

the Archangel

Archangel Michael Orthodox Church

During the Advent of Christ, Beware the Adversary of the Church

The Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis said that, “*The adversary of the [Church] is not the atheist or even the oppressor of religion but rather, ‘lard!’ The spiritual life of Christians is slowly being smothered to death by excessive luxury and ease.*”

If this statement is at all true, and given the uber-materialistic nature of our culture I have a distinct feeling that it is, perhaps nowhere throughout the course of the year are we more familiar with materialistic excesses than during the Christmas holiday season.

There is an old legend which tells how when the Devil failed to dissuade the Lord’s followers by sending damaging wars, pestilence, disease and famine, he came up with an even more diabolical plot. As a means to separate man from God, man from each another, and in an attempt to destroy our immortal soul, the devil told his evil minions, “*This year, let’s just give them a really good harvest.*” From that moment onward, mankind – who had previously been disposed to great feats of charitable love by sharing his goods with neighbors amidst equalizing adversity and poverty – began to enjoy and covet his excess wealth. Therefore that one, *good harvest* not only wedded Mankind to greed and avarice, but has served to clog and smother the purity of his heart through materialism ever since!

It is also obvious that we live in a world of great, personal freedom. Yet to the average person in such a semi-godless, capitalistic society as ours, this often only equates with an ability or “right” to satisfy one’s immediate desires and yearnings. For, without a definitive moral compass, there is little concern as to the responsibilities involved with such freedoms; leaving only an empty sense of *entitlement* for one to own property, drive a nice car, hold a job, consume material goods, succeed in life, travel the world, engage in sexual acts with consenting adults, and democratically participate in decisions which affect our future.

Unfortunately, such selfish and immature perspectives only serve to turn this world into a kind of gigantic “*Market Place,*” where everything from food to fashion and sports to sex is packaged for our immediate consumption and enjoyment. And because of man’s seeming unconcern and lack of respect to this issue of *freedom*, forces from within actually begin to break down these rights – transforming them into something which will eventually come back to destroy us!

As our collective nature becomes all the more engulfed in materialistic sludge, and with multimedia broadcasts constantly declaring that true happiness cannot be attained unless we submit to our passions, few seem to be concerned that our souls are in extreme danger of spiritual suffocation. Be mindful that tyrannies of the past often ruled by inflicting pain and punishment, but our Brave New World controls us by inflicting *pleasure*. Therefore, instead of helping to firmly anchor us with set Christian standards in the present, these same mis-used freedoms actually work to un-tether us from the stability and values of a righteous past.

(Continued on page 2)

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the Archangel

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(Continued from page 1)

And when Christians begin to buy into this notion that life cannot be enjoyed outside of commercialistic realms, we immediately slip into a type of moral and spiritual decay. We become lost in a torrential rush of progress that turns us into mere children again: immature little boys and girls without memory or purpose, whose only desires seek endless novelty and sensory cravings – rotting the body inwards to our core.

When will this enslavement to materialism end? Most likely it will go on until the Second Coming of Christ. Perhaps when the Apocalypse finally does come, don't be surprised if the first angelic trumpet sounds from the middle of a Shopping Mall; maybe even during the holiday season!

Very Rev. Fr. John Memorich

You Can Hate the Steelers and Still Help Troy Polamalu Fight Poverty!!

We are just about halfway to our goal of having 100 people donate \$10 to the Troy Polamalu Tackle Poverty project. For those that **don't know, Troy Polamalu is an Orthodox Christian and All Pro Safety** for the Pittsburgh Steelers. His wife, Theodora is on the board of FOCUS North America, a Pan-Orthodox organization that **"focuses" on helping the needy here in North America. Together, the Polamalus are trying to gather "teams" to recruit "tacklers" to donate \$10 each to fight poverty here in America.** If our team is able to get up to 100 tacklers, Troy Polamalu will send us a signed jersey, which will really be cool for our kids to see. For those that have given already THANK YOU VERY MUCH. If you have not yet donated, please track down one of the Sunday School teachers. All we need is your name, email address, and a \$10 donation. Thank you very much for your support!!

