

# SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

Volume 16 Issue 7

July 2016

## June Council Highlights

- ✘ May's Operating Income was \$18,103.52 and Operating Expenses were \$14,014.17, resulting in a surplus of \$4,089.35 for the month.
- ✘ Volunteer committee did a spring cleaning of the kitchen
- ✘ \$1000 donated to Project Mexico to help purchase mattresses and stoves.



### SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

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## Ezekiel the Watchman and Warner

**On July 21 the Church remembers the prophet and priest Ezekiel, known as a visionary who had many vivid dreams.**

But he was also stern and unyielding in his insistence on Israel's responsibility to God, having been given a forehead "like adamant harder than flint" by the Lord (3: 9). He would need to be adamant in the first years of his ministry because, as God told him, he would be dealing with "all the house of Israel", who were "of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart" (3: 7).

One of Ezekiel's famous visions came as he began his ministry. He saw a kind of chariot or wagon on four wheels, full of brightness and flashing fire, drawn by four fantastic-looking creatures. It came from the north, in a great cloud and driven by a rush of wind. The chariot was topped by a throne, on which was a seated figure. Ezekiel couldn't describe any of this in clear terms; he could only say, "Such was the appearance of the

likeness of the glory of the Lord" (1:28).

Ezekiel is so overwhelmed that he falls on his face, but God graciously calls him to rise so that they can speak face to face. Ezekiel needs help from the Spirit to be able to stand up, but he does so, and is told that he must go and prophesy to the "impudent and stubborn" people of Israel.



The prophet spent the years from 593 to 586 in Jerusalem. He saw shocking things going on in the Temple itself: people were worshipping the pagan sun-god and practicing other pagan rites. When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586, Ezekiel was devastated but hardly surprised. He had warned the people that God would let it happen; they had not listened.

By 587, Ezekiel had joined the Babylonian exiles. He felt compassion for them, and took very seriously the Lord's words: "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for

the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth you shall give them warning from me" (33: 7). Ezekiel reminded the exiles that his job was to watch and warn, but that each person was personally responsible before God.

Ezekiel also reassured the exiles that the foreign conquest of Jerusalem did not mean that God had abandoned His people, as some of them feared. His visions continued, including the vision of a valley full of dry bones that are renewed to life by God's word. This is a prophecy of the restoration of Israel, but also a foretelling of the new life given by Jesus Christ, which is why it is part of the Orthodox Church's worship during Holy Week.

Ezekiel had a vision of Israel once again living in its land, and worshipping God in the restored Temple. He also prophesied in a way that anticipates Christ's loving words: "I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over" (34: 16).

# Rector's Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We recently had the blessing and joy of celebrating the Altar Feast of our parish church. With gratitude to Almighty God for all His blessings, on June 28 & 29, we gathered in prayer to commemorate the lives of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, our heavenly patrons. For this year's feast, we had the special honor of being joined by several clergy (seven priests and one deacon) from throughout the Valley, as well as by Archpriest Chad Hatfield, Chancellor of Saint Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary and Deacon Gregory Hatrak, SVS Press and Bookstore Manager. Additionally, many of our faithful brothers and sisters from other Orthodox parishes here in the Valley also came to join us in celebrating this annual feastday. The Divine Liturgy of the feast was followed by yet another wonderful festal meal, the likes for which our parish is well known. In reflecting upon our recent celebration, it is good to recall that June 29 is not simply another holyday on the liturgical calendar; rather, for us at Saints Peter and Paul Church, it becomes like another Pascha, another God-given opportunity for us to rejoice in the many blessings we have received—especially through the lives, teachings, example, and intercessions of our heavenly patrons. It is my hope and prayer that this annual celebration will continue to be a highpoint on our calendar and that many more of our own parishioners will also be present for and participate in next year's celebration.

