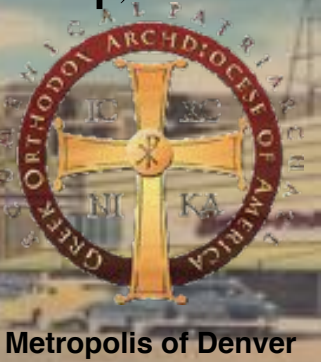


January/February 2015

Volume 4, Issue 1



The Witness



The Monthly Newsletter of Holy Apostles Orthodox Christian Church
Cheyenne, WY

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On Illness

An Excerpt from *Wounded By Love: The Life and Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios*

I thank God for granting me many illnesses. [1] I often say to Him: 'My Christ, Your love knows no limits!' How I am alive is a miracle. Among all my other illnesses I also have cancer of the pituitary gland. A tumor appeared there which has grown and presses against the optic nerve. That's why I don't see any more. I am in dreadful pain. But I pray, taking up the Cross of Christ with patience. Have you seen what my tongue is like? It has grown; it's not as it used to be. That's also a result of the cancer I've got in my head. And as time goes on, things will get worse. It will grow even more and I'll have difficulty in speaking. I'm in great pain, but my illness is something very beautiful. I feel it as the love of Christ. I am given compunction and I give thanks to God. It is on account of my sins. I am sinful and God is trying to purify me.

When I was sixteen years old I asked God to give me a serious illness, a cancer, so that I would suffer for His love and glorify Him through my pain. I made this prayer for a long time. But my elder told me that this was egotism and that I was coercing God. God knows what He is doing. So I didn't continue with this prayer. But, you see, God did not forget my request and He gave me this benefaction after so many years!

Now I do not pray for God to take away from me the thing I asked Him for. I am glad that I have it so that I can participate in His sufferings through my great love. I have the chastisement of God: *For the Lord chastises the one he loves*. [2] My illness is a special favor from God, who is inviting me to enter into the mystery of His love and to try to respond with His own grace. But I am not worthy. You'll say to me, 'Don't all these things that God reveals to you make you worthy?' These rather condemn me. Because these are things that belong to the grace of God. There is nothing of my own. God gave me many gifts, but I did not respond; I proved myself unworthy. But I have not abandoned my efforts, not even for a moment. Perhaps God will give me His help so

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It is time again for HOUSE BLESSINGS! Please email, text, call, or speak with Fr. Paul in person ASAP to set up a time for him to come to bless your home and/or business. House blessings can begin after Theophany and continue until they are all done!



that I can give myself to His love.

That's why I do not pray for God to make me well. I pray for Him to make me good. I'm certain that God knows that I am in pain. But I pray for my soul, for God to forgive my transgressions. I am not taking medicines, nor did I go for surgery, not even for tests, and nor will I accept surgery. I will leave God to sort things out. The only thing I do is to try to become good. This is what I ask you to pray for me. The grace of God sustains me. I try to give myself to Christ, to approach Christ and to be one with Christ. This is what I desire, but I haven't succeeded ? and I don't say this out of humility. But I don't lose my courage. I persevere. I pray for God to forgive my sins. I've heard many people saying, 'I'm unable to pray.' I haven't suffered this. Only on the day that I was disobedient on the Holy Mountain did I suffer that.

It doesn't concern me how long I will live or whether I will live. That is something I have left to God's love. It often happens that you don't want to remember death. It's because you desire life. That, from one point of view, is a proof of the immortality of the soul. But *whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's*. [3] Death is a bridge which will lead us to Christ. As soon as we close our eyes, we will open them on eternity. We will appear before Christ. In the next life we will experience the grace of God more intensely.

I felt great joy at the thought that I would meet the Lord

Once I came to the point of death. I had suffered severe perforation of the stomach as a result of the steroids I was given in hospital when I went for an operation on my eye ? which I lost in the end. At that time I was living in a little hut; the monastery had not yet been built. I was so exhausted that I didn't know whether it was day or night. I came to the point of death and yet I survived. I lost a lot of weight and had no appetite. For three months I survived with three spoons of milk a day. I was saved by a goat!

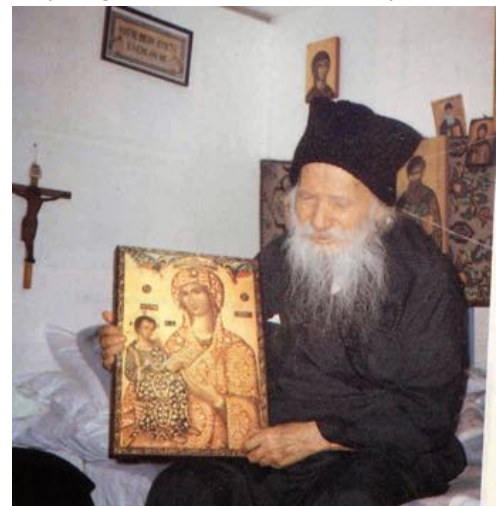
I lived with the thought of leaving this world. I felt great joy at the thought that I would meet the Lord. I had a very deep sense of the presence of God. And God desired at that time to strengthen and comfort me with something very blessed. Every so often I would feel that my soul was about to depart. I saw in the sky a star which twinkled and emitted sweet rays of light. It was bright and very sweet. It was so beautiful! Its light possessed a great sweetness. Its color was a light sky blue, like a diamond, like a precious stone. Whenever I saw it I was filled with comfort and joy because I felt that the whole Church ? the Triune Godhead, our Lady, the angels and the saints ? was contained in that star. I had the sense that in it were contained all the souls of all my loved ones, of my elders. I believed that when I would leave this life I, too, would go to that star through the love of God, not through my virtues. I wanted to believe that God, who loves me, revealed it to me in order to tell me, 'I'm waiting for you!'

