



Fire & Light St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

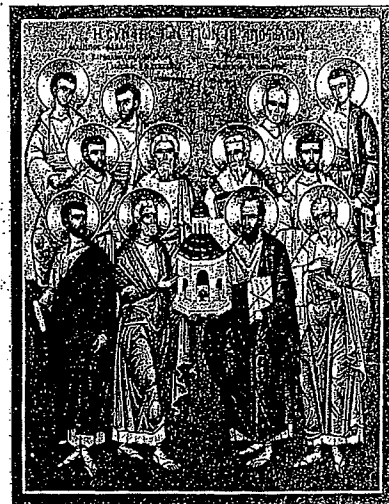
Church Tel. 930-9681 / 907-9447

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✠ June 30, 2013 ✠

Sunday of All Saints

Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious and All-Laudable 12 Apostles



⇒ **Inquirer's Class – Tuesday, July 2, 6:30pm**

⇒ **Marriage Blessing – Sunday, July 21 3:00pm ~ Thomas and Irene Lotz**

The Feast of All Saints

Honoring the friends of God with much reverence, the Prophet-King David says, "But to me, exceedingly honorable are Thy friends, O Lord" (Ps. 138:16). And the divine Apostle, recounting the achievements of the Saints, and setting forth their memorial as an example that we might turn away from earthly things and from sin, and emulate their patience and courage in the struggles for virtue, says, **"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every burden, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"** (Heb. 12:1).

This commemoration began as the Sunday of All Martyrs; to them were added all the ranks of Saints who bore witness (the meaning of "Martyr" in Greek) to Christ in manifold ways, even if occasion did not require the shedding of their blood.

Therefore, guided by the teaching of the Divine Scriptures and Apostolic Tradition, we honor all the Saints, the friends of God, for they are keepers of God's commandments, shining examples of virtue, and benefactors of mankind. Of course, we honor the known Saints especially on their own day of the year, as is evident in the Menologion. But since many Saints are unknown, and their number has increased with time, and will continue to increase until the end of time, the Church has appointed that once a year a common commemoration be made of all the Saints. This is the Feast that we celebrate today. It is the harvest of the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world; it is the "much fruit" brought forth by that "Grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died" (John 12:24); it is the glorification of the Saints as "the foundation of the Church, the perfection of the Gospel, they who fulfilled in deed the sayings of the Savior" (*Sunday of All Saints, Doxasticon of Vespers*).

In this celebration, then, we reverently honor and call blessed all the Righteous, the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Shepherds, Teachers, and Holy Monastics, both men and women alike, known and unknown, who have been added to the choirs of the Saints and shall be added, from the time of Adam until the end of the world, who have been perfected in piety and have glorified God by their holy lives. All these, as well as the orders of the Angels, and especially our most holy Lady and Queen, the Ever-virgin Theotokos Mary, do we honor today, setting their life before us as an example of virtue, and entreating them to intercede in our behalf with God, Whose grace and boundless mercy be with us all. Amen.

✠ **All the Saints in Heaven and all true Christians upon earth are "one body and one spirit" (Ephesians 4:4). This is why the prayer of believers is heard so easily and speedily and truly in Heaven, and why there is so much hopefulness in calling upon the Saints; but in order that our prayers should be always easily and speedily heard by the Saints, we must have the same spirit as them, the spirit of faith and of love for God and our neighbor, the spirit of meekness, humility, abstinence, purity and chastity, brave, valiant, thirsting after righteousness, the spirit of compassion, heavenly and not earthly.**

~ St. John of Kronstadt

He is Holy, and rests in the Saints

Christ being led into the heart by faith, dwells in it with peace and joy. It is not without reason that it is said of God, 'He is Holy, and rests in the Saints.' " **St. John of Kronstadt**

