

MOSAIC

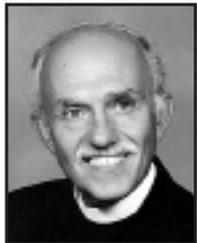
Coming together, we form an icon of God's Kingdom

Vol. 18, No. 9

Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church 2501 S. Wolf Rd. Westchester, IL
(708) 562-2744 www.holyapostleschurch.com

January 2014

From Father Bill



What's behind the gift?

If you visited me in my office recently, you saw a poster on the credenza immediately behind the desk. Printed on this poster is the following: GODISNOWHERE. Did you get that? Try again, because most people who read this verse are somewhat astonished by the meaning. At first you read: "God Is Nowhere." Upon reading it again the same letters spell: "God Is Now Here".

A Greek proverb states: "Polloi tha idoun, ligoi tha katalavoun." Many will look at the words, but few will understand.

Christmas has once again been recorded in history. We may yet be returning and exchanging gifts, and we may even be absorbed with the question: "What's behind the gift from God?" A brief story will make the meaning real.

The Jews have a story to answer the question, "How did God decide where to put His Temple in Jerusalem?" Two brothers were partners in a grinding mill in Jerusalem. At the end of each day, they took the grain they had milled and divided it equally into separate sacks.

One night the bachelor brother thought, "This is not right. I am alone and don't need much, but my brother has a wife and family. He deserves the larger share." So, sneaking back to the mill each night, he took part of his share and poured it into his brother's sack.

The married brother also thought one night: "This is not right. When I am old, I will have children to support me, but my brother will be all alone. He deserves the larger share." So, sneaking back to the mill each night, he took part of his share and poured it into his brother's sack. They thought it a miracle to find their sacks filled each morning.

One night, however, the brothers left home



Photo by Peter Bell

Dimitri Ratay gets to chat with Santa Saturday, Dec 14 at the Communion Breakfast.

at the same time to sneak back to the mill, and by coincidence, met on the street with their sacks in hand. Instantly, they knew what was happening and fell into each other's arms weeping.

God looked down upon the scene, according to the Jewish story, and said, "Here is where love meets. Here I will build my Temple."

Jesus sat outside that temple one day and saw a gift of love being made by a poor widow, a gift of love to God. Within the temple enclosure, but outside the building proper, there were 13 offering boxes. According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus sat for a while watching people come up to these boxes and leave their offerings. In a similar but not the same way, the Salvation Army greets us outside the retail stores in which we shop. Again, in our story, the Gospel states: "Many rich people put in large sums," and the implication is that there wasn't much love behind those gifts, even though they were large amounts. But along comes a widow and drops in two copper coins (leptons, the smallest denomination of the Greek monetary system) which equaled only a

penny, the smallest Roman coin. But Jesus saw the love of God behind that gift and commented to his disciples: "...This poor widow had put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury," and then he put his finger on why it was worth more. What was behind her gift?

"For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living." Her gift had a great cost behind it.

The poor widow who caught Jesus' eye as she was placing her mites in the collection box at the temple had graduated to the highest level of giving. The Jews had six levels of giving from number one, which is about one who gives without the beneficiary knowing who he is helping. The suggestion is that sincere giving progresses from the first level to the sixth.

This widow remained nameless, but not unknown, because of her generosity. Jesus said she had given more than all the others because, out of her poverty, she had given all she had. Giving is an enriching experience when it is done anonymously and when one

...See Fr. Bill on P. 3

From Father Nicholas



Becoming a lemon tree?

Happy New Year! As we begin this year, the Church remembers St. Anthony on January 17. He issued a challenge that is important to remember throughout the year. St. Anthony wrote: "Learn to desire humility, for that will cover all your sins. Do not consider yourself learned or wise or all your toil will be lost and your ship will arrive empty at the shore." Wow! Humility will cover all of our sins.

