

Rector's Letter for August, 2011

Dear brothers and sisters:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

What is the meaning of life? That's a big question that folks like to toss around from time to time. But there's another big question that's closer to home: what is the meaning of my life? Probably all of us wonder about that, especially when we are most confused, most unhappy with our direction and circumstances. On sleepless nights, we may find ourselves endlessly wrestling with our past decisions, with our priorities and goals, with our relationships. And we can never completely answer the question, because the meaning of a life only becomes clear when it is complete, when we die. Not only that, there is only One who judges the meaning of each life: Jesus Christ our Lord. Until all is revealed at the Last Day, we just try to understand the best we can, using the measure of Jesus Christ's own life as our guide for what is true and good and worthy.

On September 1, the new Church Year begins. It is the time to give thanks to the Lord for all the blessings he has provided for us, and to ask for his protection and guidance in the year to come. We should not let this opportunity pass by in our own lives, to reflect on the meaning of the year just past: what has born fruit and what has

withered? What was of lasting worth and what was a waste of time? And what hopes and fears need to be brought before the Lord for the coming year? If we do not take the time to reflect, how will we hope to live our lives in a meaningful, worthy, Christ-like way? How will we begin to prepare to meet the Lord on the Day of Judgment?

Not by accident, the Church Year begins with the Nativity of Our Most-Holy Lady Theotokos and the Conception of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist, and it ends with commemorations of the end of each of their lives (the Falling-Asleep of the Theotokos and the Beheading of St. John). The Lord marked these two holy people as the best examples for all of us to follow, because from beginning to end both dedicated their lives completely to what truly matters, what truly lasts. The Theotokos shows us the blessed joy it is to "hear the word of the Lord and keep it." St. John reminds us to "repent, for the Kingdom of God is close at hand." How could our lives be summed up? How do we want to be remembered? Would the examples of our lives speak a good word to those who follow after us?

As we draw close to our parish's hundredth anniversary celebration (Oct 8-9), this reflection takes on special purpose. Our parish has seen many lives: some were powerful inspirations; some were pillars of the church. Others were less noticed but touched someone's life profoundly. Without their contributions, SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church would not be here for us to

celebrate. What of our own lives? With the days remaining to us, how can we bring new strength and encouragement to those who come after us?

As we enter into this new Church Year, as we look ahead to our anniversary celebration, we can find new meaning for our own life in giving thanks for what has already come to pass. We can also find renewed purpose by learning better what is God's will for our lives— "hear the word of God and keep it." And by commending ourselves, and each other, and all our life to Christ our God, we can find the meaning of life in getting to know Life itself: Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. John S. Modlin



Around the Parish

Due to Hurricane Irene, we had to postpone the **Reception of Lenny Wishart into Orthodoxy**. The service is to be held instead on Saturday, Sept. 3, at 3:30 PM.

We also look forward to the **wedding of Lenny Wishart and Kira Gallick** on Saturday, Sept. 10, at 10:30 AM. God grant them many years!

Thank you everyone who participated in **National Night Out last month**. It was a beautiful and enjoyable evening, and the city community turn-out was impressive. We had many visitors to our booth, and we had a good number of guests visit the church and ask questions.

The **Parish Anniversary Cookbook** is now available for sale—please speak with Valerie Wigglesworth or Sarah Massaro. The books are a lovely hardcover, \$20 each.

We will celebrate the **Nativity of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary** with Vespers & Liturgy on Tuesday, Sept. 7, at 6 PM. Her birth was the fulfillment of promises made by God to her righteous parents, and also the fulfillment of the hope of generations of people who put their trust in God, from Noah to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to King David and his line. The birth of the Theotokos represents the best the human race has to offer to our Creator, and God accepts this gift and returns her to us as the mother of our Savior. Come celebrate this birthday of the beginning of our salvation!

This year marks the **tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 9/11**. Our parish will commemorate the departed and the grieving

with a panikhida service at 4:15 PM on Saturday, Sept. 10, and with special prayers in the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, Sept. 11.