The Debt of Thanksgiving

"The debt of thanksgiving to God, all the Saints considered as their main debt. Without thanksgiving to God there can be no progress in the spiritual life. Thanksgiving to God, without ceasing, is the fruitful seed from which, if it is watered by the tears of continual repentance, a beautiful fruit blossoms - love toward God." **St. Nikolai of Serbia**

The Lives of the Saints: Applied Dogmatics

"Saints are people who live on earth by holy, eternal Divine truths. That is why the Lives of the Saints are actually applied dogmatics, for in them all the holy eternal dogmatic truths are experienced in all their life-creating and creative energies. In The Lives of the Saints it is most evidently shown that dogmas are not only ontological truths in themselves and for themselves, but that each one of them is a wellspring of eternal life and a source of holy spirituality."

St. Justin Popovich of Serbia (+1979)

Divine Consolation

"When a person is helped to believe in God and in the future eternal life - that is, when he grasps the deeper meaning of life - and repents and changes his way of life, divine consolation comes immediately with the Grace of God; which transforms the person, and dispels all his inherited shortcomings. Many people who repented and struggled with philotimo (self-sacrificing love) and humility, received Grace and became Saints --- whom we now revere with devotion, and ask for their intercessions; whereas before, they had many passions and inherited weaknesses."

Elder Paisios (+1994)

Four Cardinal Virtues

"Indeed, we know that there are four cardinal virtues: temperance, justice, prudence and fortitude. He who is poor in spirit is not greedy; he who weeps is not proud, but is meek and tranquil; he who mourns is humble; he who is just does not deny what he knows is given jointly to all for us; he who is merciful confers of his own; he who bestows his own does not seek another's, nor does he contrive a trap for his neighbor. Then, the virtues are interwoven and interlinked, so that he who has one may be seen to have several, and a single virtue befits the Saints; but where virtue abounds, the reward too abounds." **St. Ambrose of Milan**

Speeding Minds

"If people would only put the brakes on their speeding minds, not only would their mind find rest, but it would be more receptive to divine Grace. Without divine illumination, knowledge ends in disaster. Those who strive and labor for their spiritual life have their mind illumined by God; they receive divine illumination, divine experiences, and these give them foresight, so that they don't see things only through their own understanding. A short-sighted person sees clearly the things that are close, but not what is far away. As for a person with normal vision, well, he may be able to see a bit farther, but that too is not an accomplishment. We cannot have more than two physical eyes; but we can have many spiritual eyes."

Elder Paisios

No Spirit of Repentance

"Look what modern man has come to! The bad thing is that he himself obstructs divine intervention, because he has no spirit of repentance. If there was repentance, many things would have been corrected. But now we will go through storm after storm. God save us! We must ask for everyone to be granted a spirit of repentance. And for those who deliberately harm the Church and have no intention of correcting themselves, may God grant them repentance before they are taken from this life."

Elder Paisios



HOMILY

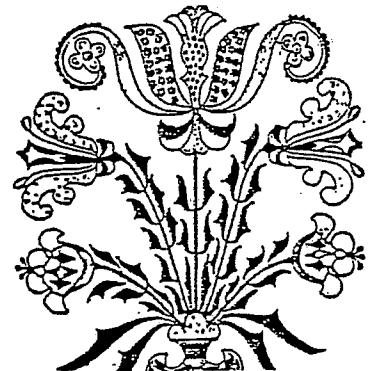
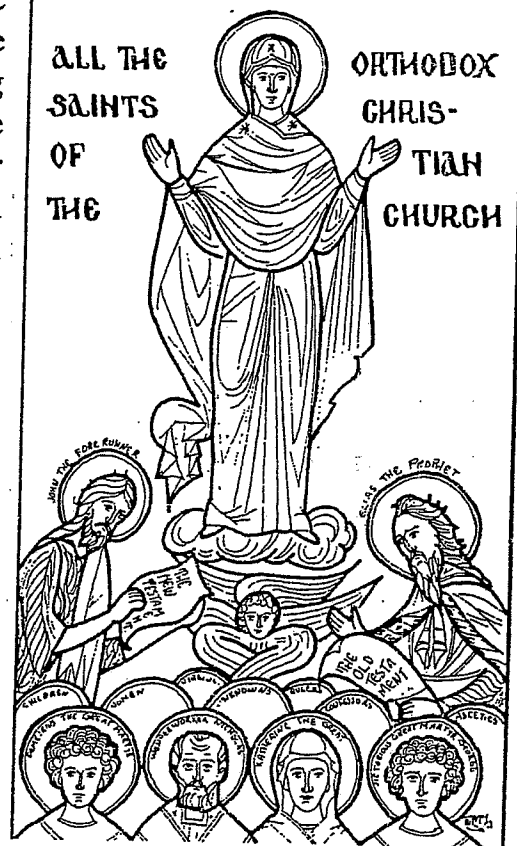
The Universal Church Glorifies the Company Of All the Saints

