



THE PARISH PRESS

St. Philip Orthodox Church



SPIRITUAL WARFARE: "DUCK!"

NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

GIVING UPDATES

MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION: Thank you for your generosity to the needy of our community! In April, we are collecting **Cleaning Supplies**.

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD COLLECTION: We continue to collect non-perishables of all kinds for the food pantries.

FORTY DAYS OF GROWTH IN STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

"One Body In Christ"

Wise financial management leads not to stinginess but to generosity.

Future St. Nicholas House – Update
Negotiations on the price are progressing slowly. Please pray for changes of hearts in the sellers!

Office Update

On May 1, Office Hours will change to 10 am to 3 pm, Monday thru Friday.



Welcome Class

Sunday, May 5th

Join us for an introduction to the life of ministry of our parish. All those who are inquirers, catechumens and new attendees are invited. We will meet right after the Liturgy in the Church Library. Questions? Talk with Subdeacon David Hyatt. dhyatt@st-philip.net.

Pray for our Catechumens!

Pray for Robert, Michael, Zachary, Evan, Tina, and in particular for Tatiana (Sze) as she prepares for Baptism on Holy Saturday (Apr 27). Let's continue to pray for, welcome, and get to know them. And pray for God to send us many more!

A Message from Fr Noah

Dear Saint Philip's Family, Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is risen!

With these most joyous words we celebrate the single most important event in history. I've been conscientiously preparing for and celebrating Pascha – the Greek word for Passover – for about a quarter of a century now and I have a couple thoughts to share with you.

First, it is all too easy for us to think of Pascha as a single day. Indeed, in this mental picture we have 40 days of austerity punctuated by an all-night blow out of religious fervor and culinary indulgence. Then, we scrape ourselves out of bed on Monday morning, and return to work, to our regular life. Let me add depth to this understanding: there is a single day of Pascha, but it is not unique in that every Sunday – truly every day – is a mini celebration of the Christ's resurrection. Again, there is a single day of Pascha and yet it is not just the climax of Holy Week, Great Lent, and the entire Church Year – though we do know that "we live from Pascha to Pascha" – it is also the celebratory beginning of Bright Week, the 40 Days of Pascha, the Pentecostarion (50 Days). Even more so, it is the festal marking of the change of cosmic status, the upgrade and deliverance, for us, the Church, and all of humanity. Not a single day, but the day of days, a foretaste of eternity, the yeast of heaven mixed into the dough of our earthly tedium.

Second, it is easy to focus in on one part of the Paschal Mystery and overlook the magnificent whole. It is not just Christ's Triumphal Entrance soured by treachery; not just the institution of the Eucharist; not just Christ's dying to pay for our sins; not just His resting to fulfill the Sabbath perfectly; not just His resurrection. It is truly the recreation of the world that we celebrate. Not just a historical event, but an event that focuses, shapes, and elevates history. Not a single day but truly Day One.

Third and Finally, this Feast of Feasts is a celebration of our own Pascha – our own personal and communal Passover – participation in the Passover from Death to Life, darkness to light, slavery to freedom, nothingness to existence. Pascha is the royal clothe upon which the needle work of our lives comes to fruition.

Brothers and sisters, this event is to not just be an excuse to going back to bad habits of self-indulgence but the means and motivation to bring "the Light that is never overtaken by night" to our darkened world.

May we prepare for and celebrate this Festival of Festivals, ever more gratefully and zealously, for many, many years as a fore-taste of "the day that has no evening"

In Christ,
+Fr. Noah

Mark Your Calendar

Services for St. Lazarus

Bp THOMAS Visit

Friday, Apr 19

6:00 p.m. Akathist for St. Lazarus

Saturday, Apr 20

10:00 a.m. Hierarchical Liturgy

Services for Palm Sunday

Saturday, Apr 20

6:00 p.m. Vespers & Artoklasia

Sunday, April 21

8:45 a.m. Orthros & Blessing of Palms

10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy & Procession

HOLY WEEK & PASCHA

Sunday, April 21

7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Matins

Monday, April 22

10:00 a.m. Presanctified Liturgy

7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Matins

Tuesday, April 23

10:00 a.m. Presanctified Liturgy

7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Matins

Wednesday, April 24

10:00 a.m. Presanctified Liturgy

7:00 p.m. Holy Unction

Thursday, April 25

4:00 p.m. Vespers Liturgy w/Footwashing

7:00 p.m. Twelve Gospels Matins

Holy Friday

Friday, April 26

INVITE SOMEONE TO CHURCH TODAY!

10:00 a.m. Royal Hours (Youth Choir)

4:00 p.m. Vespers of Burial

7:00 p.m. Lamentations Matins

Holy Saturday

Saturday, April 27

10:00 a.m. Vespers Liturgy w/ Baptism

11:30 p.m. Paschal Vigil, Paschal Matins, and Resurrection Liturgy

GREAT & HOLY PASCHA

Sunday, April 28

CHRIST IS RISEN!

2:00 p.m. Agape Vespers

Followed by Egg Hunt & Potluck

Bright Week

Services every day!

Including Divine Liturgy Monday & Friday at 10 a.m.

Thomas Sunday - Cemetery Blessing

Teens Pilgrimage to St. Tikhon's

May 4, 2019

Pentecost

June 16, 2019

International Food Festival

Sept 20 & 21 - Mark your Calendar!

Did You Know?

