

ARCHPRIEST MARTIN SWANSON, PASTOR
PRIEST SERGII ALEKSEEV, ASSOCIATE PASTOR
ARCHPRIEST RADOMIR CHKAUTOVICH, ATTACHED

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MID-AMERICA
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

January 2019

Nativity Epistle

by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad 2017



Moved by the most profound feelings of fraternal love and joy for the Savior of the World born in Bethlehem, I congratulate the archpastors, clergymen, monastics and all the faithful flock of the Russian Church Abroad on this great and holy feast of the Nativity of Christ!

O, blessed Nativity night!

On this holy night, the Son of God meekly descended to Earth and was born in a humble Bethlehem cave. He brought news of the Salvation of all mankind, and by His example of humility and self-sacrifice pointed the way to eternal blessedness. The angels praised the Birth of Christ with the words, "Glory to God in the Highest, peace on Earth and good will toward men!" (Luke 2:14). The whole world, heeding this wondrous song, became a type of temple and altar, where a unique Divine service was invisibly being performed, during which divine hymns from the heavenly abodes merged with those of suffering humanity.

In our troubled days, when the Gospel commandments of patience, humility and brotherly love resound with particular force, we bear witness to internecine strife, brutal persecution of Christians, all forms of political fervor and social discord. The human heart races at the mere thought of these great tribulations. We cannot help but pose the question: is this how the world is to honor its God, its Creator and Savior? As we celebrate this holy

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Special Services & Events

- Friday, Jan. 4: Royal Hours 9 a.m.
- Sunday, Jan. 6: Vigil for the feast of Nativity 6 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 7: Divine Liturgy for the feast of Nativity 9 a.m. followed by Yolka (Children's Nativity program) and Nativity Luncheon
- Sunday, Jan. 13: Vigil for the feast of St Basil the Great/Circumcision of the Lord 6 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 14: Meeting of the hierarch and the Divine Liturgy with the Cross Procession for the feast of St Basil/Circumcision of the Lord 9 a.m. followed by festal luncheon
- Friday, Jan. 18: Vigil and Greater Blessing of the Water for the feast of Theophany 6 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 19: Divine Liturgy and Greater Blessing of the Water for the feast of Theophany 9 a.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 23: Moleben to Holy Hierarch Theophan the Recluse 6 p.m.

Weekly Services:

Saturday - Vigil 6 p.m.

Sunday - Divine Liturgy 10 a.m.

Parish News

Choir Voices Needed

All parishioners are welcome to join the choir, all voices are needed. Choir practice is held every Wednesday evening in the church at 6:30. All members of the choir should attend as many practices as possible in order to prepare for the services of the coming week. The choir is an important ministry of the church and if you can sing, you serve God by joining the choir. WE NEED YOU!

Nativity Fast

Remember that the Nativity Fast began on Wednesday November 28th and continues until the Great Feast of our Lord's birth on January 7th. See the parish Calendar for fasting details.

FASTING IS FOOD FOR OUR SOULS

Weekly Tours of St. Basil's

Tours of St. Basil's church are conducted by one of the parish clergy every Wednesday between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., and are designed to acquaint the community with the church, its architecture, traditional design, iconography, and history. No appointments are necessary and the tours will accommodate both individuals and groups. Advance notice would be appreciated for groups over 5. For additional information or to schedule a group tour contact Fr. Martin at 314-835-1569.

Parish Prayer List

Reader Gennady Barabtarlo - Health
Dewey Mundwiller - Recovery from Surgery
Archimandrite Seraphim - Recovery

Keep our parishioners, and those who ask us to pray for them in your prayers this month. Contact Fr. Martin to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals do not notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

New "Ask Your Priest" Column

This new column will answer questions

submitted by you [the parishioners] concerning Orthodoxy. Questions will be submitted to priests anonymously. Submit your questions to StBasilSTLNewsletter@gmail.com

Receiving the Baton

Fellow parishioners, my name is Florita and I am happy and excited to take the helm of the newsletter. Thank you for supporting this publication and I look forward to supplying you with stimulating pieces that comment on our lives as Orthodox Christians. I am eager to hear from our parish so please feel free to reach out to me with your recommendations for content you would like to see.

I would also like to add a heartfelt thank you to Karen (Brigid) Hammer for her tenure as parish newsletter editor. St. Basil's has benefited tremendously from her efforts as editor for the last 9 and a half years! May God bless you for your service.