I didn't want to think about hell and about tollgates. [4] I didn't remember my sins, although I had many. I set them aside. I remembered only the love of God and was glad. And I made entreaty, 'O my God, for the sake of your love, may I also be there. But if on account of my sins I must go to hell, may your love place me wherever it wishes. It is sufficient for me to be with You.' For so many years I lived in the desert with love for Christ. I said to myself: 'If you go to heaven and God says to you, "*Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?*" [5] What do you want here?" I'll reply, "Whatever You want, my Lord, whatever Your love desires; place me wherever Your love wishes. I abandon myself to Your love. If You want to place me in hell, then do so, only don't let me lose Your love."

I had an acute sense of my sinfulness, and that's why I constantly repeated to myself the prayer of Saint Symeon the New Theologian:

*I know, Saviour, that none other has, as I have, sinned against You,
nor done the deeds that I have done.
But this again I surely know: neither magnitude of errors,
nor multitude of transgressions, can surpass my God's great patience
and His love for man unbounded. [6]*

What the prayer says are not our own words. We are unable to conceive and express such words. They were written by saints. But our soul needs to embrace these words



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written by the saints and to sense and experience them. I also like the other words of the prayer:

*Neither tears shed in my weeping, nor the slightest falling tearlet,
O my God, escapes Your notice, O my Maker, my Redeemer.*

*And my work yet unaccomplished is to Your eyes already known
and all the things I've not yet done are for You already written, in Your book already entered.*

*Look down on my humbled being look on my so great contrition
and forgive me my transgressions, all my sins, O God of all things...*

I repeated this prayer continually and intensely to escape from these thoughts. The more I repeated it, the more, up in the infinity of space, appeared the star, my comfort. It came all these days that I was suffering. And when it appeared, my soul took wings and I said to myself: 'My star has come!' It felt as if it were drawing me up from the earth towards it. I felt great joy when I saw it. I didn't want to think of my sins, as I've said, because these would exclude me from this mystery. Only once, once only, did I sense that the star was empty, it wasn't twinkling, it wasn't full. I realized what it was. It was from the 'contrary one'. I ignored him, and turned my mind elsewhere. I spoke to my sister about some jobs that were to be done. After a while I saw it shining brightly again. Joy came again even more intensely within me.

All that time I had fearful pains throughout my body. Other people saw that I was dying. I had given myself over to the love of God. I did not pray to be released from the pains. My desire was for God to have mercy on me. I had leant on Him, and I waited for His grace to work. I was not afraid of death. For I would go to Christ. As I've told you, I repeated constantly the prayer of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, but not in a selfish spirit, and not for my health to be restored. I sensed every single word of the prayer.

The secret in illness is to struggle to acquire the grace of God

We benefit greatly from our illnesses, as long as we endure them without complaint and glorify God, asking for His mercy. When we become ill, the important thing is not that we don't take medicines or that we go and pray to Saint Nektarios. We need also to know the other secret, namely, to struggle to acquire the grace of God. This is the secret. Grace will teach us all the other things, namely, how to abandon ourselves to Christ. That is, we ignore the illness, we do not think about it, we think about Christ, simply, imperceptibly and selflessly and God works His miracle for the good of our soul. Just as we say in the Divine Liturgy, 'we commend all our life to Christ our God.'

But we need to wish to ignore the illness. If we don't wish to, it's difficult. We can't simply say, 'I ignore it'. And so although we think that we are ignoring it and giving no thought to it, in point of fact we have it in our mind continually and we cannot find peace within ourselves. Let me prove this to you. We say: 'I believe that God will cure me. I won't take any medicine. I'll stay awake all night and I'll pray to God about it and He will hear me.' We pray all night long, we make entreaty, we call on and coerce God and all the saints to make us well. We go to one place and another. With all these things don't we show that we are far from ignoring the illness? The more we insist and blackmail the saints and God to make us well, the more acutely we feel our illness. The more we strive to get rid of it, the more we feel it. And so we achieve nothing. And we have the impression that a miracle will happen, and yet, in reality, we don't believe it, and so we do not become better.

We pray and we don't take medicine, but we don't find any peace and no miracle happens. But you will say: 'What do you mean that I don't believe? Don't you see I haven't taken any medicine?' And yet, at bottom, we have doubt and fear within us and we think to ourselves, 'Will it really happen?' Here the words of Scripture hold good: *If you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'be lifted up and thrown into the sea', it will be done.* [7] When faith is real, whether you take medicine or not, the grace of God will act. And God acts through doctors and medicines. The Wisdom of Sirach says: *Honour the physician with the honours due to him, according to your need of him, for the Lord created him. The Lord created medicines from the earth, and a man of sense will not despise them. And give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; let him not leave you, for there is need of him.* [8]

The whole secret is faith - without doubts, gentle, simple and artless: *in simplicity and artlessness of heart.* [9] It is not a question of 'will power' or 'mind over matter'. A fakir can display this kind of 'will power'. It is a question of having faith that God loves us with infinite love and wants us to become His own. That is why He allows illnesses, until we surrender ourselves

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in trust to Him.

