



✝ THE SPIRITUAL WATCH



“Stand fast on spiritual watch...”

-St. John Maximovitch

A Message From His Eminence

Metropolitan Demetrius of America

Official publication of the
Genuine Orthodox Church
of America

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About *The Spiritual Watch*

The Spiritual Watch is published bimonthly, with the blessing of his Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America.

The Spiritual Watch is mailed to the homes of faithful by request only. Please see request form inside.

Dearly Beloved Faithful of our Sacred Metropolis,

It is with much joy that we present to you the first issue of *The Spiritual Watch*, the new periodical of the Metropolis of America. The title comes from a quote of Saint John of San Francisco: "Stand fast on spiritual watch because you do not know when the Lord will call you unto Himself." It is our great hope that this publication will provide spiritual nourishment for our faithful Christians, and rouse you to keep "spiritual watch" against the temptations of the Evil One.

With the opportunity of the launching of our new periodical, I wish to bring to your attention an important matter in the life of our Church. Our Metropolis now serves some 40 parishes throughout eastern America! After several years of rapid growth, the Metropolis is now focusing on organizing itself better. The first step in this process of organization is to buy an office building. This will allow us to create a Metropolis Center so that the administration of the diocese can run smoothly.

The Metropolis Center that we are trying to establish at this time will, by God's grace, serve to unify our Metropolis so that the Church can operate as a single unit and not as a mere coalition of scattered parishes. The Metropolis Center will be where the hierarchy convenes for meetings and shapes the direction and the activities of the Church. Extensive files will be maintained there,

including Certificates of Baptism, Marriage, and Ordination, as well as other Metropolis documents, both historical and contemporary. Through an organized Metropolis Center, the Metropolis will be able to set up departments and funds to help with every aspect of Church life. The Center will plan and publish spiritual literature and periodicals, with the goal of eventually establishing an in-house print shop. An office of communications will also be established to encourage and inform scattered communities, as well as a travel fund to cover the costs of travel for parish visits. We will establish an office of catechism to reach out to and serve the curricular and other needs of current and potential catechumens. The Metropolis will also cultivate Metropolis-wide English, Greek, Russian, and Spanish preaching ministries to bring qualified clergymen and theologians and support missionary work. A prison ministry will also be organized at the Center to serve the spiritual needs of souls imprisoned throughout America. In short, the Metropolis Center will be a place to or-

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The Twelve Days of... Theophany

We have all heard of the "Twelve Days of Christmas," largely because of the well-known jingle, which many people assume is a countdown to the Nativity. Not so. There is a historic significance to these twelve days, but they do not end with the Nativity. The twelve days actually *begin* with the Nativity, and mark the festive time between Nativity and Theophany. In the early Church, Nativity and Theophany were celebrated as one Feast, according to the Great Synaxaristes. Early Christians celebrat-



ed the appearance of the Creator of the universe as a Man, in one Feast that encompassed all of the events from His birth to His baptism. This Feast was Theophany. By the 5th Century, the celebration of God's appearance on earth as Man was spread out, and the Nativity was fixed as a separate Feast-day. Therefore, Theophany is celebrated after

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Μήνυμα του Σεβασμιώτατου Μητροπολίτη Μας

+ Δημητρίου Αμερικής

Περιπόθητα τέκνα της Ιεράς μας Μητροπόλεως,

Με μεγάλη χαρά παρουσιάζουμε το πρώτο τεύχος του νέου περιοδικού της Μητροπόλεως Αμερικής, «Η Πνευματική Επαγρύπνηση». Ο τίτλος προέρχεται από λόγο του Αγίου Ιωάννη του Σαν Φρανσίσκο: «Να στέκεσθε ακλόνητοι σε πνευματική επαγρύπνηση, διότι δεν ξέρετε πότε θα σας καλέσει ο Κύριος». Η ελπίδα μας είναι το περιοδικό αυτό να παρέχει πνευματική τροφή στους πιστούς μας Χριστιανούς, και να τους παρακινεί να επαγρυπνούν ώστε να φυλάγονται από τους πειρασμούς του εχθρού.

Με την ευκαιρία της ενάρξεως του νέου μας περιοδικού, θα ήθελα να εστιάσω την προσοχή σας σε σημαντικό θέμα στη ζωή της Εκκλησίας μας. Η Μητρόπολή μας σήμερα εξυπηρετεί περίπου σαράντα ενορίες στην ανατολική Αμερική! Μετά από πολλά χρόνια ραγδαίας ανάπτυξης, η Μητρόπολη τώρα επικεντρώνει τις προσπάθειές της στην βελτίωση της διοικητικής διοργανώσεως. Το πρώτο βήμα στη διαδικασία της διοργανώσεως αυτής είναι η αγορά γραφείων για την Μητρόπολη, ενέργεια που θα μας επιτρέψει να ιδρύσουμε Μητροπολιτικό Κέντρο προς απρόσκοπτη διοίκηση της Μητροπόλεως.

