



September/October 2006

St. John Chrysostom Russian Orthodox Church

NEWSLETTER

Dear in Christ parishioners and friends,

May God bless you!

Do not be greatly disturbed by the arrangement of your fate. Have only the unwavering desire for salvation and, standing before God, await His help until the time comes.

St. Ambrose of Optina
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September brings with it cooler temperatures, the end of summer, and a return to work and school. For many of our parishioners in St. Louis and their friends, relatives and coworkers, July was an especially trying month, with high temperatures and a few days of powerful storms that caused an unprecedented electrical outage in our city. We are reminded that the complex cocoon of human technology which seems to sustain and protect us, and make our physical life so convenient and easy, is also fragile. It falls far short of being the god of health, safety, pleasure, and efficiency that many imagine it to be, who do not know the true God, the Creator and Sustainer of mankind. This act of nature, (in fact, an act of God, as the insurance adjusters acknowledge) also brought forth in many people heroism, sacrificial love for ones neighbor, bravery, and patient endurance. Can we deny the hand of God in this? Do we not see how God brings good out of evil? Let us thank our Lord for his blessings, protection, and providence, even in times of disaster. So did righteous Job bless the Lord at the moment of his fierce trials and sufferings.

September also marks the beginning of the Church year, which falls on September 1/14. The yearly cycle of feasts begins again from this point. We should look forward with love and zeal to the celebration of the holy days of Christ, His Most pure Mother and all the saints. They follow each other in harmony and beauty, in accordance with the wisdom of God, just as the stars and planetary bodies turn in perfect order and splendor in the heavens.

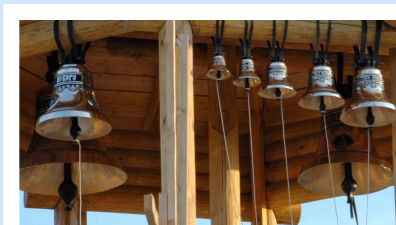
On Friday and Saturday, October 13th & 14th, Fr. Christopher and members of his family are traveling to Chicago to celebrate the feast day of our Archbishop's cathedral, "Pokrov," the Protection of the Mother of God. You are welcome to join us, perhaps in your own car. Call Fr. Christopher for more information. REMEMBER! On the Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup> we, Orthodox Christians and our children, must NOT celebrate Halloween, a feast of demons, in any manner whatsoever. Instead, come to church for the Vigil of St. John of Kronstadt, and the names day of J.T. Surgent!

### Parish News

#### **Russian Bell Fund**

Thanks to the many generous donations of parishioners and friends, the Bell Fund had reached a total of \$5,629.76 by the end of July. Please continue to help us reach our goal of \$13,000. by sending donations in the enclosed envelopes, marked "Bells." If you would like to

make a special donation toward one of the bells, and have it dedicated to a particular saint, please contact Fr. Christopher.



#### **Parish Picnic**

Our annual parish potluck (everyone bring a dish!) picnic has been scheduled for Saturday, October 7th from 12-3pm. We are sending invitations to orthodox churches in the area, making this a great opportunity to meet other orthodox people outside our parish. There will be informal Russian singing and dancing as well.

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### ***Weekday Services in September and October***

**Monday**, September 11 – Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner. The evil of his murder was turned into good when his soul descended into hades to announce to the souls of the righteous of the Old Testament waiting for the coming of the Messiah on earth.

**Thursday**, September 14 – Beginning of the Indiction, the New Church Year. Vespers only on Wednesday evening.

**Thursday**, September 21 – **FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

**Wednesday**, September 27 – **FEAST OF THE EXULTATION OF THE CROSS**

**Monday**, October 9 – Feast of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian

**Saturday**, October 14 – Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos. Vigil and Liturgy in Des Plaines, Illinois. Call Fr. Christopher if you would like to go with him.