We are well into the month of July and well into the heat of another Arizona summer. For some, these long hot months provide an opportunity to break from the routine schedule of our daily lives, to get

away to cooler climates, to travel to visit family and friends across the country and abroad, and maybe even to simply slow down a bit. Unfortunately, sometimes this natural desire to slow down or "get away" affects our spiritual lives and we become spiritually lethargic. We might even use the long hot days as an excuse to



SS Peter and Paul's Festal Divine Liturgy on June 29, 2016. Clergy serving and praying in the Altar included: Fr Chad Hatfield, Fr Andrew Barakos, Fr David Balmer, Fr John Peck, Fr Thomas Frisby, Fr Nicholas Ciccirelli, Fr Philip Armstrong, Fr Andre Perez, and Deacon Gregory Hatrak. Ignatius Olmstead, Zach Delsante and Tikhon Olmstead also served in the altar. Blessed Feast to all!

lessen our daily prayer routine, to ease up or to stop participating in the fasting discipline of the Church or even, God forbid, to use the heat as an excuse to refrain from participating in the Divine services and not attend the Saturday evening Vespers or the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. A simple second look at our summer routines should help prevent such lethargy from developing. Our spiritual life, another way of speaking of our relationship with the Lord, never slows down, does not lighten up and never "takes a vacation." Please be mindful of this in the weeks ahead.

These days, we are presently overwhelmed by the amount of violence that

has entered into our daily life in this country and, indeed, throughout the world. With the recent police shootings here in the United States and the all-too regular reports of Christians in the Middle East facing daily martyrdom, we can easily see that the world is still far from receiving the Gospel of Christ, which is the Gospel of love, peace, and unity among all peoples. It is so easy to become bogged down and overburdened by the sadness of this already very sad reality. However, as Christians who believe that Christ has already overcome sin and darkness, we are called, even in the midst of this sadness, to bear witness to the goodness of a humanity that has been redeemed by Christ. Let us entrust ourselves and the whole world to the Lord, the Giver of Life, and ask the Most Pure Mother of God to spread her protecting veil over all of us.

As I write these few lines, I am very aware that I have now been blessed to serve as Rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church for ten years. My assignment as Rector officially took effect on July 1, 2006. Looking back, it's hard to believe that so many

years have passed so quickly. Please know that I am deeply grateful to God for His Providence and for my assignment to serve you throughout these past ten years. Your lives have touched mine in so many ways and have, I pray, helped me grow in my own relationship with Christ as a servant of the Church and minister of the Holy Gospel. I thank you for your support throughout these years and ask your continued prayers, as I assure you of mine.

With love in the Lord,

+ *Bishop Daniel*

# Icons and the Iconostasis

In the Orthodox Church the icons bear witness to the reality of God's presence with us in the mystery of faith. The icons are not just human pictures or visual aids to contemplation and prayer. They are the witnesses of the presence of the Kingdom of God to us, and so of our own presence to the Kingdom of God in the Church. It is the Orthodox faith that icons are not only permissible, but are spiritually necessary because "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1.14). Christ is truly man and, as man, truly the "icon of the invisible God" (Col 1.15; 1 Cor 11.7; 2 Cor 4.4).

The iconostasis or icon screen in the Orthodox Church exists to show our unity with Christ, his mother and all the angels and saints. It exists to show our unity with God. The altar table, which stands for the Banquet Table of the Kingdom of God, is placed behind the so-called royal gates, between the icons of the Theotokos and Child and the glorified Christ, showing that everything which happens to us in the Church happens in history between those "two comings" of Christ: between his coming as the Saviour born of Mary and His coming at the end of the age as the King and the Judge.

The icons on the royal gates witness to the presence of Christ's good news, the gospel of salvation. The four evangelists who recorded the gospels appear, and often also an icon of the Annunciation,

the first proclamation of the gospel in the world. In Greek the gospel is the *evangelion*, the authors of the gospels the *evangelistoi*, the annunciation the *evangelismos*.

