

Rector's Letter, February, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters:

We sometimes divide life into the “spiritual” and the “material,” to our cost. The material covers the practical activities: earning money, managing property, matters of sickness and health, and also our friends, family, and interests. The spiritual is focused on church services, prayers, the Bible, the sacraments, and similar affairs—all really the province of the priest.

But the division is an imaginary one. Our Lord has a lot to say about things we sometimes think of as strictly material: money, business, health, family, friends—it’s all tied together with the Spirit of God, according to our Lord’s Gospel.

And the division of labor is imaginary too. We consider “ministry” the work of the priest (and okay, we’d include the altar servers and choir), but cleaning the church? That’s not the same thing. But the Spirit doesn’t make that distinction. Preaching and cleaning, praying and hosting coffee hour—they are all ministries necessary for the work of the church, and the Spirit works through each one of us, no matter how we serve.

These are all different ministries, different activities, requiring different gifts—just like St. Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. He speaks about gifts from the Holy Spirit: wisdom, knowledge, faith, even miracles—but also helping others and even administration. All of them glorify God and serve others, which is what Christian ministry is all about.

You may have heard how another name for the Church is the Body of Christ. In this same chapter while talking about variety of gifts and ministries, St.

Paul helps us understand by talking about different members of the Body, like different body parts:

For as the body is one and has many members ... so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many... If the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? ... But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

So we, members of the Body of Christ, members of his Church, each have our gifts that God asks us to use to build up that Body, to help SS. Peter & Paul. The whole Body suffers when one member holds back, and the whole Body benefits from even the most quiet, seemingly unnoticed contribution. Please join in!

Yours in Christ,



Around the Parish

We are looking for new participants in our **Growth and Outreach Committee** this year. If you would like to participate in this group, which considers ideas for building up the parish community and better connecting with our neighbors, please speak with Fr. Joshua or Jesse Torgerson. Non-parish council members are welcome!

This year, the **SS. Peter and Paul Brotherhood Society** is celebrating a milestone—our 110 year Anniversary. The Brotherhood has long been an essential part of the life of the parish. Comprised of individuals willing to maintain and preserve our church, and meet socially, we invite all males to join this worthwhile Society. See President Greg Mankevich, VP Joe Uliase or Treasurer Paul Leonowich for more information. Annual Dues \$20.00.

There is still opportunity for **house blessings**. Our homes need this spiritual “spring cleaning” each year to free them from the remembrance of sin and fill them with the presence of the Holy Spirit. All that is required is that you prepare a list of the living and departed that you wish to commemorate, and set up a candle and bowl of holy water before an icon. (Fr. Joshua brings holy water, too, in case anyone needs more.) Please speak with Fr. Joshua to arrange a time.

The feast of the **Meeting of the Lord in the Temple** is Feb. 2. This is the day when our Lord Jesus Christ was brought into the temple as a forty-day-old child by his parents. There the Righteous Simeon testified that he saw the promised salvation of Israel fulfilled: “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation....” We sing his prayer of thanksgiving at every service of Vespers. We will observe the Meeting of the Lord with Vespers & Liturgy at 6 PM on Thursday, Feb. 1.

Meatfare Sunday is Feb. 11. His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon will be making his annual visitation that weekend, and plans to join us for Meatfare Dinner that Sunday. Tickets are available from Donna Leonowich, Sarah Massaro and Jill Zadar: \$20 per adult, children under 12 are free.

The season of Great Lent begins with the Rite of Forgiveness on Sunday afternoon, Feb. 18. Each of us has the responsibility to ask and offer forgiveness before Lent starts. Unless we are homebound, we shouldn't be anywhere but in church that day.

In the first week of Great Lent, we will have services most of the week, to enter into the spirit of repentance and spiritual effort which makes the time of fasting fruitful. In addition to the Rite of Forgiveness, we will celebrate the **Canon of St. Andrew** and the first **Presanctified Liturgy and Lenten Supper** on Wednesday. These services begin at 6 PM, Monday through Thursday of the first week of Lent.

We are invited on Saturday, Feb. 24, at All Saints Orthodox Church in Hartford for a day-long Lenten retreat for Orthodox Christian adults. The retreat is entitled: **“Becoming Fire—Christian Living in Turbulent Times,”** and will be led by Dr. Al Rossi from St. Vladimir's Seminary. Please see the flyer on the bulletin board downstairs for details.

We look forward with joy to the baptism of **Cora Marie Sousa** on Sunday, Feb. 25, at 1 PM. May God grant Cora Marie and her parents, Natasha and Mario, many years!

The following **Lenten services in the Connecticut Deanery** can also be added to your calendar, all beginning at 4 PM on Sundays during Great Lent:

- ❖ 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, March 4, Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church, 34 Fair View Ave, Terryville: Lenten Vespers.
- ❖ 3rd Sunday of Great Lent, March 11: FORCC Vespers.
- ❖ 4th Sunday of Great Lent, March 18: Holy Trinity Church, New Britain: Lenten Vespers.

