

Rector's Letter, November, 2017

Dear brothers and sisters:

We are made to be a thanksgiving people. God created all things and called them good, and He crowned His creation with human beings, who are able to return an offering of thanks "on behalf of all and for all," as we say every Divine Liturgy. We can give thanks for the sunshine and the stars of heaven. We can give thanks for the earth and the seas. We can give thanks for the trees and every green thing. We can give thanks for all animals. And we can give thanks for each other. This is the great work which angels cannot fulfill, but in which small children take part. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the one perfect human being, has made on the Cross the perfect offering of thanks to God the Father, and the Good News is that we can share in that Great Thanksgiving every Divine Liturgy. "Let us give thanks to the Lord!" "It is meet and right" "Remembering all these things which have come to pass for us, the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day ... Your own of Your own we offer to You, on behalf of all and for all — We praise You, we bless you, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You, O our God!"

When we make giving thanks our way of life, it changes us and the world around us. It gives new meaning to everything that happens and everything we do. For those who fail to give

thanks, existence is a torment, full of all the moments we didn't get our due, the struggles to get even, the grinding fight to grab enough to keep going. Our patron the Apostle Paul rebukes those who, "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom 1:20-21). Being ungrateful is a failure to be truly human, wasting our lives and spreading darkness and misery.

Giving thanks does not mean that suddenly bad things pass us by, but it does mean that we are not slaves to good fortune. We find joy in the gift of life itself, even in the midst of suffering, and we trust that God who has given us every good thing also has a purpose to bring good even out of evil circumstances. Remember the story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers and so was brought into a position to save both Egypt and his whole family from years of famine. In the end, he told his brothers: "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones" (Genesis 50.19-21). This trust in the goodness of God is at the heart of giving thanks.

Trust and giving thanks is the key to understanding the Scriptures as well. Our Lord, having risen from the dead, appeared to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus and opened the Scriptures to them, showing how Moses and all

the prophets taught that Christ would suffer and die and so “enter into His glory” (Luke 24.13-35). So it is “meet and right” for us to give thanks that God prepared our salvation from the very beginning, and that He has prepared for each one of us a place at the great Wedding Banquet. We can recognize that all the complicated threads of our lives are in the hands of the Master Craftsman who does not make junk.

We can give thanks for the story of our fathers and mothers, who brought us into the world and who provided for us; the story of founding of our parish and the establishment of the awe-inspiring house of God in which we now worship; even the story of the founding and preservation of our nation. We also give thanks for the good turns we have received: friends, marriages, children, health, wealth or happy experiences. Our parish can give thanks for all those who give of themselves to serve the church. All of these are blessings from God.

So let us take joy in Thanksgiving Day. It is the most sacred of civic holidays. Embrace it as part of our Christian ministry, inspiring us to give thanks to God every day. We can follow the teaching of the Apostle Paul:

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which sur-

passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

May the peace of God enter into our lives more and more, with thanksgiving.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. John S. Modun



Around the Parish

We welcome three new ones into our parish family: **Cora Marie Sousa**, daughter of Mario and Natasha, was born on Oct. 11; **Dakota Stankiewicz**, son of Matt and Amy, was born on Oct. 22; and **Timothy Alexander Beck**, son of Veronica Tassmer and Josh Beck, was born on Oct. 24. All are happy and healthy. May God grant them many years!

Everyone soon should be receiving a **Stewardship Packet for 2018** in the mail. Please read it through carefully and consider how to faithfully respond. Please reply as soon as possible.

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).

On Sunday, Nov. 5, we will celebrate the annual **Endowment Fund Thanksgiving and Memorial Service** at the conclusion of the Liturgy.

The parish is holding a **Thanksgiving feast** before the Nativity Fast begins. Please join us on Sunday, Nov. 12, following the Divine Liturgy.

The Nativity Fast begins on Nov. 15. This season prepares us for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. As the shop displays and catalogs are already warning us, Christmas is approaching fast. For the world around us, this means a frenzy of shopping, decorating, and partying. If we would truly enter into the blessings God has set before us, we need to begin a very different sort of labor: being mindful of God for the gift of his Son and acting out of gratitude in every aspect of life. We observe the Nativity Fast by refraining from meat and rich foods, by prayer

and confession, and giving to the needy. May we be blessed with peace!

On Nov. 21, we celebrate **Entry of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary into the Temple**. The righteous Joachim and Anna had waited long, sorrowful years to be granted a child, and when the Lord at last gave them Mary in their old age, they vowed that when she was weaned, she would be offered to the Lord's service in the Temple in Jerusalem. In the feast of the Entry into the Temple, we celebrate how this vow was fulfilled with thanksgiving and joy. Through their offering, the child Mary was raised up to become a temple and dwelling place for God the Word—Jesus Christ our Lord. We will observe the feast with Vespers & Liturgy on Monday, Nov. 20, at 6 PM.

We will observe **Thanksgiving Day** with the Akathist Service, "Glory to God for all things," on Thurs., Nov. 23, at 10 AM. This simple yet profound service is not long, but it does give thanks for every aspect of creation. Consider making it part of your own Thanksgiving.

Please remember that, if severe weather conditions force **church service or event cancellations**, announcements will be posted on WFSB (channel 3) and WNBC/WVIT (channel 30), as well as on our own parish website: <www.sspeter-paul.org>.

Beyond Our Parish

All are invited to join Archbishop Nikon and neighboring clergy on Sunday, November 12, at 4 P.M. for the **Vespers of St. Nectarios at Christ the Savior**, 1070 Roxbury Rd, Southbury. Please note this is the Sunday after his Feast Day. There will be a procession with his relics, prayers for the sick and anointing with the oil from St. Nectarios' tomb. A light Buffet will follow. For more, call 203-267-1330 or visit www.christsaviorchurch.org.

#GivingTuesday at St. Vladimir's Will Double Your Money. Donate to seminarians living in New York *and* to aid Pro Vita Association for the Born and Unborn in Romania. When you donate any amount that day to St. Vladimir's Seminary on #GivingTuesday, November 28, not only will your gift be multiplied 2x by a donor, but 10% of your gift will be given Pro Vita Association for the Born and Unborn in Romania, a non-profit and apolitical organization that provides healthcare and education to family members in need. Through such support Pro Vita encourages the well being of family units being torn apart by economic stress, and often prevents the heartbreaking decision by a desperate mother to abort her unborn child. If you give \$10 on November 28, it will become \$20 automatically, and you'll be helping seminarians around the globe as they prepare to serve our Church. Go to www.svots.edu/givingtuesday to **#give2svots!**

Glory to God for All Things!

The following is a part of the Akathist we sing on Thanksgiving Day. Come and see!

Everlasting King, your will for our salvation is full of power. Your right arm controls the whole course of human life. We give you thanks for all your mercies, seen and unseen; for eternal life, for the heavenly joys of the Kingdom which is to be. Grant mercy to us who sing your praise: Glory to you, O God, unto ages of ages.

I was born a weak, defenseless child, but your angel spread his wings over my cradle to defend me. From birth until now your love has illumined my path, and has wondrously guided me towards the light of eternity; from birth until now the generous gifts of your providence have been marvelously showered upon me. I give you thanks, with all who have come to know you, who call upon your name:

Glory to you for calling me into being.

Glory to you, showing me the beauty of the universe.

Glory to you, spreading out before me heaven and earth like the pages in a book of eternal wisdom.

Glory to you for your eternity in this fleeting world.

Glory to you for your mercies, seen and unseen.

Glory to you through every sigh of my sorrow.

Glory to you for every step of my life's journey, for every moment of glory.

Glory to you, O God, unto ages of ages!