

The Protomartyr Newsletter

A monthly publication of St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Stephen Cathedral,

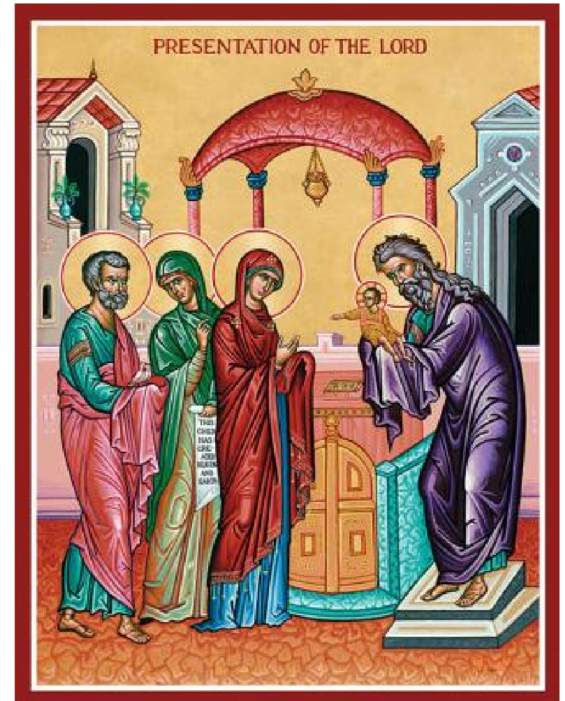
Here in Philadelphia we finally got a real taste of winter. After a very mild December and most of January, the first snow came as a historic blizzard that dumped two feet of snow, closed many businesses and schools, and even churches. Still, here at St. Stephen's a few of our parishioners that were able to dig themselves out in time traveled on Sunday morning to gather in our chapel and celebrate the Divine Liturgy, while others observed the Lord's Day with prayer and reading of the Scripture at their homes. It is important for us to remember the Lord's Day, the Day of the Resurrection, as that most central observance that makes us who we are: Christians. Without faith in Christ's Resurrection there is no Christianity and those who call themselves Christians, but who are not living in this weekly remembrance of the Resurrection by spending Sunday in prayer sooner or later lose their identity. For them Christianity becomes either a relic of the past or a cultural association that has no real impact on their lives.

So to be a Christian means, first of all, to have an encounter with Jesus Christ not as someone who lived a long time ago and left us some lessons of life, but as the One who is truly alive because He rose from the dead and is now sitting at the right hand of God the Father and to whom is given all the powers in heaven and on earth. To believe in Christ is to see His providential care in everything that happens in our lives and to seek to understand what His will for each one of us is. And the Church calls us to this encounter with Jesus every time we come here for services, both on the weekends and on Feast Days. A Great Feast that is celebrated in the month of February is exactly about this encounter. On the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, celebrated on February 2, we hear about Jesus being brought to the Temple on the 40th day after His birth. On that day there was an encounter between this young child and the Elder Symeon and prophetess Anna. Symeon and Anna lived a long life, hoping in God and waiting for His salvation. And now, at the end of their lives, their hope was fulfilled and they recognized in this infant the Messiah and Savior promised by God. Each one of us as well, young and old, are only then a Christian, if we, both in our mind, in our heart and in our deeds, recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God, our Savior and our Lord.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you!

With love in Christ,

Fr. Victor



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ICONOSTAS PROJECT



We are happy to report that the Iconostas Project in the main church has begun! And we are deeply thankful for the generosity of our parishioners who have pledged to sponsor this project! We hope to have two new icons coming to the iconostas approximately once a month. We expect the project to be completed by summer, after which we will schedule a special service of blessing of the iconostas.



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish Meeting: will take place on **Sunday, February 28th, at 12:00 PM** (following the Divine Liturgy). This is an important event in the life of our parish when we gather together as one community to elect new members of the Parish Council and discuss the various aspects of the life of our church. Please note that in order to participate in this meeting, one **must be a Communicant in our parish**, and **fulfill financial obligations for the Year 2015** by contributing at least the minimum required amount for the support of the Cathedral.



MEATFARE DINNER



This year, **Sunday March 6th** is the Sunday of the Last Judgment, the third Sunday of Preparation before the start of the Great Fast. It is also popularly known as **Meatfare Sunday**, the name coming from the fact that this is the last day on which Orthodox Christians are permitted to eat meat or poultry until Pascha. Here, at St Stephen's, we traditionally mark this day with one joined celebration of the Divine Liturgy, followed by a festal meal featuring plenty of animal products! Please mark this day on your calendar, and let us come together as one family to celebrate and share in this important day of preparation for the Great Lent.

THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH

Thank You For Attending the 79th Annual Novogodny Ball!



St. Stephen's OCF and its members would like to thank everyone from St. Stephen Cathedral who attended the 79th Novogodny Ball in January. We had 250 patrons who came to the Ball this year, including friends from Ohio, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia. The large number of kids and young adults who were at the Ball was wonderful to see. Many of these kids had met at Orthodox summer camps. They have continued their friendships and look forward to seeing each other at the Ball every January. If you or your family have not participated in the Ball in the past, you will have another opportunity to attend in January 2017. You will have a great time and you will be helping to support Orthodox and other worthy charities.

Penny Party

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, February 20th after Great Vespers. If you have new items that you would like to donate for this parish fund raising event, or if you are available to assist during the event, please see Lorraine Kane.

The Annual Parish Meeting... ...will YOU be There?

According to the parish By-Laws, the Annual Parish Meeting of St. Stephen Cathedral is to be held on or about the last Sunday of each February. Accordingly, the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 28, 2016. The Annual Parish Meeting is an important event in the life of the parish. Parishioners have the opportunity to hear about the previous year, to approve the parish budget, and to elect the officers and trustees who will guide the parish. The By-Laws require a quorum of 40 members in good standing in order to hold the meeting. Unfortunately, many parishioners head for the door after services and it is sometimes difficult to find 40 members who care enough about their parish to attend. If you care about your parish, please demonstrate your stewardship by devoting several hours of your Sunday afternoon to attend the Annual Parish Meeting. Look for the official announcement in the mail and please plan to attend.

Help Needed...

... at weekday Coffee Hours

During the course of the year there are many occasions when we have a Feast Day that falls during the week. Those who come on Feast Day mornings for the service of Divine Liturgy are always invited downstairs for Coffee Hour and fellowship. If you plan on coming to a Feast Day that is celebrated on a work

day, please consider bringing something to share with everyone after the service. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

February Charity

We have learned that Matushka Mary Geeza, the wife of our former pastor, Archpriest. Daniel, recently suffered health problems. She is getting better but is still in need of further medical care. Father Dan and Matushka Mary are thankful for all the prayers that were offered by the faithful of St. Stephen Cathedral. Our Parish Council decided to dedicate our February Charity collection to assist Father and Matushka with medical expenses. We ask you to be generous with your contributions and to continue to remember Fr. Dan and Matushka Mary in your prayers.

2015 Financial Results

For 2015, the parish had budgeted essentially a break even year with General Fund Income of \$208,000 and General Fund Expenses of \$208,300. Actual General Fund Income for 2015 was \$216,000, which was greater than budgeted, and General Fund Expenses were \$210,000, a \$6,000 positive result for the year. It should be noted however, that expenses would have been over \$4,000 more had it not been for the financial stewardship of a parishioner. The 2016 budget is currently being prepared and we will again be relying on the financial stewardship of our members to

THE LIFE OF OUR PARISH (CONT'D)

enable St. Stephen's to meet its expenses and do the work of the church.

The 26th Souper Bowl of Caring



Please join our Orthodox Catholic Fellowship as we participate in this year's drive on February 7 to address hunger and poverty in our area. Since 1990, young people have been teaming up around the time of the Super Bowl to collect dollars and food for local charities. Over 110 million dollars have been raised! We ask you to help us at St. Stephen's to be successful again this year in raising funds for Philabundance and collecting canned goods for St. Tikhon's Seminary. On February 7 we will be selling soup at our kitchen window, collecting money in soup pots, and accepting canned goods. If you have a Sunday School student, please encourage them to get involved by donating at least one canned good to our boxes. Please be generous!!!

Did You Hand in Your 2016 Pledge Card?

For the 2016 pledge drive, we sent out 120 pledge cards to our members. As this is being written, we have received 57 replies, which is a less than a 50%

response rate. This is extremely disappointing and makes it difficult to budget for 2016. Financial and non-financial stewardship are both important to our parish. Members who infrequently participate in the religious and sacramental life of the parish still have an obligation to their parish. If you haven't returned your 2016 pledge card, please take a minute to prayerfully consider God's gifts to you and respond accordingly. If you have lost or misplaced your pledge card, please ask for a new one.

