



# The St. Nicholas Navigator

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**Pastoral Epistle:  
A Simple Heart Attracts the Grace of God**

As we move past the feasts of Pentecost and All Saints, we are in a particularly “apostolic” phase of the Church year. Both the Apostles’ Fast and the reference of each Sunday now to Pentecost (1st Sunday after Pentecost, 2nd Sunday, etc.) remind us that we are called to drink deeply of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to share this drink with others. The Orthodox Church is “pentecostal” in the truest sense, as the event of the Holy Spirit’s descent inspires the whole life of the Church, and makes it possible for us to follow the example of the Apostles.

Like the Apostles, and all the Saints, however, we require a continual deepening in grace in order to continue to be beacons of grace. Their icons bear witness to the fact that they did in fact continually deepen in grace; we are still seeking to do so. Deepening in grace requires that our hearts be open. A year ago, I suggested in my pastoral epistle that we might consider our

parish vision to be one of “Opening our hearts to the grace of God.” A year later, it seems worth returning to that idea, and reflecting on how we as a community, and each of us individually, might continue to deepen in grace.

As a wonderful indication of a way forward on the path of opening our hearts, I share the following, from the book, *Wounded by Love: The Life and Wisdom of Saint Porphyrios*:



“Do everything simply and meekly. Do nothing with an ulterior motive. Don't say ‘I'll do this in order to have that result,’ but do it naturally, without taking cognizance of it. That is, pray simply and don't think about what God will bestow on your soul. Don't make any calculations. You know, of course, what God bestows when you enter into communion with Him, but it is as if you don't know. Don't discuss

the matter even with yourself. So when you repeat the prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,’ say it simply and ingenuously and think of nothing other than the prayer. These are very delicate matters...

“Your heart must be simple and not divided and dishonest, sincere and not devious and self-seeking. All people desire to find a good and simple soul; they feel comfortable with such a person and they approach him without fear and without suspicion. And such a person lives with inner peace and has good relations with everyone and all creation.

“The good-hearted person who has no devious thoughts attracts the grace of God. Above all, good-heartedness and simplicity attract the grace of God; they are pre-conditions for God to come and make His abode in us. But the good-hearted person must be aware of the schemings of the devil and men, because he will be sorely tormented. Otherwise he would have to live in a society of angels...

“Simplicity and goodness: that is everything if you want to acquire divine grace.”

Praying that God would grant such good-heartedness and simplicity to us all, with love in our gracious Lord,

Fr. Daniel

### **Our Church Home**

**By: Allen Stephen Lawrence**

*For [as] a young man marrieth a virgin, [so] shall thy sons marry thee: and [as] the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, [so] shall thy God rejoice over thee. (Isaiah 62:5)*

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)*

This past year saw many changes at St. Nicholas. Many new catechumens, new inquirers and of course new members. The church is the Bride of Christ and every one of us are part of that family. We are the Bride of Christ.

Community building is very important. We can build our community by calling those who missed Liturgy, using the church directory. Each member is very important to our family. Our ladies already send cards out to the sick or to families who have lost someone. It only takes a few minutes to check on someone... but from experience, those calls, cards or dropping by, are very important to building the church. We all share this ministry.

I witnessed a young man going around and shaking the hands of others and letting them know someone cares. Community building is very important. Who did you miss at church this morning? Some are on vacation, but others may be ill; pick out one person this week and contact them, let them know they are missed. Speak to a newcomer, make them feel that this is home. The first person in the church I met made me feel part of this family before I even set foot in St. Nicholas.

What does it mean for many individuals here at St. Nicholas to be the Bride of Christ? This is our home and it has many who give of their time, talents and money. There are many things we need to look at to keep our church running smoothly. There are many little things that need to be done on a weekly basis: dusting, mopping, cleaning bathrooms, the classrooms, the Narthex and the Nave. Then there are repairs around the church that you may have a talent for. Perhaps that means mending altar cloths or making new ones, the sticharia (robes) for altar servers or even mending vestments for the clergy.

*Not sure if you can do something? Just Ask!*

## **Why I Love the Church's Prayers** **By: Fran Presley**

It is a joy and a privilege to use my little red Pocket Prayer Book every morning. I love praying the Church's prayers because they are alive, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It would take pages to elaborate all the specific reasons I appreciate them. I'll mention only a few:

1. The prayers connect me to Orthodox all over the world who are praying the same prayers.
2. After I was chrismated in 1995, I began daily prayers, using Morning Prayers, starting on p. 5, and A General Intercession p. 25. I added A Prayer of Parents for Their Children and For Relatives and Friends and A Prayer for the Priesthood, both beginning on p. 18, and A Prayer to Your Patron Saint, p. 14. Other prayers I use as the occasion warrants. For some time after chrismation I wondered: Why do these prayers satisfy something deep inside me? Why are the words so fitting? Then one morning I realized why: the words of the Church's prayers are majestic, fit for the King.
3. The prayers do not leave out our tender Mother, who prays along with us. Page 6: "... through the Theotokos have mercy on us."
4. Also on p. 6 is this entreaty: "... enlighten my mind and my heart ... " Our whole being is to be filled with His Resurrection power.
5. And this humbling reminder every morning, p. 6: "Suddenly the Judge shall come, and the deeds of each shall be revealed ... " That keeps me

aware of the necessity of confession and reconciliation. I want to be able to welcome the Judge joyfully!

