by the Most Reverend Metropolitans Germanos of Sardis and Pisidia, Constantine of Eirinoupolis, and Dorotheos of Laodicea.

We announce these glad tidings by this Patriarchal letter to you of the Consistory of the Orthodox Carpatho-Russian Parishes in America and to all with our ecclesiastical and paternal congratulations, joyful events designed by God and desired and requested by you. We express hope that you will now organize and establish your Orthodox Church upon stable and canonical foundations under the zealous and prideful care of your Bishop, always working together in canonical unity with His Eminence the Archbishop who will always be willing to express his concern and love for you whenever the need arises. Together, then, go forth with understanding; develop and progress in works of faith and piety to the glory of Christ. This will bring joy to the Holy Orthodox Church and to us.

We, now, bestow upon all of you our Patriarchal and Pastoral wishes and blessings, praying always and in all things that the blessings of God, His grace and immeasurable mercy, be with you and with all the members of your Church.

September 19, 1938

BENJAMIN

Archbishop of Constantinople

The Ecumenical Patriarch

Editor's Note: Through the course of 2008 each issue of The Church Messenger will highlight important aspects of the history of our Diocese. This issue features the official proclamation of Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin, accepting our parishes into the fold of the Holy Orthodox Church and placed under his canonical protection.

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The Meeting of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple

The Creator of the Law, in fulfillment of the Law, was brought to the Temple and presented to the Lord, for the external aspect of this great event in the Gospel narrative was in conformity with the rules laid down in the Old Testament. The Lord said to Moses, Consecrate to Me all the first-born; whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast is Mine. And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of cattle. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem' (Ex. 13:1-2, 14-15).

And so Mary and Joseph came after forty days of purification to the Temple to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons (Luke 2:24). The original Old Testament prescription that the firstborn must be consecrated to the service of the Lord was now done by substitution: ...the first-born of man you shall redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts you shall redeem. And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary... (Num. 18:15-16). These five shekels evidently symbolized the coming redemption of us by the Savior His five wounds on the Cross.

The harsh way of the Cross, portent with profound significance, brought Son and Mother, the God-Man and she who is more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious, beyond compare, than the Seraphim, monthly to the Temple at Jerusalem, and the Liberator and Redeemer of the world was Himself redeemed for so trifling a sum. Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word (Luke 2:25-29).

This was the crossroads between the Old Testament and the New. St. Simeon symbolizes the departing Old Testament, exemplified by men of righteousness and prophets who in spite of all their doubts and searchings entertained the firmest faith in what was foretold of the promised salvation. The righteous Simeon took Him up in his arms, and the Old and New Testaments stood together: the Old, departing, held in its arms and blessed the New. This was unity and continuity, a direct link and a development: the Law and the promised manifestation of the Grace of God as His Only-Begotten Son, the Redeemer.

To Simeon the God-Receiver was granted more than had been granted to any other man before him: he held the Almighty in his arms, and to him were revealed both the Glory and the Way of the Cross of his God: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Thy people Israel. And His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:30-35). Thus, for the first time, the Most-Holy Mary was forewarned that there would be no end to the thorns and trials of her life, that her Son, while bringing light and spiritual renewal to all peoples, would Himself be so persecuted that a sword will pierce through your own soul also.

The Lord wished for moral harmony in spreading abroad this holy news, and so He wished a woman, too, to repeat what had been said by Simeon: And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the Temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of Him to all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:36-38).

Just as in Palestine in ancient times, we bring our children on the fortieth day to be presented to the Lord; but in contrast to the Israelites, we bring children of either sex. In the Presentation, Christ, the Firstborn of all the human race, Creator of the New Church and of the New Testament, filled the old rites with a new content. By bringing our children to church like the Most-Pure Virgin Mary, we bind them over to God. Baptized and sanctified by grace, our children, by being made members of the Church, take their first steps upon the way of grace and the way of the Cross that lies before those who would follow Christ.

