



Winter 2024

“The Evangelist”



The Semiannual Newsletter of St. Matthew Orthodox Church



From the Rectors Desk

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

There is much to be thankful for in the past six months in our parish community. From continued interest and growth, to youth programs, to support of local ministries, and to ongoing engagement in liturgical life, our parish is “doing well” in so many ways. Jesus Christ is truly in our midst here!

One thing I often have found myself speaking about in the past few months with different people, that I would like to share more generally here, is that it is very important for us, in our day to day life, to not forget what “the big picture” of Christianity is all about. It is about Jesus Christ becoming a human like us, and being Crucified and Risen from the dead. And this sequence of events reveals to us that our loving God’s plan is the Resurrection of all humanity, as foreshadowed in Jesus’ particular Resurrection. From His eternal and timeless view, we are already, and always have been, His Children; we are indeed already freely saved by His Grace. All that now remains for us to do, in time, is to accept that salvation, to accept His Love for us as His Children, into our lives, and to live out this acceptance by maintaining a committed relationship to Him every day.

Now then, of course, on this day to day basis, we certainly remain immature, lazy, selfish, subject to passions and our unique personal histories, and we get stuck in downspirals from time to time. But this is precisely when we have to mentally return to “the big picture” of what Christ has done for us and revealed to us. He has become man so that we might become God! Thus, the good message that “God desires that all men shall be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4) is precisely our motivation to conquer sin. His high calling convinces us to rise up to spiritual maturity, and we can even say that it is His love for us, and not any fear of Him on our part, that best motivates us not to sin. For, as can be shown statistically, the fear-based versions of Christianity (think of the “fire and brimstone” Christianity of early America) have largely died out, precisely because that is not who God is. And

indeed, when we raise our children, we motivate them to come to maturity not by fear, but by loving encouragement. How could God be anything less than us in this regard? Indeed, He motivates us, and convinces us to receive His eternal salvation, by love alone.

So, when we feel powerless, sinful, depressed, and down, may we continually return to this big picture of what Christianity reveals - God's love revealed to us through the Resurrection of Christ - and use this as our motivation to conquer whatever passions and issues afflict us. Eternal life is far better than we can imagine, and God is doing everything He can to convince us to accept it - beginning with the birth of His Son in a manger!

In Christ,

Fr John



From the Office of the President

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

"As Orthodox Christians, we greet one another with this confident exclamation during the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. With this seasonal greeting we affirm that Jesus, who took on flesh and was born into our world, is indeed the Christ, and worthy of glorification.

This greeting is unlike other seasonal greetings about being merry (Christmas),

glad (tidings), or happy (holidays). Not that I have any trouble with being merry, glad or even happy. I enjoy a spiked eggnog or a traditional Christmas shot of whiskey as much as the next guy. But there is more to the preparation and celebration of Christmas than that. In this feast we celebrate our salvation through the good news of our Savior's advent. When we greet each other with the news of Christ's birth, we seize the opportunity to glorify the new born Savior. This greeting carries within it the promise of salvation, and the very meaning of life.

Christmas comes at the end of the secular calendar. It is for us more than the end of

one year and the beginning of a new year, and now a new century. It is for us a call to rededicate ourselves as we make God our Lord, and call him our Savior. Rededicated to Christ, let us charge boldly into the next century. Let us not be ashamed to proclaim that Christ is Born! Glorify Him! He is our God and we are His people."
Christ is Born! Glorify Him!
The above was
written by His Grace Bishop John Abdalah

of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. This is a shorter version of his longer message. The complete message can be found at http://ww1.antiochian.org/Midwest/Articles/Christ_Is_Born_Glorify_HimNB.htm

Paul Novak
Parish Council President

Treasurer's Report

Dear church family,

As we close out 2023 I would like to say thank you to all of you who have supported Our parish operations and special projects this year. We have been able to meet all our obligations and continue to update our aging building.

Please consider completing an annual pledge card so the Parish Council can continue to make prudent financial decisions for the 2024 budget process.

Prayerfully consider how much you can give monthly while stretching your faith and receive the blessings of cheerful giving. Commit to making that additional \$42 a month gift to help us proactively reduce our church mortgage.

Finally, let's finish off our iconography project in 2024 and raise those funds as soon as possible. By year end it looks like we will have over half of the needed balance in hand with more pledged for 2024.

It has been so wonderful to observe the level of giving that we have grown to and the advancement of the Orthodox presence in NE Wisconsin.

A blessed Nativity to you all.

Tom Julian
SMOC Treasurer



If you would like to know more from your parish council or about St. Matthew in general you can find the council minutes at https://smocgb.com/parish_council_news.

