



# Weekly Bulletin

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

A Community of the Orthodox Church in America

Witnessing to the Apostolic Faith in Lake County for over 44 Years

*Father Andrew Clements*, Pastor

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|                  |               |   |  |             |
|------------------|---------------|---|--|-------------|
| <b>Sunday</b>    | <b>Dec 16</b> | <i>29th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 4 / Sunday of the Forefathers</i>         |  |             |
|                  |               | 9:00 am   | Church School  |             |
|                  |               | 10:00 am  | Divine Liturgy   | Coffee Hour |
| <b>Monday</b>    | <b>Dec 17</b> | <i>Holy Prophet Daniel</i>  |  |             |
|                  |               | 3:30 - 5:00 pm  | Confession   |             |
| <b>Wednesday</b> | <b>Dec 19</b> | <i>Prefeast of the Nativity</i>   |  |             |
|                  |               | 7:00 pm   | Vespers of the Prefeast  | Confession  |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | <b>Dec 20</b> | <i>Prefeast of the Nativity</i>   |  |             |
|                  |               | 7:00 pm   | Vespers of the Prefeast  | Confession  |
| <b>Friday</b>    | <b>Dec 21</b> | <i>Prefeast of the Nativity</i>   |  |             |
|                  |               | 7:00 pm   | Vespers of the Prefeast  | Confession  |
| <b>Saturday</b>  | <b>Dec 22</b> | <i>Prefeast of the Nativity</i>   |  |             |
|                  |               | 4:00 pm   | Confession   |             |
|                  |               | 5:30 pm   | Grt Vsprs / Convert Service / Convert Confessions / Confession |             |
| <b>Sunday</b>    | <b>Dec 23</b> | <i>30th Sunday after Pentecost / Tone 5 / Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ</i> |  |             |
|                  |               | Readings:   | Heb 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40                                      | Mat 1:1-25  |
|                  |               | 9:00 am   | Church School  |             |
|                  |               | 10:00 am  | Divine Liturgy / Baptism & Chrismations                        | Coffee Hour |

**ATTENDANCE / STEWARDSHIP / Dec 9**

|                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Attendance: (Adults 129, Children 39) | 168        |
| Operating                             | \$4,197.00 |
| OCA Assessments                       | 48.00      |
| Uganda Children                       | 93.00      |
| Charitis                              | 78.00      |
| Maintenance                           | 20.00      |
| Icons                                 | 57.00      |

**IN OUR PRAYERS**

Please keep Kurt Hardman, Melanie, Nora, Naomi & Ben Sherman in your prayers this week as they prepare to embrace the Orthodox Faith next Sunday during Liturgy.

**EVENING ADULT CLASS**

The Class will meet this week on Dec 18 at 7:00 pm to complete our study of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

**CONFESSION NOTE**

Confession is in order for everyone during Advent. Please approach in a timely manner taking advantage of the extra times scheduled in December.

**PRAYER CORNER + + + + +**

Eleanor Alexander (Tom's mom), Perry (Capitan), Sbdcn Leonard, Kathy (Denise F's sis), John (Adam's nephew), Ted Geletka, Nina Stehnach (Fr's frnds), Julian, John Clements, Sarah Crivella, Nancy, (Ruth B's frnd), Joella (Lu D's daughter) Lillian (Lu D's mom), Bradley (Tina C's son), suffering Christians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

**Birthdays:** Sarah Cunningham (12/16), Joe Bagley, Lea Povozaev (12/17), Meredith Herzog (12/21), Viktor Povozaev (12/22), Cindy Renda, Collin Rausch (12/23).

**Newborns:** Emmett (Tom & Laura).

**Expecting:** Inga & Vytas, Bobby & Juliana, David & Maria, Daniel & Danielle, Colin & Tamuna.

**Departed:** Fr Dcn Dennis & Helen Lucak (11/10), Larry Weber (11/9, Maureen M's uncle).

**Newly Illumined:** Silvia Nicoletti.

**Our Seminarian:** Deacon Brian Crivella & Family.

**Our Missionaries:** Peter & Sharon.

# The Poor, Debts, & Your Enemies: Learning to Forgive

by Fr Stephen Freeman

*He who has pity on the poor makes a debtor of God.* (Prov. 19:17)

Jesus told a story about a man with a huge debt. He owed it to his master and was unable to pay. When he was dragged before his master, he begged for mercy. Strangely, the master was so moved by the man's begging that he forgave him the entire debt. This same man, Jesus said, turned around and had a poor man thrown into prison for a very minor debt. When the master learned of this injustice, there was a serious reckoning: the man was delivered to the "torturers" until he could pay his own debt.

Debt is serious business. Indeed, it is pretty much the business of our culture. America owes trillions of dollars – to itself, to others, to one another. Everybody owes somebody! Of course, in our land, there is an occasional reckoning. Some go to prison for failure to pay their taxes. Some lose their homes for failure to pay their mortgage. Others have their debts forgiven (particularly if they are "too big to fail").

There is a deeper debt, something that makes money look like child's play (and it is). That debt is the burden created by the injuries we do to others. Many of those burdens could never be reduced by any amount of money. We generally do not think of those who owe us money as "enemies" – it's usually only our "friends" who owe us money. But the level of emotional and spiritual debt owed by our enemies can be enormous. Such debts only grow older with time.

There is a spiritual burden created by the debts of our enemies. They keep us from true prayer and they block our journey to the heart. I have been told by many that they "have no enemies." I suggest that everyone who owes you a debt is your spiritual enemy. Some are simply more pernicious than others. I have rarely encountered a heart so pure that no resentment or grudge could be found in it.

In the parable, the only possible way for the first man to settle his debt was for the master to let it go. He, of course, was promising to pay and begging for more time. The debt of the second man was small and could likely have been paid over time. But there was no mercy in the heart of his creditor, only resentment, and bitterness. His

resentment and his bitterness created the "tortures" in his sentence.

My experience in life is that no one has the power to pay the emotional/spiritual debt owed to others. Nothing erases a memory or removes the injury itself. People fantasize that an apology would suffice. It doesn't. It may restore some small measure of self-esteem, but the injury remains. I have listened to people who have returned to an injury year after year and marvel at their inability to forgive.

My experience has also shown me something else. There are those in my life whose "stock" is large. My love and communion with them are such that I easily overlook their sins against me. I find it easy to explain away their actions and make excuses for them. These are what constitute our "friends." As St. Paul notes, "Love covers a multitude of sins."

Essentially, the difference between our enemies and our friends are the allowances we are willing to make for them. Friends have credit accrued from a variety of things. Our enemies are bound in poverty.

There is only one way forward. The debts of our enemies must be treated as the debts of the poor. Our enemies will not have enough to pay us. If these debts cannot be paid (and they can't), then they can only be forgiven. Or, perhaps, someone else can loan them what is needed.

And here we come to the verse from Proverbs: "He who gives to the poor makes a debtor of God." The Scriptures add: "And He will pay him."

The penury of our enemies is the deepest poverty of all, truly an inescapable cycle. It can only be broken by an act of radical generosity. But the generosity is not being asked of us. God will repay the debt. Whatever it is they have done, however much they owe, God will pay it.

I have long placed this thought in a prayer: "O Lord, you know what my enemies have done to me. On the day of judgment, do not hold it against them on my account."

Set them free. Get serious about laying up treasure in heaven. Make a debtor of God.