So we must go out to meet Christ and receive Him, taking Him into the arms of our souls, begging leave for sin to depart from us that we may live our lives in peace and tranquility, free of the agitations of evil. St. Simeon gave us an example of how firmly to follow the path of a righteous life, filled with the expectation of a meeting with the Lord.
**Lives of the Saints**

**Father Philoumenos of Jacobs Well**

1913-1979

The life of Father Philoumenos is an example to us that martyrdom for Christ is not of the past from Roman or Communist times, but is a reality even in our own day. Father Philoumenos, an Orthodox monk, was brutally martyred in 1979 in Israel. His life is a reminder to us of the danger of being so devoted to our Faith, that we use it as a club or a weapon to attack and antagonize those who disagree with us. While Muslim fundamentalists receive most of the press regarding this, even Orthodox Christians can use their love of the calendar, canons, or concern with being correct to attack and antagonize those who do not measure up to their standards.

For priests, Father Philoumenos is an example of continuing in prayer regardless if there is a congregation to join us. While we priests are tempted to omit some of the services since no one will attend, he faithfully conducted the cycle of Vespers, Matins and Hours in remote locations with no one in attendance.

Father Philoumenos was born on the island of Cyprus on October 15, 1913, the twin brother of Father Elpidios, a monk of Mount Athos in Greece. At the age of 14 both of the brothers dedicated their lives to the service of Christ as monks, entering the ancient monastery of Stavrovouni, founded by the Empress St. Helen. Later, Father Elpidios left for Mount Athos while Father Philoumenos joined the monastic Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in 1934.

Arriving in Palestine, Father Philoumenos was concerned as he saw how the Orthodox Palestinian faithful were being spiritually neglected. He began the study of the Arabic language, becoming fluent in both speaking and writing. He discovered that many of the Orthodox Palestinian faithful were being spiritually neglected. He began the study of the Arabic language, becoming fluent in both speaking and writing. He discovered that many of the Orthodox Palestinian faithful were being spiritually neglected. He began the study of the Arabic language, becoming fluent in both speaking and writing. He discovered that many of the Orthodox Palestinian faithful were being spiritually neglected. He began the study of the Arabic language, becoming fluent in both speaking and writing. He discovered that many of the Orthodox Palestinian faithful were being spiritually neglected. He began the study of the Arabic language, becoming fluent in both speaking and writing.

When there were pilgrims for the Divine Liturgy and Vespers, he made the usual abridgements lest the service be too long and some be tempted to leave. Later on, privately, he would read every word that had not been chanted in church. Those who stayed with him for some time saw the copies of the church service books and noticed that the markups were always in place and the volumes never dusty, which earned the Divine Promise: “Well done good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over little things, I will set you over great things. Enter into the joy of the Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

The crowning moment of Father Philoumenos’ earthly pilgrimage came on November 29, 1979 at the shrine built on the site of Jacob’s Well. Father Philoumenos had been assigned as the guardian and keeper of this holy place, the very place where our Lord met the Samaritan Woman and offered her living water. The week before a group of fanatical Zionists came to the monastery at Jacob’s Well, claiming it as a Jewish holy place and demanding that all crosses and icons be removed. Father Philoumenos gently reminded them that the floor they were standing on had been built by the Emperor, St. Constantine, in 331 A.D. The shrine at Jacob’s Well had served as an Orthodox Christian holy place for sixteen centuries before the Israeli state was created, and had been in Samaritan hands before that. Several days later, during a rainstorm, a group broke into the shrine while the monk was already vested to celebrate Vespers. They chopped off the three fingers of his right hand, the fingers used to make the Sign of the Cross and cut his face with an axe in the form of a cross. The church and the holy things were all desecrated. No one was ever arrested.

Father Philoumenos’ body was buried on Mt. Zion, and when it was exhumed four years later, as is the custom among Greek monks, it was found to be substantially incorrupt. His relics rest in a glass shrine in the seminary chapel of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. His official glorification by the Patriarchate has not taken place in order to prevent further violence and unrest, but in the case of martyrs, no official canonization by the Church is needed. There can be no doubt as to the reason and circumstances of his death.