St. Luke wrote: "Everyone that exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11) St. Isaac said what salt is to food, humility is for virtue.

Humility is critical in building a virtuous Christian life. We sing at the feast day of Holy Transfiguration: "You were transfigured on the Mount, Christ God revealing Your glory to Your disciples, as much as they could comprehend." The Lord's glory was revealed in proportion to what the Disciples could bear.

How much can we bear? When Jesus was born, there was no room at the inn. Do we have room for Christ? Humble people find a place for Christ to dwell.

St. John quotes from the Gospel of Matthew: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me." (Matthew 11:29) He says learn from Me. Do not learn from an angel, not from a man, not from a book but from Christ! Learn from My illumination and action within you!

Humility comes through struggle. The Christian spiritual journey begins with humility and ends with love.

What is humility? Here is St. John Climacus' humility test. Does this define you? Humble people are gentle, kind, inclined to compunction, sympathetic, calm, radiant, easy to get along with, inoffensive, alert, and active. Humility accepts indignity.

Humble people realize that all things, good and bad, are from God. God allows circumstances to help us learn and grow in our relationship with Him.

Humility is trying to become a pencil in God's hand, an organ of God's divine powers always performing works for God. Even people that hurt our pride help us to become more humble.

Humble people try to avoid praise. Humility wipes out anger. Desiring to continually learning is another sign of humility. Humility will not condemn or judge anyone.

Humble people continue to examine themselves and consider their neighbor supe-



Gavel to Gavel



Highlights of the October Parish Council Meeting

By PAUL KALLIS, SECRETARY

Present: Fr. Bill Chiganos, Fr. Nicholas Georgious, George Alex, Peter Bell, George Chechopoulos, Terry Chiganos, Cindy Clark, James Fotopoulos, Tom Gregory, Paul Kallis, James Kapolas, Nick Kirkeles, Nick Kouchis, George T. Mannos Jr., Mary Maragos, Peter Poteres, and Steven Savas

Financial/Treasurers Report:

✦ Steve Savas moved to approve the financial statements dated September 30 subject to year-end review. The motion passed unanimously.

Stewardship Report:

✦ George Mannos said that as of September 30, pledges for 2013 are 765 which is 17 better than this period last year. Total amount pledged to date for 2013 is \$655,769.25, which is \$8,375.71 less than the same period last year. The average pledge of \$857.22 is \$30.68 less than this period last year. The percent paid to date is 88% vs. 88% for the same period last year.

Correspondence:

- ✦ Thanks from Joan Berg for the fellowship hour in her honor.
- ✦ Thank you from Bradley Holman, President of the Philoxenia house ministry for our donation from the 5K.
- ✦ Annunciation Cathedral of Chicago will hold its 2014 Cathedral Ball on 1/11/14.
- ✦ St. John the Baptist is holding its 55th Anniversary Dinner Dance on 11/2/2014.

Meditation:

✦ Father Bill reflected on the fact that our church has always been very strong in stewardship, allowing us to fund our many ministries. He mentioned that recently our pledges have decreased significantly mainly due to the passing of certain parishioners. He said that the Council needs to work on teaching the newer church members the importance of stewardship so we can get it back to the levels we have had.

Building & Grounds:

✦ Steve Savas said the RPZ backflow preven-

ter will be installed on 10/24.

- ✦ Jim Fotopoulos reported that the electrical work will be completed by the end of the year.
- ✦ Steve Savas will meet Monday, 10/21, with the inspector regarding the bathroom remodeling permit.
- ✦ Jim Fotopoulos reported that the south sidewalk has been completed and work on the new shed has begun.

Ways & Means:

✦ Nick Kouchis said that the Council is still looking at potential venues for the golf outing.

