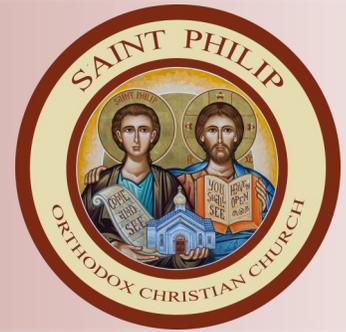


THE PARISH PRESS

St. Philip Orthodox Church

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NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

CHRISTMAS CARDS TO THE ST. PHILIP FAMILY



As we prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Savior's birth, we help various Orthodox monastic communities, missionary situations, and charitable services. This is accomplished by asking members to forego sending cards to many within our St. Philip's family, and to send just one card to the entire church community - taking the savings from the cost of cards and postage, and enclosing a contribution which will be distributed among these groups. All cards will be displayed. Cards can be mailed to the Church or placed in the offering basket.



GIVING OPPORTUNITIES!

MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION: Thank you for your generosity to the needy of our community! In **November & December**, we are collecting **Turkeys**.

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

Cool-Weather Gear Drive Update

The coat drive has been a great success! St. Philip parish sent fifty-one items of cold weather clothing to The V. Rev. Fr. Antonio Perdomo at St. George the Great Martyr OCA Church in Pharr, TX! Fr. Antonio is most warmly grateful to one and all. Thank you to all who donated!

MAY GOD BLESS ALL OUR FAITHFUL GIVING & SERVICE!

A Message from Fr. Noah

Dear St. Philip's Family,
Christ is born! Glorify Him!!!

As a child, each year my mother made me give away several toys prior to Christmas. This had important implications, practical as well as spiritual. This seemed like torture until I recalled that I was making room for the new toys! These were my first tottering steps in asceticism.

As Orthodox Christians and as humans, young or old, we need to "de-clutter" our lives as well. This means simplifying the material as well as the immaterial aspects of life. Our toys, extra clothing, tools, decorations, unnecessary electronic devices can get in the way of a peaceful life and separate us from one another. Likewise, we need to pare back the social engagements that muddle up this most wonderful time of the year.

So, how do we de-clutter our lives, our spaces, our minds, and our souls? Be intentional! Combine your increased Prayer, Fasting, & Almsgiving with getting rid of anything that might be un-necessary. Change your spending habits.

I am looking forward to celebrating the Nativity of our Lord with you in peace, joy, and grateful hearts at our upcoming festal services. Please make a point to be there.

Grateful for God's simple love in the gift of His Son, I remain,

Your Servant in Christ,
+Fr. Noah

Mark Your Calendar:

Advent Paraklesis & Taylor Kardiotissa Icon Visit
Friday, December 13, 7 pm

Sunday School Christmas Program
Sunday, December 22
12:30 pm after Liturgy

Feast of the Nativity of Christ

Tuesday, December 24
Royal Hours, 9 am
Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil, 10 am

Festal Orthros, 9:30 pm
Divine Liturgy, 11 pm

Wednesday, December 25
Vespers for the Synaxis of the Theotokos, 12 pm

Thursday, December 26
Orthros 9 am; Liturgy 10 am

Circumcision & St. Basil - New Year's

Tuesday, December 31
Vespers & Artoklasia 6 pm
Talent Show 7 pm
New Year's Prayers 9 pm
Wednesday, January 1
Divine Liturgy 10 am, New Year's Prayers 11:30 am

Theophany

Sunday, January 5
Great Blessing of Water, 11:30 am
Outdoor Blessing of Water @ Lenape Park, 2 pm
Monday, January 6
Orthros 8:45 am, Divine Liturgy 10 am
Great Blessing of Water, 11:30 am

Bp THOMAS Visit
January 9-14, 2020

Feast of Presentation
February 1-2, 2020

Beginning of Lent
March 2, 2020

We live Pascha to Pascha!
April 19, 2020



Office Update

This Christmas season offers us special opportunities to bless our parish and our neighbors. Please remember our Christmas card program (see above), and that your Flower donations help to beautify our church for this holy season! The office staff wishes you all the joys and blessings of Christmas. In Christ,
Celia-Marie (office@st-philip.net)



UPDATING THE Photo Directory

to encourage unity, fellowship, and ministry at St. Philip

Please submit your updated family photo, address, emails, and telephone numbers to: **stphilipphotos20@gmail.com**

You may also submit a printed photo for the directory. We will have a section for Stewards, and another for Friends. See Dale Yeager, Colin Miller, or Sdn David Hyatt with any questions.

January 24, 2020

Washington, DC **MARCH for LIFE**

Schedule:

Gather at St. Philip—5:45am
Bus Departs—6:00am
Leave Washington, D.C.—4:00pm
Arrive at St. Philip—9:30pm
Cost — \$48/person (Includes Bus & Gratuity)

Registration is available on the St. Philip website: www.st-philip.net

Ministry Together

w/ Sdn David Hyatt

"...you are worried and troubled
about many things.
But one thing is needed..."
(Luke 10:41-42)



The Christmas season is one filled with busyness, parties, shopping, cleaning and decorating, mailing Christmas cards and shipping packages to friends and family near and far. We wonder, "How will I get it all done in time?" and "How will we ever pay for all these presents?" The festivities of the holidays often lead in turn to stress and anxiety.

For those who are facing this upcoming Christmas without a loved one, the memories can bring intensified grief and sorrow even amidst the twinkling lights and joyful music.

