

Rector's Letter, September, 2017

Dear brothers and sisters:

What is the meaning of life? That's a big question that folks like to toss around. But there's another big question that's closer to home: what is the meaning of my life? We all wonder about that, especially when we are most confused, most unhappy with our direction and circumstances. On sleepless nights, we may find ourselves endlessly wrestling with our past decisions, with our priorities and goals, with our relationships.

We can never completely answer that question, because the meaning of a life only becomes clear when it is complete, when we die. Not only that, there is only One who judges the meaning of each life: Jesus Christ our Lord. Until all is revealed at the Last Day, we just try the best we can, using the measure of Christ's own life as our guide for what is true and good and worthy.

On September 1, the new Church Year begins. It is the time to give thanks to the Lord for all the blessings he has provided for us, and to ask for his protection and guidance in the year to come. We should not let this opportunity pass by in our own lives, to reflect on the meaning of the year just past: what has born fruit and what has withered? What was of lasting worth and what was a waste of time? And what hopes and fears need to be brought before the Lord for the coming year? If we do not take the time to reflect,

how will we hope to live our lives in a meaningful, worthy, Christ-like way? How will we prepare to meet the Lord on the Day of Judgment?

Not by accident, the Church Year begins with the Nativity of Our Most-Holy Lady Theotokos and the Conception of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist, and it ends with commemorations of the end of each of their lives (the Falling-Asleep of the Theotokos and the Beheading of St. John).

The Lord marked these two holy people as the best examples for all of us to follow, because from beginning to end both dedicated their lives to what truly matters. The Theotokos shows us the joy it is to “hear the word of the Lord and keep it.” St. John reminds us to “repent, for the Kingdom of God is close at hand.” How could our lives be summed up? How do we want to be remembered? Would the examples of our lives speak a good word to those who follow after us?

As we enter into this new Church Year, we can find new meaning for our life in giving thanks for what has already come to pass. We can also find renewed purpose by learning better what is God’s will for our lives— “hear the word of God and keep it.” And by commending ourselves, and each other, and all our life to Christ our God, we can find the meaning of life in getting to know Life itself: Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life.

With love in Christ,

Fr. John S. Mosher

Around the Parish

On Sunday, Aug. 27, **Parley Sophia Bass** was baptized in our church, with Nicole Milner as her godmother. May God grant them all many years!

We have been praying for **Samantha Fossett**, granddaughter of Margaret Walton. She is recovering from a debilitating illness that has severely weakened one side of her body. She needs intensive physical therapy to be able to do things other girls take for granted, and the bills have far outstripped their insurance. With the family's permission, we are letting you know that **the Charity Fund has contributed almost \$1,000** to Samantha's recovery this year. Your ongoing generous contributions will make it possible for SS. Peter & Paul to continue to help people in need like Samantha. Thank you for your support!

The feast of the **Nativity of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary** is on Sept. 8. The birth of the Theotokos was the fulfillment of promises made by God to her righteous parents, and also the fulfillment of the hope of generations of people who put their trust in God, from Noah to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to King David and his line. The birth of the Theotokos represents the best the human race has to offer to our Creator, and God accepts this gift and returns her to us as the mother of our Savior. We will not be holding our own services this year, instead, we have received an invitation from Waterbury:

We are invited to St. Mary's, 3125 N Main St, Waterbury, to celebrate their patronal feast with Vespers & Liturgy on the eve, Thursday, Sept. 7, at 6:15 PM. There will be a bring-and-share meal afterward. Our sister parish in Waterbury has suffered many trials in recent years, including the sudden death of their last parish priest and major structural problems with their temple. However, they gratefully worship in their parish hall, and they would welcome our participation on their feast day.

The feast of the **Elevation of the Cross** is on Sept. 14. This feast honors first the finding of the Cross of our Lord by St. Helen, and then its recovery years later, after it had been captured by the Persians. In celebration, we lift up the life-giving Cross, so that we may bow down before the crucified Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we put all our trust. We will observe the feast with Vespers and Liturgy on the eve, Wednesday, Sept. 13, at 6:00 PM.

Our **children's education sessions** begin on Sept. 17. Children are encouraged to **invite a grandparent to church** with them on that day.