Old Business:

- ✦ The parish allocation for the St. Iakovos Retreat Center is extended for two years.
- ✦ A committee is being formed to look into the fund for priests in need.
- ✦ A committee is being formed to document the following items: no checks should be written to cash, priests should not be signing checks, churches should be covered by insurance, churches should have workers' compensation, 1099s should be given to any priest earning more than \$600 and to any lawyer doing work for a parish.
- ✦ Cindy Clark reported that the pictures have been completed for the parish directory.

New Business:

- ✦ George Chechopoulos reported that our Liquor Liability Renewal is due Nov. 22, 2013. Quote is for \$650. Jim Fotopoulos made a motion to approve the expense and it was approved unanimously.
- ✦ George Chechopoulos said that our workman's compensation report was received.
- ✦ George Alex reported that our custodian Andy's mother passed away. George Alex made a motion to give \$100 to St. Thomas Hospice in her memory. The motion passed unanimously.
- ✦ Committee chairs provided a brief preview of their updates for the General Assembly meeting.

rior to themselves. The Saints are a great example of this. They believed that they were the worst sinners and that other people were better! Humble people constantly put others first.

Acquiring humility is difficult. So, how can we cultivate humility? St. John writes: "Remember your sins." According to the Bible, we are all spiritually ill and need the

Great Physician to heal us. As we remember our sins, we grow in humility. True repentance leads to humility. This should not lead us to despair but back to the Lord.

Pray the Jesus Prayer continually: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner". Ask for forgiveness from one another. The Sacrament of Confession, confessing

...See Fr. Nicholas on P. 4

HARC

Bed Time Blessings

By Dandi Daley Mackall

Illustrated by Elena Kucharik
(endearing artist for Care Bears)

Bedtime is the perfect time to assure children of God's loving presence and protection. Reading this small book is a beautiful way for ending the day and starting the night with God.

\$4.00

Friends of Liberty

By Beatrice Gormley

In 1773, Boston is in political turmoil. Lines have been drawn between the Loyalists and the Patriots. Sally Gifford, a shoemaker's daughter, finds herself on the opposite side from her best friend, Kitty, the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Sally is torn between her friendship and her loyalties to her family and community in their fight for freedom. As the conflict continues to grow more charged in the weeks leading up to the Boston Tea Party, Sally must decide exactly what is most important to her.

\$8.00

Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration

Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation

Edited by John Chryssavgis
and Bruce V. Foltz

The abundant contributions of the Orthodox tradition to seeing into the sacred depths of nature are evident in this rich collection of essays. It will stand as a classic in the field for years to come and help reshape reflections on our shared planetary future. This anthology is a monumental contribution to the literature on religion and ecology.

\$35.00

*Some people
are kind, polite,
and sweet-spirited
until...
you try to sit in
their pews.*

Philoptochos Update

We donated \$20,000 to the two beneficiaries of our luncheon and fashion show held in October: The Theotokos Orthodox Orphanage in India and Big Brothers / Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago. Thank you to our generous sponsors, patrons, and guests who made it all possible!

We sponsored our annual Communion Breakfast to encourage community spirit, especially for families with young children. We held our Christmas Bake Sale so even those who do not bake can still enjoy traditional foods and homemade seasonal treats.

We held our Christmas Party at the December General Meeting to spread good cheer among our membership.

Once again this holiday season, we extended our philanthropic arms to help many less fortunate people within our community and beyond. Through your donations and support, we delivered carloads of toys and books to the Family Shelter Service Center.

We collected many new warm gloves, mittens, and hats, and delivered them to the Peoples' Resource Center.

We visited our sick and elderly bringing holiday cheer along with an assortment of delicious baked treats.

We sent gifts to the children who reside at St. Basil's Academy. We provided meals, gift cards, warm clothing, and other assistance to families with extenuating circumstances who had nowhere else to turn but to their church.

We thank all who participated with their time and talents. We thank all who gave so generously so that we could help so many others.

We continue to reach out to those in need beyond the holiday season. The philanthropic work of Philoptochos goes on throughout the year. Philoptochos is the warm, motherly embrace of our Orthodox Church that reaches out to assure people that someone cares about them when they most require assurance and love.