Whether the worries and stresses of this season come to us because of overexertion or because of losses we've experienced, they can easily overwhelm us and distract us from the one thing needful.

So, what is Jesus referring to when He says that 'one thing is needed'? To sit at His feet with our hearts open to His Incarnation in our lives, open to the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness in and among us, such that we can share the Light of Christ with others by our love and service.

May this season of preparation and waiting for the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ be for us a time where we choose the one thing needful.

We worship Thy Nativity, O Christ!

Did You Know?

- **Future St. Nicholas House Update** – We have the blessing of the Metropolitan. All the "ducks are in a row" and we'll be closing in the next few days!
- **The Fast is Continuing** – Let us continue in prayer and preparation to receive the Savior.
- **A School at St Philip?** It is a real possibility. The Steering Committee is working on gathering interest.
- Stay connected with parish life by synching with our calendar on **Google Calendar**. See <https://www.st-philip.net/calendar.html> for instructions on how to add the parish calendar to your own device.
- An Orthodox Christian ought to **come to confession** at least four times per year and as needed.
- If you spend less money on gifts, entertainment, food, etc., you'll have **more to give in alms**, special projects, and stewardship.
- Brushing your teeth before Divine Liturgy is a courtesy to those with whom you will be praying. If you are planning to receive Holy Communion, take care not to inadvertently break the Eucharistic fast!
- **Our Library** has a great selection of many topics related to our Holy Faith. We are looking for someone to be our **parish librarian**.
- The kingdom of heaven is not a reward for works, but a **gift of grace** prepared by the Master for His faithful servants. Are you a faithful servant?
- You can **bring someone back to church**. Open the directory for someone you haven't seen in a while, say a prayer, and give them a call or shoot them a text or email. This holy season is a great time to help someone reconcile with God.



Evangelism Challenge

"Serve in a soup kitchen or shelter"

Now that the Nativity Fast is halfway over, it is good to reflect upon whether we have been strengthening our prayers with almsgiving. Giving expresses our faith: giving is an act of worship, an acknowledgment that God is worthy of our trust, that we do not need to cling to our possessions, but as we have freely received, so too we have been freed to give. Our possessions are not our own, but loans from God, and we are stewards of those gifts to bless and benefit others. But while God apportions possessions in different degrees to different people, everyone receives the exact same twenty-four hours every single day. How are we acknowledging that God is worthy of our time? Every breath we receive from Him is just as much a gift as our paychecks and possessions. Are we attempting to hoard these gifts for ourselves, or are we using our time to glorify God? How are we prioritizing the giving of our time to serving others?

The holiday season is an excellent time to start serving in a soup kitchen, food shelf, or shelter; this is the time of year when the need is the highest. But that need never goes away. Start now, so that you can continue throughout the year. Service is an act of worship and evangelism, for in doing so we declare that God and other people are worthy of our limited time, that the good news we share has transformed our lives and our priorities.

Let your light so shine among men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

"Making a Defense":

Explorations in Orthodox Apologetics

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

A perennial question which Christians, and all people of faith, encounter is that of the *problem of evil*. Why would a good, all-powerful, all-knowing God allow suffering, death, and evil to exist in the world?

The Orthodox "answer" to this problem is in fact nothing other than the Christmas Mystery, the Mystery of the Incarnation, of God Himself coming among us to bear the effects of our sin and suffering, and to redeem us from them.

Following the Holy Fathers, we understand "evil" not as a "substance" but as a *privation or lack of goodness that comes from the use of our free will*. All that God has created is by nature "good," because God is good, or rather, Goodness itself. All "evil" then is a falling away from and refusal to participate in God who is Goodness.

All sin, death, evil, and suffering originate ultimately from the *free will* that God has given humans made in His Image. God did not create these bad things (Wisdom 1.12-16), and they are not something God desires for anything He has

made. And yet, as St. Irenaeus says, "there is no coercion with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually" (*Adv. Haer.* 4.37.1 [ANF 1.518]). God is *personal*, a loving Father, and so He works with us in ways that uphold our *personhood* as well. He *gives us over* to what we choose, to what we think we want (Rom 1.24ff), such that we can experience the effects of trying to live without Him, and therefore repent, turn, and be healed (Ezek 18.23; 33.11).

To be sure, there is a personal and *cosmic* dimension to the "evil" we experience in the world. We inhabit systems that compound and focus human evil, and there are malevolent spiritual forces behind these things. St. Paul even says that all creation has been affected by and suffers because of humanity's fall (Rom 8.18-23).

Death is the ultimate "evil," the ultimate tragedy that is the "spring" from which all other evil flows, and death is not something we can solve ourselves. Death cannot be repented from.

The Incarnation is the answer to the evils of sin, suffering, and death, for in Christ, the whole world is crucified and raised to new life, and given the opportunity to once again *choose life, goodness, communion with God in Christ, with His people*.

Practical Spiritual Wisdom

A man should know that a devil's sickness is on him if he is seized by the urge in conversation to assert his opinion, however correct it may be. If he behaves this way while talking to his equals, then a rebuke from his elders may heal him. But if he carries on in this way with those who are greater and wiser than he, his sickness cannot be cured by human means.

St. John Climacus

Prayer affords an experience of spiritual liberty of which most people are ignorant. The first sign of emancipation is a disinclination to impose one's will on others. The second--an inner release from the hold of others on oneself.

St. Sophrony of Essex