News and Notes

Welcome to the Newly Illumined!

St. Matthew was happy to welcome seven new members into the church over the past 5 months. Coming into the church is a joyous and wonderful moment not just for those who are coming into the church, but for all who are already a part of it. Our church family has grown and we should be singing songs of Joy. This is also a time that we can not forget our most important duty as members of a church family. We must pray for those around us. Those who come into the church deserve our prayers as sometimes there are challenges to joining the church. These challenges can be spiritual, related to friends or family, or any other number of things that can cause strain, tension, or stress. Please remember these newly illumined in your prayer.

If baptism is our personal participation in Easter—the death and resurrection of Christ, then chrismation is our personal participation in Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us.

Antonina Parry
Frieda (Helen) Pentz
Dexter (John) Panella
Wyatt (Innocent) Panella
Danny (Nicholas) Panella,
Robert (John) Trowbridge
Nicholas (Andrew) Parker





Something Smells Good in the Kitchen



In December parishioners took part in a lenten cookie workshop in Herrick Hall. Dorothy Olson taught a baking class to those who attended. The instruction was on how to bake a Serbian almond vanilla cookie, which was not only delicious, but lenten to boot!



Eat, Laugh, and be Merry

This year's St. Matthew's Day Dinner was a treat for all those who were able to attend. Not only did attendees get a delicious catered entree with potluck, but they also got a slice of this lovely cake pictured to the right. The cake was not the only treat people received that day, as all were entertained by Dr. Jeff Zdrale's review of our parish history. We celebrate the many years of our parish's life and ask God for many more.



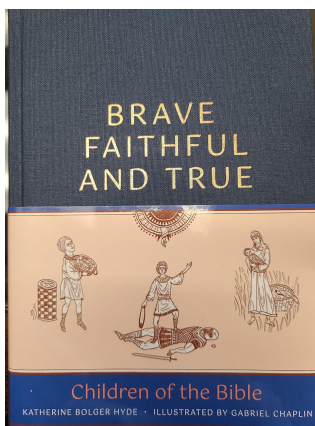
40 Days for Life Campaign



This Fall our Parish was able to participate in the 40 Days of Life. The campaign consists of 40 days of prayer and fasting in shifts outside of a clinic or hospital that performs abortions or which is an abortion referral center. The campaign also involves outreach to the community to promote awareness about abortion and outreach directly to women considering abortion. Thank you to everyone who was able to volunteer during the campaign.

Book Therapy - New in the Bookstore

The following are just a few of the new books we have in our own bookstore. Feel free to take a look at all the wonderful books and items we have to offer!



Brave, Faithful, and True: Children of the Bible
by Katherine Bolger Hyde, illustrated by Gabriel Chaplin

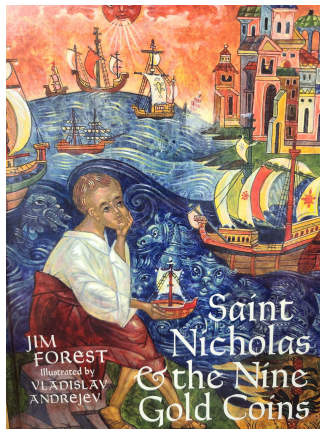
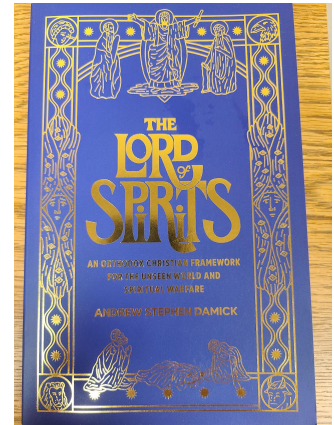
We hear a lot from the Bible about the outstanding men and women who helped God accomplish His purposes in both Old and New Testament times. But what about the children? The Bible doesn't mention many children by name, but if we look closely at the stories that are there, we see courage, kindness, generosity, and deep faith even in the youngest of God's servants. *Brave, Faithful, and True* retells the stories of twelve children—six from the Old Testament and six from the New—from the children's own point of view, bringing their encounters with God to vivid life and leading the children of today to think about what these stories might mean in their own lives.

Also included are an explanation of how each story relates to the Orthodox Christian liturgical cycle and a brief description of how the story features in salvation history.