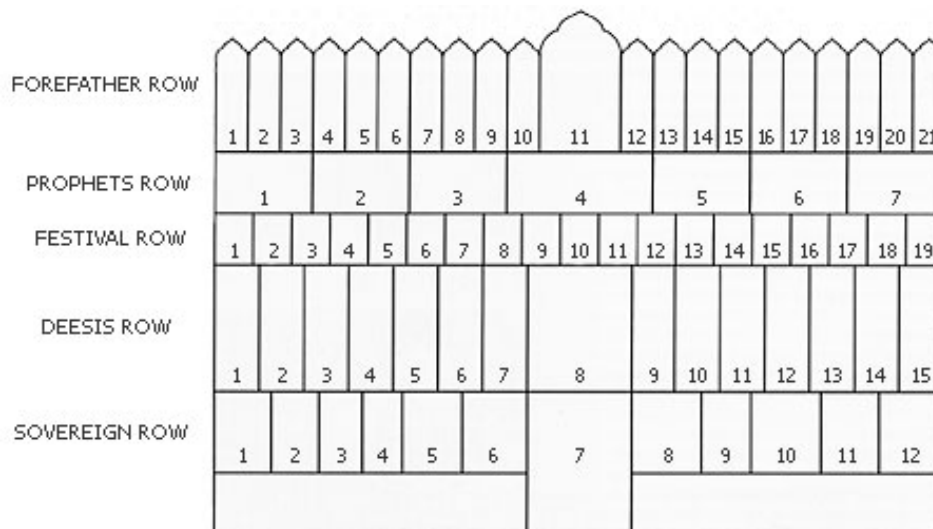
Over the doors we have the icon of Christ's Mystical Supper with his disciples, the icon of the central mystery of the Christian faith and the unity of the Church in the world. It is the visual witness that we too are partakers in the "marriage supper of the lamb" (Rev 19.9), that we too are blessed by Christ "to eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Lk 22.30), blessed to "eat bread in the Kingdom of God" (Lk 14.15).

other holy people blessed by God, all crowned on the top by the cross of Christ.

In recent centuries the iconostasis in most Orthodox churches became very ornate and developed into a virtual wall, dividing the faithful from the holy altar rather than uniting them with it. In recent years this development has happily been altered in many places. The iconostasis in many church buildings now gives first place to the icons themselves and has become once more an icon "stand" or "screen" (stasis) rather than a solid partition.

Besides the iconostasis, Orthodox Church buildings often have icons or frescoes on the walls and ceilings. The "canon" of Church design is to have the icon of Christ the Almighty in the center of the building, and the icon of the Theotokos with Christ appearing within her found over the altar area. This latter icon is called the "image of

the Church" since Mary is herself the prototype of the entire assembly of believers in whom Christ must dwell. In the altar area it is also traditional to put icons of the saints who composed Church liturgies and hymns. Directly behind the altar table there is usually an image of Christ in glory—enthroned or transfigured or resurrecting, and sometimes offering the eucharistic gifts.



Over and around the central gates are icons of the saints. The deacon's doors in the first row (for the servants of the altar) usually have icons depicting deacons or angels, God's servants. The first row also has an icon of the person or event in whose honor the given building is dedicated, along with other prominent saints or events. Depending on the size of the iconostasis, there may be rows of icons of the apostles, the major feasts of the Church, the prophets and

# The Saints: Examples of Holiness

*Fr. Steven Kostoff* evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics

We recently celebrated the Great Feast of Pentecost on June 19. All of the subsequent Sundays of the liturgical year, until the pre-lenten Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee sometime next year, will be so numbered, challenging us to keep our spiritual sight on the overwhelming significance of Pentecost in the divine economy. The New Testament era of the Church began its existence on the Day of Pentecost with the Spirit's descent as a mighty rushing wind that took on the form of fiery tongues alighting upon the heads of the future apostles [Acts 2:1-13]. The Church has always existed, but the Church as a remnant of Israel that would flourish and grow with the addition of the Gentiles began its final phase of existence with the death, resurrection and ascension of God's Messiah, Jesus Christ Who, seated at the right hand of the Father, would send the Holy Spirit into the world and upon "all flesh" on the day of Pentecost. As Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus wrote in the fourth century, "The Catholic Church, which exists from the ages, is revealed most clearly in the incarnate advent of Christ." The simple calendar rubric of numbering the Sundays after Pentecost is one way of reminding us of this essential truth of the Christian Faith. The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and in and through the sacramental life of the Church we experience something like a permanent pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The first two Sundays after Pentecost are dedicated to the saints—the first, to All Saints, and the second, to local Saints, in our case, the Saints that have shown forth in North America. We commemorate all of the saints of the Church – men, women and children—from her beginning to the present day, including the "patriarchs, matriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers,

and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith." That is, the entire "cloud of witnesses" that surround us and pray for us while serving as models for our own faith. God has revealed to the Church His innumerable saints, and we rejoice in their continuous presence, made possible by the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit. The divine and co-eternal Spirit, holy by nature, makes human beings holy by grace. That is why these particular Sundays fall so naturally after the Sunday of Pentecost.