STEWARDSHIP REMINDER

We have received pledge cards from 225 members in the past months. Our deepest gratitude to those who have generously pledged for 2012. However, there are still many outstanding pledge cards and we would like to have those returned as soon as possible. Reminder letters have been sent out this past week to those members, who have not responded as yet. If you have misplaced your Pledge Card, they are available in the Church vestibule or you can get one mailed to you by calling the Church office. Your participation as a member of Archangel Michael Orthodox Church is important, especially since preparation of the budget is upon us this month. We look forward to receiving your pledges in the next few weeks.

Thank You for your attention,
The Stewardship Committee



CAROLING



Join a lively group of Archangel Michael parishioners on Saturday, December 17, as we do a good deed and have a lot of fun at the same time. **Yes, it's time for our annual Christmas Caroling to nursing homes!**



The event begins at 11 a.m. with lunch at the church. We will enjoy pizza, cookies, hot chocolate and some lively conversation. The kids will decorate their tree for **the church vestibule and we'll all prepare cards to take to the parishioners we will visit.** Then, we will leave the Church at 12:40 PM for our 1st caroling destination.

We need carolers of all ages to join us on our expedition. The residents of the nursing homes especially enjoy seeing the children, but we also need adults and teenagers to help with the singing! Bring some friends!

This is really an enjoyable event, so please prayerfully consider joining us on this day of giving cheer. **It's a great way to get in the Christmas spirit! Please contact Anna Sekerak at 216.281.0256** if you can attend, so we are sure to have enough food.

But we always have extra, so if you are available at the last minute, stop on by!



Thanks to all and hope to see you there!



Transitions

Gift From God:

Baby girl, Emma Marie, daughter of Charles and Beth Noll, born on November 29, 2011.

May God Grant Her Many Years!

HALUPKI DINNER

Mark your calendars! On Sunday, January 29, 2012, St. Michael's Woodside will hold its third annual Halupki Dinner after Divine Liturgy. Enjoy a tasty dinner in the company of your church family. Invite your friends so they can enjoy this special treat. Tickets will go on sale after the holidays.



C.O.R.E. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



In order to further Archangel Michael parishioners' education and understanding of the Orthodox Faith we are developing a program to answer questions you may have concerning areas and issues regarding the Orthodox Faith.

Please fill in your question in the area below and turn it in to the candle desk, or email the church secretary Anna Wolf at info@stmichaelscleveland.org. We will attempt to answer all questions regarding our faith in the upcoming issues of the *Archangel*.

Name: _____

Question: _____

Question: When should we begin or start our fast prior to receiving Holy Communion ?

Answer: .Although the Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, Jews, and Muslims, all reckon that a liturgical day begins and ends with sunset, most people (apart from those living in monastic communities) prefer to utilize our more modern, standardized practice of determining a day as beginning and ending at twelve o'clock midnight (12:00 a.m.). Therefore, when we are preparing ourselves to receive the Eucharist (Holy Communion) at a following morning's Divine Liturgy, fasting from all food and drink should commence from midnight onwards. This of course also applies to the use of all tobacco products, chewing gum, candy, and/or breath fresheners.

When fasting for an evening service such as the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts, the typical practice is that you fast from your noon meal onward (although a more ancient practice is to fast fully from breakfast time).

This protocol places no impediments upon the practice of good oral hygiene. Those who are preparing to receive the Eucharist may still brush their teeth, rinse with water, and use mouth wash before coming to services.

There also exists in some parishioner's minds the nagging concern whether it is permissible to take oral prescription medications (with water and in some instances a limited amount of food) or peculiarities regarding those persons who suffer from various ailments such as diabetes. In these instances there can be no hard, fast rule or "blanket answer" covering all situations. If you have a specific question regarding your own unique situation, please discuss this with the priest individually or during your next Confession. In this way a determination will be made upon a case by case basis.

Fr. John



55+ Club gathers for their annual Panikhida service to honor departed members of the club, November 15, 2011.

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? NINE MOTORCYCLES!

A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who donated money for our drive to purchase motorcycles for the Orthodox priests in the Nandi district of Kenya. As we told you before, the priests there have multiple parishes that they serve, and these can be up to 7 miles apart each, across rough terrain. When asked how we could help them with their ministry the most, the overwhelming answer was motorcycles. All together, over \$12,000 was raised, to purchase 9 motorcycles. We've had pictures in the vestibule for a while for you to see. Ever since the motorcycles have been purchased, we've received a large number of thank you notes from the priests. They are EXTREMELY grateful for the help that we were able to give to them.



