

St Basil con't

blow would render me insensible. Death would be a kindness to me, for it will bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and labor, and to Whom I hasten.”

The official was stunned by his answer. “No one has ever spoken so audaciously to me,” he said.

“Perhaps,” the saint remarked, “ that is because you’ve never spoken to a bishop before. In all else we are meek, the most humble of all. But when it concerns God, and people rise up against Him, then we, counting everything else as naught, look to Him alone. Then fire, sword, wild beasts and iron rods that rend the body, serve to fill us with joy, rather than fear.”

Reporting to Valens that Saint Basil was not to be intimidated, Modestus said, “Emperor, we stand defeated by a leader of the Church.” Basil the Great again showed firmness before the emperor and his retinue and made such a strong impression on Valens that the emperor dared not give in to the Arians demanding Basil’s exile. “On the day of Theophany, amidst an innumerable multitude of the people, Valens entered the church and mixed in with the throng, in order to give the appearance of being in unity with the Church. When the singing of Psalms began in the church, it was like thunder to his hearing. The emperor beheld a sea of people, and in the altar and all around was splendor; in front of all was Basil, who acknowledged neither by gesture nor by glance, that anything else was going on in church.” Everything was focused only on God and the altar-table, and the clergy serving there in awe and reverence.

Saint Basil celebrated the church services almost every day. He was particularly concerned about the strict fulfilling of the Canons of the Church, and took care that only worthy individuals should enter into the clergy. He incessantly made the rounds of his own church, lest anywhere there be an infraction of Church discipline, and setting aright any unseemliness. At Caesarea, Saint Basil built two monasteries, a men’s and a women’s, with a church in honor of the Forty Martyrs (March 9) whose relics were buried there. Following the example of monks, the saint’s clergy, even deacons and priests, lived in remarkable poverty, to toil and lead chaste and virtuous lives. For his clergy Saint Basil obtained an exemption from taxation. He used all his personal wealth and the income from his church for the benefit of the destitute; in every center of his diocese he built a poor-house; and at Caesarea, a home for wanderers and the homeless.

Sickly since youth, the toil of teaching, his life of abstinence, and the concerns and sorrows of pastoral service

took their toll on him. Saint Basil died on January 1, 379 at age 49. Shortly before his death, the saint blessed Saint Gregory the Theologian to accept the See of Constantinople.

Upon the repose of Saint Basil, the Church immediately began to celebrate his memory. Saint Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (November 23), in his eulogy to Saint Basil the Great, said: “It is neither without a reason nor by chance that holy Basil has taken leave from the body and had repose from the world unto God on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus, celebrated between the day of the Nativity and the day of the Baptism of Christ. Therefore, this most blessed one, preaching and praising the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, extolling spiritual circumcision, himself forsaking the flesh, now ascends to Christ on the sacred day of remembrance of the Circumcision of Christ. Therefore, let it also be established on this present day annually to honor the memory of Basil the Great festively and with solemnity.”

Saint Basil is also called “the revealer of heavenly mysteries” (Ouranophantor), a “renowned and bright star,” and “the glory and beauty of the Church.” His honorable head is in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

In some countries it is customary to sing special carols today in honor of Saint Basil. He is believed to visit the homes of the faithful, and a place is set for him at the table. People visit the homes of friends and relatives, and the mistress of the house gives a small gift to the children. A special bread (Vasilopita) is blessed and distributed after the Liturgy. A silver coin is baked into the bread, and whoever receives the slice with the coin is said to receive the blessing of Saint Basil for the coming year.

Mark 1:1-8 (Gospel, Sunday Before Theophany)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.” The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’ “ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Join us! **MARCH FOR LIFE** **Save the Date!**
CHICAGO
LOVIN' LIFE IN CHICAGO

ANNUAL MARCH FOR LIFE CHICAGO
JANUARY 15, 2017, 2-4pm

Pre-March Students for Life Conference 1.14.17
Pre-March Rose Dinner 1.14.17
Pre-March Mass & Brunch at Union League Club - Pre-March Youth Rally at St. Ignatius
Pilgrim Masses locations: TBD
Details: www.marchforlife-chicago.org
Location: Federal Plaza - 50 W. Adams - Chicago

Aid for Women ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO Catholic Conference of Illinois CFC FFL SPIRIT JUICE STUDIO
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA PROLIFE ACTION LEAGUE relevant radio CHICAGO 950/930AM STUDENTS FOR LIFE THOMAS MORE SOCIETY LAKE COUNTY RIGHT TO LIFE

Join Aid for Women, Archdiocese of Chicago, Catholic Conference of Illinois, Couples for Christ, Lake County Right to Life, Orthodox Church of America, Pro-Life Action League, Relevant Radio®, Spirit Juice Studio, Students for Life of Illinois, Thomas More Society and support the March for Life Chicago! Life Wins!!!

19th AAC Local Committee holds organizational meeting

The Local Committee charged with planning the [19th All-American Council](#) [AAC] of the Orthodox Church in America held its first meeting in Saint Louis and Kansas City December 14-15, 2016.

The 19th AAC will be convened at the historic Saint Louis Union Station Hotel, Saint Louis, MO July 23-27, 2018.

Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary and Council Supervisor and Deacon Peter Ilchuk, Council Manager, met with Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, Dean of the Kansas City Deanery and Local Council Clergy Chair; Robert Butchko, Local Council Lay Chair; and Kansas City Deanery faithful who have expressed an interest in assisting with planning efforts. An overview of expectations and duties of the Local Committee, which compliments the work of the Preconciliar Commission, was reviewed. Con't Page 9

Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God

Commemorated on [December 26](#)

The Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos: On the second day of the feast, the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated. Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity—concretely and historically—is the humanity He received from Mary.

His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.

Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

Father Alexander Schmemmann, *The Services of Christmas* (1981)

Sunday after the Nativity: Commemoration of the Holy Righteous David the King, Joseph the Betrothed, and James the Brother of the Lord

Commemorated on [December 26](#)

The Holy Prophet-King David, Saint Joseph the Betrothed, and Saint James the Brother of the Lord are commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, their commemoration is moved to December 26.

At an early date, some churches in the East began to commemorate certain important figures of the New Testament at the time of Theophany, and later during the Nativity season. In Syria, for example, Saint Stephen (December 27), Saints James (April 30) and John (September 26), and Saints Peter and Paul (June 29) were commemorated near the end of December.

In Jerusalem, the saints mentioned above were combined with a feast that the Jews of Hebron celebrated on December 25 or 26 in honor of the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob. Later on, the Christians substituted Saint James (October 23) for Jacob, and then the commemoration of the Brother of the Lord became associated with his ancestor King David. In time, Saint Joseph was linked with Saints David and James.

The Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago presents
The 9th Annual Pan-Orthodox

Sanctity of Life Sunday

Prayer Service and Presentation



*Come join in prayer that the Lord would
guide us all to keep life sacred,
followed by remarks by*

His Grace Bishop PAUL
of Chicago and the Midwest (OCA)

Sunday, January 22, 2017 — 6 pm

Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

6980 County Line Road Burr Ridge, IL 60527



Christmas and Martyrdom

by Fr. Steven Kostoff

The Gospel reading for the Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord is Matthew 2:1-12. This passage proclaims the Good News that the Savior was born in Bethlehem according to the biblical prophecies. The star guides the Magi and they, in turn, bring their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the newborn Child in acknowledgment that He is unique and a true King, testified to by cosmic signs that even the Gentile Magi can properly interpret. Joyous as this is, there is already a hint of the ultimate destiny of Christ in that myrrh is used in the burial customs of the Jews.

On the Second Day of the Nativity, we complete the reading of the second chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel—2:13-23, which immediately introduces us to the tragic reality of the massacre of the innocent boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or younger. The previous joy of the Savior's Nativity is replaced by the wailing and lamentation of the mothers of these innocent children, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more” [Jeremiah 2:18].

The shadow of the Cross lay across the infancy narratives in this Gospel, for in the immediate post-Nativity period, these male children become the first of many martyrs who must die because Christ has entered the world, as many of the powerful of this world—following the dark example of King Herod—will not receive Him; they will actually despise Him and turn against His followers. Thus, the suffering of innocent children is somehow taken up by God as an offering in a sinful world that fluctuates between light and darkness. We now understand that the cave of the Nativity anticipated the tomb of Christ's burial, and that the swaddling clothes anticipated the grave clothes with which Christ would eventually be bound following His death on the Cross.

On the Third Day of the Nativity, we commemorate the Protomartyr Stephen, the first to die for his faith in Christ in the post-Resurrection community of the newborn Church. Martyrdom has always been a distinct and powerful witness to Christ “from the beginning.” The kontakion for the Feast of Saint Stephen captures the movement between the joy of Christ's birth and the sobering reality of what Christ's coming meant for some:

Yesterday the Master assumed our flesh and became our guest;

Today His servant is stoned to death and departs in the flesh:

The glorious first martyr Stephen!

There is no greater witness to Christ than that of the martyrs—flesh and blood men, women and children who gave their lives for the Lord in the sure hope and assurance that eternal life awaited them in the Kingdom of God. If we exchange a “Merry Christmas” with others, we always need to be mindful of the commitment we are making to the newborn Christ. As we temporarily indulge in the days of the Feast, we realize that the Christian life is ultimately a commitment to discipline and restraint, even the “crucifixion” of the flesh with all of its desires, in order to “witness” to Christ as disciples who believe that His advent in the flesh, culminating in His death and resurrection, has prepared a place for us in His eternal Kingdom where there is “life everlasting.”

AAC Con't

“The goal was to organize the chairpersons and volunteers and to begin the work of the Council,” Father Eric said. “There are over a dozen committees, including transportation, the AAC dinner, and delegate registration, and in general there is a need for nearly 100 volunteers to operate the Council.”

Meetings were also held with the hotel staff of the Saint Louis Union Station Hotel.

**Annual Yelka
Christmas Dinner & Celebration**
All Welcome

hosted by
St. Pantelimon Orthodox Church
7549 West 61st Place, Summit, IL
Rectory: 708-552-5276

When: Sunday - January 8, 2017
Time: Noon
Cost: Free will offering
RSVP: By January 4, 2017
Karen M. 708-699-7497
Fr. Andrew 708-552-5276

Menu

Roast Beef	Fried Chicken
Mashed Potatoes	Vegetables
Salad / Bread	Coffee / Tea / Desserts
Cash Bar	

RAFFLE

Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen Commemorated on December 27

The third day of the Nativity is dedicated to the Protomartyr Saint Stephen. This is the third day of the three day Winter Pascha.

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called “archdeacon.” He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was “the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel.”

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned Saint Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. Saint Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, Saint Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death Saint Stephen said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

Saint Stephen is also commemorated on August 2 (Translation of his relics) and on September 15 (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415).

Financial Snapshot

Fiscal Year: 1st Quarter

September

Income:	\$4,606.47
Expenses:	<u>\$5,400.07</u>
DIFFERENCE:	-\$ 793.60

October:

Income:	\$2,203.00
Expenses:	<u>\$4,867.86</u>
DIFFERENCE:	-\$2,664.86

November:

Income:	\$5,620.25
Expenses:	<u>\$7,001.47</u>
DIFFERENCE:	-\$1,381.22



FIRST QUARTER TOTAL:

Expenses exceeded
Income
by **-\$4,839.68**