The Venerable Bede (†735 A.D.)

Today, beloved brethren, we celebrate in one joyful solemnity the feast day of all the Saints. In their society Heaven exults, in their protection earth rejoices, in their triumphs the holy Church is crowned. The more endurance they showed in giving witness, the brighter is the glory of that witness; for, as the battle was fiercer, the glory of the fighters was greater. The many kinds of suffering enhance the triumph of martyrdom; and the greater the torments, the greater also the reward. Our Mother the catholic Church, spread far and wide over the whole earth, was taught in Jesus Christ her Head to fear neither insults, crosses, nor death. Grown stronger and stronger, not by resisting but by enduring, She has breathed the will to victory into all those whose containment in this earthly prison forms them into an opposing army, that they may be inspired to fight the good fight with no less ardent courage than these who have gone before.

O truly blessed Mother Church, basking in the glow of God's favor, adorned with the glorious blood of the victorious martyrs and clothed in the virginal white of an untarnished Orthodoxy! Her garlands lack neither the rose nor the lily. We should each then strive, dear brothers, to gain the great dignity of these two honors, either the white crowns of virginity or the red of suffering. In the Heavenly camps, both peace and war have their garlands with which to crown the soldiers of Christ.

For the unutterable and immense goodness of God has seen to it that the time of labor and struggle should be neither prolonged nor long-drawn-out nor endless, but that it should rather be brief and, as we might say, momentary. For the struggles and the labors belong to this short and hard life, but the crowns and the rewards of merit to that which is eternal. The labors, then, will be ended quickly, but the rewards of merit will continue without end. And after the darkness of this world, we are to see the most radiant light and to receive a blessedness greater than the bitterness of all sufferings, as the Apostle testifies when he says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us."



St. Macarius on the Heart

The heart itself is but a small vessel, yet dragons are there, and there are also lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil. But there too is God, the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the apostles, the heavenly cities and the treasures of grace—all things are there. (H.43.7)

'Their prodamation has gone out into all the earth...'

The Feast of the Glorious Leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul

WRITTEN BY HIEROMONK IRENAEUS |
07 AUGUST 2010 (EXCERPT)

The Feast of Sts Peter and Paul is fundamentally a missionary Feast. In it we see the calling of the Christian, not towards 'missionary work' in the shallow sense of simply spreading messages and passing out literature, but in the deep, abiding sense of being transformed by the Holy Trinity, and in that transformation drawing up to Christ the whole of the fallen world.

We see today the power of that mission. These two men, sanctified by God's grace, continue to convert the nations, and our own hearts. That 'net' which they cast, has caught us as well. And the whole Church is the beacon of this same life-creating grace. Our Church has always been a 'missionary' Church in precisely this: she changes the human heart, and that heart changes creation—drawing it out of its sinful debasement, back into the glory of God. So has our own Russian Orthodox Church, from the time of the conversion of the heart of the Russian people in the days of St Vladimir, played her part in evangelising and transfiguring the whole world. So does she, today, transfigure our hearts, drawing us into the divine Mysteries of our Lord, that we, too, may become a Christian people of mission and true life.