Το Μητροπολιτικό Κέντρο που επιχειρούμε τώρα να ιδρύσουμε, με την χάρη του Θεού, θα ενώσει την Μητρόπολή μας, ώστε η Εκκλησία να λειτουργεί ως ενιαία μονάδα και όχι ως απλός όμιλος διάσπαρτων ενοριών. Το Μητροπολιτικό Κέντρο θα είναι ο χώρος στον οποίο η Ιεραρχία θα συνεδριάζει προκειμένου να κατευθύνονται οι δραστηριότητες της Εκκλησίας. Θα διατηρούνται στο Μητροπολιτικό Κέντρο εκτενή αρχεία, τα οποία θα συμπεριλαμβάνουν πιστοποιητικά βαπτίσεων, γάμων, και χειροτονιών, καθώς και άλλα έγγραφα της Μητροπόλεως, τόσο ιστορικά όσο και σύγχρονα. Με οργανωμένο Μητροπολιτικό Κέντρο, η Μητρόπολη θα είναι σε θέση να ιδρύει αρμόδια γραφεία και ειδικά ταμεία προς στήριξη κάθε πτυχής της εκκλησιαστικής ζωής. Στο Κέντρο θα εκπονούνται και θα δημοσιεύονται διάφορες ψυχοφελείς εκδόσεις και περιοδικά, με απώτερο στόχο την επί τόπου ίδρυση τυπογραφείου. Θα καθιερωθεί επίσης γραφείο επικοινωνιών με σκοπό να ενθαρρύνει και να ενημερώνει κοινότητες διάσπαρτες σε όλη την Αμερική, καθώς και θα συσταθεί ειδικό ταμείο για την κάλυψη των ταξιδιωτικών εξόδων για

ποιμαντικές επισκέψεις. Θα δημιουργήσουμε γραφείο κατήχησεως για την εξυπηρέτηση των προγραμματικών και άλλων αναγκών

των σημερινών και μελλοντικών κατηχομένων. Από το Κέντρο, η Μητρόπολη επίσης θα οργανώνει προγράμματα κηρυγματικής δράσεως σε όλη την Μητρόπολη στα Αγγλικά, στα Ελληνικά, στα Ρωσικά, και στα Ισπανικά από εξειδικευμένους κληρικούς και θεολόγους, καθώς και θα ενισχύει ιεραποστολικές έργα. Θα διοργανωθεί επίσης στο Κέντρο διακονία κρατουμένων που θα εξυπηρετεί τις πνευματικές ανάγκες φυλακισμένων ψυχών σε όλη την Αμερική. Εν ολίγοις, το Μητροπολιτικό Κέντρο θα είναι ένας χώρος όπου θα διοργανώνονται και θα συντονίζονται οι διάφορες πρωτοβουλίες της Μητροπόλεως, προκειμένου να επιτυγχάνονται περισσότεροι στόχοι.

Προς το παρόν, ένα μέρος αυτών των δραστηριοτήτων συντονίζεται στην Μονή του Αγίου Ιωάννη, και άλλο μέρος αυτών σε άλλα μέρη κατά τρόπο τμηματικό, με αποτέλεσμα τα αρχεία της Μητροπόλεως να μη βρίσκονται πλήρως σε τάξη. Δεν υπάρχει χώρος για αρχειοθέτηση, οι οικονομικές υποθέσεις παραμένουν ασυντόνιστες, και πολλές Μητροπολιτικές πρωτοβουλίες εμποδίζονται και δεν υλοποιούνται λόγω της αποδιοργάνωσης. Τα Μοναστικά ιδρύματα αποτελούν χώρους ησυχίας και προσευχής για όσους έχουν εγκαταλείψει το κόσμο. Το ιεραποστολικό έργο ενός μοναστηριού ρέει από τη ζωή της προσευχής των μοναχών. Τα Μοναστήρια δεν πρέπει να λειτουργούν ως γραφεία Μητροπόλεως, αλλά ως πνευματικά κέντρα.

Όπως και κατά όλη την ιστορία της Εκκλησίας, έτσι και σήμερα ο ρόλος και οι ευθύνες της Μητροπόλεως είναι καίριες σημασίας για την λειτουργία της Εκκλησίας ως σύνολο. Όπως ακριβώς

χρειάζονται οι πιστοί τον ιερέα τους και οι ιερείς τον επίσκοπό τους, έτσι και οι ενορίες χρειάζονται την Μητρόπολη για να λειτουργούν αποτελεσματικά. Όσο πιο στενός ο σύνδεσμος αυτός, τόσο περισσότερη αρμονία υπάρχει, και αυτό κατά νόμο πνευματικό. Ως εκ τούτου, αγαπητοί, ζητώ ο καθένας σας να στηρίζει την Μητρόπολη όπως μπορεί καλύτερα, με όποιον τρόπο. Η Μητρόπολη χρειάζεται την βοήθειά σας. Μόνο με την στήριξή σας μπορεί αυτό το έργο να αποδώσει καρπούς.

Τα ανά χείρας ενημερωτικό δελτίο της Ιεράς Μητροπόλεως Αμερικής είναι ένα δείγμα των πολλών νέων μας έργων. Όμως, για να συνεχίσουμε έχουμε ανάγκη να μας στηρίξετε! Παρακαλούμε να συνεισφέρετε σε αυτή τη σημαντική προσπάθεια.

Διάπυρος προς Χριστόν ευχέτης,
+ ο Αμερικής Δημήτριος



A Message From His Eminence *Cont'd from cover*

Metropolitan Demetrius of America

ganize and coordinate the activities of the Metropolis, ensuring many more objectives are accomplished.

At the present time, part of these functions are done at the Monastery of St. John, and part of them in various other places in a piecemeal fashion, with the result that the Metropolis files are in some disorder. There is no room to store archives, financial matters lack coordination, and many Metropolis-wide initiatives are prevented from being undertaken because of the disorganization. Monastic establishments are places of hesychia and prayer for those who have left the world. The missionary work of a monastery flows from its life of prayer. Monasteries should not function as Metropolis offices, but as spiritual centers.