The Lord of Spirits: An Orthodox Christian Framework for the Unseen World and Spiritual Warfare

by Fr Andrew Stephen Damick

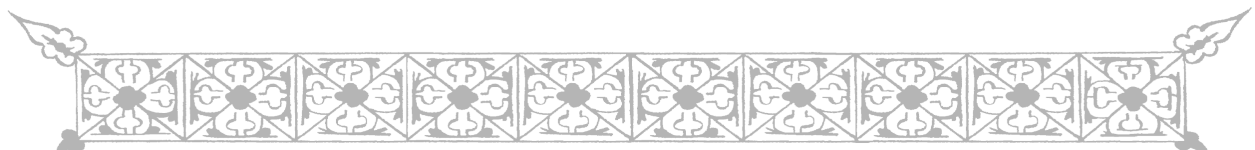
The modern world doesn't acknowledge but is nevertheless haunted by spirits - angels, demons, and saints. In our time, many yearn to break free of the prison of a flat, secular materialism, to see and to know reality as it truly is. What is this spiritual reality like? How do we engage with it well? How do we permeate everyday life with spiritual presence? In *The Lord of Spirits: An Orthodox Christian Framework for the Unseen World and Spiritual Warfare*, Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick provides a distillation and expansion of the material in the popular podcast *The Lord of Spirits*, which he co-hosts with Fr. Stephen De Young.



Saint Nicholas and the Nine Gold Coins

by Jim Forest, illustrated by Vladislav Andrejev

The figure of Saint Nicholas stands apart from nearly every other Christian saint: his fame spread across empires and generations to make him one of the most recognizable Christian saints in history. But the popular perception of Saint Nicholas today diverges greatly from his original veneration as a compassionate almsgiver and defender of the poor. Saint Nicholas has been reduced to the pop culture figure of Santa Claus, a jolly old man who brings presents to good little boys and girls. This book reacquaints those boys and girls with the authentic Santa Claus—Nicholas, a man who found greatness not simply in spreading "good cheer," but in being a true icon of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

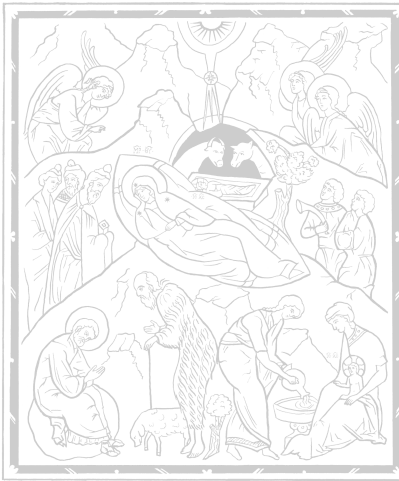




Homiletics

The following excerpt is taken from St. Gregory Palamas' Homily on the Nativity (58), taken from Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies (Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009). St. Gregory was the Archbishop of Thessaloniki in the 14th century and a theologian best known for articulating the distinction between the essence and energies of God.

This is the festival of the virgin birth! The pre-eternal and uncircumscribed and almighty Word is now born according to the flesh, without home, without shelter, without dwelling, and placed as a babe in the manger, seen by men's eyes, touched by their hands, and wrapped in layers of swaddling bands. He is not a spiritual creature coming into being after previously not existing; nor flesh which is brought to birth but will soon perish; nor flesh and mind united to form a rational creature, but God and flesh mingled unconfusedly by the divine Mind to form the existence of one theandric hypostasis, who entered the Virgin's womb for a time. By the good pleasure of the Father and the co-operation of the Spirit, the Word who transcends being came into being in this womb and by means of it, and now He is delivered from it and born as an infant, not losing but preserving the signs of virginity. He is born without suffering, as He was conceived without passion, for as His mother was shown to be above the pleasure of passion when she conceived, so she is above grievous pains when she gives birth. "Before the pain of travail came upon her, she escaped it" as Isaiah says (Isaiah 66.7 LXX), and she brought forth in the flesh the preeternal Word. Not

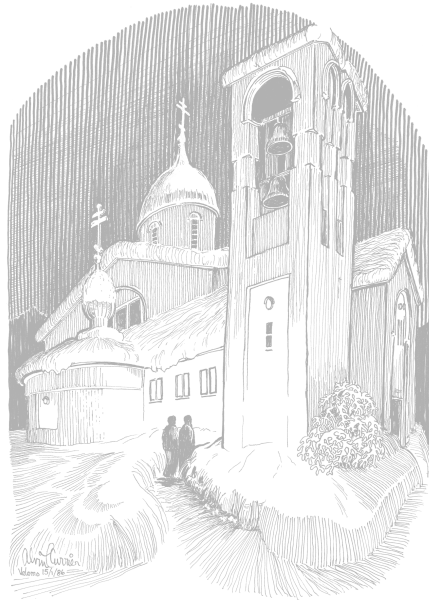


only is His divinity inscrutable, but the manner in which He was united with the flesh is past understanding, His condescension unsurpassable, and the human nature He assumed divinely, ineffably sublime, and so far above all thought and speech, that it does not admit of any comparison with creation. Even though you see in the flesh the child born to the Maid who knew no husband, He is still beyond compare. It says, "He is fair in