It is this, in the end, to which the Feast truly calls us. The long fast has brought us to participate in the memory of these two heavenly Apostles, and with them we participate in the Mystery of Holy Communion in our Lord and God and Saviour. The Lord shows His love to us, as He showed it to Peter, and as He showed it to Paul. He asks us, too, the question He posed to Simon: 'Dost thou love Me?', and we must respond to His divine love. We can do

so by simply accepting it as a casual gift, then moving on and waiting for the next; we can do so by ignoring it altogether (though woe to us, then!). Or we can respond by taking the love we have received, and offering our lives back to Christ in gratitude, becoming wholly His. It is only self-sacrifice that responds to love truly, and creates of the human heart an icon of Christ that can speak to the world. Sacrifice is the avenue of real love. So we hymn the sacrifice of these great Apostles:

Let us praise Peter and Paul, the two great stars of the Church.

They shine brighter than the sun in the sky of faith.

Let the nations follow the rays of their preaching,

And be led from ignorance to the knowledge of God!

One was nailed to the Cross

And received the keys of the Kingdom from Christ in heaven,

The other, beheaded by the sword, departed to the Saviour,

And is worthily counted blessed.

Together they proclaim to Israel:

'He Who was stretched out on the Cross is the Lord of all!'

By their prayers, O Christ our God,

Strengthen the Orthodox Faith and destroy our enemies,

As Thou art the Lover of mankind!¹¹

The present Feast calls us to *change*. To follow the example of our Glorious Fathers in the Faith, St Peter and St Paul, and offer the whole of our lives back to the Giver of Life. It was by such self-sacrifice and loving self-offering that they became 'brighter than the sun in the sky of faith'; and it is by such self-offering that we, too, by their holy prayers and intercessions, may find salvation in the eternal Kingdom of the Holy Trinity.

It is pointless for someone to say that he has faith in God if he does not have the works which go with faith. What benefit were their lamps to the foolish virgins who had no oil (Matt. 25:1-13), namely, deeds of love and compassion?

-St. Gregory Palamas

Who Really is a Bigot?

- John Sanidopoulos, *Mystagogy Blog*

A bigot is most often defined as a prejudiced person who is intolerant of opinions, lifestyles, or identities differing from his or her own. In other words, a bigot may be any person who regards his own faith and views in matters of religion as unquestionably right, and any belief or opinion opposed to or differing from them as unreasonable or wicked. Or, a bigot is a person who is intolerant of opinions which conflict with his own, as in politics or morals; one obstinately and blindly devoted to his own church, party, belief, or opinion.

Outside of the word's common association with prejudice, the dictionary definition of a bigot includes one who holds rigidly to an idea. Again, holding to what you believe to be true is, by itself, not inherently bad. Even the simple act of one person believing another to be a bigot, and refusing to be convinced otherwise, is itself a prime example of bigotry. According to this definition **EVERYONE** is a bigot. Everyone has a group that they have no tolerance for. It doesn't matter if you are liberal, conservative, or moderate. Consider this; a bigot is someone who says they aren't a bigot.

Bigot is also used as a term of derision to imply contempt or disapproval. One noteworthy example of this is how the word bigot is increasingly being used to defame those who do not believe marriage between homosexuals should be validated in church or public policy.

It's much easier to call someone a bigot than to consider their arguments. Elbert Hubbard said: "If you can't answer a man's argument, all is not lost; you can still call him vile names." Name-calling is a form of an attack, based upon one's prejudices, emotions, or special interests, rather than one's intellect or reason. It draws a vague equivalence between a concept and a person, group or idea. By linking the person or idea being attacked to a negative symbol, the propagandist hopes that the audience will reject the person or the idea on the basis of the symbol, instead of looking at the available evidence.