When I began this drive, I had no idea how we would be able to raise so much money. I didn't think it was possible. But God truly showed how active the Holy Spirit is within our parish. He inspired a relatively small number of people, to raise a very large sum of money. Truly Amazing!!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TREMENDOUS SUPPORT!

On Prayer:

Do not neglect evening prayer. Pray with eagerness like those who are going to a feast. They are awake and feel joy alone. Thus, since you are going to speak with your Bridegroom, do not listen when the Tempter tells you various things in order to hinder you, because you know there is someone who cares for you.

~ Elder Amphilochios Makris

The work of prayer belongs to the angels, and is, therefore, the special concern of the Church. Every other work, i.e., charity, nursing the brethren, visiting the sick, caring for prisoners, releasing captives, and other similar things, is done by the brethren in love and offered by them to God. Similarly, poverty, fasting, sleeping on the ground, prostrations, vigils, etc., are good and like a sacrifice to God, because they aim to subdue and humble the body so that we may be purified and approach God and become friends of God -- yet these things do not present us directly to God, whereas prayer does so and unites us with Him. A person praying acts towards God like a friend -- conversing, confiding, requesting -- and through this becomes one with our Maker Himself.

~St. Symeon of Thessalonica

True prayer is undistracted, prolonged, performed with a contrite heart and alert intellect. The vehicle of prayer is everywhere humility, and prayer is a manifestation of humility. For being conscious of our own weakness, we invoke the power of God. Prayer unites one with God, being a divine conversation and spiritual communion with the Being that is most beautiful and highest. Prayer is forgetting earthly things, an ascent to heaven. Through prayer we flee to God.

~St. Nectarios of Aegina

Orthodox Poetry: Poem from the novel, “*Dr. Zhivago*” “The Star of the Nativity”

It was winter, and chill
Wind blew from the steppe,
And the infant felt cold as he lay in that den
On the slope of the hill.

And as he lay there, the child was kept warm
By the breathing of oxen,
And a haze hung over the manger,
For in that cave they kept beasts from the farm.

Shaking the bedstraw and granules of millet
From their sheepskins,
Bleary-eyed herdsmen
Gazed from their crag at the expanse of midnight.

Far away, beneath snow lay the burial yard,
Fields, fences, and tombstones,
Snow-drifted cart shafts,
And over the graves stood a sky full of stars.

And nearby, and unseen hitherto and more timid
Than candle-stub glow
In a night-watchman's window,
The star on the roadway to Bethlehem glinted.

It flamed like a hayrick, standing aside
From the heavens and from God,
Like a fire-raiser's flare,
A threshing-floor blaze, or a farmstead on fire.

Like an inferno of haystack or straw,
It soared up aloft and
Amid a whole cosmos
Alarmed at the sight of this new-risen star.

The aurora that glowed, overarching the orb,
Held a message: stargazers
In threesome sped forth
In response to that sign never witnessed before.

In train came their camels, loaded with gifts,
Together with donkeys
Harnesses in series,
Hooves stepping sedately, down from the hills.

And in a strange vision of time's future course
There rose up an image of things yet to come:
The thought of all ages, all dreams, and all worlds,
The future of galleries, museum collections,
Fairyland whimsies, feats of magicians,
All the world's Christmas trees, dream visions of children,
Shimmer of candlelight, chains of crepe paper,
And all the splendor of tinsel and foil...
... Yet wilder, more savage the wind from the plain...
... And all those apples, and all the gold baubles.

Part of the lake was screened by some alders,
But one of its reaches was plain to be seen
Between rookery nests set aloft in the trees.
Those guarding their flocks commanded clear outlook
As donkeys and camels skirted the water:
"Let us go with the others. Let's worship this wonder,"
Said they, drawing their fur coats about them.