6. The Church includes these instructive words, p. 7: "Arising from sleep I thank thee ... " We learn that we are to begin the day with praise. For our example, He created the birds to begin their day with singing!
7. The Creed, p. 7, instills Truth into our hearts as we recite it every morning. The more I recite the Creed the more aware I am of its power.
8. How important it is to pray for the needy every single day! Page 26: "Be mindful, O Lord ... of the young and the old, orphans and widows, the sick and suffering, the sorrowing and the afflicted, all captives and the needy poor ... " Would I pray for these needy ones every day if I did not pray the Church's prayers? The answer is no.

That is just a small sample of why I love and appreciate the Church's prayers. Of course the Lord also enjoys our personal prayers. Jesus told us, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man open the door I will come in and sup with him and he with Me." That is an invitation to friendship and intimacy. He wants us to open our hearts to Him. But that does not preclude the Prayers of the Church. The Church's prayers, prayed daily, have the power to seep into our spirit and transform us.

## God Willing

**By: Fr. Daniel Bethancourt**

In Arabic culture, the expression “*insha'allah*” (“God willing,” or “if God wills”) is a very common one. It often comes as an almost automatic addition to any mention of future plans. While this Arabic expression is popularly associated with Islam, it was in fact a Christian expression long before it was a Muslim one, and undoubtedly entered the Arabic lexicon through the once-predominant Christian population in the Middle East.

While we may say “God willing” simply as a matter of habit (and it's not a bad habit to have), it's worth giving more careful consideration to how important and significant the phrase is. The Apostle James, known as “the Brother of God” (*Adelphotheos* in Greek), writes the following in his Epistle: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” (James 4:13-15)

He then goes on to condemn the blind boastfulness of those who presumptuously speak of their future plans, which will most likely come to nothing. St. James thus connects this expression, “If the Lord wills,” with a humble way of thinking about our life. Who are we to boast about what we'll do next year, when we have no idea what tomorrow may bring? We ought to recognize our powerlessness before God, and prayerfully place everything — even the simplest plans for the day ahead — in His hands. We should think of every plan for the future in terms of “if God wills.” By doing so, we acknowledge God's wisdom and power, and submit our desires for His approval.

Archbishop Dmitri (of blessed memory) points out in his work, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: A Pastoral Commentary*, that the Apostle Paul shows this humble way of thinking when speaking of his desire to visit Rome. In Romans 1:10, St. Paul says he is “...making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.” Archbishop Dmitri writes, “The expressions ‘by any means’ or ‘somehow’ and ‘at length’ or ‘at last’...may be taken to indicate a certain timidity and humility in what he proposes.” He also adds, “The insertion of ‘by the will of God,’ is evidence that, in the Apostle's mind, his desire to be in Rome is subject to God's will. He is no doubt willing to accept a revelation that it is not His will, at least, not at the present time.”

So we see that St. Paul himself speaks of his intentions with humble caution, using the expression “by the will of God,” and remaining open to the possibility that God may reveal something other than what St. Paul expects. In fact, it turned out that St. Paul went to Rome, but only as a prisoner, which was probably not what St. Paul envisioned when he was writing the letter.

Thus, two holy Apostles (St. Paul and St. James), bear witness to how crucial it is to be open to God's will in our thoughts, and in our words. Not only that, but the Orthodox Christian tradition down to our own day continues to bear witness to the truth and beauty of the expression “God willing.” May we use this expression, not as something casual or automatic, but as a thoughtful recognition of our humble dependance on God's almighty power, and of His loving providence for us in all things.

## Parish News & Announcements

- The **St. Daniel (of Pereyaslavl) Burial Fund** has been established to provide a decent and holy burial for those who lack the means. To contribute to the fund, you can send a check, or drop it in the offering basket, with the earmark "Burial Fund."
- There will be a **Parish Fellowship Potluck**, hosted by the Castens, on Saturday July 14, following Vespers (at about 6:15pm).
- The **Annual Blessing of Vehicles** is planned for Sunday, July 15, following the Liturgy.



**Contact Us! Let us know what you'd like to see in the newsletter! Call, text, or email us at:**

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 email: [jones.c4@gmail.com](mailto:jones.c4@gmail.com)  
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## June Birthdays

June 1 - Nino Driver  
 June 2 - Alexander Galloway  
 June 3 - Amelie Baker  
 June 6 - Lyuba Olenina, Cristina Kudryavtseva  
 June 8 - Irina Ballard  
 June 12 - Molly Gouletas  
 June 20 - Andrew Ekshyyan  
 June 21 - Erika Hand  
 June 22 - Caitlin Busada  
 June 29 - Dave Gouletas

## June Name Days

June 1 - (Rdr.) Will (Justin) Wise  
 June 11 - Nathaniel McCoy  
 June 27 - Joanna Bethancourt  
 June 29 - Peter Bethancourt, Peter Filipek, Pete Katsufrakis, (Rdr.) Paul Hand, (Rdr.) John (Paul) Crichton, Dcn. Peter Scott Staller

## July Birthdays

July 1 - Fransuaza Maria Denison  
 July 5 - Maximus Olsen  
 July 14 - Joanna Bethancourt  
 July 18 - Jonathan Davis  
 July 20 - Maria Frank  
 July 27 - Kristen Edmiston & Abby Stewart  
 July 29 - Philip LaHaye  
 July 31 - Barry Busada

## July Name Days

July 2 - (Rdr.) Carter (John) Jones & John Olsen (St. John Maximovich)  
 July 5 - Katie Jones & Ella Olsen (St. Elizabeth the New Martyr)  
 July 20 - Ilias Bourdaras & Elias Filipek (Prophet Elias)  
 July 22 - Fran Presley (St. Mary Magdalene)  
 July 24 - Cristina Kudryavtseva (St. Christina)  
 July 25 - Anna Bloss, Eddie Marsh, Anna Stewart (Dormition of St. Anna)



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**St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church**  
**9100 Youree Drive**