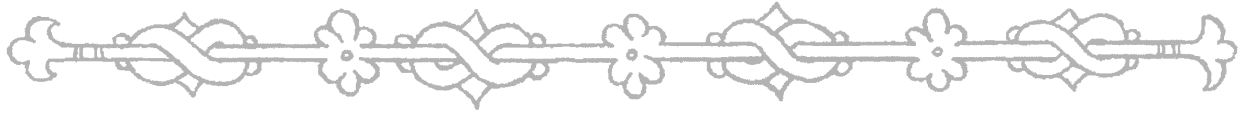
beauty beside the sons of men" (Psalm 45.2 LXX). It does not say "fairer" but simply "fair", so as not to compare incomparable things: the nature of God Himself to that of mere men. That is why God who sits upon the cherubim (Psalm 99.1) is set before us as a babe on earth. He upon whom the six-winged seraphim cannot look, being unable to gaze intently not only at His nature but even at the radiance of His glory,

and therefore covering their eyes with their wings (Isaiah 6.2), having become flesh, appears to our senses and can be seen by bodily eyes. He who defines all things and is limited by none is contained in a small, makeshift manger. He who holds the universe and grasps it in the hollow of His hand, is wrapped in narrow swaddling bands and fastened into ordinary clothes. He who possesses the

riches of inexhaustible treasures submits Himself voluntarily to such great poverty that He does not even have a place at the inn; and so He enters into a cave at the time of His birth, who was brought forth by God timelessly and impassibly and without beginning. And—how great a wonder!—not only does He who shares the nature of the Father on high put on our fallen nature through His birth, nor is He subject merely to the utter poverty of being born in a wretched cave, but right from the very start, while still in the womb, He accepts the final condemnation of our nature. He who is by nature Lord of all is now ranked with the servants and enrolled with them (Luke 2.1-6), clearly making humble service to others no less honorable than the exercise of lordship, or rather, showing the servants as having greater honor than the earthly ruler at that time, provided of course they understood and obeyed the magnificence of grace. For the man who then seemed to rule the world was not counted with the King of heaven, though all his subjects were, nor was this earthly ruler reckoned then as one of them, but the heavenly Lord was. If He had been born from seed, He would not have been a new man and, being part of the old stock, and inheriting that fall, He would not have been able to receive the fullness of the incorruptible Godhead in Himself and become an inexhaustible source of hallowing. And so, not only would He not have been able to cleanse, with abundance of power, our forefathers' defilement caused by sin, but



neither would He have been sufficient to sanctify those who came later. Just as water stored in a tank would not be sufficient to provide a large city with enough to drink continuously, but would require its own spring, so that it is never surrendered to the enemy on account of thirst, in the same way, neither a man nor a holy angel who, by sharing in grace, had the ability to make things holy, would suffice to sanctify everyone at all times. But creation needed a well containing its own spring, that those who drew near it and drank their full might remain undefeated by the attacks of weaknesses and deprivations inherent in the created world. So neither an angel nor a man, but the Lord Himself came and saved us, being made a man like us for our sake, and continuing unchanged as God. Building now the new Jerusalem, raising up a temple for Himself with living stones (Ephesians 2.20-21; 1 Peter 2.5), and gathering us into a holy and worldwide Church, He sets in its foundation, which is Christ (1 Corinthians 3.11), the ever-flowing fount of grace. For the Lord's eternal fullness of life, the all-wise and omnipotent divine nature, is made one with human nature, which was led astray through lack of counsel, enslaved to the evil one out of weakness, and laid in the deepest caverns of Hades for want of divine life, that the Lord might instill into it wisdom and power and freedom and unfailing life. May we all attain to this, at the future glorious advent and epiphany of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory unto the ages. Amen.



Catechesis

The following is taken from “Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs,” an adult catechesis freely available on the OCA website.