The herdsmen they sweltered and trudged through the snow.
Beyond the shelter, across the bright clearing,
Glinting like mica, lay marks of bare feet.
And in the starlight sheepdogs grated and growled
At that crystalline trail with its candlelight gleam.
The frost-bound night was a fairytale picture.
And all the time from the blizzard-blown mound
Invisible strangers kept joining the crowd.
Hugging close to the shepherd and peering around,
The dogs ran, and fretted and feared some affliction.

And through that same country, along the same way,
Came angels processing and merged with the throng.
Incorporeal beings, they were seen by no eye,
But the ground showed their traces wherever they trod.

By the stone at the door of the cave they all gathered.
Dawn broke and the cedars emerged from the gloom.
"Who are you? Whence come you" Maid Mary demanded.
"We are shepherds, messengers of the Lord.
Singing praises and bringing our homage we come."
"But you are so many. Some must wait by the door."

Amid ashen darkness preceding the dawn
Shepherds and herdsmen paced up and down.
Pedestrians and riders groused at each other.
And at the trough where beasts of burden were watered
Donkeys kicked, camels bellowed and snorted.

Daylight was coming, and like flakes of cinder
Dawn swept the last stars from the heavenly vault.
From the numberless crowd just the Magi were admitted
By Maid Mary through the cleft in the rock.

In his manger of oak the Child slept, all radiant
Like a beam of moonlight glimpsed through tree hollow.
Instead of a sheepskin to warm him, the Infant
Had mere lip of donkey and nostril of oxen.

And they stood in the shadows, in the gloom of the barn,
And they whispered, scarce finding the phrases.
All at once, in the dark someone put forth an arm
And motioned the Magi aside from the manger.
One Wise Man turned round, and behold, like a guest at the gateway,
Observing the Maid was the Christmastide star.

40 Things You Didn't Know about DEACON DENNIS LUCAK

1. I started playing guitar when I was seven.
2. I was a regular on the Gene Carroll Show for ten years.
3. I am a serious rocker – I love rock-n-roll, especially music from the 60's, and I love to rock in a rocking chair.
4. Currently, I am studying classical guitar as I really like all kinds of music including, of course, liturgical music.
5. I enjoy watching baseball, softball, and volleyball.
6. I slid into second base spraining my left knee, then went to work on crutches (not good for a bus driver!).
7. I drove a city bus for 20 years and taught people to drive a city bus for ten years.
8. I'd rather drive the bus.
9. I am a licensed funeral director and embalmer.
10. I'd rather drive the bus.
11. I was a sales rep for five years.
12. I traveled to Caracas, Venezuela.
13. I liked philosophy classes in college.
14. I attended Ohio State University, Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, and John Carroll University.
15. I liked the Fleetwood Mac group.
16. I enjoy watching Homeland.
17. My favorite hobby is swimming.

18. I worked in the steel mills one summer.
 19. I went to New York when I was 18 to make it big with my band. Guess we know how that went.
 20. I like going to Shakespearean plays.
 21. I was extremely shy as a child.
 22. I have no patience for puzzles.
 23. I do not like pierogies or asparagus. I do like hot dogs.
 24. I cannot type very well. Spelling is not my strong point.
 25. I rode my bike from home in Parma to Marblehead and back again. I don't remember how long I was grounded after that, but I didn't want to ever see that bike again. Of course, that was many years ago.
 26. I wear my watch all the time, even in bed.
 27. I took my first cruise in 2010. I went to the Caribbean and it was fabulous.
 28. I rode the zip line on the cruise and I have a T-Shirt to prove it.
 29. I like Star Wars and anything SciFi.
 30. My pizza has to have anchovies on it. Can't figure out why Helen doesn't eat pizza any more.
 31. I still have vinyl records.
 32. I went to the premier showing of Star Trek before it was on TV.
 33. I had an eight track player but don't have an MP3 player – whatever that is.
 34. I could eat a bottle of olives in one day.
 35. When I was 12, I saw three unidentified flying objects in the daytime sky.
 36. I proposed to my wife at Niagara Falls and went to St. Tikhon Seminary on our honeymoon.
 37. I still try my hand at writing music. Maybe someday you will hear my music in church.
 38. My recent favorite place is my gym, where I have managed to lose weight and stay fit. (applause, please).
 39. In college I had a job as an orderly at the mental hospital, which offered me room and board. It was a rewarding, memorable experience.
 40. My friend and I chopped down a 40 foot tree in my mom's yard and had no idea what we were in for. I rented a chainsaw. The tree fell onto Ridge Road, blocking the street and causing a motorist to call the police. The police kindly helped us and no one was injured.
-



Don Singel, our custodian for 27 years, celebrated his 70th birthday on November 23, 2011.