Fr. Bill from P. 1

Sacrificial giving measures far more

doesn't care if credit is received.

The beginning of a new year affords the opportunity for many of us to catch up with our stewardship pledge, give more to missions, help needy around us and do just a little bit more to support the parish's work for the coming year. For me, remembering our "Wounded Warriors" is indeed a worthy cause.

Just as the gift of the poor widow contrasts markedly with the hypocritical and avaricious leaders of Jerusalem, so today, the sacrificial gift measures far more than show-off giving

Please continue to support our efforts so we can continue to meet the needs of the less fortunate.

by Eleftheria Karapas Parafink, president

New projects and events

Blankets of Love – service project

Do you like to knit or crochet? Would you consider making a blanket or two for a sick infant or child? We will be collecting these Blankets of Love in February and then donating them to local children's hospitals and clinics. Even if you cannot knit or crochet, you can participate by donating yarn for others to make the blankets. For complete details, contact Faye Adams at 630.517.8097.

Membership

If you have not paid your membership for 2013-2014, it is not too late. Your membership fair-share dues help fund our many obligations and projects. If you have never been a member before, here is your opportunity. Come join this most amazing group of women. Membership envelopes are available in the church office.

Vasilopita Celebrations

January 12 following Divine Liturgy – sponsored by Holy Apostles Philoptochos
Please join in our annual parish tradition during the fellowship hour.

January 12 evening at St. George, Chicago – sponsored by the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos. This is an annual fundraiser for St. Basil's Academy in Garrison, NY.

Looking Further Ahead

February 9 – Godparents' Sunday

Luncheon following the Divine Liturgy

February 13 – Koukla's Kafenio will be open for lunch.

February 18 – General meeting at 7 pm

February 9 - 18 – Blankets of Love collection

that has little cost behind it. It is not the outward show but the depth of surrender to God's mercy and care that counts most. Whatever the gift or the pledge, the basic question is, what is behind this gift? Is it costing enough to merit God's blessing?

May the rich bounties given to you and your family fill your heart with genuine gladness and thanks giving, for the gift of every good thing is from God.

I pray that we all have a a blessed New Year!

Fr. Nicholas from P. 2

“If the grace of God comes, everyone and everything changes” ...St. Porphyrios

our sins to God, is another powerful tool. These all help us recall our sins.

Next, remember God’s grace. Reflect upon all of the material, physical and spiritual gifts God has given you. Gratitude leads to humility.

Last, learn from your weaknesses. It is easy for us to fall, but God utilizes our weaknesses to draw us closer to Him. St. Paul writes: “God’s strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Physical labor and fasting help us to realize these weaknesses. Fasting can bring on real hunger and physical exhaustion and shows us how weak our flesh can be. It is then that we realize our dependence on God.

Recognizing our own mortality and frailty leads to humility. God allows weaknesses so that He can demonstrate His strength in our lives. He is drawn to people who are weak: “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 5:3) Remembering weakness brings humility.

All of these tools help us become humble: making room for and becoming more receptive to God’s love.

Recently I read a wonderful humility story. An elder was fasting for 70 long weeks. He only ate twice a week and begged the Lord to reveal the meaning of a passage in Holy Scripture. But God would not reveal it to him. The extremely frustrated elder thought to himself, "I have labored long and hard, and I have accomplished nothing. I will go to my brother and ask him."

When he left his cell and locked the door behind him, an angel from the Lord appeared and said to him: "Seventy weeks of fasting did not bring you nearer to God. Now, however, that you have humbled yourself and resolved to go to your brother with your question, I have been sent to you to explain the meaning of this passage."

St. John Climacus compared humility to a lemon tree. It lifts its branches up when it has no fruit. The more the branches bend down, the more fruit it bears. If we bend down, we will have more fruit. An Athonite elder called humility a magnet that attracts the grace of God. Saint Porphyrios summed up the spiritual benefits of humility best when he wrote: “If the grace of God comes, everyone and everything changes; however, in order for it to come, we must humble ourselves first.”

