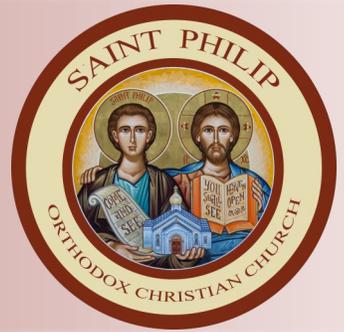


THE PARISH PRESS

St. Philip Orthodox Church

VOL. 20.09 — SEPTEMBER 2019



NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES!

MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION: Thank you for your generosity to the needy of our community! In **September**, we are collecting **Cleaning Supplies**.

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD COLLECTION: We continue to collect non-perishables of all kinds for the food pantries.

Sunday School Snacks Needed! As the Sunday School year begins this month, all donations of juice boxes and snacks are invited! Just clearly label them and put them in the kitchen (or appropriate cabinets).

Winter/Cool-Weather Gear Drive:

St. George the Great Martyr Orthodox Church in Pharr, TX needs your help to stock its clothing closet for the needy. Please put new or very nearly new cool weather gear such as jackets, sizes babies to adults, in the marked box in the hallway. Your contributions are appreciated from Sept 29 to Dec 1. Contact the church office if you have any questions (215-721-4947).



FUTURE ST. NICHOLAS HOUSE – UPDATE

St. Nicholas House is becoming a reality step by step, by God's grace. We are drawing up an agreement of sale now to present to the seller. Please pray for this location of expanded ministry and hospitality. Also, please share your concerns, dreams both short term with the new house and long term with Phase Three Expansion, and how you can help via the [survey on the website homepage](#).

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

The retouched and repainted stucco and resealed black top of the parking lot and the cemetery look beautiful and will ensure the long-term strength of our holy facilities, thanks to the generosity of those who built up our "Capital Improvement Fund."

MAY GOD BLESS ALL OUR
FAITHFUL GIVING & SERVICE!

A Message from Fr. Noah

Brothers and Sisters, Christ is in our midst!

The Crown of the Year - September 1st is the Indiction (Civil and Fiscal New Year) of the Eastern Roman Empire and still celebrated as the Church New Year - is a time for us to rededicate ourselves to God and to living lives pleasing to Him! This means both active service as well as internal renewal.

First, by active service I mean spending ourselves (2 Cor 12:15) in service, ministry, hospitality, and good works. It is through these things that we demonstrate, purify, and exercise our faith. This means alacrity, cheerful readiness, in the face of needs and opportunities. It means putting down our phones and getting off of our couches, using our time for God's glory and the needs of others. It means living more simply and generously, truly entrusting our finances to God, entrusting our months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes to God, so that we can be His Hands and Feet bringing His love to those in the stupor of our nihilistic and hedonistic world.

Second, internal renewal. By internal renewal I mean pouring ourselves out (Phil 2:17) in prayer and repentance. It means coming to church, starving for every word that comes from the mouth of God, thirsting like a dry land for the rivers of Grace in the Sacraments, the Services, the Scriptures, and Stillness. We need to raise ourselves, our families, our parish, our friends, neighbors, and colleagues, our country and our world to God on our knees in front of our icons, with our prayer ropes steadying our passionate concerns with the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We need to sleep less so we can seek more of God's mercy through the saints' witness and intercession.

Our active life (praxis) and our interior life (theoria) are not mutually exclusive but actually interdependent. One of the speakers at our recent Parish Life Conference (SAVE THE DATE: June 24-28, 2020) said that "ministry flows from the chalice". We will become burnt out logs unless the fire of God's love is actively stoked with prayer and ministry.

What an honor, joy, and blessing it is to be spent and poured out for God's glory, the edification of the Church, the salvation of the world, in cooperation with God as He heals us. Humbled to be leading you in this little leg of the pilgrimage, I remain,

Your Servant in Christ
+Fr. Noah

Mark Your Calendar:

Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos

Sunday, September 8

Sunday School begins Sept 8

Twelve Baskets Full

Thursday, Sept 12

Elevation of the Holy Cross (Strict Fast)

Friday, Sept 13

Vespers & Artoklasia, 7 pm

Saturday, Sept 14

Orthros & Cross Procession 9 am,

Divine Liturgy 10 am

w/ Fasting Potluck to follow

International Food Festival

September 20-21

Work & Pray & Invite!



Pilgrimage to Holy Protection Monastery

Monday, Sept 30 –

See Sdn. David for details

Women's Heart Health Presentation

Saturday, Oct 5, 2 pm

Welcome to our new Seminarian & Family!

This academic year, we will be hosting St. Tikhon's seminarian, Fr. Jesse Robinson, with his wife of almost 5 years, Chelsea Xenia, and their children Julian (3), Isaac (1), and number 3 due in February! They are originally from the Phoenix, AZ area where they attended St. Ignatius in Mesa.

Before the priesthood, Fr. Jesse had a career in the computer/tech world, which he left to own an ice cream store briefly where he met his wife.

Ministry Together

w/ Sdn David Hyatt



"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor 1:3)

St. Sergius of Radonezh says, "If you want to serve God, prepare your heart not for food, not for drink, not for rest, not for ease, but for suffering, so that you may endure all temptations, trouble and sorrow. Prepare for severities, fasts, spiritual struggles and many afflictions, for 'by many afflictions is it appointed to us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven' (Acts 14:22)."