5 HIDDEN HEALTH DANGERS OF WINTER

Winter weather will soon be here, and with it comes a whole new set of health hazards that we all need to know about and protect ourselves from. Although some hazards are obvious, i.e. Shoveling, falling on the ice, some are just as dangerous, but more subtle.

They include:

1. **Heart attack and strokes.** While the number of heart attacks does increase in winter, by an estimated 53%, these are not always caused by snow because the increase is all across the country, including the sunbelt states. It is actually the cold, not just snow, that poses the threat. Our arteries respond to cold by constricting (narrowing) and that makes us more prone. Narrowed arteries can cut down the flow of blood throughout your body making your heart work harder. Even a small temperature drop can cause big problems. British researchers found that a decrease in as little as 2 degrees temperature can result in a 2% increased risk. Moreover, as we age, the cold hits us harder, especially when the temperature drops to 32 degrees or below. The older you get, the harder it is to regulate body temperature due to a decrease in fat and muscle, less ability to generate heat. So, compared with people in their 50s, those in their 70s and 80s feel the cold more severely. Constricting arteries can also trigger tears or splits in the plaque that lines the walls of the arteries. When that happens, blood clots can form, triggering a heart attack or stroke, both of which occur more frequently in the winter.
2. **High blood pressure.** The cold weather- constriction of the arteries increases blood pressure. Because there is less space for blood to flow there is more resistance inside blood vessels.
3. **Vitamin D deficiency.** Getting too little vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin, during winter's gray day can be dangerous. Less sunlight means you tend to get less vitamin D because it is primarily absorbed through the skin. Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to an increased risk of osteoporosis, heart attacks, dementia, heart disease and Parkinson's disease. About 15 minutes of sun each day is often enough to maintain the levels you need. Unfortunately, in some areas of the country, the sun virtually disappears for months. Some people, especially older people, may need to take a vitamin D supplement. Please check with your physician before starting any supplements. And, NO, artificial sun is not the same
4. **Winter blues.** Shorter days with less sunlight bring a greater risk of seasonal affective disorder. This is a type of depression that occurs in the fall and winter. Symptoms include: loss of energy, anxiety, oversleeping, social withdrawal and weight gain. This disorder is usually treated by exposing the patient to increased doses of artificial light, under medical supervision.
5. **Lung problems.** Cold weather tends to bring out more respiratory problems, such as asthma, allergies, as well as a greater risk of pneumonia. Emphysema may also worsen in the winter, as cold and dry air narrows airways, restricting airflow into and out of the lungs making breathing more difficult. Utilizing humidified air may decrease these risks. Also, always cover your airway when leaving a warm home into cold air thereby decreasing the sudden change in temperature.

We Ohioans realize that winter makes it tough to keep up our heart-healthy habits including walking, biking, and outdoor sports but it is important to maintain some type of exercise program. Perhaps walking outside is not an option right now but using a treadmill or exercising to a video are alternatives for now. So, until Spring, do what you can to protect yourself from the elements. Dress warmly, utilize layers that you can easily remove when you enter an environment, like the mall, where it is warmer.

Until next time, be well and have a wonderful holiday.

Jean Mehalik, R.N.

December 2011 Archangel Business Directory

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DECEMBER 2011

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A Monthly Publication of OUTREACH
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5025 East Mill Road
Broadview Heights, OH 44147

ST. MICHAEL'S WOODSIDE WILL HOST A GALA NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

December 31, 2011

7:00 p.m. Doors Open

Hors D'Oeuvres

8:00 p.m. Dinner—Buffet

Carved Beef, Center Cut Pork Chops, Woodside Signature Chicken,
Woodside Signature Salad, Vegetable Medley, Smashed Redskin Potatoes

DESSERT STATION

9:00 p.m. Dance to the Music of TROY ENTERTAINMENT

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