Join CT Deanery Youth for a year of one-night retreats at All Saints Orthodox Church in Hartford, CT from 6:30 PM-9:30 PM. All youth in grades 6-12 are welcome to join us for food, fun, and fellowship with other Orthodox Christians from all over CT! No need to have attended Youth Rally, and don't worry if you have to arrive late. Each evening begins and ends with a short

worship service and includes dinner and an activity. **Our first "Rally after Rally" event will be on Friday, September 15** at 6:30 PM at All Saints Orthodox Church (205 Scarborough St., Hartford, CT). For more information, please call or e-mail Fr. James Parnell at 860-922-5329 or OCAchaplain@gmail.com .

Though it's hot outside, our parish is beginning to think about snow removal! If you have a **recommendation for a snow removal company**, please relay their contact information to a member of the parish council.

The Brotherhood is once again holding a **Winter Clothing Drive**. Please donate gently used winter clothing—coats, hats, gloves, boots, shoes, blankets—especially coats for young children. Monetary donations are very welcome, as well. The Brotherhood plans to hold its give-away on Saturday, Nov. 4. For more detail, speak with Andrew Bobik (203-302-7675).

The parish is looking for a volunteer to serve as our **alternate delegate at the Diocesan Assembly in Vermont, Friday to Saturday, Oct. 27–28**. If you are willing, please speak with Fr. Joshua or any member of the parish council as soon as possible. We will need to hold an election in the next few weeks for the alternate.

St. Vladimir's Seminary invites us to three major events during the month of September:

- Dr. Alice-Mary Talbot will present the Fourth Annual **Father John Meyendorff**

Memorial Lecture on Friday, Sept. 15, at 7 PM. Her presentation is titled after her forthcoming book, *Varieties of Monastic Experience in Byzantium, 800–1453*. During her lecture she will highlight some of the findings of her research in two areas—the many ways one could be a Byzantine monk, and the continuing tensions in Byzantium between the eremitic (solitary living) and coenobitic (community living) forms of monasticism.

- The seminary will be hosting a “Movie Night” on Sunday, Sept. 24, at 7 PM, featuring the newly released film, **“Becoming Truly Human”**. The documentary explores “Nones” and “Dones” through the stories of eight Millennials who journey from religious affiliation to non-affiliation and reveals not only their discouragement with “Church,” but also their thirst for “spirituality,” albeit disconnected from the “God” of their youth.

- The seminary will be the site of a **Workshop for Readers and Musicians**, sponsored by the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the OCA, on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 10 AM to 4 PM. The workshop will address the importance of liturgical reading as participants review the Church’s theology that guides and informs this ministry. They will also review rubrics and melodic patterns for reading, as well as methods for chanting the prokeimena and Alleluia verses in synergy with the choir. Participants also will receive vocal coaching and prac-

tice. Archpriest J. Sergius Halvorsen, Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Rhetoric at the seminary and an accomplished liturgical musician, will serve as Instructor for the workshop. **Pre-register by Sept. 4, 2017.**

St. Vladimir's Seminary has announced that **Orthodox Education Day on Oct. 7** will address one of the most painful realities of the 21st century: **“Modern Martyrs: Christians of the Middle East and North Africa.”** The Reverend Dr. George L. Parsenios, associate professor of New Testament at St. Vladimir's, will speak on martyrdom in the New Testament. Ed Day will reflect on the reality that the birthplace of Christianity—the Middle East—is losing its Christian population, due to persecution and war.

The day will begin with Divine Liturgy at 10 AM and will also include an Akathist service to the New Martyrs. There will be presentations and children's activities related to the theme. Admission is free. See the flyer posted on our bulletin board for more details.

The 2017 **FORCC Benefit Dinner** will be on Sunday, October 1, at 1 PM, at St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Orange. The Keynote Speaker is V. Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield, President of St. Vladimir's Seminary. He will speak on “Pan-Orthodoxy, Truth or Fiction?” If you are interested in attending please speak with Alexia Tassmer, our FORCC Representative. Reservations are required by September 24 — no tickets will be sold at the door and seating is limited. Dinner

choices are chicken or stuffed fish fillet. Tickets cost \$35 for Adults and \$10 for children under 12 years of age.

**SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church
Investment Summary
July 31, 2017**

	General Fund	Cemetery	Endowment
Beginning Investment	\$139,243	\$ 84,148 12/15	\$110,757 12/15
Additional Contributions	\$250,217	\$130,000 6/17	
Transfer to General Fund			\$3,013 12/16
Total Income Earned	\$ 24,044	\$ 5,409	\$ 8,040
Balance 7/31/17	\$428,253	\$227,221	\$126,322
Return % Average since inception	4.76%	3.16%	5.23%
Return 2017 to date	6.61%	7.93%	8.52%