

Rector's Letter

November, 2020

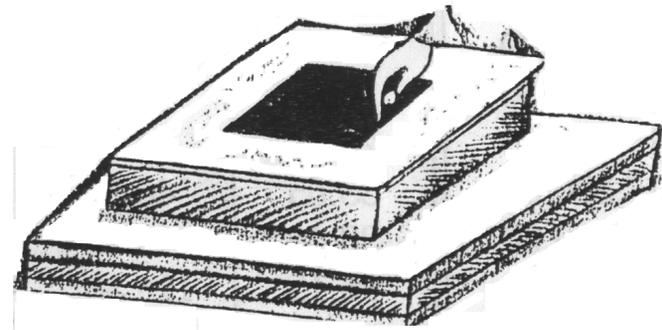
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“Let us give thanks to the Lord.” This is the fundamental calling of all Christians, to give thanks, and it is a blessing that we are reminded of it with Thanksgiving Day each November. God has created the world and all that dwells in it. He has given us life and every gift that we possess. He has sent his Son Jesus Christ to free us from the power of death and share eternal life with us. And in return, we are supposed to do what God created us in the beginning to do: give thanks.

Giving thanks means first that we acknowledge that we are not “self-made men”: “Know that the Lord, he is God; it is he who has made us, and not we ourselves” (Psalm 100:3). If we are pleased with our talents, our accomplishments, or the good things in life, then we need to give thanks to God for giving them to us. If we are not going hungry this day, we need to give thanks to God for the food we are about to eat. If we have been preserved from harm, we need to give thanks for God’s mercy. When we go to sleep, we give thanks for the day that is past, and when we wake up, we give thanks for the day that is to come. And of course we need to come together for the Divine Liturgy, to take up our part in the

work of thanksgiving (“Let us give thanks to the Lord!” “It is meet and right...”).

When we give thanks, we turn away from sin and selfishness. We avoid fighting to please ourselves or to grab what we can get, because we remember that God has provided for us. We avoid envy and resentment, because we remember everything any of us has is a gift. We are generous because the Lord told us, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). With our “time, talent, and treasure,” we offer to God the first and best of our labors, not the leftovers, because God has already offered to us the priceless treasures of the kingdom.



We can be bold with God as a thanksgiving people. We are tempted to spend a lot of time and energy worrying about the problems of our church and complaining about our failures. But God invites us to be confident in his goodness even in the midst of these trials. He even asks us to test him in this:

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts. “See if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

As God’s own people, we do not need to fear any trouble; we can give offerings of thanksgiving to God no matter what, because God has promised to work all things for good, and his promises are sure.

With love in Christ,



Around the Parish

Everyone soon should be receiving a **Stewardship Packet for 2021** in the mail. Please read it through carefully and consider how to faithfully respond. We rely on your support to carry out the work God has entrusted to us.

Online Christian education series: “Exploring Our Faith.” Join us any time as we explore important aspects of the Orthodox Christian Faith, inviting your own questions each session. Our next session—“Orthodox Teaching on the Last Days”—is planned for **Tuesday, Nov.**

24, at 7:00. We continue to use GoToMeeting, with the “Praying Together” details shared above.

Children’s education this month: We will have an online session after the Liturgy on Sunday, Nov. 22. Come learn about the angels!

On Sunday, Nov. 1, we will celebrate the annual **Endowment Fund Thanksgiving and Memorial Service** at the conclusion of the Liturgy.

On Sunday, Nov. 8, we look forward with joy to the **uniting of Rebecca Swimmer and Michael Pannone in the mystery of Holy Marriage** at 3:00. The Parish Council has worked out a new plan allowing for such events close to the Divine Liturgy, while still minimizing the risk of Coronavirus. This involves an intense sanitizing process that prevents any access to the building for at least four hours. As a result, the **Divine Liturgy on Sunday, Nov. 8, needs to begin early, at 9 AM!** We will ask everyone to leave promptly at the end of the Liturgy, and the doors will be opened once again at approximately 2:30. We are grateful for your attention and cooperation.

The Nativity Fast begins on Nov. 15, to prepare us for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We observe the Nativity Fast by refraining from meat and rich foods, by prayer and confession, and by 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**. We join with Joachim and Anna in giving thanks for the Virgin Mary, brought into the Temple with 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 celebrate festal Vespers & Liturgy at 6 PM on Friday, Nov. 20.**

We look forward with joy to welcoming two members

of the Starks family into the household of faith: **Lukas by Holy Baptism and his father Trevor by Holy Chrismation, on Saturday, Nov. 21, at 2 PM.** On that day, the feast of the Entrance into the Temple of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, may the Lord grant them (and mother Christine Shanahan) many blessed years!

We will observe Thanksgiving Day with the **Akathist Service, “Glory to God for all things,”** on Thurs., Nov. 26, at 10 AM. This sim-



ple yet profound service is not long, but it does give thanks for every aspect of creation. Consider making it part of your own Thanksgiving.

Our **annual parish meeting** will take place after the Liturgy on Sunday, Dec. 13, this year. As we have done earlier this year, we will make it possible for people to participate fully via Go-ToMeeting. Use the same connection information as for our services:

<https://sspeterpaul.org/praying>

In preparation for our annual meeting, we are asking that all reports be submitted before Nov. 18, so that we can mail them in a packet to each parish member—we are not able to distribute the reports in person.

We ask your support for our Charity Fund as we draw near to Thanksgiving. Normally at this time, we would be preparing for our parish Thanksgiving celebrations. In our constrained circumstances, we still want to reach out to others out of love and gratitude.

We now accept donations online! We are using Square Online to receive all standard forms of payment. The page allows donations of any amount, and can set recurring contributions for your convenience. Learn more on our donations page: <https://sspeterpaul.org/donate> .

We welcome your donations and pledges, which can be mailed to SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, PO Box 334, Meriden CT 06450. We

are grateful for your continued support of the work of our parish, which has continued even during the lockdown, and even has expanded into new areas, like our online ministries. Thank you!

We are seeking volunteer videographers for Sunday mornings. Rick Comshaw has spearheaded our camera and sound set-up, which is now working well to stream services online, but we need a small team of people willing to learn to use our equipment, to take responsibility for our streaming each Sunday. If you are interested, please speak with Fr. Joshua or Rick Comshaw (860-736-4139).



Stewards of the OCA Sunday, November 15: Support the work of the Orthodox Church in America by becoming a Steward of the OCA. Your support will enhance the work of the ministries and departments of the OCA that serve the entire church by providing important resources such as liturgical texts, liturgical music, religious educational material, and educational events. Other new and exciting projects are also under development. Go to oca.org/stewards to learn more and to view the schedule of upcoming live online events that will highlight the work and plans of the departments.

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!