*"We share the most difficult of vocations – to live up to our high calling in Christ Jesus. This is not something that we achieve on our own, but a process that includes the grace of God and our own self-determination, what we call our freedom of choice or "free will."*

The word we use for "saint" is the Greek word for "holy" – agios. In a real sense, we are celebrating the presence of holiness in the world, incarnate in actual flesh and blood human beings. The descent of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for human beings to become and remain holy. Without the Holy Spirit, human beings can be nice, pleasant and even good – but not holy. And it is the holiness of the saints that is their one common characteristic, expressed in an endless diversity of vocations. Every baptized and chrismated

member of the Church is already a saint – a person sanctified and set apart as a member of the People of God – and every such member has the vocation to become a saint. The phrase often used to capture this paradox of the Christian life is "become what you already are." This phrase expresses an entire lifetime of striving and struggle to attain, by God's grace, the highest of vocations – the holiness of a genuine child of God, "born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" [John 1:13]. Of this we are reminded in the Gospel reading for the Sunday of All Saints: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father Who is in heaven.... He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" [Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38].

We probably have a difficult time relating to such a passage, since we expend an enormous amount of energy – time, talent and treasure—in order to guarantee for ourselves a comfortable life and the closest of possible family relationships. God and Church may be a part of that choice, but perhaps only as one compartment of life among many. At times, the greatest of our goals may be to create a certain form of "domestic bliss," to the extent that this is humanly attainable. Nothing else can seem greater or more desirable. Jesus, however, makes other claims on us. And the first of those radical claims is that we must love Him above all else – including father and mother, son and daughter. This is a "hard teaching." Perhaps it is here that

*(Continued on page 5)*

# The Saints: Examples of Holiness

(Continued from page 4)

we discover the greatest “achievement” of the saints, and the reason behind the sanctity that they often so clearly manifest. They simply loved Christ before all else. And there is nothing that can deflect them from that love. But in no way does this diminish our love for our loved ones. I believe that if we love Christ before all else, then we would have a greater love for those around us, including our very family members. To love Christ above all else is to expand our very notion and experience of love. If we live “in Christ,” we can then love “in Christ.” Elsewhere, Jesus would claim that this would include our enemies! This is a love that will not disappoint. With any other deeper love, there is always the lurking temptation of succumbing to one form of idolatry or another. Jesus even says that if we love anyone else more than Him, we are not “worthy” of Him! Clearly, there is nothing easy about bearing the name of Christ and calling oneself a Christian. Is all



of this impossible? Jesus teaches that “with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” [Matthew 19:26].

We share the most difficult of vocations – to live up to our high calling in Christ Jesus. This is not something that we achieve on our own, but a process that includes the grace of God and our own self-determination, what we call our freedom of choice or “free will.” There are obstacles that begin with the genetic and the environmental. There are distractions and temptations too numerous to keep track of. There is the unbelief of the world around us. Yet, if we approach this “day by day,” we soon realize that we are simply trying to become genuine human beings, for the glory of God is a human being fully alive, to paraphrase Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. As disciples of Christ, we have the “inside track” to allow us to “run with perseverance the race that is before us” [Hebrews 12:1]. So, we thank God for the multitude of the saints who not only set an example for us, but who also pray for us unceasingly in the Kingdom of God.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, *Reflections in Christ*, <http://oca.org/reflections/fr.-steven-kostoff/the-saints-examples-of-holiness>

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## From the Fathers . . .