It's always amusing to watch those who bellow and brag about how superior they are, become strident and defensive, when their views are questioned or challenged! The only defense one has to deflect the truth is to resort to derogatory comments and personal attacks. Name-calling is the attempt to distract the uninformed observer from the message by attacking the messenger. Thomas Jefferson wrote: "Resort is had to ridicule when reason is against us."

The most powerful and persuasive contributions are made by those that don't resort to cheap name calling and show that they can articulate their rebuttal rather than resort to the lazy way out of personal abuse.

Those who resort to brow-beating, name-calling, bullying, bashing, harassment, threats, mockery, and rudeness, instead of humbly and honestly facing the real issue, only stroke their own ego. They stroke their ego even further when they consider themselves more tolerant than those whom they call bigots. Eric Hoffer declared: "Rudeness is the weak man's imitation of strength." Name-calling is verbal abuse; a crude substitute for argument. It is the strategy of cowards: If you don't agree with someone, shout him down and call him names, so you think you win. Those who resort to name calling **IMMEDIATELY** discredit themselves and any ideas they have regardless of the validity.

G. K. Chesterton wrote: *"We call a man a bigot or a slave of dogma because he is a thinker who has thought thoroughly and to a definite end."* He also confirmed: *"The people who are the most bigoted are the people who have no convictions at all."*

Bigot is most simply defined as the favoring of one argument over another. Bigotry, in and of itself, is neither good nor bad, but simply an inclination towards one idea over another. Examples of bigotry could be a preference for ice cream over broccoli, believing that the earth is spherical instead of flat, or the inclination to think that the Bible causes more harm than good. The question is not "Who is a bigot", but rather "About what are you bigoted and why?"

Charles Spurgeon, England's best-known preacher during the second half of the nineteenth century, declared: "The glorious charity of the present day is such, that it believes lies to be as good as truth; and lies and truth have met together and kissed each other; and he that telleth truth is called a bigot, and truth has ceased to be honorable in the world!"

We are left with answering the question: who really is a bigot? We can safely assume that those who call others bigots are in reality yelling at their own reflection. In my opinion, we are left with only two choices - it is either that EVERYONE is a bigot or NO ONE is a bigot. I leave it to the reader to decide which is the fairer choice.

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What happens if the gay rights movement, as it appears it may, succeeds politically on same-sex marriage, but many Christians refuse to recognize such unions and continue to declare that American society has become ungodly and immoral?

Gay rights advocates often compare their cause to the civil rights struggle of half a century ago. But there is a fundamental difference. When Martin Luther King Jr. called on the nation to "live up to the meaning of its creed," he heard an echo from a thousand pulpits. Treating black folks decently was consistent with what Christians had been taught. Dr. King was pushing against an open door. Priests and pastors marched for civil rights. Others preached for civil rights. But if the gay rights agenda is imposed, we could have priests and pastors preaching not acceptance but principled rejection.

Prelates could be declaring from pulpits everywhere that the triumph of gay rights is a defeat for God's Country, and the new laws are immoral and need neither be respected nor obeyed. The issue is acceptance. We know of how America refused to accept Prohibition and, in good conscience, Americans broke the laws against the consumption of alcohol.

Imagine the situation in America today if priests and pastors were telling congregations they need not obey civil rights laws. They would be denounced as racists. Church tax exemptions would be in peril. Something akin to this could be in the cards if the homosexual rights movement is victorious — a public rejection of the new laws by millions and a refusal by many to respect or obey them.

The culture war in America today may be seen as squabbles in a day care center compared to what is coming. A new era of civil disobedience may be at hand.

Patrick Buchanan

There is not such thing as Gay Marriage and never will be, no matter what politicians may say, until pigs fly without an assist from aeronautical science.

- Thomas Fleming

Not only is sodomy no longer seen as sinful, but there are no sins of any kind, except any insistence that there are absolute truths and that there is a God Who has some rules that He wants us to follow. Rather than losing self, we want our Lord as the therapeutic guru to serve ourselves.