If we love Christ, all things will change in our lives. We do not love Him in order to receive some reward such as health. Rather we love Him out of gratitude, without thinking of anything, only of the love of God. Nor should we pray with any ulterior motive and say to God: 'Make such-and-such a person well, so that he may come close to You.' It is not right to point out ways and means to God. How can we presume to say to God, 'make me well'? What can we tell to Him who knows everything? We will pray, but God may not wish to listen to us. A person asked me a little while ago, 'When will I get well?'

'Ah,' I told him, 'if you say, "When will I get well?" then you never will get well. It's not right to entreat God about such things. You entreat anxiously for God to take the illness from you, but then the illness lays even tighter hold on you. We mustn't ask for this. Nor should you pray about this.'

He was taken aback and said, 'Do you mean I shouldn't pray?'
'Not at all,' I answered. 'On the contrary, pray a great deal, but for God to forgive your sins and to give you strength to love Him and to give yourself to Him. Because the more you pray for the illness to leave you, the more it adheres to you, winds its tentacles around you and squeezes you, and becomes inseparable from you. If, of course, you feel an inner human weakness, then you may humbly entreat the Lord to take the illness from you.'



Let us abandon ourselves in trust to the love of God

When we surrender ourselves to Christ, our spiritual organism finds peace, with the result that all our bodily organs and glands function normally. All these are affected. We become well and cease to suffer. Even if we have cancer, if we leave everything to God and our soul finds serenity, then divine grace may work through this serenity and cause the cancer and everything else to leave.

Stomach ulcers, you know, are caused by stress. The sympathetic system, when it is subjected to pressure, is constricted and suffers harm and so the ulcer is created. With stress, pressure, distress, anxiety, an ulcer or cancer comes about. When there are confusions in our soul, these have influence on our body and our health suffers.

The most perfect way is not to pray for our health – not to pray to become well, but to become good. That is what I pray for myself. Do you hear? I don't mean to be good in the sense of virtuous, but in the sense of acquiring divine zeal, of abandoning ourselves in trust to God's love, and of praying rather for our soul. And we mean our soul as it is incorporated in the Church, whose head is Christ, along with all our fellow men and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And I open my arms and pray for all people. When I am about to receive Holy Communion, as I am standing before the Holy Chalice, I open my soul to receive the Lord, and I bow my head and I pray for you, for this person and that, and for the whole Church. You should do the same. Do you understand? Don't pray for your health. Don't say, 'O Lord, make me well.' No! Rather say, 'Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me', with selflessness, with love and without expecting anything. 'Lord, whatever Your love desires...' Only in this way will you act from now on, loving Christ and our brothers and sisters. Love Christ. Become saints. Throw yourselves into becoming friends with Christ, into His love alone, into divine *eros*.

Isn't perhaps this what is happening to me, since I feel this zeal and adoration? Even though I feel that my body has rotted away, I don't succumb to my illness, not even to my cancer, I shouldn't speak, but my love for you and for the whole world doesn't allow me to remain silent. When I speak, my lungs remain without oxygen and that's very bad because the heart is harmed. I have suffered something much worse than a heart attack. And yet I live. Isn't that an intervention of God? Yes, and I am obedient to God's will, to my illness. I suffer without complaint and... with annoyance at myself because no one is devoid of uncleanness. [10] I'm in a bad state. My spirit is also sick.

I say to a hermit with whom I am in contact, 'Pray for me. I love you. Love me too and pity me and pray for me and God will have mercy on me.'

'You're the one who should pray,' he says to me.

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Happy Birthday to...

Robert Johnigan (1/7)

Chris Karajanis (1/7)

Jamie Pullos (1/12)

Linda Rosa (1/23)

Mark Radich (2/6)

Beth Radich (2/10)

Barbara Andrikopoulos (2/9)

Jared Marquardt (2/14)

Driko Pappas (2/14)

José Rosa (2/18)

Tim Joannides (2/20)

Jennie Joannides (2/23)

Emily Radich (2/24)

Kay Pappas (2/28)

Many Years!!!

Happy Anniversary to...

Dave & Adrianne Johansen (1/26)

José & Linda Rosa (2/26)

Happy Nameday to...

Genevieve Garrett (Genevieve – 1/3)

Fay Zaharas (Fotini – 1/6)

Tyler Garrett (John – 1/7)

Anthony Pappas (Anthony - 1/17)

Tim Joannides (Timothy – 1/22)

(If you don't see your birthday, anniversary, or Nameday here, please forgive me for missing it, and let me know when it is! - Fr. Paul)

‘I’m beginning now to be unable to do all that I did for so many years,’ I tell him. What does the hymn say?

*My mind is sorely wounded, my body has grown enfeebled,
my spirit is sick, my speech has lost its power;
my life is brought to death; the end is at the door.
And so, O wretched soul of mine, what will you do
when the Judge appears before you to investigate your deeds?* [20]

This hymn reflects my present state. I think that if I hadn’t done this or that I wouldn’t be in pain now, I would be close to Christ. I say this about myself because I’m thoughtless...