*“Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly the angel who guards you will honor your patience. While a wound is still fresh and warm it is easy to heal, but old, neglected and festering ones are hard to cure, and require for their care much treatment, cutting, plastering and cauterization. Many from long neglect become incurable. But with God all things are possible [Matthew 19:26].”*

+ St. John Climacus, Step 5.30, *Ladder of Divine Ascent*

# Bits . . .

## MARINE CARE PACKAGES

What a success! All of you who contributed and/or prayed for this effort are blessed. On Monday morning, June 20, 2016, John & Carol Yavornitzky, David Bieber, Paul Hudson, a friend and his grandson Nicholas packed 19 boxes with the donated items. About 15 were larger boxes. Total weight was over 400 lbs. with about 100 lbs of dog stuff, and some very creative cards that the Sunday Schoolers made for the Marines. On Tuesday, June 21, 2016, Paul & David took them to the post office where they were met by our benefactors, David Haddad & his "Friends of Freedom" non-profit, who paid nearly \$1100 for the shipping costs. Julie and her unit should receive everything before July 4th. We have a cash balance from the drive of about \$1200. With the concurrence of several big donors, we



will be depositing the money in a special church account designated as a reserve for future outreach programs that the Parish or Teen & Youth League pursue. Julie thanks everyone who donated or helped.

## CONGRATULATIONS

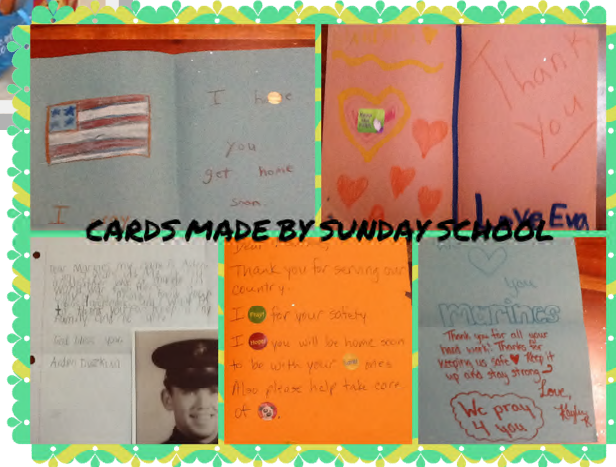
We had the joy of welcoming Paraskeva Slaughter into the Church. Congratulations and

many years to the newly –illuminated servant of God!

## SUMMER STEWARDSHIP

Throughout the summer months, many of our parishioners will be taking vacations, seeking cooler climes, or visiting family and friends throughout the country and world. It is also during the summer, when church attendance decreases because of vacations, that our parish expenses rise, due to the greater use and higher cost of electricity in the heat of the summer. However, the life

and work of your parish community continues even when you are traveling and away and enjoying your vacation. You are asked to kindly remember this and to maintain—and even increase—your stewardship during the summer months. May the Lord bless your travels and bring you safely home.



# Around SS Peter & Paul

## JULY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- July 14 Barbara Harp  
Azariah Merriwether
- 16 John Yavornitzky
- 20 Wesley Holmes  
Matushka Mary Balmer  
Fr David/Matushka Mary Balmer
- 22 Nadya Moriarty
- 23 Nicholas Enoch Sr.
- 25 Protodeacon Alexis
- 27 Phil O'Brien

**Многая лета! Many Years!**

## CONGRATULATIONS

July 1<sup>st</sup> marks  
Bishop Daniel's  
tenth anniversary at  
SS Peter and Paul!  
**Многая лета!**  
Many Years!

## PRAYER LIST

*"I was sick and you visited me."*  
**Matt 25:36**

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

- Ted Demos  
Larry Gardner  
Protodeacon Alexis  
Ann Carroll  
Ann Garza  
Rose Kurowski  
Alan Burns  
Tillie (Tatiana) Kulek  
Anna Michkofsky

*If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Bishop Daniel.*

# ... and Pieces

## KITCHEN CLEANING

Thirteen parishioners joined together for a deep cleaning of the kitchen on Saturday, June 25. The volunteers did an outstanding job cleaning and organizing the kitchen and pantry. It was also an excellent community-building opportunity for everyone, especially our newest parishioners. After all that hard work, everyone relaxed and enjoyed some pizza. Thanks to all those who participated:

*Marty Gala*

*Rita Mudrenko*

*Gina Mudrenko*

*Sue & David Bieber*

*Nicholas Enoch*

*Elizabeth Michel*

*John Hecht*

*Heather Pfeiffer*

*Linda Walters*

*Barbara Peterson*

*Greg & Nicola Hazen*



## BOOKSTORE

Summer reading starts and ends at the church bookstore and parish library!