- ❖ 5th Sunday of Great Lent, March 25, Three Saints, 26 Howard Ave, Ansonia: Annual Unction Service.
- ❖ Palm Sunday, April 9, All Saints, 205 Scarborough Street, Hartford: Bridegroom Matins of Holy Monday.

Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon Sanctity of Life Sunday January 21, 2018

Sunday, Jan. 21, was observed as “Sanctity of Life Sunday” in parishes across the United States. The commemoration marks the 45th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the US. Metropolitan Tikhon, at the request of His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, Chair of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, lead the Orthodox delegation at the annual March for Life in Washington, DC on Friday, Jan. 19. Metropolitan Tikhon offered the opening prayer at the pre-March program.

The complete text of His Beatitude’s annual message on Sanctity of Life Sunday is available on our parish bulletin board and on the OCA website: <<https://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon/sanctity-of-life-sunday-2018>>. We share below some extracts from that message:

To the honorable Clergy, venerable Monastics, and pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

From the moment they were born, both Moses and our Lord Jesus Christ faced great danger: as infants someone wanted each of them dead. Moses’s life was saved because the Hebrew midwives feared God more than Pharaoh, so they refused to follow the order to kill the newborn males (Ex. 1:17). And our Savior’s life was spared because of angelic intervention (Mt. 2:13).

But the Holy Innocents were not spared. Herod’s lust for power, or rather his deep-seated insecurity, led to the massacre of a multitude of small children, and the bitter weeping of their inconsolable mothers. We sing of this at the Ninth Royal Hour on Christmas Eve: “Mothers were bereft of their infants, and by an untimely death their babes were bitterly harvested. Breasts grew dry and sources of milk were stopped. Great was this calamity!”

The root of sin and specifically of violence toward our fellow human being has not changed since those times. It has always been our passions: anger, fear, judgment, despair, jealousy, pride, vanity, to name only a few. Moreover, the Fathers of our Church have always taught that the nature of all passions is one and the same: love of the self. This is, in the words of our Lord, “not to think the things of God, but those of man” (Mt. 16:23), or in other words not to think as God does, but as people do.... The mind of God is not only not to kill, but to give life to the world through His death (John 6:33, 51).

Locking ourselves within our own minds and setting ourselves as the standard of life, not only do we not see God for what He is, but we don’t see our fellow human beings for what they are.... The calamities we inflict on each other are not different in nature since the beginning of time, they are only greater. Today we have means to injure others on extraordinarily

larger scales.... The only difference between us and the sinners of ancient times is that we have greater means for putting ourselves first....

Yet, the scariest of all things is not even the scale of our means of violence. Rather it is the fact that our human mind has devolved in its own universe to the point of finding justification for all these terrible violences. At times it even seems that we are drawing near to justifying anything.... So much violence has been done in the name of the law and of the good of the human being.

In front of this terrible reality some of us will be drawn to prayer. Others will be drawn to helping all the victims of this terrible violence. Others will be drawn to changing the law. But in front of all of us, regardless of our inclinations, is put forth the only Way and the only conquering of death and victory of life—Christ, the one who “died for the life of the world” (John 6:51). There is a great mystery hidden in this truth, because Christ died for the life of the world at the hands of the world. This is how St. John Chrysostom puts it:

Tell me, what is the goal of the Gospel of grace? Why the revelation of the Son of God in the flesh? So that we bite and devour each other?

...Christ didn't die only for friends or for His own, but also for His enemies, for tyrants, for impostors, for those who hated and crucified Him...

Throw the net of love, not so that the lame will fall, but rather that he be healed... and thus having searched the hidden depths, pull out from the chasm of perdition the one drowned by his thoughts...

Do not hate! Do not turn away! Do not persecute! Rather, show him pure and true love.

And how Christ died “for the life of the world” at the hands of the world clarifies for us the most crucial thing, namely that life has only one source and only one victory: selfless or self-sacrificial love. Let us be selfless love for all and we—in the one who is Love and Life itself—will conquer death:

Be persecuted, but persecute not.

Be crucified, but crucify not.

Be wronged, but wrong not.

Be slandered, but slander not.

Have clemency, not zeal, with respect to evil.

Lay hold of goodness, not justice.

Justice does not belong to the Christian way of life, and there is no mention of it in Christ's teaching. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep: for this is the sign of limpid purity. Suffer with the sick, and mourn with sinners; with those who repent, rejoice...

Be a partaker in the sufferings of all men, but keep your body distant from all. Rebuke no man, revile no man, not even those who live very wickedly.

Spread your cloak over the man who is falling and cover him. (St. Isaac of Syria)

With love in Christ,

+ ***Tikhon***

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada