

ST. NICHOLAS BULLETIN – May 2009 - XPUCTOC BOCKPECE! CHRIST IS RISEN!

Thank you to all who supported the Lenten, Holy Week and Pascha services! I am very proud of all the parishioners who came and prayed at this most solemn time of the year! God Bless you! A BIG thank you too to those few individuals who VOLUNTEERED their time, effort and dollars to ensure everyone would have a good Pascha. You know who you are – I appreciate and value you. This parish needs to get a better understanding of volunteerism and we will pursue this more later. Fr Kirill

NO KNEELING UNTIL PENTECOST!

MAY SERVICE SCHEDULE:

Every Sunday, Liturgy 10AM.

May 17th, Molebien following Liturgy for all who bear the saints names: Boris, Gleb, Irene, Kirill, Theodore, Constantine, Elena, Nikita, and anyone else who wishes to join in.

Ascension Thursday May 28-The Day our Lord went up to heaven after his being on earth following His Resurrection. Evening Divine Liturgy, Wednesday, May 27, 7PM.

I thank everyone for their kindness and generosity in donating to the parish during these very hard economic times. Your Pascha gifts to the church overwhelmed me. Truly, the Lord will reward you!

A total of \$501 was collected for flowers, palms etc. This year, the Plasteeneetsa was decorated so tastefully and beautifully. It was a joy to behold and a real testament to our love for the Suffering Lord. From Palm Sunday through this Pascha Season, St Nicholas parish was transformed.

We collected \$3,714 for the Renovation fund.

Olga Kuharetz, Vladislav & Natalia Chermeta, Valeriy Minyazov, and Yuri & Ia Zagvazdin graduated to Seraphim status;

Svetlana Kozlova who was already a Seraphim, generously donated more to the fund;

Roman Pokrovskii (Chelsea Restaurant) and Volha Dziube, are now Cherubims;

Lyudmyla Gugliara has graduated to Archangel; a new Archangel is Alla Antsis. Linda Pickering who was already an Archangel has added to her donation;

Anonymous, and Tamara Goldberg, are new Angels.

Thank you all, and if you have not yet donated to the on-going renovation, please consider doing so!

As much as this subject is sad and disturbing, it is a fact of life. In my nearly 30 years as a priest, I have had my share, too big a share I think, of infant and child burials. (I want to remind you too, that a

miscarried or stillborn child is entitled to a service as well.) This is something which we all need to examine and be aware of as Orthodox Christians, lest it touch our friends or our families. Fr. Steven Kostoff, Rector of Christ the Savior / Holy Spirit Church, Cincinnati, OH, recently posted some reflections on the burial of a newborn child. They speak eloquently to this tragic yet thoroughly Paschal event. I include portions of the reflection here for its pastoral sensitivity and illustration of the depths and power of the Orthodox theological message expressed.

Fr. Steven writes: Right before Lent, we served The Order for the Burial for a two-day old boy. Humanly speaking, there is nothing more heartbreaking than this: a tiny infant dressed in white baptismal clothes, lying in the middle of the church in a coffin that looks more like a small box, surrounded by his grieving family and friends. With the casket open, I could not help but continuously gaze upon this baby. I was deeply struck by the innocence, purity and beauty of this "undefiled infant," as he was called in the funeral service. The initial impact of death is that of irrevocable loss. This is why, at a funeral we sing so realistically, "I weep and wail when I think upon death ..." But, we use a completely different funeral service for infants, and children under the age of seven, where we are called upon to remember the joy of Pascha, not the harshness of death. I was struck by the beauty of the service, the certainty of an infant's entrance into the Kingdom of God. There is no sin for which he/she needs to be forgiven -- including so-called "original sin." The service explicitly states that "he/she has not transgressed Thy divine command" and that "infants have done no evil. For an infant, the service repeatedly refers to the departed infant as "undefiled," "uncorrupted," "most-pure," "truly blessed," and even "holy." This is not sentimentalism meant to make us feel better. Instead it reveals a profound theological truth. According to Orthodox teaching, one is not born "guilty." We believe that we are born bearing the consequences of "original sin," often referred to as "ancestral sin". The consequences of ancestral sin are corruption and death. Thus, unfortunately, no one, even a child, is too young to die. And hence the tragic nature of life, nowhere more clearly revealed than in the death of an innocent infant.

The entire funeral service is permeated by the sure hope and conviction that this little child has been "translated unto Thee," and that he/she is now "a partaker of Thy Heavenly good things." His/her death is treated realistically, and the pathos of an uncompleted earthly life is clearly acknowledged. Yet his/her death is an entrance to life with God in His eternal Kingdom: By Thy righteous judgment, Thou has taken this infant O Lord. The sword of death has come and cut thee off like a young branch, O blessed one that has not been tempted by worldly sweetness. Give him/her rest with all the Righteous who have been well-pleasing unto Thee, O only Lover of mankind. The suffering hearts of the mother and father are not forgotten in the prayers of the service, expressed with a certain rhetorical style that may no longer be fashionable, but which retains a genuinely poignant realism: And, the child speaks for the parents, "O God, Who hast summoned me, be Thou the consolation of my household now, for a great lamentation has befallen them. But do Thou, Who was born of a Virgin Mother, refresh the inward parts of my mother, and sprinkle dew upon the heart of my father: Alleluia!" These hymns and prayers are profoundly comforting, not primarily for psychological and emotional reasons, but because they reveal what is actually true: that Christ has overcome death, trampling it down on our behalf by His glorious Resurrection. Death itself has been transformed from within. Horror and darkness give way to hope and life. The healing grace of God does not come through pious, psychological or emotional sentiment, but through the awareness of this Truth as it penetrates our minds and hearts through the gift of faith. What other kind of "comfort" can there be when parents, relatives and friends must bear the cross of the death of a beloved infant? Grief and sorrow over such a loss never leave us, but they can be transmuted and transformed in time by the joy of knowing God's love, poured out to us through His beloved Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS RISEN! XPUCTOC BOCKPECE!