**Troparion**

At Jacob’s Well you were proved well named: loving Christ, confessing Him, pouring out your sacred blood. Being faithful in small things you were set over great. Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth, you are now Guardian of the Holy Places forever.

Very Rev. Fr. Edward Pehanich

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**Upcoming 2008 Trip**

Sponsored by St. Nicholas Orthodox Church (10th Street, NYC)

(Visit the proceeds will be going to the elevator fund)

**12 Night Greece & Eastern Mediterranean Cruise, departing from Rome, Italy**

Departure from USA: Sunday, August 3; Cruise - Monday, August 4- Saturday, August 16, 2008

Ship: Royal Caribbean - Legend of the Seas

Prices with airfare starting at: $3,450.53 per person (includes all taxes and gov’t fees)

Prices without airfare starting at: $1,878.03 per person

Deposit of $450/person required to guarantee price. Full refund will be given (if there is a need to cancel) by May 20, 2008

Contact: Stephanie Salony (908)284-0561 between 6-9 PM or via e-mail: stephanie.salony@patmedusa.net for additional details and to reserve your space.

**Metropolitan Recovering from Recent Surgery**

JOHNSTOWN, PA - The Chancery is pleased to report that His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas has recently undergone successful knee-replacement surgery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is now recuperating at his residence in Johnstown. Our Diocesan faithful are kindly asked to continue to remember His Eminence in their prayers during his period of recovery. Cards and best wishes may be sent to him at:

312 Garfield St.
Johnstown, PA 15906
JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA – Protopresbyter Frank P. Miloro, Dean of Christ the Saviour Cathedral, has announced that the Cathedral will undergo extensive interior renovation and re-decoration, and will be closed for public worship from January 13 through mid-April. Plans call for the Cathedral to re-open for Palm Sunday—April 20. For the next three months, all Divine Services will be celebrated in the lower level Cathedral Auditorium, which has temporarily been converted to worship space.

The renovation project includes complete interior painting of both levels of the Cathedral, in addition to refinishing the auditorium walls. The altars and other liturgical furnishings will be refinished. Wood wainscot will be replaced with porcelain tile throughout the church to complement the porcelain flooring. Wall and ceiling icons will be washed and reglazed, and the stained glass windows will be cleaned. Elias Painting and Church Decorating of Johnstown is the general contractor. Other work will include a new cross shrine of custom-carved resin icons that is being installed in front of the Cathedral. In addition, a mosaic Golgotha scene is being placed inside the main front portico of the church. Design and fabrication of this is by Figula Studios of Glen Hope, PA.

JOHNSTOWN, PA - Pictured are two of several Cathedral parishioners celebrating their 90th birthdays who attended the annual St. Nicholas Dinner. They are (left to right): Ann Evanisko, mother of Pani Connie Miloro, and Ann Grata.

NEW YORK, NY - St. Nicholas Church, 10th Street, NYC, held their annual Kermes this past November. The day’s festivities began with Metropolitan Nicholas celebrating a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Metropolitan Nicholas was greeted with the traditional gifts of bread and salt by Chairman of the Trustees, Robert Zizik. The Divine Liturgy was filled with the voices of the parishioners lead by Cantor Nicholas Timko. Following Liturgy parishioners and friends were treated to a spectacular luncheon prepared by the parish’s own George and Justina Chobor. After the luncheon everyone settled in for a wonderful program put on by the children of the parish and Vychodna Dolina. The show began with Nike Rael and Michael Salony performing on their guitars and singing. The children of the parish then shared a few encore performances from the talent show they had put on a few weeks earlier. Finally, the crowd was delighted by a performance by the children of the parish and Vychodna Dolina who traced the calendar year in a Carpatho-Rusyn village through song. They began by singing prayers of Theophany, through Puscana, into Lent, to the joys of Easter, through the Fall Harvest, ending at Christmas. The program was a delight to the ears, hearts and souls of each in attendance.

The beautiful interior of St. Nicholas of Myra Church is shown below, adorned with dozens of poinsettias for the Feast of the Nativity. Very Rev. Fr. John J. Beskid, pastor, is grateful to parishioner, Paul Sikoryak, Sr. for procuring the magnificent plants.
A Busy Fall at Saint John’s in Hawk Run!

HAWK RUN, PENNSYLVANIA – There has been much activity at St. John the Baptist Church in Hawk Run recently. After a highly successful Church Picnic in the Fall, a small group from the parish made an 11-day trip to Russia. On the trip, a new Plascanitsa was purchased for the church. Parishioners have begun to bowl together on the first Thursday of every month, with the Church School students having their own bowling outing on a November Sunday afternoon, with some 35 people participating. A new charitable organization has been formed in the parish: the St. Agape Society. Named after one of the daughters of St. Sophia, the group has already sponsored Fall projects. Prior to Thanksgiving, a food drive was organized for a local food pantry. In December, the members re-instituted the “giving tree” tradition in the parish. A small Christmas Tree was put up in the church hall, containing the names of some 27 needy individuals in the community. Parishioners were asked to select a name and purchase Christmas gifts for the person whose name was taken. This effort was coordinated through the YMCA. Pastor of St. John’s in Hawk Run is Father Peter Benyo.

HOMER CITY, PA - Recently a new bishop’s throne was blessed at SS Peter and Paul Church in Homer City. The new throne was hand made by John Charnego, son of Mike and Sheila Charnego of Homer City. The Ladies Altar Society graciously donated the money to cover the costs of making the throne.

HOBART, IN - Pictured are the children of Saint Nicholas Church, Hobart, IN, with Saint Nicholas during the annual Saint Nicholas Dinner, 2007. Pastor of the parish is Fr. Sergei Alekseev.

RAHWAY, NJ - His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas is pictured with New Jersey Deanery clergy at the ordination to the Diaconate of Sub-deacon Michael Rustick at St. John’s Church in Rahway.

AMBRIDGE, PA - Recently John and Kathryn Youhas of St. John’s Church in Ambridge, PA celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary. They are shown with their children, Protodeacon John Youhas and Bonnie and Ron Raible, and their pastor, Very Rev. Fr. Robert Prepelka.

JOHNSTOWN, PA - Children of the Intermediate Sunday School Class at Christ the Saviour Cathedral participate in the parish’s annual Christmas Pageant.
Memories of a Trip to Russia

By Father Peter Benyo

On October 1, 2007, I had the privilege of leading a trip to Russia for a small group of parishioners from St. John the Baptist Church in Hawk Run, Pennsylvania. The pilgrimage to some of the churches and monasteries there—as well as the unique opportunity to spend time with local Orthodox clergy and faithful in that region—gave me a multitude of memories that I would like to share with the readers of The Church Messenger.

Early Visitations

The first few days of our trip centered around visitations to the famous Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Lavra some 50 miles outside of Moscow. Father George Gulin, our guide and translator, received his theological training at the seminary associated with the monastery. The monastery was founded in the 14th century by St. Sergius of Radonezh. It encompasses some 24 acres and is, in effect, a walled fortress. The property includes 6 churches, numerous chapels, bell tower, monastic dwellings, religious and liturgical shops and a graduate academy for seminary students. Here in the Monastery Church of the Holy Trinity we had the spiritual privilege of viewing and venerating the relics of St. Sergius. A constant stream of worshipers comes here on a daily basis from 5:30 A.M. to 9 P.M. to pray before the body of this popular Russian Saint. While in the city of Sergiev Posad where the Lavra is located, we were dinner guests of Father Deacon Alexander and Vira. Their 9 children all expect to be priests and priest’s wives when they grow up.

The 7 Springs of St. Sergius

Located approximately a half hour into the countryside from Sergiev Posad are the “7 Springs of St. Sergius.” Our group had the opportunity to travel to this remote area, where St. Sergius lived for a period of time. Legend has it that no water was readily available in this area, but when the Saint prayed for relief, 7 springs sprung forth on a nearby hillside. Many miracles have been attributed to this water, and believers still come and immerse themselves in the frigid waters of the springs.

On to Moscow!

