

SS. PETER & PAUL

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Rev. Joseph McCartney, Rector

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Gospel Reading ~ Luke 17:12-19

Epistle Reading ~ Colossians 1:12-18

The Conception by Righteous Anna of the Most-holy Theotokos

This Week at a Glance

Sat, Dec. 15th

6:00 pm - Great Vespers

Sun, Dec. 16th

9:00 pm - 3rd & 6th Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who donated cookies, pastries, for spreading the word to your family and friends and your precious time to make this year's Cookie Walk a huge success. Preliminary numbers show that we did almost \$4,000 in sales! Thank you for supporting this important fundraiser.

Shoe Drive

There will be a box in the church hall during the month of December that you can deposit men's gently worn shoes. These will be delivered to St Herman's House.

Rectory Phone

Please note that the rectory phone line has been disconnected due to lack of use. Please contact Fr Joseph on his cell phone.

Gospel Meditation

Can anyone say that he doesn't suffer? That he doesn't feel pain in this world? Which human being doesn't feel as though his life is more or less martyrdom? Man chose the life of sin, which choice resulted in pain, sickness, suffering, and eventually death. But God, who does not want to chastise anyone, transforms all of this into salvation. Through these very things, man is helped to come back to his senses.

Even though the Lord foreknows that the nine lepers after being healed will not remember to thank him, he acts as God: He is beneficial to all. However, only one finds the road: "He turned back and with a loud voice praised God". Clearly, even when he was suffering and now when he is healed, he remembers God, and runs to him. As a rule, those who act correctly are few. The many when tormented think only of their problem, and because of this, they complain and even raise their sufferings to God. But even after, when their troubles have passed, they don't remember him.

The issue is what happens inside the heart of man. Whether you suffer externally or not, when deep in your heart you seek, love, and desire God, he will orchestrate things in such a way that you will eventually find yourself on the road of salvation. This will come about whether you are in pain or are healed. We shouldn't expect first to surpass or succeed in something and only later to turn to God in order to thank Him. This is a mistake. This very moment, whatever is happening to you, worship, seek, and love God, deep in your heart. Judge yourself, even if you don't feel like you're to blame. Glorify God, who continues to bless your life, so that your soul is able to do that which it hasn't done up until this hour: to become humble, to seek forgiveness, to follow him, to live in God.

Annual Parish Meeting

We will have our annual Parish Meeting on **Sunday, January 27th** immediately following Divine Liturgy. This annual meeting is open to eligible voting members of our parish only. Visitors and non-members will be asked to exit the church hall prior to the start of the meeting. Please keep in mind that a "voting member" is one who 1.) Has received communion and confession in the last year in our parish. (*Confession in home parish is required unless a blessing is received from the rector to confess to a different local Orthodox priest.*) 2.) One who has fulfilled financial obligation in the past year, which is currently defined by the parish council as a minimum contribution of \$275 in the last year. If you haven't fulfilled these obligations you must do so **before Christmas** to be considered an eligible voting member. Confession is available up to an hour before and after vespers and before Divine Liturgy.

New Parish Council Members Needed

We will have some openings on the parish council this coming year. The positions that will be open are **Secretary, Trustee-at-Large** (2 positions), **Auditor**. If you would like to serve your parish in either capacity please see Fr Joseph to confirm eligibility. At our parish meeting we will not take nominations from the floor, as all candidates need to be approved.

Christmas Concert and Yolka

Our Annual Christmas Concert and Children's Yolka will be held immediately following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 23rd in church. Please see Alex or Kathy for choir practice times. Children's Yolka practice will be held Sunday, December 16th after Communion. Please see Dawn Koukios or Matushka Maura if your children would like to be in the Yolka. It's a simple program, but the one practice would be necessary.



Honey for Sale

Today during coffee hour be sure to purchase a bottle of local honey harvested from the hives at St Herman's House. Each bottle is \$12 and goes directly to support their ministry. Please see Joann Romick to purchase your bottle. Support a local Orthodox ministry and get family and friends a nice Christmas present all at once!

Conception of the Theotokos

Saint Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, was the youngest daughter of the priest Nathan from Bethlehem, descended from the tribe of Levi. She married Saint Joachim (September 9), who was a native of Galilee.

For a long time Saint Anna was childless, but after twenty years, through the fervent prayer of both spouses, an angel of the Lord announced to them that they would be the parents of a daughter, Who would bring blessings to the whole human race.

The Orthodox Church does not accept the teaching that the Mother of God was exempted from the consequences of ancestral sin (death, corruption, sin, etc.) at the moment of her conception by virtue of the future merits of Her Son. Only Christ was born perfectly holy and sinless, as Saint Ambrose of Milan teaches in Chapter Two of his Commentary on Luke. The Holy Virgin was like everyone else in Her mortality, and in being subject to temptation, although She committed no personal sins. She was not a deified creature removed from the rest of humanity. If this were the case, She would not have been truly human, and the nature that Christ took from Her would not have been truly human either. If Christ does not truly share our human nature, then the possibility of our salvation is in doubt. From ancient times this Feast was especially venerated by pregnant women in Russia.