As has been the case throughout the history of the Church, the role and re-



sponsibilities of the Metropolis are of key importance to the operation of the Church as a whole. Just as the faithful need their priest and the priests need their bishop, so the parishes need a Metropolis in order to function most effectively. The closer the connection, the more harmony there is; and this is part of the spiritual law. Therefore, dearly beloved, I am asking for each of you to support the Metropolis to the best of your ability, whatever that may be. The Metropolis needs your help. Only with your assistance can we bring this project to fruition.

In your hands you hold one of our many new projects: the newsletter of the Metropolis. But we need your support to keep it going! Please contribute to this important endeavor.

Your fervent intercessor before Christ,

+ Demetrius of America

The Twelve Days of... Theophany *Cont'd from cover*

the 12th day of the Nativity, and marks the end of the season of celebration, “the portal of jubilation and the Seal of feasts...” as St. John Chrysostom calls Theophany. This is why we do not fast between the Nativity of our Savior and the Eve of Theophany, which is a strict fast day.

In the world around us, “Christmas” seems to have greater significance than Theophany, or “Epiphany,” as this Feast has also been called. Even among the Orthodox, some of us tend to be more likely to go to work or school on Theophany, whereas we would certainly take the day off to attend services and celebrate the Nativity. However, this is a lamentable error. In the Church, Theophany is given greater honor than the Nativity. St. John Chrysostom says about Theophany, “It is the Culmination of the appearance of the Ancient of Days in the cave in Bethlehem...” Our Savior was not manifested to all when He was born, but when He was baptized, the Saint tells us.

But what are we celebrating on the Theophany? We are not only celebrating the beginning of our Lord’s soul-saving, three-year ministry on earth, which was completed with His ascension;

we are not only celebrating the manifestation of the Holy Trinity, the pre-eternal Godhead, to the race of man; we are not only celebrating the sanctification of all waters on earth, and the renewal of creation; we are not only celebrating our Savior’s baptism, which is a remarkable occurrence, beyond expression; but we are also celebrating our own baptism, and all baptisms, from then until now—in short, we are celebrating the dawn of the bright opportunity for salvation for the human race. As the Holy Spirit, in the form of a Dove, descended upon our Savior when He was in the Jordan, so also the Holy Spirit comes to all of us at the time of our baptism, “...upon thee no less at thy baptism the Spirit comes,” says St. John Chrysostom. Words fail to encompass what this day, Holy Theophany, means for us. “The human

race no longer slithers upon the ground... but flies out of the water of baptism like a bird!” writes St. Demetrius of Rostov. “Everything existent is brightly illumined...” on Theophany.

Who but God has the ability to foretell events that will happen literally *thousands* of years in the future? Among the innumerable prophecies in the Old Testa-



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Monastic Tactics

Out of the spiritual battlefield of monasticism...

What Should the Soul Realize?

The Lord sees your need and your efforts, and will give you a helping hand. He will support and establish you as a soldier, fully armed and ready to go into battle. No support can be better than His. The greatest danger lies in the soul thinking that it can find this help within itself; then it will lose everything. Evil will dominate it again, eclipsing the light that as yet flickers but weakly in the soul, and it will extinguish the small flame which is still scarcely burning. The soul should realize how powerless it is alone; therefore, expecting nothing of itself, let it fall down in humility before God, and in its own heart recognize itself to be nothing. Then grace - which is all powerful - will, out of this nothing, create in it everything. He who in total humility puts himself in the hand of the merciful God, attracts the Lord to himself, and becomes strong in His strength.

-St. Theophan the Recluse

In the Angelic Way

We are celebrating the Feast of the Synaxis of St. John the Baptist, the first Ascetic of the New Testament, and the Father of all monks. Like the Theotokos, St. John was born to elderly parents, St. Zacharias and St. Elizabeth, who were past childbearing age. St. Zacharias was a High Priest and a Prophet. He is the one who received the Theotokos into the Holy of Holies when she was just three years old, after the Holy Spirit directed him to do so. Over 12 years later, Archangel Gabriel appeared to St. Zacharias and told him that he would soon become a father, but knowing this to be physically impossible, St. Zacharias doubted. The Archangel then told him that he would be mute until this event had come to pass, due to his doubting, which is what happened. When St. Elizabeth was six months pregnant with St. John, the Theotokos came to visit her. It is recorded that St. John leapt in St. Elizabeth's womb, because of his joy in being in close proximity to God incarnate and the Holy Virgin. What clear proof we see here that the unborn have lives and souls, created by God, that should be cherished? When St. Zacharias signaled his agreement to his wife's assertion that the boy shall be named John, his tongue was immediately loosed and he praised God. Though filled with unspeakable joy to become parents, and to such an illustrious baby son, it was not foreordained that St.

Nothing By Chance

Do not say, "this happened by chance, while this came to be of itself." In all that exists there is nothing disorderly, nothing indefinite, nothing without purpose, nothing by chance ... How many hairs are on your head? God will not forget one of them. Do you see how nothing, even the smallest thing, escapes the gaze of God? -

-St. Basil the Great

Tiny Grain or Terrible Monster?