Parish Revitalization Meetings

The level of interest and participation in the series of Parish Revitalization meetings which we held during 2015 was a big disappointment. These meetings covered important aspects of the life of our parish and provided an open forum for honest discussion and opinion. Sadly, the participation in these meetings was sparse, outside of a handful of parish council members. Several more meetings are planned for 2016. It's not too late to participate and to give your input on what we can collectively do to make St. Stephen's a better parish.

Offering Envelopes

If you haven't already, please pick up your box of 2016 offering envelopes which you will find downstairs in the church hall.

The envelopes cost approximately \$10 per box so they should be used and not wasted. The box also includes an Initial Offering envelope which is used to offset at least part of the cost of the envelopes. Any contribution toward the cost of the envelopes would be appreciated.

Some Thoughts About the Monthly Newsletter

This February newsletter represents the eighth monthly newsletter that we have been providing to our parishioners. Special thanks go to Paulette Kevolic, Rdr. Daniel Drobish, and Jane Volin for the work they have been doing to make the newsletter possible. Any comments or suggestions are always welcome, and any contributions to support the printing and mailing of the newsletter are appreciated.

Here is a request: the newsletter will usually be available on the last Sunday of the month for the coming month or the first Sunday of the month in the current month. Please save the parish postage by picking up your addressed copy at the candle desk. We had to mail out 28 copies this month to parishioners who are in church every Sunday but didn't pick up their January newsletter. Stale news is no news. Please take your copy of the new newsletter every month and help us reduce expenses.

February 2016

(NOTE: Light Grey denotes Fasting Days)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	6:30 PM Great Vespers	MEETING OF THE LORD 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy		7:00 PM Daily Vespers / Bible Class		9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM - Great Vespers
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9:40 AM - 3 rd & 6 th Hours <i>Reader: Nina Gavula</i> 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy <i>Epistle: Christopher Jones</i> Souper Bowl Sunday!				7:00 PM Daily Vespers / Bible Class		9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM - Vigil
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9:40 AM - 3 rd & 6 th Hours <i>Reader: Alexa Jensky</i> 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy <i>Epistle: Michael Jones</i>	7:30 PM Parish Council Meeting			7:00 PM Moleben to St Panteleimon / Bible Class		9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM - Great Vespers 6:30 PM - Penny Party
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE 9:40 AM - 3 rd & 6 th Hours <i>Reader: Anna Jensky</i> 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy <i>Epistle: Michael McCartney</i>			----- Fast-free Week -----			9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM - Great Vespers with General Confession
28	29			7:00 PM Daily Vespers / Bible Class		
PRODIGAL SON 9:40 AM - 3 rd & 6 th Hours <i>Reader: Bob Lutzick</i> 10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy <i>Epistle: Larry Skvir</i> 12:00 PM - Annual Parish Mtg						
<p>Slavonic Divine Liturgy is celebrated every Sunday at 8:30AM in St Michael Chapel</p> <p>Please check the Cathedral website for any changes to the schedule. www.ststephenscathedral.org/calendar.html</p>						

PRAYERS

For the Newly-Baptized/Chrismated

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, visitation, and furtherance in all good things to Thy servants, and preserve them for Many Years!

Mary (Madison) Popelak Samantha Skvir Elijah Rabaca Katherine Gavula

For our February Birthdays

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health, salvation, visitation, and furtherance in all good things to Thy servants, and preserve them for Many Years!

Nicholas Jones	1	Stephen Mandell	10	Barbara Afanassiev	21
Denise Rowe	3	Maura Wagner	11	Christopher Jones	22
Jude Milan Mitchell	4	Christine (Nass) Phillips	11	Leonard Kolomyec	24
Nicholas Afanassiev	9	Connie Skvir	17	Ekaterina Hulayew	26
Vladislav Ringe	9	Diane Fedoronko	18	Laura Waskovich	26
		Irena Ferraro	20		

For the Sick

O Christ our God, Who alone art our Defender: visit and heal Thy suffering servants, delivering them from all sickness and grievous pains and afflictions. Guide the hands of the physicians and nurses that attend to them so that all things may be done according to Thy Will. Raise them up from their bed of illness, so that they may continually offer hymns and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto Thee; through the prayers of the Most-Holy Theotokos, the Holy Apostle and Physician Luke, the Holy Greatmartyr and Healer Panteleimon, and all the Holy and Venerable Unmercenary Physicians and Healers who have been well-pleasing to Thee throughout all the ages. For Thine it is to show us mercy and to save us, and to Thee do we ascribe Glory, together with Thy Father who is from everlasting, and Thy Most-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen!

Mary Popelak	Dimitri Archie	Eric DeFrancesco	Lois Brautigam
Bogdan Arutyunov	Ersilia Maximo	Pauline Englesson	Maria Sedorcheva
Andrew Wagner	Arnold Jensky	Michele Decker	Olga Gazak
Keivan Galaviz	Dimitry Hubiak	Alice Kopistansky	

For the Departed

O God of spirits and of all flesh, Who hast trampled down Death and overthrown the Devil, and hast given Life to Thy world, do Thou, the same Lord, give rest to the soul of Thy departed servants, in a place of brightness, a place of refreshment, a place of repose, where all sickness, sighing, and sorrow have fled away. Pardon every transgression which they have committed, whether by word or deed or thought. For Thou art a good God and lovest Mankind; because there is no man who lives yet does not sin, for Thou only art without sin, Thy righteousness is righteousness to all eternity, and Thy Word is Truth. For Thou art the Resurrection, the Life, and the Repose of Thy departed servants who have fallen asleep, O Christ our God, and unto Thee do we ascribe Glory, together with Thy Father, who is from everlasting, and Thine All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever unto ages of ages. Amen! MEMORY ETERNAL!

Ever-Memorable Archpriest Alexander	Newly-departed Antonina Ren
Ever-Memorable Matushka Mary	Newly-departed Walter Barford
	Newly-departed Michael Mariani

CHURCH ETIQUETTE

Part 4 - Receiving the Antidoron, Holy Bread



When receiving the antidoron after Holy Communion, or after venerating the cross at the end of Divine Liturgy, do not allow the crumbs to drop, since this is blessed bread. Children will need assistance so that they do not take too many pieces, and so they are not careless in handling the bread. After returning to your seat, you may eat the holy bread as you say the prayers after Holy Communion silently while others are communing.

Additional Pious Customs

- **Crossing oneself** - It is always appropriate to cross oneself at the mention of the Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; whenever entering or leaving the church; at the beginning of the Liturgy; when passing in front of the altar; when venerating an icon, the Gospel, or the cross; and at times for personal petitions. It is not necessary to cross oneself when the priest is giving a blessing or censuring the congregation. Instead, one should bow to receive the blessing.
- **Bowing** - Orthodox Christians bow when the Theotokos and Christ are petitioned. They also bow to the priest at his blessing, and when he asks forgiveness before the Great Entrance and again before Holy Communion. It is traditional for the Orthodox faithful to bow and cross themselves when they enter and leave the church, and when they pray before the icons.
- **Kneeling** - In some Orthodox traditions there are times when kneeling is a pious practice in the Liturgy, the most notable being at the Consecration of the Holy Gifts. However, kneeling is prohibited during the Paschal season (from Pascha to Pentecost) as well as on Sundays, in honor of the Resurrection.

(Read Part 5 in the March 2016 Newsletter)

MEDITATIONS ON THE DIVINE LITURGY OF THE HOLY EASTERN ORTHODOX CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH

BY NIKOLAI GOGOL

The Office of Preparation (The Proskomidia) (*cont'd*)

Priest and deacon, taking their vestments in their hands, make three bows towards the East and repeat silently:

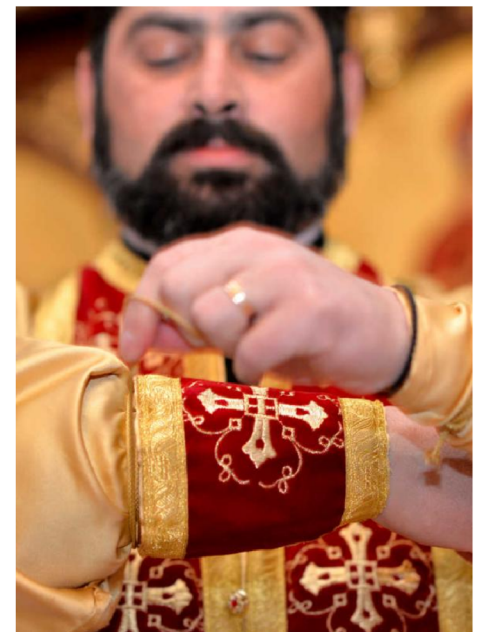
God cleanse me, a sinner, and have mercy on me.