No trip to Russia would be complete without spending some time in Moscow! We visited the renowned Church of St. Basil in Red Square. This frequently photographed edifice is, in reality, several churches, with each multi-colored dome resting over a separate building. In Moscow, we also took time to be “typical tourists”—visiting the “Gum” department store and enjoying a lunch of pizza! We attended Vespers and Matins in the Church of Christ the Saviour. This enormous church was completely destroyed by Stalin and later rebuilt after the fall of Communism. The church can hold some 15,000 people—its iconostas and sanctuary, restored to its original look—gives the effect of being a “church within a church.” On Sunday morning, I was able to celebrate Divine Liturgy in a local village church. As is common in Russia, there was much “liturgical activity” following Divine Liturgy, with baptisms, a moleben and a parisaas all being celebrated concurrently on the 3 altars in the church. As is also common, we were asked to remain for a light meal at the parish hall after the completion of the services.

Patriarchal Liturgy

The next day was the spiritual highlight of our tour as the Feast Day of St. Sergius was celebrated in all of the monastery churches at the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra. We were able to attend a Divine Liturgy celebrated by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia. Also at the altar were Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria and All Africa as well as numerous other hierarchs. Two choirs antiphonally sang the responses to the Liturgy in the church, which was filled to capacity for the service. Two of our Hawk Run parishioners were blessed to receive Holy Communion from the hands of Patriarch Theodoros—all members of our group agreed that this was truly an experience they will never forget.

Returning home, we could not help but think of what a special opportunity this trip was. Not only were we able to see the grandeur and splendor of Holy Orthodoxy, and we also experienced its intimacy through our contact with the ordinary people there in a place where their Orthodox Faith is their greatest treasure and most-prized possession.

Historic Ordination in Rahway

RAHWAY, NEW JERSEY – On Saturday, December 22nd, parish history was made at St. John the Baptist Church in Rahway, NJ. On this day, Sub-deacon Michael Rustick was ordained to the Diaconate by His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas—the first ordination in the 92 years history of St. John’s!

Hierarchical Liturgy

Prior to the beginning of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, His Eminence was welcomed with the traditional gifts of bread and salt by George Kocan, Parish Vice President. Father Andrew Fetchina, Pastor, then presented the Metropolitan with the cross. Responses to the Liturgy were sung by the St. John the Baptist Church Choir of Perth Amboy. The choral group is under the supervision of Father Matthew Moriak, Father John Cmur and Protodeacon Gregory Benc.

Metropolitan Nicholas directed much of his homily to the newly ordained Deacon Michael, a vocation of the Rahway parish. “The role of a deacon is an important one in today’s Church,” the Hierarch began. “A deacon should not view his duties as simply being liturgical in nature. Always under the supervision of his parish priest and directly answerable to his bishop, a deacon should be expected to teach, to visit the sick, to work with the youth of the parish and to perform labors of outreach. The original 7 deacons of the early Church were selected to serve the basic needs of the faithful. Likewise, the deacons of today must never lose sight of their calling to special service.”

Luncheon

Following the Hierarchical Liturgy, St. John’s Hall was filled to capacity for a special luncheon honoring Deacon Michael. The meal was prepared by the women of the parish. Remarks were made by Paul Hanas, Parish President, who thanked the parishioners for all of their efforts in preparation for this special day. Deacon Michael offered an emotional “thank you” to everyone who had contributed to his spiritual growth and formation, leading him to the Holy Diaconate. For the past four years, Deacon Michael has attended classes in the Diocesan Diaconate Program, which are held at Christ the Saviour Seminary in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.
LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS - Over thirty people from across the Diocese gathered together in Lenox, Massachusetts for the longest running Diocesan Retreat. The Retreat, dedicated to St. Nectarios, met from Friday, November 7, to Monday, November 10. It was decided that the presentation would honor the 1600th Anniversary of the repose of St. John Chrysostom. Fr. Loposky’s presentation was entitled St. John Chrysostom: Martyr of the Pulpit.