A tiny grain of dust gets into our eye and disturbs our sight. An apparently insignificant attachment or partiality deprives our mind of right understanding, harms and changes our thought and outlook. Fathers who were strong in spirit and body were afraid of the least sin, the least deviation from the teaching of the Gospel. How much more should we who are weak in spirit and body have a horror of sin which has such a hopeful chance of finding a haven and welcome in our weakness, and which, on getting a foothold in us, assumes the appearance of an insignificant trifle, but having got in, turns out to be a terrible monster.

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

Zacharias and St. Elizabeth would live to raise him. Herod heard of the miraculous circumstances surrounding St. John's birth, and he assumed that this babe was the Savior, Whom he hunted. He sent soldiers to slay the infant. The elderly St. Elizabeth took her baby and fled into the desert. The soldiers threatened St. Zacharias and demanded that he reveal the whereabouts of his son. They slew the holy Prophet between the Temple and the Altar. St. Elizabeth and the infant were concealed by God in the desert. However, St. Elizabeth reposed very shortly thereafter, and the infant was left alone in the desert... Well, not alone. Who attended St. John in the wilderness during those 30 years, between the time of his infancy and the time of his appearance in Judea, preaching and baptizing the people? Who taught him the Scriptures and the Law of God? It was the angels.

St. John lived the highest angelic life of an ascetic, and is even depicted with wings in his icon. Shortly after he baptized his beloved Lord and God, Whom he served his whole life, he was beheaded at the command of Herod Antipas, the son of the Herod who had sent soldiers to murder him when he was a baby. May we heed the voice of the Forerunner, who called out of the desert, "Repent!" and keep spiritual watch always!



Ask His Eminence

Q: Somebody that I love got sick, and I prayed for him to get better, but he reposed. Why didn't God heal him?
-Anonymous Child, Maryland

A: Well, you do not know that God didn't heal him. God did heal him, but not in the way that you wanted. When we say our prayers, do you remember what we say? We say, "Thy Will be done..." We do not say, "My will be done." When we pray to God, we cannot tell God, "Excuse me, God, but You better get this done..." That is not the right attitude because that makes God our servant—we're not being His servants. God's Will is always what is beneficial for us.

There is a beautiful story from the life of St. Varus, about a mother and a son. The mother, Cleopatra, whose son, John, was about to join the army, witnessed the martyrdom of St. Varus. She managed to smuggle the martyr's relics to her home village, and then build a church in his honor. On the day of the consecration of the church, the pious Cleopatra stood before the relics and prayed with all her heart that God would protect her son; however, her son became ill later that same day, and reposed in the evening. She grieved and lamented bitterly to the Saint, crying out repeatedly, "Why didn't you heal him? Why didn't you take care of him?" Finally, Saint Varus appeared to her together with her son, both radiant, adorned with gold and with wreaths on their heads. The Saint asked Cleopatra, "Did you not ask me to intercede with God for whatever is best for your son? God, in His unspeakable goodness, took your son into His heavenly army. If you so desire, here he is: take him and place him in the army of the earthly king." Hearing this, the young John embraced St. Varus and said: "No, my Lord, do not listen to my mother and do not send

me back into the world..."

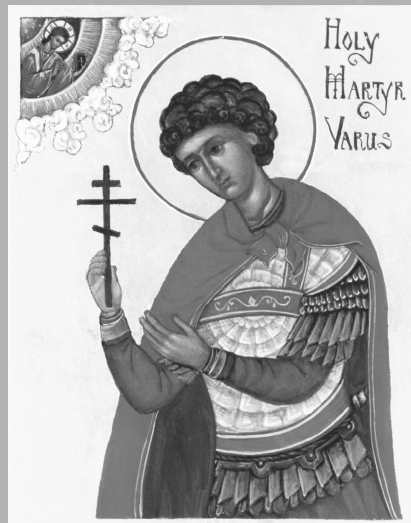
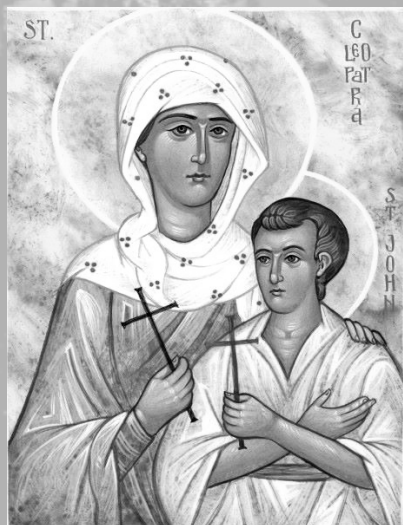
We do not know what would have happened to John if he had stayed in this world, or if he would have had such a resplendent eternal lot. We also do not know what would have happened to our reposed loved ones if they had lived in this world for longer. God knows these mysteries. The one thing that we do know is that we look at things here through our little temporary scope, and our view of what is beneficial is severely limited. But God is God, pre-eternal, with no beginning and no end, and He sees the full picture of what will benefit us. God desires our eternal salvation. Think of it logically, if not spiritually. If we are willing to work hard, in our jobs for example, for temporary, corruptible rewards, how hard should one be willing to work for unfading, eternal rewards, beyond expression? If we are going to have to struggle a little bit here, because that is what we need, or because of our weaknesses, this is for our benefit. Sicknesses and sorrows are often part of this struggle.

Prayer for loved ones who are ill is necessary. The power of prayer and commemorations is great, but only with God's Will. In fact, something is always received during those special prayers of the Proskomidi, for the soul or for the body or for both.