The deacon takes his dalmatic and stole (orarion) and asks the priest to bless them. Upon receiving the blessing he goes aside and vests. First, he puts on the dalmatic which is of a bright color signifying the radiant attire of the angels and in remembrance of unsullied purity of heart that ought to be inseparable from the priestly office. The deacon after putting on his dalmatic and the priest his sticharion say:

My soul shall exult in the Lord, for He has endued me with the robe of salvation, and with the garment of joy has He clothed me. He has set a crown on my head like a bridegroom, and like a bride He has adorned me with comeliness. (Psalm 61:10)

Then the deacon kisses his stole, a long narrow band, and hangs it over his left shoulder. The stole is the symbol of the office of deacon: with it the deacon gives the sign for the commencement of every part of the church service, for the worshipers to pray, the choir to sing, the priest to begin his duties, and for the deacon himself to have the swiftness of the angels and their readiness to serve. The office of the deacon corresponds to that of the angels in heaven. According to the interpretation of St. John Chrysostom, this narrow band on the deacon's shoulder fluttering to and fro like a wing symbolizes the flying of the angels. Next, the deacon puts on cuffs which are fastened firmly about the wrists so as to allow the hands greater freedom of movement and dexterity during the sacred office. While putting them on he meditates on the all-creative and efficacious power of God. For the right cuff he recites:

Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorified in strength. Thy right hand, O Lord, has shattered the enemy, and through the multitude of Thy glory Thou hast crushed Thy adversaries. (Exodus 15:6-7)



As he puts on the left cuff he reflects that he is the work of God's hands and asks his Creator to direct him with His guidance from above, saying:

Thy hands have made me and moulded me: give me understanding, and I will learn Thy commandments. (Psalm 119:73)

The priest vests in a similar manner. First he blesses his sticharion and puts it on while reciting the same words the deacon recited. Then instead of a simple, plain stole on one shoulder, he puts on a double one which covers both his shoulders and goes around the neck, the parts uniting in front and reaching to the hem of his clothes, indicating by this union the twofold nature of his office, that of priest and deacon. As the name epitachelion (that is, *on the neck*) implies, it signifies the outpouring of grace from above on the priest, hence he recites these sublime words from Scripture:

Blessed is God Who pours His grace on His priests, like the balm on the head that ran down the beard, even Aaron's beard, down to the hem of his garment. (Psalm 133:2)



Using the same words as the deacon, he puts on the cuffs, and then the girdle (zone) over his sticharion and stole so that during the holy office he will not be inconvenienced by the looseness of the vestments. Moreover this girding attests his readiness for service, for a man girds himself when he sets out on a journey or undertakes an important task. So, too, the priest girds himself when he sets about his heavenly ministry, and regarding his girdle as the strength of divine power that strengthens him, he recites:

Blessed is God Who girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect, and makes my feet like a hart's, and has set me on high (that is, in the House of the Lord), (Psalm 18:32-33)

If he belongs to the higher clergy, he hangs at his left side the oblong gneual (epigonation) which denotes the Sword of the Spirit, the all-conquering power of the Divine Word, proclaiming the unceasing struggle that man faces in this world - to proclaim the victory that Christ gained over death that man's immortal spirit might struggle courageously against its corruption. That is why the gneual has the appearance of a mighty weapon and is hung on the thigh where man's strength lies; this prayer being recited the while:

Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy splendour and beauty. Go forth and prosper and reign in the cause of truth and meekness and justice, and Thy right hand shall guide Thee wonderfully, always now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen. (Psalm 45:3-5)

Lastly, the priest completes his vesting by putting on the chasuble (phelonion), the uppermost vestment, covering all the others and symbolizing the all-embracing justice of God, and says:

Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy saints shout for joy, always, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen. (Psalm 132:9)