If you want to enjoy good health and live for many years, then listen to what Solomon the Wise has to say: *Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the counsel of saints is understanding; for to know the law is the mark of a sound mind, for in this way you will live long and years of your life will be added to you.* [21] This is the secret: for us to acquire this wisdom, this knowledge, and then everything functions smoothly, all things are put in order and we will live with joy and health.

Endnotes

[1] The holy Elder suffered from the following illnesses: myocardial infarction (anterior diaphragm with lateral ischaemia), chronic kidney disease, duodenal ulcer (with repeated perforations), operated cataract (loss of lens and blindness), herpes zoster (shingles) on the face, staphylococcus dermatitis on the hand, inguinal hernia (frequently strangulated), chronic bronchitis and cancer of the pituitary gland. Cf. Dr. Georgios Papazachou in an article in the periodical *Synaxis*, 41 (Jan–Mar) 1992, 93.

[2] Heb. 12:6.

[3] Rom. 14:8.

[4] A theory that a soul after death has to pass through a series of ‘tollgates’ where it is interrogated about a variety of sins.

[5] Matt. 22:12.

[6] Prayers of Preparation for Holy Communion, Prayer 7.

[7] Matt. 21:21.

[8] Sir. 38:1, 4, 12.

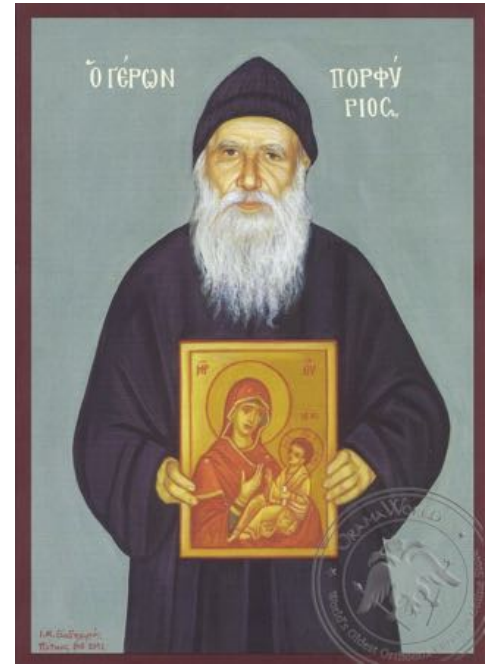
[9] Wisd. 1:1.

[10] Cf. Job 14:4.

[11] Great Canon by Saint Andrew of Crete (1st troparion of the 9th Ode).

[12] Prov. 9:10–11.

From *Wounded By Love: The Life and Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios*, pp. 224–231, as edited from an archive of notes and recordings by the Sisters of the Holy Convent of Chrysopigi (Life-Giving Spring). This remarkable book is available [directly from the publisher in Greece](#) or from [Uncut Mountain Supply](#).



The Life of a Lesser-Known Saint...

St. Tatiana of Rome and those with her – January 12

The Holy Virgin Martyr Tatiana was born into an illustrious Roman family, and her father was elected consul three times. He was secretly a Christian and raised his daughter to be devoted to God and the Church. When she reached the age of maturity, Tatiana decided to remain a virgin, betrothing herself to Christ. Disdaining earthly riches, she sought instead the imperishable wealth of Heaven. She was made a deaconess in one of the Roman churches and served God in fasting and prayer, tending the sick and helping the needy.

When Rome was ruled by the sixteen-year-old Alexander Severus (222–235), all power was concentrated in

the hands of the regent Ulpian, an evil enemy and persecutor of Christians. Christian blood flowed like water. Tatiana was arrested and was brought into the temple of Apollo and forced to offer sacrifice to the idols. The saint began to pray, and suddenly there was an earthquake. The idols were smashed into pieces, and part of the temple collapsed and fell down on the pagan priests. The demon inhabiting the idols fled screeching from the temple. Those present saw its shadow flying through the air.

The pagans then tore the holy virgin's eyes out with hooks, but she bravely endured everything, praying for her tormentors that the Lord would open their spiritual eyes. The Lord heard the prayer of His servant. The executioners saw four angels encircle the saint and beat her tormentors. A voice was heard from the heavens speaking to the holy virgin. Eight men believed in Christ and fell on their knees before St. Tatiana, begging her to forgive them their sins. For confessing themselves Christians, they were tortured and executed, receiving Baptism by blood.

The next day, St. Tatiana was brought before the judge. Seeing her completely healed of all her wounds, she was stripped and beaten, and her body was slashed with razors. A wondrous fragrance filled the air. She was then stretched out on the ground and beaten for so long that the servants had to be replaced several times. The torturers became exhausted and said that an invisible power was beating them with iron rods. Indeed, the angels warded off the blows directed at her and turned them upon the tormentors, causing nine of them to fall dead. They then threw Tatiana in prison, where she prayed all night and sang praises to the Lord with the angels.

A new morning began, and St. Tatiana was taken to the tribunal once more. The torturers beheld with astonishment that after such terrible torments she appeared completely healthy and even more radiant and beautiful than before. They began to urge her to offer sacrifice to the goddess Diana. The saint seemed agreeable, and they took her to the heathen temple. St. Tatiana made the Sign of the Cross and began to pray. Suddenly, there was a crash of deafening thunder, and lightning struck the idol, the sacrificial offerings and the pagan priests.