- Please plan your **confession prior to Holy Unction** and start inviting friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, and everyone to the solemn services of Holy Week.
- **Home blessings** are suspended for the season. Please schedule directly with Fr Noah or Fr James for after Pascha.
- **Congratulations to Kh. Vera** for **graduating** from Clarion University in January, with a BS degree in Liberal Studies/Communications!
- The Doors! The Doors! In Wisdom, let us attend! – **Starting May 1st the south entrance doors to the Great Room will be locked by the Ushers at 10am.** Also, all the doors will be opened for services with Allen Wrench keys from the inside.
- Stay connected with parish life by syncing with our calendar on **Google Calendar.** See <https://www.st-philip.net/calendar.html> for instructions on how to add the parish calendar to your own device.



Spiritual Warfare:

*Taking Every Thought Captive to Christ
"Duck!"*

In the heat of battle, sometimes the best advice is simply, "Keep your head down!" Or, "Take cover!" Or to change the metaphor, sometimes the best offense is a good defense.

In this light, it is noteworthy that the "weapons" of our spiritual warfare, as St. Paul relates them (Eph 6:10ff), are largely *defensive*. Which is to say that the Church's life and calling—and thus ours as individual members of the Body—is primarily to be Who and What the Church is. While we indeed proclaim the gospel to the world around us, our "crusade" is primarily against our own sins, unto our own repentance, unto our own unity in Christ. No small task!

When we pursue that goal, of course we will naturally draw the fire of the enemy, because the true peace and love of Christ are infectious! For those who have already been wounded by the love of Christ (Song 2:5), and so died to themselves, the "fiery arrows" of the devil (Eph 6:16), as it were, lose their "urgency." We are called to *extinguish* them, to get out of their way, and to prevent them from hitting others. Again, no small task!

Knowing, Praying, Living the Holy Scriptures

"How I have loved thy law, O Lord! The whole day it is my meditation." (Ps 118:97)

What is the Rule of Love?

Last month, we reflected on reading Scripture in and with the "Rule of Faith," suggesting it is a virtual synonym to the "mind of the Church"—the Church's living faith as expressed in Her sacraments, worship, creed, and forms of life/practice that together form the indispensable context in and from which to read and interpret Scripture.

This month, let us reflect on another "Rule" that guides the Church's reading and interpretation of Scripture: the "Rule of Love."

The "Rule of Love" is most directly connected with the 4th-5th century bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine. In his discussion of Scriptural interpretation in *On Christian Doctrine*, he says that:

if it seems to you that you have understood the divine scriptures, or any part of them, in such a way that by this understanding you do not build up this twin love of God and neighbor, then you have not yet understood them. (36, 40)

In other words, for the Church, the "meaning" of Scripture can never be considered apart from the *effects* of our readings of Scripture. Scripture was given to us by God to draw us into deeper love and communion with God and one another. Any reading of Scripture that diverts from or distorts that true purpose is false. Clearly, then, the Rule of Love is just the flipside of the Rule of Faith/Truth: we cannot love God via Scripture if our love is directed at a false "god"—an idol of our imagination—rather than the one true God and Father revealed through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Likewise, our love of others will not be "true" if it proceeds from idolatry, for idolatry is the root from which comes the laundry list of sins against our "neighbor" recounted in Romans 1-3.

The connection of "Love" and reading Scripture relates not only to the effects of our readings, but to our own inner cultivation of love. St. Athanasius concludes his treatise *On the Incarnation* with this counsel:

But in addition to the study and true knowledge of the Scriptures, there is needed a good life and a pure soul and the virtue which is according to Christ, so that the mind, guided by it, may be able to attain and comprehend what it desires, as far as it is possible for human nature to learn about the God Word. Without a pure mind and a life modeled on the saints, no one can comprehend the words of the saints. (§57)

Love in accordance with both Truth and Virtue—all of which are Christ Himself—must be both the starting place and the goal of our reading of Scripture.



Ministry Together

w/ Sdn David Hyatt

"God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble."

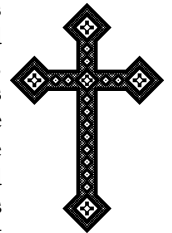
1 Peter 5:5

Humility is a bit of a tricky virtue; about the time I think I am growing in humility my pride comes along and wants to tell someone about it. "Look at me! I'm really becoming humble!"

Jesus, in the Beatitudes, calls us to shine brightly so *"that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matt. 5:16) It is good and right to appreciate the work of others, and to be appreciated for our talents and labor. It can be a real boost to hear, *"Well done good and faithful servant."* (Matt. 25:21) But working for the praise of others is a certain way to feed the weed of pride!

Effectiveness in ministry provides a fertile seedbed for the toxic weed of pride to take root, but it also can be the perfect place for humility to grow deep and strong.

Matthew the Poor, in *If You Love Me*, writes, "For the moment a servant begins to feel certain of himself, and the conviction of his personal superiority and power grows within him, a dangerous rift forms between him and those he serves." If we are seeking to serve and glorify God, as Jesus instructed, then the rift that forms is between us and God! What a tragedy if our ministry within the Church of God moves us farther away from the One we serve.



So how can we grow the fragrant flower of humility in the garden of our hearts? Let me offer two steps that we can take to tend the soil of our hearts.

First, we need to remember our own weaknesses. St. Paul describes each one of us as *"earthen vessels."* (2 Cor. 4:7) Why? So that we remember that the power of God that is at work within us and through us is not from us!

Second, we need to rely on God's strength. As we become more skilled in our area of ministry, we will be tempted to rely on our own strength and thus feed the weed of pride. But humility grows when we continually rely upon the power of God who said, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Cor. 12:9)

May humility grow deep and strong in us as we serve in our areas of ministry to the glory of God the Father!