Don't fill your free days with senseless drive! Redeem the time! Nourish and refresh your soul! There is something for everyone! Advice for everyday living, stories from centuries ago to present day, history, adventure . . . you name it, we've got it.

And if we don't have it, I can get it for you. So don't fill your head with ridiculous romance or vitriolic political prattle that only infuriates . . . instead satiate yourself with hope, joy and wonder!

All to be found in our humble little bookstore and library.



## BLESSING OF VEHICLES

It is our parish custom to bless vehicles on the Sunday nearest to the Feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah. This year, that commemoration falls on Sunday, July 17. Cars and other vehicles will be blessed that

day, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

## WELCOME

We welcome all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, and enjoy some coffee and fellowship. We

invite you to visit our website at

[www.sspeterpaulaz.org](http://www.sspeterpaulaz.org).

## SUMMER READING

If you're looking for reading material for those long hot summer afternoons or for summer trips and vacations, don't forget to visit our parish library. We have about 300 titles in various topics relating to the Orthodox Christian life.

## FEASTDAY PICTURES

### *Bible Lessons from Sunday School...*

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Nine year old Joey, was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday school.

"Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then, he used his walkie-talkie to radio headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved."

"Now, Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?" his mother asked.

"Well, no, Mom. But, if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

#### THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A Sunday School teacher decided to have her young class memorize one of the most quoted passages in the Bible; Psalm 23. She



*Olga Bahleda, with her daughter Janet, celebrates her 95th birthday. Many Years!*

# July 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p><b>St. Elijah—Blessing of Cars</b> Vehicles will be blessed immediately following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, July 17, 2016</p>					1	2
<p><b>3 Milk-Giver Icon at Mt. Athos</b> 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>4 Galatian Icon</b></p>	<p><b>5 Ven. Athanasius of Mt. Athos Relics Ven. Sergius of Radonezh</b></p>	6	<p><b>7 Blachernæ Icon</b></p>	<p><b>8 Kazan, Sitka-Kazan Icons and others</b></p>	<p>5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</b></p>						<p>5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>10 Konevskaya Icon Ven. Anthony of the Kiev Caves</b> 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	11	<p><b>12 "Three Hands" Icon</b>  6:00pm Council Mtg</p>	<p><b>13 "Axion Estin" Icon</b></p>	14	<p><b>15 Great Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles</b></p>	<p><b>16</b>  5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>17</b> 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>Blessing of Cars</b></p>	18	19	<p><b>20 Holy Prophet Elijah</b></p>	<p><b>21 Amatia Icon</b></p>	22	<p><b>23 Pochaev &amp; Joy of All Who Sorrow Icons</b>  5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>FELLOWSHIP OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS NATIONAL CONVENTION CHICAGO, IL</b></p>						<p>5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>24 Martyrs Boris &amp; Gleb, Passionbearers</b> 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	25	<p><b>26 St. Jacob, Enlightener of the People of Alaska</b></p>	<p><b>27 Greatmartyr &amp; Healer Panteleimon</b></p>	28	29	<p><b>30</b> 9:00-11:00 am Feed My Starving Children 1345 S Alma School Rd Mesa, AZ 5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>31 Forefeast Procession of the Lifegiving Cross</b> 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>1 Procession of the Lifegiving Cross Beginning of Dormition Fast</b></p>	2	3	4	<p><b>5 Forefeast Transfiguration</b>  6:00pm Vespers</p>	<p><b>6 Transfiguration</b> 9:00 Divine Liturgy Blessing of Fruit 5:00pm Vespers</p>