Once again, the martyr was fiercely tortured. She was hung up and scraped with iron claws, and her breasts were cut off. That night, angels appeared to her in prison and healed her wounds as before. On the following day, they took St. Tatiana to the circus and loosed a hungry lion on her. The beast did not harm the saint, but meekly licked her feet.

As they were taking the lion back to its cage, it killed one of the torturers. They threw Tatiana into a fire, but the flames did not harm her. The pagans, thinking that she was a sorceress, cut off her hair to take away her magical powers, then locked her up in the temple of Zeus.

On the third day, pagan priests came to the temple intending to offer sacrifice to Zeus. They beheld the idol on the floor, shattered to pieces, and the holy martyr Tatiana joyously praising the Lord Jesus Christ. The judge then condemned her to be beheaded with a sword. Her father was also executed with her, because he had raised her to love Christ.



Assisting in Upcoming Services...

Prosforo

1/1 (weekday) – Pres. Lavinia
1/4 – Fay Zaharas
1/5 (weekday) – Fay Zaharas
1/6 (weekday) – Tina Marquardt
1/7 (weekday) – Sarah Pullos
1/11 – Kelly Zaharas
1/18 – Estelle Haefele
1/21 (weekday) – Angie Galeotos
1/25 – Stephan Pappas
2/1 – Lexie Garrett
2/2 (weekday) – Tina Marquardt
2/8 – Adrianne Johansen
2/10 (weekday) – Christine Pappas
2/14 (weekday) – Sarah Pullos
2/15 – Kathy Joannides
2/22 – Fay Zaharas

Greeter

1/4 - Cameron Karajanis
1/11 - Zoe Christopulos
1/18 - Greg Pappas
1/25 - Rob Marquardt
2/1 - Chris Karajanis
2/8 - Driko Pappas
2/15 - Estelle & Jim Haefele
2/22 – Nick Bellack

Please keep an eye out for updated lists; all is subject to change!

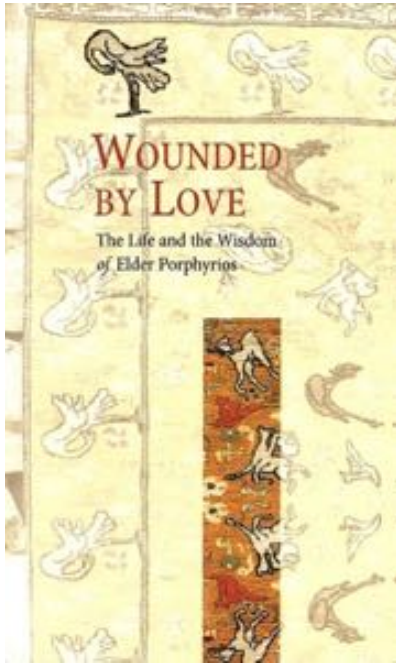
Fellowship

1/4 – Estelle & Jim Haefele
1/11 – Olga Reikstins, Irina Needhammer, & Jenni Jackson
1/18 – Alexis & Nick Bellack
1/25 – Julie, Kayla, & Kaycee Lehman
2/1 – Christine & Driko Pappas
2/8 – Tara & Greg Pappas
2/15 – Tina & Rob Marquardt
2/22 - Kelly & Steve Zaharas



*Thank you for your service
and dedication!!!*

Fr. Paul's January book recommendation:



Wounded by Love: The Life and the Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios by Elder Porphyrios: Elder Porphyrios was a priestmonk in Greece who reposed in 1991. He stands in the long tradition of Spirit-bearing guides in the Orthodox Church which, from the Apostolic Age until today, have brought us great wonderworking and Spirit-breathing Saints. Elder Porphyrios was officially glorified as a Saint less than a year ago. Of all the modern Saints and Elders of our Church, Elder Porphyrios is largely considered to be the greatest. I have heard more than one person state that, "A Saint like Elder Porphyrios only comes around once every two- or three-hundred years."

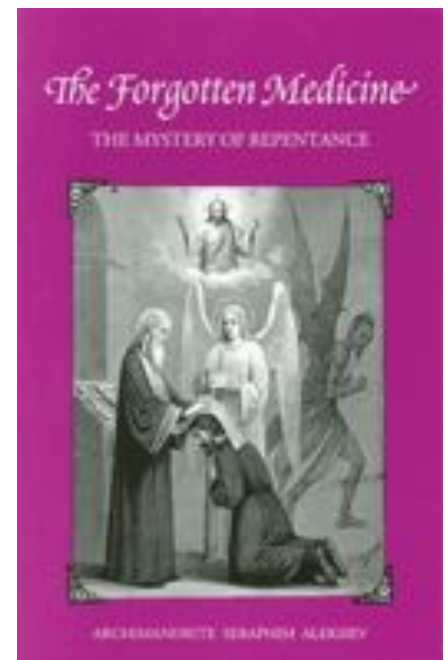
Part of Elder Porphyrios' greatness lies in his ability to speak with immense simplicity about very deep spiritual concepts. This book - containing a life of the Elder and many of his counsels - was compiled from various tape-recorded sessions with the Elder. The book can be found from its distributor - Uncut Mountain Supply - though it is commonly sold-out. Still, it can be found at many other online sellers. There are 6 or so books containing recollections of those who knew the Elder and his teachings, but this is the best place to start. Wounded by Love has come to be recognized as literally THE best modern book about spirituality available in English... a true, modern Orthodox classic.

