



Weekly Bulletin

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Witnessing to the Apostolic Faith in Lake County for over 42 Years

Father Andrew Clements, Pastor

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2017

Number 49

Sunday	Dec 3	<i>26th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 1 / St Nicholas the Wonderworker</i>	
		9:00 am	Church School
		10:00 am	Divine Liturgy St Nick's Celebration
Wednesday	Dec 6	<i>St Nicholas the Wonderworker</i>	
		7:00 pm	Prefestal Vespers Confession
Saturday	Dec 9	<i>Conception of the Theotokos</i>	
		4:00 pm	Confession
		5:30 pm	Great Vespers Confession
Sunday	Dec 10	<i>27th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 2 / Martyrs Menas, Hermogenes & Euegraphus</i>	
		Readings:	Eph 6:10-17 Luke 17:12-19
		9:00 am	Church School
		10:00 am	Divine Liturgy Coffee Hour

ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / Nov 26

Attendance: (Adults 143, Children 34)	177
Operating	\$3,057.00
OCA Assessments	67.00
Uganda Children	89.00
Charities	79.00
Icons	50.00

TUESDAY EVENING ADULT CLASS

The Class will meet this week on Dec 5 at 7:00 pm.

COOKIE / FOOD SALE

This Saturday, Dec 9 is our sale. Please be planning on how you will participate by either baking, helping out that day, purchasing items, setting up for the Church School or all of the above.

PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD

Please See Maureen with your \$10.00 donation over the next few weeks if you'd like your name on the Parish Christmas Card. All proceeds go to charity.

CONFESSION NOTE

Confession is in order for everyone during this season, so please note the extra times scheduled and approach in a timely manner.

PRAYER CORNER ++++++

Eleanor Alexander (Tom's mom), Perry (Capitan), Sbdcn Leonard, Kathy (Denise F's sis), Jim (Ruth's dad), Michael (Chongris nphw), Ted Geletka, (Fr's frnd), Connie (Linda D's frnd), Alex Dzura, infant Ju-

lian, John Clements, Willie (Elena G's son), suffering Christians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Birthdays: Elena Gomer, Bill Butterfield, Vaughn Clouse (12/3), John Christani Sr (12/4), Katherine Bailey (12/7).

Newborns: Sophia (Tom & Stephanie).

Expecting: Brian & Nicole, Cole & Sarah, Matt & Krista, James & Lisa.

Our Seminarian: Brian Crivella & Family.

Our Missionaries: Peter & Sharon.

Memory Eternal: Russ Bechowiak.

Dear Father Andrew,

Just wanted to let you know, after completing this year's Thanksgiving Turkey Project, what a tremendous success it was. The dinner kits provided by our generous congregation along with the 100 turkeys delivered to deserving families in Ashtabula, Lake and Geauga Counties was greatly appreciated by all. It is truly heartwarming to see the appreciation by the families and agencies involved. Thanks again to those who assisted in picking up the turkeys, the handling of turkeys and kits at the church along with their distribution.

Love in Christ,

Lisa and Jim Gordon

Knowing the Master's Manger

by Fr Lawrence Farley

In the opening verses of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah we find the following words: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken: 'Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know; My people does not understand'" [Isaiah 1:2-3]. With these words the prophet begins his extended denunciation of his people, calling Israel back in repentance to loving fidelity to their covenant God.

They needed to be called back. At that time in around the seventh century BC they not only worshipped Yahweh their God, but also Baal, the fertility god, the god of the storm and of rain and life. Doubtless they regarded it as a kind of syncretistic ecumenism, a broadness of sympathy and generosity of devotion. They probably also regarded it as keeping up to date: Yahweh might have been appropriate for the time of their desert sojourn, but for their life in agricultural Canaan, they needed now a more agricultural god. Yahweh might have been okay for the Bedouin part of their history, but Baal was more suited for their settled life on the land. Anyway, Israel then worshipped both Yahweh and Baal, and attributed their agricultural prosperity primarily to the latter.

What the majority in Israel considered ecumenical broadness of mind, Isaiah considered simply as apostasy and unfaithfulness. Yahweh was their God, and Baal, the god of Canaan, had nothing to do with them. Devotion to Baal therefore was pure adulterous idolatry, a spiritual defection from their true Husband and Protector. Adultery, as everyone then knew, was punishable by death. What else then could Israel expect for its apostasy?

The prophet Isaiah therefore began his ministry by calling Israel to recognize this fact. But he did not just announce judgment and destruction, but also called Israel back to repentance and forgiveness and life. Yahweh their God did not desire their death, but their repentance. He was willing to sit down and reason with them, and promised that if they would but repent, though their sins were like scarlet, they would become white as snow [Isaiah 1:18].

For now, though, Isaiah began by pointing out their ingratitude. Any father in those days could legitimately expect gratitude and obedience and respect from his sons. But though Yahweh had reared and brought up Israel, giving them life and protecting them as a father did his sons, He received no gratitude, obedience, or respect from His people. And it was worse than that—even dumb animals

knew where their food came from. The ox knew its owner, and the donkey knew its master's manger, and they waited by that feed trough every day for the master to pour in food for them to eat. Both ox and donkey (the usual domestic beasts of burden) knew the sound of their master's footsteps, and had gratitude to him for filling the manger. They knew who to thank for their food, and prosperity, and life. But Israel somehow did not know who to thank. Israel was dumber than their farm animals. They regarded their food and agricultural prosperity not as coming from Yahweh, but as coming from Baal. Israel did not know their master's manger.

This ox and donkey, by the way, found their way into the Nativity icon and into every Christmas scene ever since. When we see the Nativity scene, either eastern or western, we see the ox and the donkey standing by the manger over the newborn Christ. Why? Neither Saint Matthew nor Saint Luke mention any animals in their narratives. But the Church, reading this prophecy of Isaiah, beheld the Master's manger and thought of Jesus. For what was the Master's manger to which the prophet here referred? Surely it was the manger into which the newborn Christ Child was laid! Thereafter the place of the ox and the donkey was assured in any picture of the Nativity of Christ.

The prophet Isaiah speaks to us today as well, for we no less than ancient Israel have trouble knowing the Master's manger. We also fail to see that our life, strength, prosperity, and food come from God. We imagine that our ability to find food and earn our daily bread comes from ourselves. We get up each morning and go to work and labor hard at our forty hour a week jobs to earn our living. Surely our food comes from ourselves? We forget that the strength and health by which we labor come as gifts from God. More than that, our very ability to rise every morning and get out of bed come as gifts from God. For one day we will not rise from our beds, but the doctor will come and pronounce us dead and draw the sheet over our faces. No labour for us that day. That day will mark the end of God's gift of life to us.

All the more reason today to know our Master's manger, and to recognize that all that we have comes from Him. Oxen and donkeys know who their true benefactors are, and we should be at least as smart as they are. As we bend over our daily mangers and sit at our tables to eat our daily bread, let us give thanks to God, and know that all that we have and ever will have comes from Him.