Thank you,
Florita (Elizabeth) Nichols

Use eSCRIP and Amazon Smile Rebates

It costs \$0 and benefits the parish. Get cards at the candle counter. Sign up for the Amazon rebate program to have a portion of your Amazon purchase donated by them to the parish. Please find sign up instructions next to the stair case in the hall.

SERVERS WANTED!

Boys may begin to serve in the altar at St. Basil's from the time they begin to go to Confession (usually about 9 years old). We encourage all of our boys to serve in the altar! For more information please contact Michael Orlando.

St. Basil's Parish Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SaintBasiltheGreatSTLMO/>

for daily edification and updates of interest. Like our Facebook Fanpage! "Like" us to appear in your Facebook Newsfeed.

Nativity Epistle continued

event, let us lift up our prayers for brotherly unity and understanding, for patience and mutual respect within society, and for peace among nations. Let us unite in our churches during these days, leaving aside at least for a while our earthly cares and troubles, let us offer the God-Child our fervent faith and hope in salvation, let us fill our lives with Christian virtues.

As we noetically kiss the holy manger of Bethlehem, let us piously pray to the Divine Child that this 21st century, in contrast to the last one, will be a time of building the Church and of mankind turning to God, that the seeds sown by the suffering of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia will continue to bring forth abundant fruits of faith, hope and love in human hearts. Let us pray to Him that He grant us spiritual peace and true Christian life, so that we would be to our neighbors a "light of the world" (John 8:12) and the "salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

With love in the Incarnate Lord,
+HILARION

On The Theophany Icon

Excerpt from Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church

For Orthodox Christians, the feast of the Baptism is more important than the Nativity, in that it is a great theophany, a full manifestation of Christ's divinity. The iconography of the Baptism is simple and ancient, adhering closely to the Gospels. The moment Christ abases himself (kenosis) by stepping into the river to be baptized, the waters begin to move upon contact with the Body of Christ and a voice from the heavens reveals Him to be the Son of God. His descent into the "liquid sepulcher" of the Jordan foreshadows the Descent into Hell, and its meaning is the same: through death (kenosis) Christ will save man, and the nudity of his body reveals the new Adam. The rocky landscape (the Jordan valley) opens up into a whirlpool. John leans

over Christ, who dominates the waters and blesses them. Next to the Baptist [John] are a tree trunk and an axe (an image of Christ), in keeping with the prophecy of Isaiah: "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees" (Luke 3:9). Three angels (an image of the Trinity), with hands veiled as a sign of respect, are ready to receive the naked body of Christ, the new Adam, as if it were the Eucharist. With His baptism, Christ renewed in His own person the primordial image of man, and the beauty that man had lost through sin.

The earth opens up as during the Descent into Hell: Christ immerses himself in the Deadly abyss and reemerges victorious. Over Him, the dove of the Holy Spirit sheds the light of the Trinity and a voice from the heavens

announces, "Thou art my beloved Son, with thee I am well pleased."

St. Basil Composes His Liturgy

Excerpt from The Lives of The Three Great Hierarchs

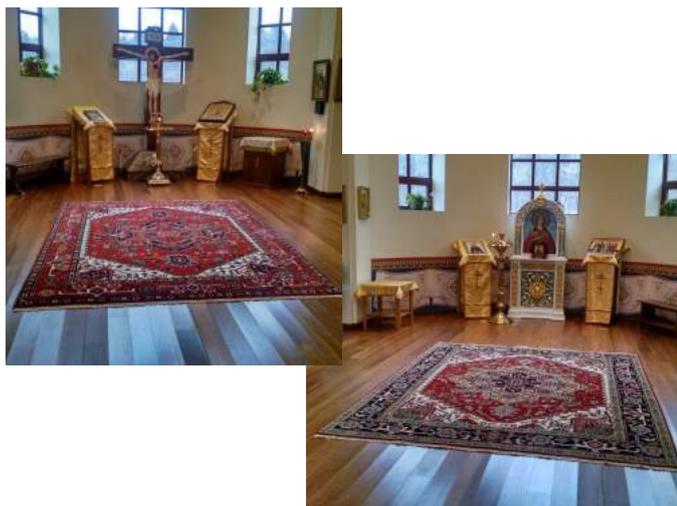
The blessed Basil asked God to enlighten his understanding, that he might celebrate the offering of the bloodless sacrifice to God with his own words, and that the grace of the Holy Spirit be sent down upon him for this task. On the seventh day after this, when Basil, standing before the altar in church, began to prepare the bread and the chalice, the Lord Himself appeared to him with His apostles, and said: "In accordance with thy request, let thy mouth be filled with praise, that thou mightest perform the bloodless sacrifice, uttering thine own words." Thereafter, Basil began to speak and to write down such words: "Let my mouth