Fr. Paul's February book recommendation:

The Forgotten Medicine: The Mystery of Repentance by Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev: This brief book - just 72 pages - is one of two volumes in English of the writings of Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev. Both can be found from St. Herman Press, this one being only \$5.

Archimandrite Seraphim discusses the Holy Mystery of Confession here, answering many objections to this necessary Christian Sacrament. Archimandrite Seraphim is able to write with great simplicity, offering the reader a beautiful understanding of why our Lord instituted Holy Confession and why it is such an essential aspect of one's spiritual life. This would be a perfect book to read before Great and Holy Lent, which begins at the end of February.

If you find this work beneficial, I would also highly recommend his other work, the modern classic The Meaning of Suffering & Strife and Reconciliation, a truly marvelous work comprised of two other short works. These two books together would serve anyone well on their journey in the spiritual life and ought to be read and re-read throughout one's life.



A Russian Christmas...



Why do Russian Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on a different day? Do other Orthodox do the same?

Please join us after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, January 11, when Olga and Irina will host fellowship hour and answer these questions while sharing with us some of the traditional ways that Russians celebrate the Nativity of our Lord!

January 2015

Holy Apostles Charity Book Drive

To benefit various Cheyenne
Medical facilities

which provide books for patients, family members,
and visitors.

There will be containers
each Sunday in January for you to drop off your
gently used books.

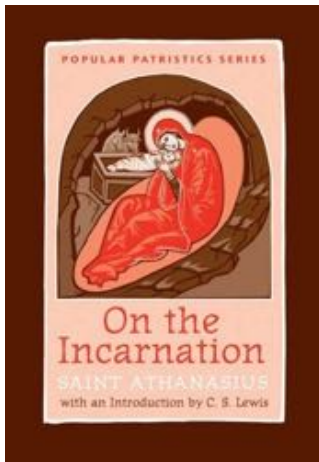
Any books you wish to pass on for someone else to
enjoy
will be appreciated.



Conversing with the Fathers...



Each month, our “Conversing with the Fathers” class will meet to discuss one of the works of a Holy Father of Orthodoxy. This is a wonderful opportunity to read, study, and converse about the Divinely-breathed words of the Saints of our Church. The class meets the first Monday of each month. Please join us in this holy work! Below are the first three books of our series...

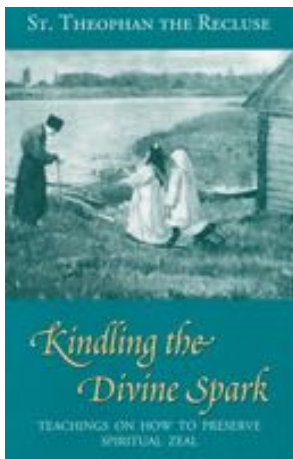
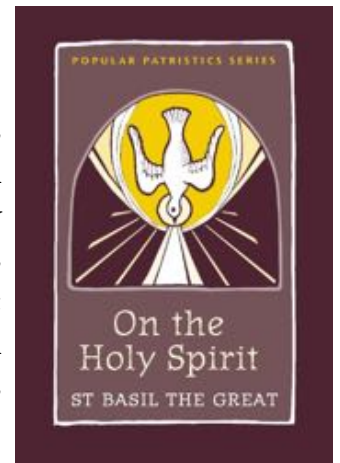


January selection:

Our first book for this class is St. Athanasius the Great’s classic work, *On the Incarnation*. Offering the first true Patristic overview of what God did for man and what salvation means, St. Athanasius’ work is deceptive, in many ways; he writes in very simple, straightforward language while expressing incredibly profound truths of the Christian Faith. This book became hugely influential at the First Holy Ecumenical Synod, especially in the composition of the Creed. No Patristic course could be taken seriously without the inclusion of this work.

February selection:

While the First Holy and Ecumenical Synod focussed on the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Second focussed on the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The work which most influenced the Church’s views of the Holy Spirit is our February selection: *On the Holy Spirit* by St. Basil the Great. Also notable in this work is St. Basil’s explanation of Holy Tradition, the first clear exposition of this topic ever given. This work also explains well the significance of language in attempting to make theological expression. Of all of St. Basil’s writings, this is perhaps his best-known.

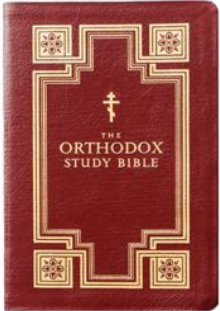


March selection:

Our March selection will be a significant change of pace, as we go to a much more modern Father: the 19th-century Saint, Theophan the Recluse and his work *Kindling the Divine Spark: Teachings on How to Preserve Spiritual Zeal*. These instructions to women examine many essentials of the spiritual life, including: how the heart is purified, inner suffering, spiritual zeal, how to train oneself to pray, and mystical union with the Lord. It contains twenty sermons and a brief Life of St. Theophan. Though originally offered to nuns, it comprises a conscious teaching of spirituality suited to the needs of both men and women, whether lay or monastic.