Birth narratives

John’s Gospel begins pre-creation, and Mark’s Gospel begins as Jesus comes onto the public scene (or just before, with his cousin John), but Matthew and Luke each record something about Jesus’ early years. This was an expected component of the ancient biography, but the Evangelists turn this convention to their own purposes. With Matthew, we sense the continuation of the Old Testament Scriptures, as we hear about dreams in which God’s angel speaks: the Gospel is not something alien to the story of Israel, but its fulfillment.¹⁰ With Luke, Jesus’ early story is told in parallel with that of John, but in such a way as to show his essential superiority to his cousin. John may be the greatest prophet born of women (Luke 7:28), but Jesus is the only true Human, the desire of the ages, the fulfillment of hope for Jew and Gentile. And so, in Matthew’s account, we hear of Joseph’s dilemma, of his dreams, of the star and the magi, of Herod’s machinations, of the slaughter of the innocents, of the flight into Egypt, and of

the holy family’s return to Nazareth. The narrative is full of intrigue, suspense, foreshadowing, and human touches. Its ins and outs are punctuated with verses from the Old Testament, as the Evangelist frequently tells us “this was to fulfill what was written....” As hearers, we are well prepared for what will come as we move beyond Jesus’ infancy and childhood—the astonishing teaching and actions of this One who has come as a fulfillment. Luke’s account is wonderfully artistic, weaving together the infancy stories of Jesus and John as they meet, even in the wombs of their mothers. Instead of actual quotations from the Old Testament, the stories are told so that they recall older stories of Eli, of Hannah, of the prophets and kings. We hear luminous words from the angel Gabriel, from John’s father, from Simeon, from Elizabeth, and from the Theotokos, as Luke pairs male and female witnesses to this One who has come to change the history of humankind. We follow this child through to his twelfth year, where we, with his parents, find him aptly “in the house of [his] Father,” teaching the teachers. John may be great, but early in this gospel, even in the womb, the prophet John acknowledges the presence of One who will increase in all things: like Mary, we treasure these things in our hearts, and prepare to learn more!



Get to Know...

Meet Danny, a new addition to our community, who, alongside his wife Beth and their two sons, Dexter and Wyatt, relocated from the sunny shores of San Diego, California, to De Pere in 2021.

Danny discovered Christianity during his volunteer work at the San Diego Rescue Mission homeless shelter. Powerful personal testimonies sparked the inception of a transformative experience, leading him to embrace prayer, delve into the wisdom of the church fathers, and eventually to encounter the profound beauty of the divine liturgy here at SMOC. A particularly joyous moment recently occurred when both Danny and his sons entered the church on the day dedicated to the feast for St. Matthew.

Danny's interests are as diverse as they are engaging. From the delightful pursuit of buying and selling pinball machines and video arcades to the technical pleasures of building computers and experimenting with electronics, he revels in the intricate mechanics and nostalgic charm of repairing these games from the 80's. His curiosity extends to the dynamic world of Bitcoin and cryptocurrency

mining, where he navigates the ever-evolving landscape of digital currencies.

In addition to his hobbies, Danny is an avid traveler, finding joy in exploring new places. He also collects cigars, savoring the rich flavors and stories that each one brings. He looks forward to embracing more hiking and outdoor opportunities, fostering a connection with nature and adventure. Danny and Dexter started beekeeping this past year, which allows the family to enjoy fresh honey (which also gives enough extra to experiment with various mead recipes!).

In his professional life, Danny serves as an Academic Advisor, dedicating the majority of his career to higher education. Complementing this, his involvement in real estate reflects a passionate commitment to expanding his family's rental housing offerings throughout the Green Bay area.

Eager to forge connections within the SMOC community, Danny looks forward to sharing in our collective journey of faith and fellowship!

From the Kitchen...

Here is a delicious recipe from Joy Jeffers that we have all enjoyed in Herrick Hall.

Shrimp & Dill Rice Salad

Ingredients:

3 c. cooked converted/parboiled white rice
1 cucumber, seeded, quartered, sliced
1 can black olives, halved
3 green onions, chopped
1 c. shrimp (cut if large)

Dressing:

1/3 cup oil
1/4 c. fresh lemon juice
2-3 cloves garlic
1 TBSP dill weed
1/4 tsp pepper

~Joy Jeffers

The Language Corner

Matushka

Pronounced:

MA-toosh-ka

Meaning: Russian, for 'mother'





Iconography 2024

Please support our fundraising campaign as we raise \$49,000 for Phase III of our Iconography Project. Details can be found on the Herrick Hall bulletin board. So far \$11,1459 has been donated and \$16,800 has been pledged for a total of \$27,945. With your help, our parish will be completing the beautification of our church, which takes many other parishes decades to complete. Thank you for your support.



“[Icons] are meant to draw us not to themselves, but beyond the images to the heavenly reality they depict. Unlike other art and certainly unlike idols, icons do not allow us to get stuck in the beauty of this world but call us to be a part of a world transfigured by God’s grace and love.”

From the OCF website