be filled with praise, that I may hymn Thy glory", "O Lord our God, Who hast fashioned us and led [us] into this life", and the other prayers of the Holy Liturgy. When he had finished praying, he elevated the bread, praying earnestly with such words as "Attend Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, from Thy holy habitation, and from the throne of the glory of Thy kingdom, and come Thou to sanctify us, O Thou Who art seated with the Father on high yet remainest with us here invisibly; and with Thy mighty hand vouchsafe to bestow upon us Thine all-pure Body and [Thy] precious Blood, and through us upon all the people." When the holy hierarch had performed this, [former teacher] Ebbulus and the clergy of higher rank [present during the liturgy] beheld a celestial light illumining the sanctuary and the bishop, and certain radiant men clad in white garments who surrounded the holy Basil. Seeing this, they were struck with great awe and fell upon their faces, shedding tears and glorifying God.

New Rugs in Nave

Two parishioners, Malcom (John) Royse and Michael Orlando, have donated two new rugs for our nave. The new rugs are located in front of the Golgotha and the kiot of St. Irene.



Parish Children Explore St. Louis

The young children of St. Basil's have been enjoying some of St. Louis' best kid-friendly attractions. The pictures below show the

children after they whirled about at the Winterfest Ice Rink under the shadow of the St. Louis Arch and the children at the World's Aquarim in St. Louis. Thank you to parishioner Valentina and her husband Leo for hosting us.



Preparation for the Parish Feast Day

The feast day for St. Basil the Great will be Monday, January 14th with a Vigil the night before on the 13th (reference schedule of services for further information). Parish feast days are great celebrations honored by a visit from the ruling Hierarch and St. Basil's is not an exception. We plan to have visiting clergy from near and far as well as visiting laypeople join us for our services on these days. Please make plans to attend the services planned and to join the St. Basil's parish in celebrating what is referred to as the "second Pascha". A luncheon will follow the Liturgy on the 14th. Dish sign-up sheets can be found on the bulletin board in the Church narthex.

Getting to Know our Priest: Father Martin

How long have you been a priest?

For over 30 years. I was ordained in 1986

Where and what did you study?

I did my undergraduate studies at the University of Southern California, my master's degree at the University of Iowa, and doctorate at UCLA. I majored in Social Psychiatry.

Where have you lived?

I've in Southern California, Iowa City, and most of my adult life in St. Louis.

Why did you choose your patron saint, St. Martin of Tours?

Martin was my Matushka's maiden name. I started to read about St. Martin and I was fascinated with his life and I wanted to have him as my heavenly intercessor and as a spiritual role model. Unrelated to why I chose him, Martin is also my middle name.

Did you get to choose St. Basil on your own or was it predetermined?

I chose the saint on my own.

Why did you choose St. Basil as the patron saint for the church?

Because he was a great theologian, and had a major influence on the spread of Orthodoxy throughout the world and he also wrote the first monastic rule which was very important for the development of early monasticism.

What is your role or position in the Diocese of Chicago and Mid America?

I am the Dean of the Southwestern deanery [region] which includes 9 parishes and missions across Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and a part of Southern Illinois. I've been the Dean for about 15 years. I am also a member of the Diocesan council.

What does "Dean" mean?

Dean means that I am the Archbishop's representative and act as an intermediary between him and the clergy of the deanery. So if they are unable to reach the Bishop or have a minor concern or question for the Archbishop, I can either pass it along to him or answer the question if the Archbishop has given me his blessing to do so.

What was your association with the Diocesan Seminary, the Pastoral School?

I founded the Pastoral School, I was the first

Dean and also served on the faculty. I now serve as an Examiner and on the Board of Directors.

What was your motivation for starting the Pastoral School?

Myself and another priest recognized the need for an alternative to a residential seminary environment for people who weren't able to relocate from their home to go to a traditional seminary but still felt that they had a vocation for the priesthood. At the time, distance learning was becoming popular so I decided to start a distance learning seminary which was one of the first of its kind in 2005.

Do you have anything else you'd like for the parish to know?

I think the parish should know about our origin. We started out in a 400 sq ft place with 6 people in South St. Louis. We chose ROCOR because of its traditional ecclesiology and to promote a pan-ethnic environment where we could thrive. Sure enough, more people started to join the parish and we welcomed all who came. Because of our growing number of Russian speakers, we have started to incorporate more Slavonic into our services, however we are an ethnically diversified parish with many American converts and it is our goal to stay that way!