- Robert M. Peters

...The state cannot redefine what is so deeply imprinted into nature (marriage), but it can try, and as it sees its efforts come to naught, it will become increasingly draconian in an attempt to save face. In the end it is doomed to failure, but along the way many martyrs will be made and much of what is good about our civilization evaporated and/or overrun by the barbarian hordes. — Internet Comment

"Our thanks are due to those who have so generously helped us by giving a glimpse of what might be meant by a Pagan civilization. And what is lost in that society is not so much religion as *reason*; the ordinary common daylight of intellectual instinct that has guided the children of men."

"A world in which men know that most of what they know is probably untrue cannot be dignified with the name of a skeptical world; it is simply an impotent and abject world, not attacking anything, but accepting everything while trusting nothing; accepting even its own incapacity to attack; accepting its own lack of authority to accept; doubting its very right to doubt." **G.K. Chesterton**

Angerism? by Michael Baumann

We all make a big mistake when we identify with our sin, especially our besetting ones. Plug any other serious and besetting sin into the homosexual ideology and it becomes immediately absurd. For instance:

Should I loudly proclaim that I was born an angerist and demand that I be allowed to express my anger without any condemnation or consequences while condemning people who speak ANY opposition to having my anger forced upon them as obvious angerphobes. They are just trying to suppress my right to angry expression, AND I WON'T HAVE IT! And, hey, my particular form of anger requires that I be able to berate my 'significant other' all the time, even in public. So if we are married, she must not be allowed to divorce me for any reason. Shoot, that's just an anachronistic expression of an outmoded morality that denies me my rights. Abuse laws need to be changed, after all we are consenting adults. Oh, and the children won't be harmed in any way to be sure.

Homosexuals are people who are tempted by a disordered same gender attraction into living a life of sin. That is a bad thing for them, for those with whom they engage in sin and for all of us.

Angerists are folks who are tempted to sin by a disordered incensive faculty into lust of power and pride that they direct to abuse and control other people. That is a bad thing for them, for those with whom they engage in the sin and for all of us.

When we identify as persons with our besetting sin or allow anyone else to so identify we are loving the created thing more than the Creator. It is form of idolatry and enormously poisonous to our soul, the souls of others, the Church and our culture.

To the extent we so identify and promote or allow such identification, we are no longer made in the image and likeness of God, but are made in the image and likeness of our sin. No longer can we access the salvation of the God/Man Jesus Christ, because we have voluntarily sunk into the bestial world rather than following God's grace and becoming human.

As with all sins, falling prey to same gender attraction must be treated with compassion and pastoral care, but not enabled. The simplistic repetition of legalistic prohibitions against sin and the damnation that follows is not Orthodox. Anyone who falls into such a lazy trap has forfeited the riches of the truth revealed to the Church and risks being condemned along with the Pharisees who locked up the Kingdom and neither went in themselves nor allowed others to enter.

Homosexuals are to look toward the healing of their souls just like all of the rest of us: acknowledge our sins, repent/forgive, then strive to practice virtue, prayer, attendance on the Sacraments and the giving of alms.

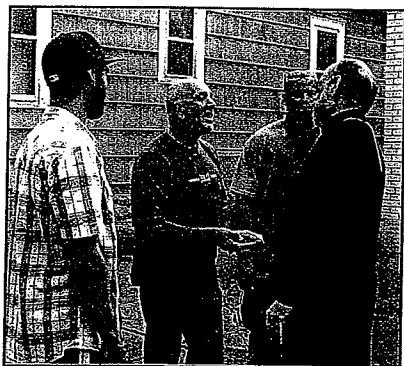
We Orthodox should not embrace either pole of the false dichotomy of licentiousness and puritanism but seek our joy in the communion with our Lord Jesus Christ - a communion that requires that we pick up our Cross and follow him by allowing our passions and desires to be crucified.