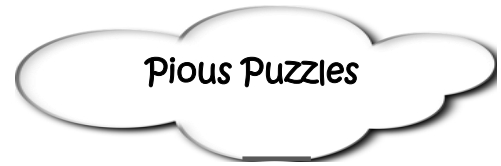
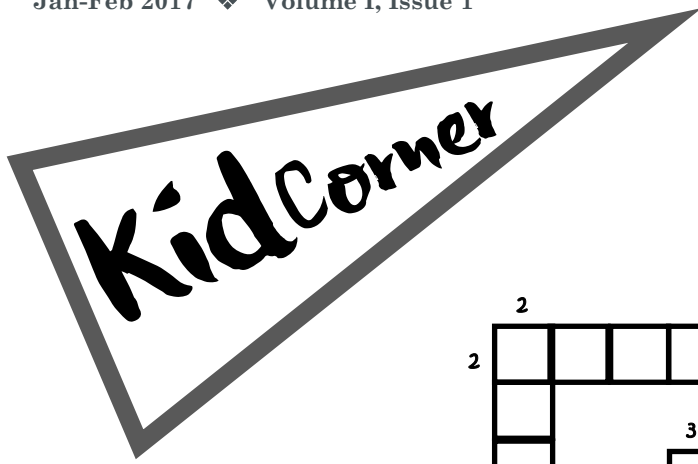
The person who reposes in a right Christian manner, with prayers and Holy Communion, has great hope that his soul will be saved. If, then, his soul is saved, the ultimate goal has been achieved, which is what we are working towards. May God grant that we are all saved!

Do you have a question for his Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America, that you would like to ask through this column? Questions may be sent to *The Spiritual Watch*, c/o St. John's Monastery, 151 Heron Road Cobleskill, NY 12043, or email it to: KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com

The Devout Cleopatra and her son, John, who reposed suddenly, and then refused to rejoin his mother in this life.



St. Varus the Holy Martyr and Wonderworker



Across

- 2) Our top commitment every Sunday;
- 6) They followed a star to find the Sun of Righteousness;
- 9) The elderly protector of the Holy Virgin
- 10) He said to them, "Come follow Me..."
- 11) Holiday in Orthodox English;
- 12) God first appeared to us incarnate, in this form.

Down

- 1) He came to save the human race;
- 2) The earthly profession of the Lord;
- 3) Town where He was born;
- 4) Sunday is His day;
- 5) Literally, "God's Birth-Giver" in Greek;
- 7) The Magi did not come empty-handed to honor the Great King;
- 8) A strange and marvelous mystery: *this* is a heaven..

Wondrous Word Searches



Hidden Words: Magi, Saint Nicholas, Fasting, Theotokos, Lord, Bethlehem, Incense, Gifts, Manger, Christmas, Infant, Priest. Good luck!

Think about your Faith

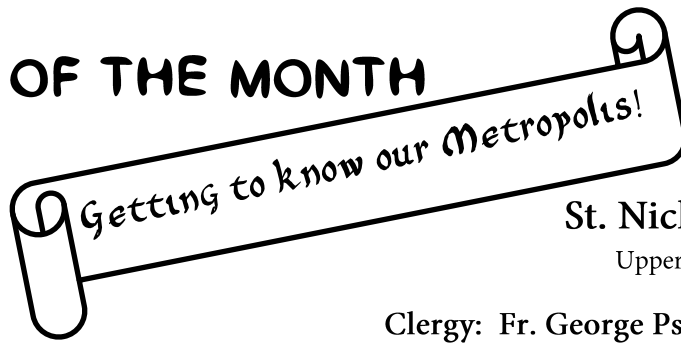
Answer one or more of these questions in a few sentences to a paragraph, then, with your parent's permission, send your responses, along with your name and age to: The Spiritual Watch, c/o St. John's Monastery, 151 Heron Road Cobleskill, NY 12043 or email them to KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com Part or all of some of the stronger responses may be published in the next issue. (Age will be taken into consideration; parents feel free to simplify the questions to support younger children.)

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the meaning of our motto: "Stand fast on spiritual watch..." Why is this important? How does it relate to the Parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)?
2. In the Mind of the Church, which could be considered the more honored Feast, the Nativity or the Theophany? Why? Compare and contrast these holy Feasts, as a way to develop a deeper understanding of them.

MANY THANKS to MJP who contributed this issue's puzzles. If you have a pious puzzle for the Spiritual Watch, feel free to share it.

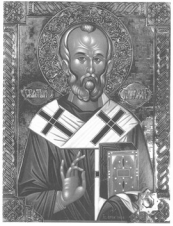
PARISH OF THE MONTH



Featured in this issue:

St. Nicholas of Myra Orthodox Church

Upper Marlboro, Maryland ❖ StNicholasMD.com

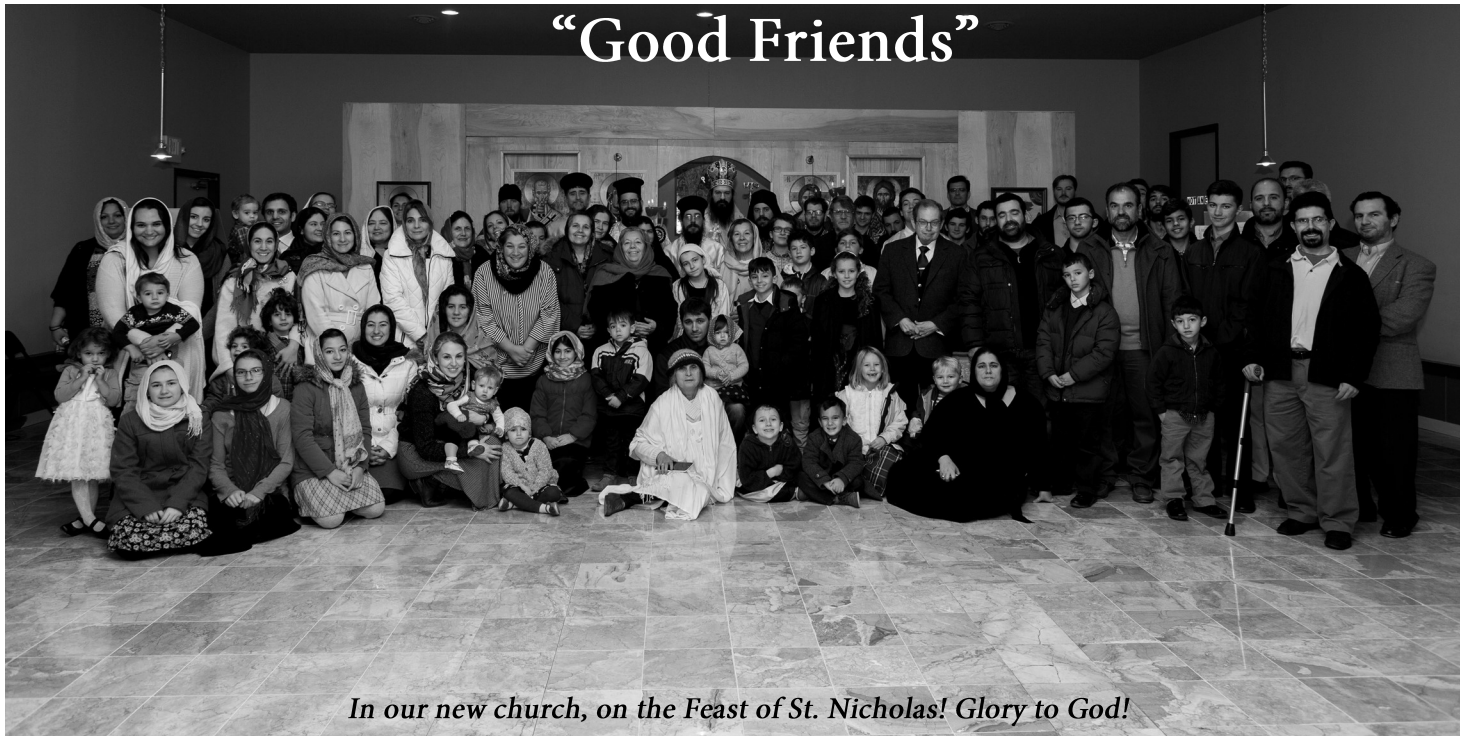


Clergy: Fr. George Psaromatis, Presbyter

Ecclesiarches: Kyriakos Gerassimou, John Psaromatis

Readers: Daniel Guetzkow, Nicholas Snogren

Presbytera: Mary Psaromatis



In our new church, on the Feast of St. Nicholas! Glory to God!

We, here at the parish of St. Nicholas, have reason to believe that the holy Hierarchs, St. Nicholas of Myra and St. John of San Francisco, are good friends! As many in the Metropolis know, our parish had been holding services in parishioners' homes, and then in a cramped office space in Crofton, Maryland, for about four years. This was a special problem for us, especially given that our parish has over 50 children who regularly attend (the majority of which are under age 5, it seems...).

We had been actively fundraising and looking for a new property to house our parish. Thanks to the love and generosity of many faithful from all over the Metropolis, as well as to Fr. Nicodemos and our sister parish of St. Seraphim of Sarov who donated 15 thousand dollars to our effort, we were slowly getting to be in good position for making an offer on a new property. In the meantime, the building committee had been looking at dozens of potential properties, over the course of many months. Slowly, we began to become disheartened by problems and deal-breakers that would come to the surface with every property that initially showed promise. One was too close

to power lines, another did not have a commercial property license, and yet another was snatched away by a higher bidder, etc. etc. The building committee met multiple times, and parishioners worked hard in their search for a suitable property within our budget that would work, but to no avail.

And then came the Thyranoxia service for the official opening of the Monastery of St. John of San Francisco, in in Cobleskill, NY, on the weekend of the Feast of the Saint, July 2nd – 3rd of 2016. Through God's mercy, many of our parishioners were able to attend this blessed event. What an unforgettable, grace-filled service! We parishioners of St. Nicholas were especially moved by a miraculous, myrrh-streaming icon of St. Nicholas that was present on this occasion. This icon was from a nearby Russian Monastery, and had been visibly gushing forth myrrh for many months. Our Russian Fathers had brought the icon on the Feast of St. John as a special blessing to us all. As they anointed us with the miraculous

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The Spiritual Watch is looking for articles on Metropolis parishes for this column! Please send in clergy name(s), clergy wives name(s), website, contact info., and a brief history of your parish/ interesting facts to KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com



Fr. Joachim is Ordained



The Ordination of Monk Joachim to the Diaconate took place on the feast of Saints Catherine and Clement in the side chapel of our main church dedicated to Saint Glicherie of Romania on November 23/December 8, 2016. May God grant Father Joachim many years in the service of His Holy Church!