The Enemy of our Souls resists the Kingdom of God at work in and through us. And one of the most common ways for him to distract and derail us is through suffering. All too often, when the going gets tough we complain, seek the easier path or just plain quit. This kind of comfort-seeking undermines our ministry even though it brings temporary relief.

We've all heard the adage, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care"? St. Paul writes that God "comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:4).

May we be found faithful in suffering and be agents of the comfort of Christ to those who suffer through our various areas of ministry!

"Making a Defense":

Explorations in Orthodox Apologetics

In his First Epistle, St. Peter exhorts the churches to be "always ready for a defense [*pros apologian*]" of our faith (1 Pet 3:15). To "apologize" does not mean, properly speaking, to say "I'm sorry," but rather to *give a defense* on behalf of something or someone. These of course are very different postures! And St. Peter clearly has in mind the latter—a posture of bold and active readiness to defend what we believe to be true, a readiness that is *expected* of every Christian.

For the next year, in this column, we will be exploring different topics and themes related to Orthodox apologetics—how we should understand and respond to the questions and challenges that come to us especially from the society and culture of our particular mission field of early 21st century North America. (We welcome suggestions for topics to address—see Fr. Noah, Joe Kyriakos, or Justin Gohl).

What we simply want to establish in this pilot column is the importance, the necessity, of explaining ourselves, our faith, to the world around us. We believe that we, as the Church, have "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), and in that deposit, all wisdom, discernment, and Truth. There is no reason for us to be embarrassed, to be put "on our heels" as we engage modern challenges and questions, and certainly no reason to capitulate to "falsely-named knowledge" (1 Tim 6:20).



Did You Know?

- **Spiritual Writings in Arabic:** With the help of one of the priests in the Archdiocese, there is a plan to begin sending out spiritual passages for the salvation of our souls, in the Arabic language. If you or anyone you know is interested in receiving quotes of the day, writings of the Fathers, lives of the saints, etc., in Arabic, please send your name and email address to the following email address: meletioszafaran@yahoo.com
- The **liturgical offerings** of our parish (Prophora, Artos, Kolyva, Altar Candles, Wine, Classic Olive Oil, Flower Decorations) are simple and profound ways to offer our talents to God and to each other.
- Please take the time to fill out our **Adult Education Survey** (provided in listserv emails). It will be of great help toward planning for and providing for the ongoing spiritual growth of our parish!
- Pray for, welcome, and get to know our many **Catechumens**, and learn from them about our newly rededicated "St Boniface Catechetical School."

Evangelism Challenge

"Deliberately Get to Know & Serve Your Neighbors"

Evangelism is not just simply "telling" others the good news, but "showing" it as well. How can we tell others of God's love, mercy, and compassion if our lives are devoid of those traits?

A great many people around you have quiet, unexpressed needs. Some might be big, others small. Maybe they're having trouble making ends meet. Maybe they have a favorite shirt that's developed a rip and they don't know how to fix it. Whatever the need, God has placed them near you, so that you can minister to them. But you'll never know how you can bless them until you talk to them.

Don't feel that you need to solve whatever problems or difficulties they face; a small gesture of kindness goes a long way. Remember that Christ set the bar absurdly low: just a cup of cold water. Is there someone whom the Lord has placed on your heart, but you don't know how to minister to them? Just ask. Christ asked a blind man what he wanted, so there's no reason to feel foolish.

The extent to which we love our neighbors is the extent to which we love God, and the measure in which we love God is the distance we will go to love our neighbor. Let us live generously, in proportion to what God has freely given us, without expectation of thanks or repayment.

Knowing, Praying, Living the Holy Scriptures

"How I have loved thy law, O Lord! The whole day it is my meditation." (Ps 118:97)



Scripture as a Mirror

Mirrors, of whatever sort, can be tools of vanity—whether they are actual mirrors, or the "mirrors" of people, texts, ideas, etc., that feed our confirmation bias, our tendency to position ourselves as the center and judge of reality.

Part of God's providential purpose for Scripture is to provide us a "mirror" that first shows us how we *really look*. When we contemplate the portrait of humanity given to us in Scripture, we are—or should be—led to humility, contrition, and repentance. As St. Paul tells his Jewish compatriots according to the flesh (Rom 2:17ff), merely "having" the Scriptures can never be a source of self-oriented pride, because part of their function is to show us our sickness so that we can turn and be healed.

But the Scriptures are also—and even more so—a mirror by which we see the Face and Image of Christ. In the Wisdom of

Solomon 7:26 (OSB), "Solomon" tells us that Wisdom is

the radiance of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the operative power of God and the image of His goodness.

Wisdom, the spotless mirror of God, reflects Himself, His Image, to us through the mirror of Scripture, which we might also understand as the "table" and "meal" that Wisdom sets for His initiates that we are to "consume," and internalize (Prov 9:2).

It is in this way that we should understand the Apostle James who says, *if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does (Jam 1:23-25)*

In the "mirror" of Scripture, we get the double-vision of who and what we are as humans apart from Christ, and who we are and ought to be and become in Christ, the True Human, the New Adam.