"I behold the Bridal Chamber richly adorned for my Savior, but I have no wedding garment to worthily enter. Make radiant the garment of my soul O Giver of Light and save me."

Miracles Still Happen on Ideal Street in Buffalo

Miracle of Operation Buffalo

Over the past few months, Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, located at 45 Ideal Street in Buffalo, has undergone a significant transformation. On August 1, by the initiative of His Grace Bishop Michael, "Operation Buffalo" was launched to prepare the rectory for the arrival of the new parish priest, Fr Volodymyr Zablotsky. Volunteers from across the New York and New Jersey Diocese traveled to Buffalo to share their love for the church. This was the first effort of its kind in the Diocese and it may become an example for similar future undertakings in the Diocese and throughout the OCA. The talents and the labor hours offered by the volunteers were nothing short of miraculous. A project that would ordinarily cost tens of thousands of dollars was accomplished on a "boot strap" budget.

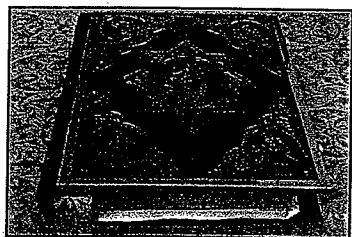


But there was another side to "Operation Buffalo" which might not have been immediately noticed. The love, dedication, and sacrifice of all the volunteers were infectious and brought a jolt of enthusiasm and the hope for a brighter future for the parish. But "Operation Buffalo" also helped the parishioners realize that their parish is indeed a part of the Body of Christ and a Church of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. This, of course, would not be possible without the fatherly love and concern of His Grace Bishop Michael, who in the past year visited the parish numerous times, particularly during "Operation Buffalo." Parishioners were deeply touched when hearing His Grace say on several occasions, "The Body of Christ in Buffalo is hurting - we need to help them."

Miracle of the Gospel Book

On Saturday morning, November 12, while walking around the church property, Fr. Volodymyr noticed a broken pole light with some rocks still lying near and around the pole. The broken light was not a result of some mischief; it was part of evidence left behind by the thieves who managed to take about 100 square feet of copper from the church roof. The thieves were also able to enter the church through a basement window and steal a Gospel Book that dated back to at least the time of the construction of the present church in 1933.

A number of local TV stations picked up the story which offered Fr. Zablotsky an opportunity for appealing to the public with a plea to offer any information which may lead to the return of the Gospel, while some parishioners stepped forward with a reward of \$1,000.00 for the return of the book.



Two weeks later on Saturday, November 26, Fr. Zablotsky was in for yet another surprise. Around 8:30 PM parishioner Steven Camp knocked on the door of the rectory. Steven was very emotional and clearly shaken. "Father, you can't believe what just happened," he said, while giving the stolen Holy Gospel book to Fr. Volodymyr. An unidentified man approached Steven, and after verifying that Steven indeed was a member of Saints Peter and Paul Church, handed him the Gospel Book and said before wailing, "I need to do the right thing. I can't live with this any longer." The following day during the Divine Liturgy Fr. Volodymyr, while reflecting on the Gospel from Luke (Luke 13:10-17) said, "While we marvel at the miracle of Our Lord healing a crippled woman by His healing touch, last night Our Lord touched the crippled heart of a man whose name we may never know. Let us pray that the healing of that man's heart will be complete. As miraculous as the return of our Holy Gospel book is, the Lord is capable of working greater miracles in this man's heart."

Thinking back on all these things that have happened over his first few months as the acting rector, Fr Volodymyr has concluded that: "It is part of our life. Indeed it is the very sign that we are alive. Good things are followed by bad and then the pendulum swings back again. Saint Paul reminds us that 'all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose' (Romans 8:28)."

*Follow the
"continuing
miracle" taking
place on Ideal
Street by going
to the parish's
website:
[http://www.
peterandpauloca.
com/](http://www.peterandpauloca.com/)*

*See the story
of "Operation
Oneonta" on
our Diocesan
website.*