Youth Conference in the Big Apple

The Holy Metropolis of America, for over a decade has sanctioned an annual Youth and Family Conference. Every fall one of the parishes of our Metropolis hosts the event. This year, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrius, the conference was held in NY for the second time since its inception in 2005. The goal of the conference is to encourage the faithful to come together, in a spirit of brotherhood, to talk and learn about our Faith. One aspect that we hope was learned this year, is to continue to “live” Orthodoxy in the world.

From Toronto to Edmonton in Canada and from Florida to California in the U.S., both cradle orthodox and converts alike, came to listen to and ask questions of our Hierarchs, His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrius of America and His Eminence Metropolitan Moses of Toronto, and our priests, Archimandrite Fr. Agathangelus (Chancellor of the Metropolis of America), Protospesbyter Fr. Kleanthis Korkotas (St. Isidoros), Fr. Nicholas Chernjavsky (Holy Ascension), Fr. Nicholas Seregos (St. Isidoros), and Protospesbyter Fr. Theodore Giannakopoulos (St. Markella). Fr. Deacon Alexander (Dormition) and Fr. Deacon Paraskevas (St. Nectarios) were also in attendance.

This years conference was held jointly by the Cathedral of St. Markella in Astoria and Saint Isidoros in Bethpage on Long Island. Although the conference was set



up with very short notice, over one hundred faithful attended. We hope that all, both Clergy and Laity alike, left feeling spiritually strengthened and edified.

As this years' organizing committee we would like to extend our sincere thanks to:

His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrius of America

His Eminence Metropolitan Moses of Toronto

All The Clergy in attendance

All the Attendees

And our great appreciation to:

Saint Markellas' Cathedral

Saint Isidoros Church

L.I.U Post campus

Maria and Eleni Tsamblakou

Eleftherios & Penelope Spanos

Louie's Oyster Bar & Grille, Port Washington

Northwell Health Ice Center

Telly's Greek Taverna

LaGuardia Plaza Hotel

Please join us for the 2017 Family and Youth Conference in Concord, NH!



Orthodoxy in Guatemala

What is Happening with Orthodoxy in Guatemala? A lot of people recently have been hearing that Orthodoxy is growing Guatemala.

Guatemala is a Central American country that is suffering with poverty and crime. But it is also a burgeoning mission field for the Faith. Orthodoxy was brought to the country a few years ago, when Metropolitan Demetrius of America founded a small parish in Guatemala City dedicated to Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg. A beautiful church was built, but the parish didn't grow much because there was no permanent priest. Then he started sending Fr. Maximus, a Spanish-speaking hieromonk of Holy Ascension Monastery there to serve as a part-time priest. As events developed, God made it clear that he wanted a more permanent Orthodox presence in the country, and Fr. Maximus asked the Metropolitan for a blessing to look for a property to found a monastery which would serve as a base. Metropolitan Demetrius was more than happy to give his blessing, because he had always had the dream of doing more missionary work in Guatemala and Latin America in general. After some looking and much prayer to Blessed Xenia, they found a beautiful property on top of a mountain in Santa Cruz Naranjo, about an hour and a half southeast of Guatemala City. Metropolitan Demetrius drew lots to decide the name of the monastery, and the name drawn was St. Ignatius the Godbearer of Antioch. Thus the monastery officially was called "La Hermita de San Ignacio" – the Hermitage of St. Ignatius. The monks (by this time Fr. Maximus had been joined by another monk) quickly built two small cells, and in February 2016 the Metropolitan came to Guatemala to celebrate the feasts of St Xenia (Feb.6) and St. Ignatius (Feb. 12). He served an open air Liturgy at the Hermitage attended by many people and made some 50 locals catechumens. Then, seeing that there was going to be a community there, he gave directions to build a large church. Fortunately, labor and materials in Guatemala are cheap, so the church has nearly been finished.



But the founding of the Hermitage and the building of the church are only the beginning. Guatemala is one of the premier coffee regions of the world, and the Fathers are attempting to support themselves by growing coffee and exporting it to the United States and Canada. The soil at the hermitage is volcanic (you can see four volcanoes in the distance, two of them active!) ideally suited to grow gourmet coffee. Meanwhile, the Fathers have established weekly catechism classes for children and are working on literature about Orthodoxy in Spanish.

That being said, missionary work is never a solitary endeavor. The Fathers need help from Orthodox people in developed countries like the US. They are actively looking for anyone who speaks any amount of Spanish to volunteer to become a godparent for one or more of the catechumens.

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Parish of the Month, *St. Nicholas* Cont'd from p.7

myrrh, one parishioner was heard saying, "May St. John on his Feast work together with St. Nicholas that we may find a home!"

Well, the next day, on July 4th, that's what happened! Presbytera Mary was searching her app for available properties, as she had done frequently over the course of the previous two years, and she saw it! "Fr. George," she said, "I don't think we have looked at this one..." Fr. George was not immediately enthusiastic because of the previous disappointments, and said that he didn't think it would work geographically. Presbytera continued to



look at the features of the property, and said, "Fr. George, I think this one might work..." And they drove out to see it. It was perfect! Glory to God! How grateful we are to St. Nicholas, and his Co-worker in this blessing, St. John of San Francisco! And we are very grateful to EVERYONE who donated or who prayed for us to finally get our St. Nicholas home! On the weekend of December 18-19n.s., His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America, together with Fr. Agathaggelos, Chancellor of the Metropolis, Fr. Nicodemus Gayle, Fr. Christos Patitsas, Fr. Andrew Frick, Fr. Deacon Andrew Wales, and Fr. Deacon Joseph Clatterbuck, joined us for the celebration of St. Nicholas in our new home! Yes, there is still much that needs to be done, but we have a home! And we all fit! Glory to God. Please continue to keep our parish in your prayers!