Educational/Spiritual Opportunities...

We have **NO** lack of opportunities for spiritual growth and education. Please try to take part in whatever you can and choose at least **ONE** class to participate in!



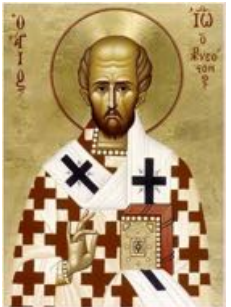
1) Read the Bible in a Year: If you have fallen behind in this project, it's never too late to start. There is **NO** question that the Holy Scriptures will bring you countless spiritual riches!

2) Basics of Orthopraxy: Keep looking out for entries into this series in the weekly emails and take the time to read them. I'm trying to keep them all to 1-2 pages. These offerings are meant to explain how and why we do some basic things in our Orthodox lives.



3) Bible Study: **MANY** people have asked for a Bible study class; we are currently seeking a new time that works better for people's schedules. Keep a lookout for the new time.

4) Conversing with the Fathers: This class will be only **ONCE** a month. It will assign a short book from one of the Fathers of the Church and then meet to discuss the contents. This class asks **VERY** little of your time, so it is a great opportunity to learn even with a busy schedule!



5) Orthodox Reading Group: This class will now only meet once a month. Please consider coming if you have yet to attend!

6) St. John Chrysostom Catechetical Lecture Series: Our second set of lectures during Fellowship will begin on January 18th and focus on the topic of the Church.



8) Guest Speakers: Plans are underway to bring in a guest speaker soon; please be on the lookout and, when we have the date, mark it immediately!

9) Great Vespers & Paraklesis: We will continue to celebrate Paraklesis every Wednesday night and will add Great Vespers on the first Saturday evening of each month. These are part of the worship of the Church. Don't consider them options; consider them as simply part of your Orthodox life. Worship is everything!!!

Some Words from Modern Saints & Elders...

St. Nektarios of Aegina (+1920)



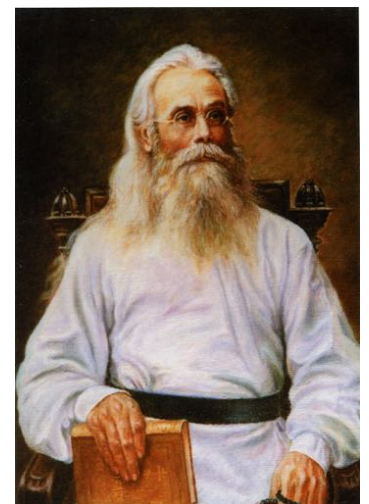
"A Christian must be courteous to all. His words and deeds should breath with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which abides in his soul, so that in this way he might glorify the name of God. He who regulates all of his speech also regulates all of his actions. He who keeps watch over the words he is about say also keeps watch over the deeds he intends to do, and he never goes out of the bounds good and benevolent conduct. The graceful speech of a Christian is characterized by delicateness and politeness. This fact, born of love, produces peace and joy. On the other hand, boorishness gives birth to hatred, enmity, affliction, competitiveness, disorder and wars."

"Christians, have we understood the great responsibility that we have taken on before God through baptism? Have we come to know that we must conduct ourselves as children of God, that we must align our will with the will of God, that we must remain free from sin, that we must love God with all our hearts and always patiently await union with Him? Have we thought about the fact that our heart should be so filled with love that it should overflow to our neighbor? Do we have the feeling that we must become holy and perfect, children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven? We must struggle for this, so that we may not be shown unworthy and rejected. Let none of us lose our boldness, nor neglect our duties, nor be afraid of the difficulties of spiritual struggle. For we have God as a helper, who strengthens us in the difficult path of virtue."

St. Hilarion of Optina (+1873)

"We cannot live in such a way that no one grieves or offends us, for the Apostle Luke writes: *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22), and bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).* Let us therefore ask that we may bear sorrows with self-reproach and humility and not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good, and with the Prophet say: *With them that hate peace I was peaceable (Ps. 119:6).*"