We will celebrate the **Elevation of the Cross** on the eve of the feast with Vespers & Liturgy on Wednesday, Sept. 13, at 6 PM.

We are now only a month away from **SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church's Hundredth Anniversary Celebration, Oct. 8-9**. On Saturday, we will gather for Great Vespers and the blessing of the church. Refreshments will follow at 6 PM. Please contact Irene White (203-269-8655) if you plan to attend.

On Sunday, we will celebrate a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at 9 AM, with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah presiding and His Grace, our Bishop Nikon and His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek concelebrating. A banquet will follow at 1 PM at Seasons Restaurant, Tradition Golf Course, 37 Harrison Rd., Wallingford.

Please make your plans to attend, and in particular, please let us know whether you will attend the dinner on Sunday, Oct. 9. Banquet tickets are \$50 for adults and \$10 for children. Please contact Irene White (203-269-8655) or Irene Zavednak (203-484-4071) for reservations.

This year's **Orthodox Education Day** at Saint Vladimir's Seminary will be themed "For God & Country" and will honor military chaplains and those serving in the armed forces. "Ed Day" takes place on the first Saturday of October: Oct. 1. It starts with a Divine Liturgy at 8 AM and includes workshops, exhibits, dance groups, and delicious food. There will be a number of special events tied with this year's theme as well—see the flyer posted downstairs for details. The whole day is free and open to the public.

Since everyone is encouraged to participate in the services and events of Ed Day at SVS, there will be **no Vespers in Meriden** on Sat., Oct. 1.

As many of you know, the parish of St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre has for many years helped St. Vladimir's Seminary by managing the gyro stand in the food tent. **St. Alexis Church is asking for volunteers** from the whole Connecticut Deanery to help them at the gyro booth for a slot 8 AM-3 PM. If you are interested in participating, please speak with Fr. Joshua.

Sept. 8-10, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Yonkers, NY, will host the North American Conference of the Fellowship of Ss. Alban and Sergius. On the evening of Sept. 8, **Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware)**—Co-chair of Orthodox-Anglican Dialogue—will commence the proceedings by delivering a free and public keynote. For details and to register, visit: www.svots.edu, "Upcoming Events"; or contact the Events Coordinator, 914-961-8313 EXT 351.

The **18th Annual Benefit Dinner of the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches of Connecticut (FORCC)** is set for Sunday, Oct. 2, at 1 PM, at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 4070 Park Ave., Bridgeport. Anton Vrame, Director of the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese will speak on “Educating Orthodox Christians for Today.” Scholarships will be awarded to high school graduates who exemplify Orthodox faith and service. Tickets are \$35 per adult (\$10 per child), and reservations are needed by Sept. 20. Please speak with Alexia Tassmer if you are interested in attending this year. More details are posted downstairs on the bulletin board.

Please consider **using Viridian as your energy provider**. In addition to providing competitive electricity rates, Viridian is a fund-raising partner with our parish. The parish receives significant rebates and monthly discounts thanks to referrals. Please speak with John Stoidis if you are interested in participating.

The **Church School** will meet on Saturday, September 17, to work on their “anniversary surprise” project. Formal Church School sessions will begin after the anniversary celebration in October.



A Prayer for the New Church Year:

O Master, Lord our God, Source of life and of immortality, the Author of all created things both visible and invisible, who have placed all seasons and years in your power, and direct all things with your most wise and gracious providence: we thank you for your bounties, which you have poured out upon us during our life that is past, and we entreat you, all-bountiful Lord!

Bless the crown of the coming year with your goodness; preserve this land, its president, and all its civil authorities; multiply the days of their life in health unalterable, and grant upon them progress in all virtues. Bestow your good things from above upon all your people: health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things.

Deliver your holy Church, this city, and all cities and lands from every evil assault, and grant to them peace and tranquility; and grant that we may always offer thanksgiving to you, the Father who is from everlasting, with your only-begotten Son, and your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, God glorified in one essence, and to hymn your all-holy Name.

**Glory to you, O God, unto ages of ages!
Amen.**