Looking Ahead: Youth Conference 2017

With the blessing of Metropolitan Demetrius of America The Dormition of the Theotokos parish is hosting the 2017 Family and Youth conference this year over Columbus Day weekend, in Concord, New Hampshire, at the peak of the beautiful foliage season. It will take place on the weekend of October 7-8, 2017.

The theme will be "Reverence and the Fear of God." Our planning committee is actively working on this important effort. We are anticipating having a very edifying and enjoyable time of instruction and fellowship. Please mark your calendars and keep our efforts in your prayers. We look forward to you joining us.

In Christ,

Fr Andrew, for the planning committee



Remember this little Youtube star? He finally got a church, glory to God! Our deepest gratitude to all of you who prayed and donated.

PLEASE SUPPORT *THE SPIRITUAL WATCH*

The Spiritual Watch is a volunteer effort, but it does incur significant expenses with printing and shipping costs. We are not able to continue this effort without your support. With your support, we hope to eventually publish the *Spiritual Watch* in Greek and Russian, and to publish more volumes in full color.

The *Spiritual Watch* is mailed to the homes of the faithful by request ONLY. Suggested annual donation: \$100

If you would like to receive *The Spiritual Watch*, but are unable to give a donation at this time, please send a note with your address.

Please note: Those making a monthly pledge to support the Sacred Metropolis will automatically also receive the *Spiritual Watch* (see pledge form on back cover).

Please make checks out to The Metropolis of America, with *The Spiritual Watch* on the memo line, and mail to:

***The Spiritual Watch*, c/o St. John's Monastery, 151 Heron Road Cobleskill, NY 12043**

Please include the name and address of the person to whom you want *The SW* to be mailed. Questions? KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com

Orthodoxy in Guatemala

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They also need help translating texts, purchasing books, printing catechetical material, and doing graphic art. And of course, donations are needed to help both the missionary work and the charitable work – many of the catechumens literally live in bamboo huts and do not have enough money even to eat.

Baptisms will happen in February (6-13). Fr. Maximus will also be there right after Nativity (Jan. 7) to Pascha (April 16). Anyone can come during that time to sponsor a baptism, please contact Fr. Maximus.

All in all, it's a big task ahead, but one that already has God's blessing. If you are interested in helping the mission or just finding out more, you can email Fr. Maximus

at romiosini@aol.com or call 845-679-0600 (US number) or 011-502-3282-6951 (Guatemalan number).



Orthodox Village in America?



In earlier centuries, Orthodox villages could be found in many different parts of the world, in which all neighbors worshiped our Savior, fasted, and celebrated the Feasts. Well, for one week in mid to late August, your child can experience life in an Orthodox village! That's right, St. Xenia's camp! Here, a blessed Orthodox community is formed, where the inhabitants fast together, pray together, and have fun and fellowship as young Orthodox Christians in America! Keep your August calendar open for this amazing experience! More details to come!



The Twelve Days of... Theophany

Cont'd from p.3

ment, which was written thousands of years before these events actually took place, the prophets describe the extraordinary events of Theophany. King David, the author of the Psalms, writes, "Great was the resounding sound of the water, the clouds gave forth a voice." Ps. 76:16. The Prophet is referring to the voice of God the Father, which was heard like thunder from the Heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."

Another great miracle that occurred on that marvelous day was the unnatural reversal of the currents' water flow direction when our Savior descended into the Jordan. This event continues to occur in the Jordan every year on Theophany. The Psalmist writes, "The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee and feared; and the depths were troubled..." Ps. 76:15. Prophet Michael marvels at the forgiveness of sins that takes place through holy baptism, when he prophesies about the Theophany many centuries before It occurs, "He will sink our iniquities, and they shall be cast into the depths of the sea, even all our sins..." Mic. 7:19. St. John of Da-

mascus adds, "The jaws of the devouring lions have been broken!"

St. John the Baptist, who is the last prophet of the Old Testament and the first ascetic of the New Testament, considered the Father of Monks, of whom our Savior said, "No greater man has been born of woman..." (Luke 7:28), did not want to baptize the Lord. He realized that This is God Who stands before him to be baptized, the One for Whom he had leapt for joy at their last meeting, when the pregnant Theotokos visited the pregnant St. Elizabeth, the Forerunner's mother. St. John asked our Savior how he could baptize Him, when he was the one who needed baptism from Him. How could anyone illumine the Sun of Righteousness? But the Lord was not baptized in the waters to be sanctified, but to sanctify the waters. And through His baptism, on this day, after the 12th day of Nativity, He gave the human race the greatest and most needed gift we have ever received: our baptism.



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“The Metropolis is in need of help. In order for parishes to function well, the Metropolis must function well.”

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In order to cover Her financial needs and responsibilities, the Sacred Metropolis is looking for Orthodox Christians who are able to provide support through a monthly pledge.

Για να καλύψει τις οικονομικές ανάγκες και ευθύνες Της, η Ιερά Μητρόπολη ζητεί Ορθοδόξους Χριστιανούς που μπορούν να Τη υποστηρίξουν με μηνιαίες δωρεές.

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By St. John Maximovitch



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