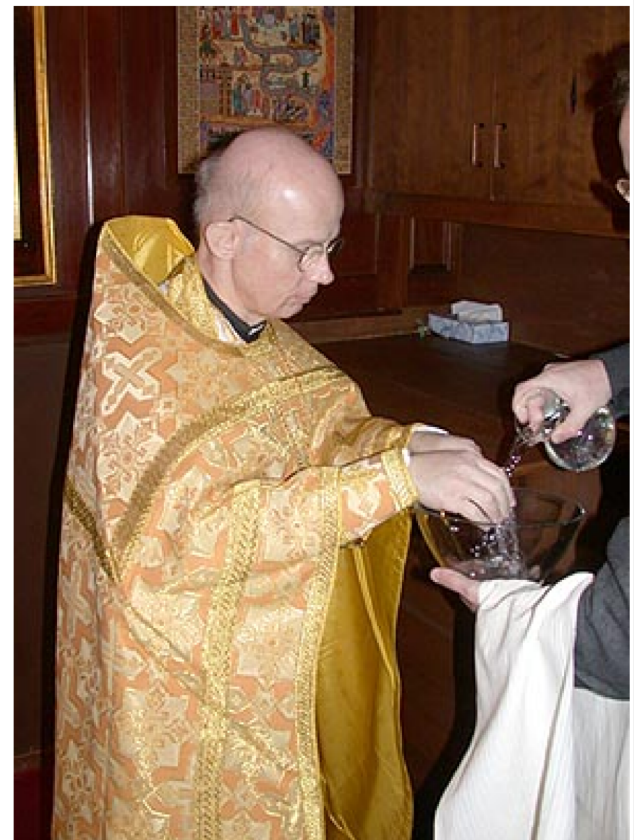
Thus invested with the divine instruments, the priest is now another man. Whatever he may be as an individual, however unworthy of his vocation, everyone present in the church looks upon him as God's instrument, through whom the Holy Spirit works. The priest and deacon then wash their hands, saying from the Psalm:

I will wash my hands among the innocent, and so will I go round Thy altar, O Lord. (Psalm 26:6)

They they make three bows with the words:

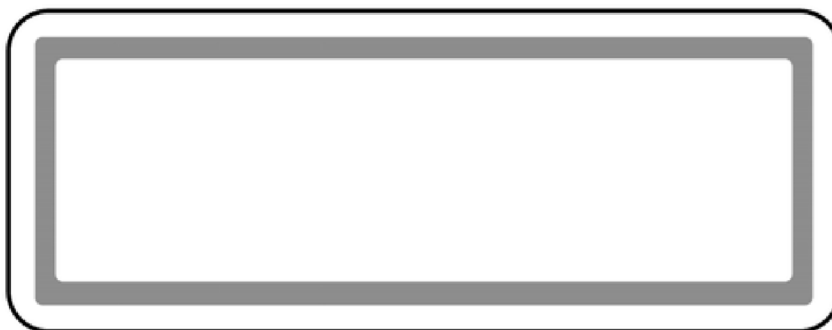
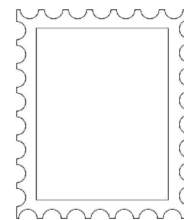
O God, cleanse me, a sinner, and have mercy on me.

They are now cleansed and enlightened, like their shining vestments. They no longer remind us of ordinary people, but resemble radiant visions rather than men.



(Read part 3 in the March 2016 Newsletter)

St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral
Orthodox Church in America
8598 Verree Road
Philadelphia, PA 19111



ZACCHAEUS OF LITTLE STATURE

BY ST. NIKOLAI VELIMIROVICH

"Today, salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9).

Thus it was spoken by the One Whose word is life and joy and restoration of the righteous. Just as the bleak forest clothes itself into greenery and flowers from the breath of spring, so does every man, regardless of how arid and darkened by sin, becomes fresh and youthful from the nearness of Christ. For the nearness of Christ is as the nearness of some life-giving and fragrant balsam which restores health, increases life, give fragrance to the soul, to the thoughts and to the words of man. In other words, distance from Christ means decay and death and His nearness means salvation and life.

"Today, salvation has come to this house" said the Lord upon entering the house of Zacchaeus the sinner. Christ was the salvation that came and Zacchaeus was the house into which He entered. Brethren, each one of us is a house in which sin dwells as long as Christ is distant and to which salvation comes when Christ approaches it. Nevertheless, will Christ approach my house and your house? That depends on us. Behold, He did not arbitrarily enter the house of the sinner Zacchaeus, rather He entered as a most desired guest. Zacchaeus of little stature climbed into a tree in order to see the Lord Jesus with his own eyes. Zacchaeus, therefore, sought him; Zacchaeus desired Him. We must also seek Him in order to find Him and desire Him in order that He would draw nearer to us and, with our spirit, to climb high in order to encounter His glance. Then He will visit our house as He visited the house of Zacchaeus and with Him salvation will come.

Draw near to us O Lord, draw near and bring to us Thy eternal salvation. To Thee be glory and thanks always. Amen.