Opening Presentation

Following a quiet evening of rekindling old friendships and finding new friends in the welcoming atmosphere of The Village Inn, everyone gathered on Saturday morning for a continental breakfast. After this, the faithful gathered for morning prayers and a welcome by the Very Reverend Fr. Luke Mihaly, host pastor of the Annual Retreat and Dean of the New England Deanery. Fr. Stephen Loposky, pastor of St. Mary’s parish in Corning, NY was introduced and gave his presentation. Fr. Loposky emphasized two points regarding St. John Chrysostom and preaching. One is the contempt of praise that anyone preaching should have. This means that when giving a sermon, the preacher must be focused on teaching the truth and not just what people want to hear. The sermons must be challenging to those listening. The point of the sermon is to teach the truth and not to focus on what the people are going to say or think about you after you preach. If the priest only preaches so he can hear how good he was, then the sermons will be of no benefit. The focus becomes on the one giving the sermon rather than on God or man’s relationship with God. As Fr. Stephen said: “. . . if the preacher does not have this contempt of praise, and rather looks to be praised for his sermons, it follows that he will eventually speak, not to profit his hearers, but simply to please them. If the pastor seeks praise for his sermons, the people will not be profited.”

Sunday Liturgy

On Sunday morning, Divine Liturgy was celebrated, with responses sung in our traditional Carpatho-Russian Plain Chant. A very enlightening and enjoyable weekend was sealed through the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. Following a hearty New England breakfast, good-byes mingled with tears and many smiles filled the inn as once again a successful weekend had come to an end in Lenox. Thanks are extended to Sally Husiak, the coordinator of the Annual Retreat.
Additional Contributions to the Saints Cyril and Methodios Church Endowment

Protopresbyter Michael and Pani Eleanor Polanichka - $25
+Memory of Josephine Barriger Michaele Bober - $100

NAIROBI, KENYA – Hundreds of Kenyans have lost their lives, and hundreds of thousands more have lost their homes, as a result of the recent violence that erupted in the wake of contested presidential elections that were held in Kenya on December 27th.

Several Orthodox clergy and laity have seen all of their worldly possessions consumed by flames. According to His Eminence, Archbishop Makarios of Kenya, food is in short supply. The seminary in Nairobi is currently housing about 20 displaced families, and St. George Orthodox Church in Kibera is housing several more.

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) has had a long history in Kenya. The Mission Center is taking a special collection as a gesture of solidarity with its Orthodox brothers and sisters in this East African nation. The funds collected will be used to help displaced Orthodox families in Kenya to rebuild their homes and their lives.

All donations for this special collection should be made payable to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center with “Kenya Crisis Collection” clearly marked in the check’s memo line. Gifts may be submitted to:

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center
Re: Kenya Crisis Collection
P. O. Box 4319
St. Augustine, FL 32085-4319

OCMC to Take Up Special Collection for Orthodox Christians Displaced by Violence in Kenya

Turkish Government Grants Permission to Orthodox Christians to Observe Feastday of Saint Nicholas in Historic Church

After five long years of constant refusal, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been granted permission by the authorities in Ankara, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the historic Church dedicated to Saint Nicholas, in Demre, Turkey.

The church’s origins date back to the fourth century when Saint Nicholas, a Greek, was the Bishop of the city of Myra, the ancient city which is now known as Demre. Owned by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the church was prohibited by the Turkish Government to conduct services or offer prayers. The church was converted into a museum by the State and has been an attraction for guided tours provided by the Turkish Tourism Agency. The structure is currently under renovation and becomes submerged by rain water during the winter and summer months, which damages the mosaics and frescos.

For several years, religious and political authorities have argued over whether the Divine Liturgy should be celebrated there. In a meeting last year, the Ecumenical Patriarch held discussions with the Turkish Minister of Culture, Ertugrul Gunay, in which the Minister said, “I earnestly want every citizen in this country to be able to freely celebrate their own religion in the place seen as most important for worship.” Not only did the Minister keep his word, but he also contributed forty-thousand Turkish Lira for the completion of the church’s renovation.

Very Reverend Robert J. Prepelka

-Guest Sermon, cont’d from page 2-