The youthful actors and actresses come and go, but the pageant itself remains a popular annual tradition.



Annual Pageant wows the crowd again

Peter Koppany portrays Joseph during the pageant.



Photos by Peter Bell



Guardian Angel Alexia Pappas gets her hair done by mom, Patty, at left. Above, the angels take their places.



Adventure Theater presents two plays in one.

Photo by Peter Bell



Actors Jack Parrott and Sabrina Lorusso, directors Marina Dimas and Peter Savas take part in "Touch of an Angel".

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

<p><i>A resolution not to break!</i> <i>Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly, and trust in our Creator, who loves us.</i></p>						
<p>EVE OF HOLY EPIPHANY 8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Fellowship Hour</p>	<p>HOLY EPIPHANY 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy And Blessing Of The Water</p>	<p>FEAST DAY OF ST. JOHN 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy 4:30pm Greek School</p>	<p>NEW YEAR'S DAY FEAST DAY OF ST. BASIL 9:00am Orthros 10:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>NO Greek School</p>	<p>4:30pm Adventure Theater</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>VASILOPITA 8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Fellowship Hour</p>	<p>5:15pm The Way</p>	<p>10:00am TOTS 4:30pm Greek School 7:00pm Philoptochos Board Mtg.</p>	<p>1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism</p>	<p>4:30pm Greek School 7:30pm Parish Council Meeting</p>	<p>FEAST DAY OF ST. ANTHONY 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy 4:30pm Adventure Theater</p>	<p>FEAST DAY OF ST. ATHANASIOS 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Fellowship Hour</p>	<p>4:30pm Greek School 7:00pm PTO Meeting</p>	<p>1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism</p>	<p>1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism</p>	<p>4:30pm Greek School</p>	<p>4:30pm Adventure Theater</p>	<p>FEAST DAY OF ST. GREGORY 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Fellowship Hour</p>	<p>5:15pm The Way</p>	<p>10:00am TOTS 4:30pm Greek School</p>	<p>1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism</p>	<p>FEAST DAY OF THE THREE HIERARCHS 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy 4:30pm Greek School</p>	<p>4:30pm Adventure Theater</p>	<p>31</p>
<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	

Memorials

Sotirios Verveniotis

Helene Georgiou

Sam Poulos

Kasiani Capenigro

Danielle Poulos

Theodoris Karabinas

Fotini Karapas

Eleftheria Pantelis

Anastasia Georgiou

Theodore Mavrick

Katherine Mavrick

Alexander Stratigos

Peter Tomaras

John George Karones

Dr. Christos Patsavos

Weekday Services

Feast Day of St. Basil

Wednesday, January 1

9:00am Orthros

10:00am Divine Liturgy

Holy Epiphany

Monday, January 6

8:00am Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day Of St. John

Tuesday, January 7

8:00am Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day of St. Anthony

Friday, January 17

8:00am Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day Of St. Athanasios

Saturday, January 18

8:00am Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day of St. Gregory

Saturday, January 25

8:00am Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day of Three Hierarchs

Thursday, January 30

8:00am Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy

Stewardship

To save your money and the church's money, drop your pledge off at the church before the postal rates go up again.

Baptisms

Dimitri, son of

Katherine and Odysseas Mitropoulos

Sponsors: Tina and Gus Sparagis

Weddings

None

Funerals

None

Mosaic Deadline

The February 2014 Mosaic deadline is Wednesday, January 8.

Postmaster: Please deliver by the 3rd of January

PERMIT NO. 157

BELLWOOD, IL.

PAID

U.S. POSTAGE

NONPROFIT ORG.

Address Service Requested

(708) 562-2744

Westchester, IL 60154

2501 S. Wolf Rd.

Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church