Welcoming the Newly-baptized: the Wallers

On December 22nd, Fr. Martin baptized the newest members of our parish: Douglas, Danielia, and Ryan Waller. In order for us all to get to know them better, we sat down and had a brief interview.

Where are you from?

We moved here from Rochester, NY, but Douglas and I (Danielia) grew up in Houston, TX.

What brought you to Orthodoxy?

Before, we were Protestants all of our lives. We were looking for authenticity and right worship, and researched our way into Orthodoxy.

Is anyone else in your family Orthodox?

No. Just us for now.

What is the reason for choosing your patron saints?

I (Danielia) chose Mother Maria of Paris because I identify with her life as an advocate and mother, and aspire to emulate her love for serving others. Douglas chose St. Constantine because in his life as a leader he has made many difficult decisions even at his own expense when the Christian faith was new, and Doug identifies with that. We chose St. Basil for Ryan because our parish is named for him, and he was a man of great ascetism, wisdom, and charity.

What is your favorite thing about being Orthodox?

The rhythm of Orthodox worship.

What are you most excited about in your new Orthodox life?

Communion, learning more about the lives of the saints, and getting to know people in our parish.

Do you have any plans to serve the church in some capacity?

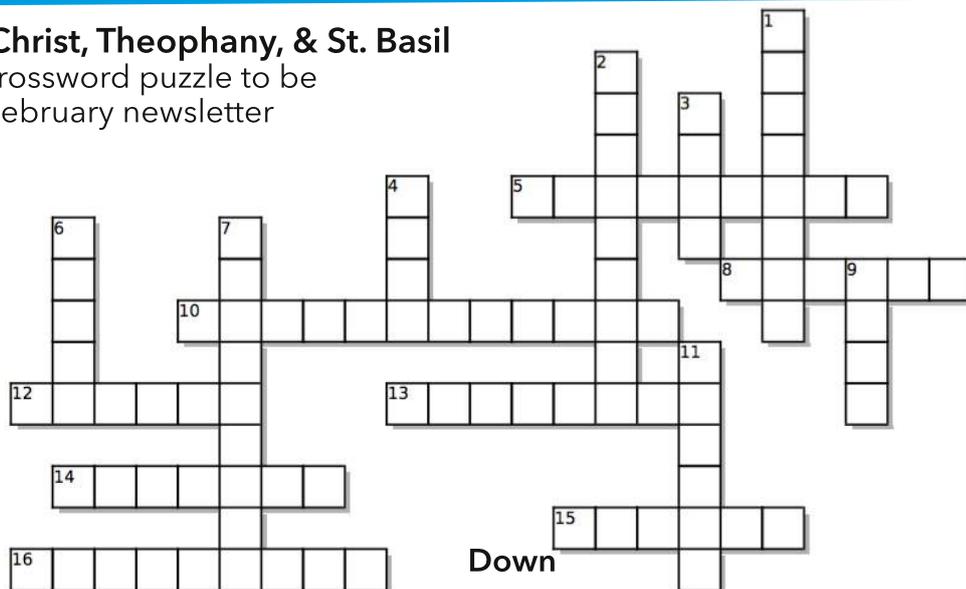
I (Danielia) currently serve in the choir and on a trapeza team, Ryan plans to serve as an altar boy, and Doug is looking forward to finding a way to serve when he comes home from Afghanistan permanently.

Please make sure to take time to congratulate the Waller family and welcome them to Orthodoxy! May God grant them many years!



Nativity of Christ, Theophany, & St. Basil

Answers to crossword puzzle to be included in February newsletter



Across

Down

- | | |
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| <p>5. City where Joseph and the Theotokos traveled to be registered.</p> <p>8. River in which Jesus Christ was baptized.</p> <p>10. Gift of incense given by wise men.</p> <p>12. Age of Jesus Christ when baptized.</p> <p>13. City which St. Basil was Archbishop of.</p> <p>14. Grandmother of St. Basil</p> <p>15. City where St. Basil received secular education.</p> <p>16. First people to see infant Jesus in the cave.</p> | <p>1. Wise man known as the King of Persia.</p> <p>2. Wise man known as the King of Arabia.</p> <p>3. Gift typically for kings given by wise men.</p> <p>4. Wise men from distant countries.</p> <p>6. Gift of oil given by wise men.</p> <p>7. Age of St. Basil at time of repose.</p> <p>9. Form in which the Holy Spirit revealed itself.</p> <p>11. Wise man known as the King of India.</p> |
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