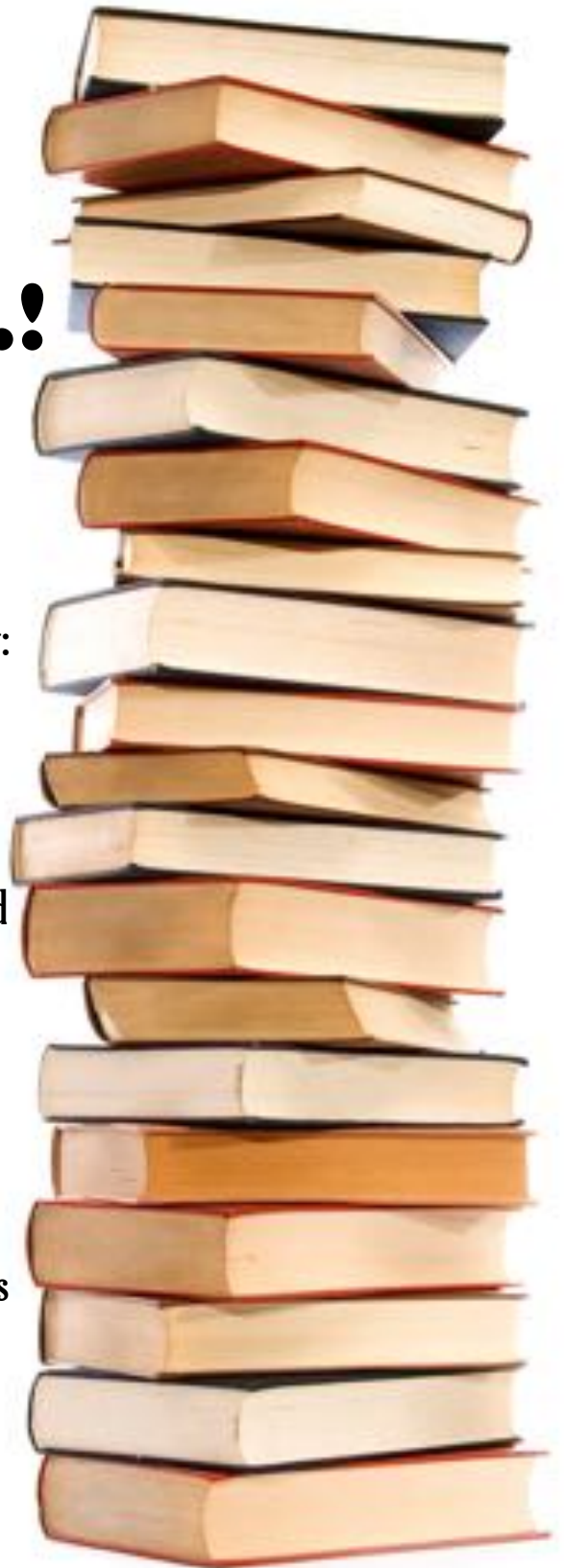
"When sorrow comes to us, we must await consolations, but after the consolation, we must again await sorrows."



We need YOUR help getting the Lending Library up and running...!

As we seek to stock the bookstore, we also want to get the Lending Library moving. This means having parishioners - i.e. YOU - offering your books for this worthwhile ministry! If you have any books that you would like to donate, here is what you need to know:

- 1) Bring any Orthodox books in a bag or box to Fr. Paul's office; you can leave them outside of his office door if he is not there.
- 2) If you have any non-Orthodox book that you think would be good to add to the collection, feel free to bring those as well; please know, however, that Fr. Paul must approve ALL books - Orthodox and non - and that, if he does not accept a book, it may only be because he is not familiar with it.
- 3) Please be sure to have your name written on the inside cover; this way, if you ever move or decide that you would like some books back at home, we can identify them as yours.
- 4) Be careful of what you bring... certain titles and authors will be confiscated for the fireplace! 🔥 (ha ha...)



Congratulations to our new Parish Council members...

Nick Bellack

Sam Galeotos

Tyler Garrett

jim Haefle

Tim Joannides

Christine Pappas

Jamie Pullos



***And ‘Thank you!’ to our previous
members for their service and dedication:***

Stephan Pappas
&
Steve Zaharas

JANUARY

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
28	29	30	31	1 8:45 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy - Circumcision of Christ, St. Basil the Great, New Year	2	3 9:00am Orthodox Reading Group 6:00pm Great Vespers
4 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy	5 8:15 Orthros 9:00 Hours 10:00 Vespers Liturgy Eve of Theophany 5:30pm - Conversing with the Fathers	6 8:45 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Theophany	7 8:45 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Synaxis of John the Forerunner 6:30 pm Paraklesis	8	9 9:30 Liturgy - St. Anthony the Great at SCH	10
11 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy PC swearing-in (tentative)	12 5:30pm Fundraising Metting at church	13 7:00am Men's Group	14 6:30 pm Paraklesis	15	16	17
18 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Lecture series on the Church (pt 1)	19	20	21 No Orthros 9:30 Liturgy St. Maximus the Confessor 6:30 pm Paraklesis	22	23	24
25 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Lecture series on the Church (pt 2)	26	27 7:00am Men's Group	28 6:30 pm Paraklesis	29	30	31

 = strict fast
 = wine/oil allowed
 = fish allowed

FEBRUARY

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
1 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (Triodion Begins) Lecture series on the Church (pt 3)	2 8:45 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy - Presentation of our Lord 5:30pm - Conversing with the Fathers	3	4 6:30 pm Paraklesis	5	6 9:30 Liturgy - St. Photius (at SCH)	7 9:00am Orthodox Reading Group 6:00pm Great Vespers
8 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Sunday of the Prodigal Son	9	10 7:00am Men's Group 8:45 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy - St. Haralambos	 11 NO Paraklesiis	12 5:30 PC Meeting	+ 13	14 8:45 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy - Saturday of Souls
15 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)	 16	 17 9:30 Liturgy - St. Theodore the Recruit (at SCH)	 18	 19	 20	 21
 22 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Liturgy Forgiveness Sunday 6:00pm Forgiveness Vespers	+	 23 24	+ 6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy with Lenten Potluck following	+ 25 26	+ 27 6:00pm Salutations to the Theotokos at SCH	 28 + = strict fast = dairy, eggs, fish allowed  = wine/oil allowed  = fish allowed