**Tuesday**, October 31 – Vigil for the feast of St. John of Kronstadt

### ***Our Church Needs Your Financial Help***

To keep the church open and running there are many, many expenses. To meet these expenses we have no one else to help us except you! The United States government does not help us, President Putin does not help us, the church in Russia does not help us. It all depends on us, the parishioners and friends of the parish. If you want a priest and deacon to serve Liturgies, Moliebens, pannychidas, Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, prayers and blessings when you and your family and friends need them – if you want to have a beautiful church and church property – if you want to keep it beautiful and safe – if you want the doors of the church to be open for you – if you want any of these things, you must take responsibility for the Church upon yourself. Please donate as generously as you can to St. John Chrysostom Church every week or every month, on a regular basis. It is the only way we can survive, grow, help take care of those truly in need, reach more people searching for the beauty and salvation of Orthodox faith in Christ, and one day plan to build a beautiful Russian Orthodox Church with a golden cupola and Russian bells to help more powerfully to proclaim the truth of Orthodoxy to the city in which we live.

*Parish News continued . . .*

### **Baptisms**

The following baptisms took place in July:

- July 11th - Emilia (Lauren) Wiebenga, daughter of Church Warden Mark Wiebenga. Her godmother is Genevieve Brown.

- The double baptism of Nadejda Andreevna Loban, daughter of Andrei and Yelena Loban (godparents: Fr. Dn. Matthew Williams and Maria Gauze), and Anastasia (Olivia) Rogers, daughter of John and Oxana Rogers took place on July 29th (godparents: Anatoly and Xenia Golubev).

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**A note of gratitude to God and thanks to fellow parishioners from Fr. Christopher and Matushka Mary:**

We would like to thank all the parishioners and friends who have been praying for the healing of our son, Reader Constantine, after his accident on August 3<sup>rd</sup> when he fell from a height of 22 feet and broke the top two vertebrae (C1 and C2) of his neck. We are so grateful to God for preserving his life. It was a miracle that he got up and walked away from the fall. It was a miracle that the two vertebrae did not pinch his spinal chord at all, and that all neurological functions are normal. It was a miracle that he had only a few minor scratches on his body that healed within ten days. He is now wearing a halo brace for three months. We would be so grateful if you would continue to pray for his healing, and that God will grant him patience during this time of enforced physical inactivity.

***Glory to God for all things!***

### ***Sunday School***

Our Sunday School classes continue to meet after Liturgy in the church, to learn how to love God and one's neighbor. Prayer, lives of the saints, the feasts and fasts of the church, proper behavior in and out of church, and some simple dogmas are taught. There are presently two levels, and the hope of a third class for older children. Visitors are most welcome – since we meet in the church itself, interested visiting children should simply stay in church with the parish children.

The format of the classes will change soon,

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**ABOUT THE GREAT FEASTS**  
**occurring in September and October**

**The Nativity of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary**  
**September 8/21**

When the time drew near for the birth of the Saviour of the world, there lived in the Galilean city of Nazareth a man named **Joachim**, a descendant of King David, with his wife **Anna**. They were both pious, and well-known for their humility and charity. Filled with love for God and men, they lived to a ripe old age—grieving only that they never had children. In spite of their advanced years, they never ceased to ask God for the gift of children.

Troparion of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Mary

Thy nativity, O Theotokos Virgin, hath  
proclaimed joy to all the world; for from thee  
hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ  
our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the  
blessing, abolishing death and granting us life  
eternal.

They vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate him to the service of God. At that time, every Jew hoped that their offspring would take part in the kingdom of the Messiah, Christ the Saviour. Therefore the Jews held every childless couple in contempt, considering barrenness to be a punishment by God for their sins. Joachim was especially grieved as a descendent of King David, from whose seed the Christ was to be born.

As a reward for their patience, steadfast faith, and love for God and each other, the Lord sent great joy to Joachim and Anna. Toward the end of their lives a

daughter was born to them! According to the command of an angel of God, they named her **Mary**. The birth of Mary brought rejoicing not only to her parents but to all the world, for this reason: she was foreordained by God to be the **Mother of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world**.

This feast rightly proclaims joy to all the world, because the curse of barrenness and of sin was annulled. Celebrating the opening act of the revelation of Christ's Incarnation, it is the first of the twelve great Feasts in the cycle of the Church year which begins in September. Many women monasteries are named after this Feast. (Adapted from: The Law of God, Holy Trinity Monastery)

**The Exaltation (Elevation) of the**  
**Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord**  
**September 14/27**

This feast is closely linked to the lives of the holy Equals of the Apostles, Constantine and his mother, Helena (celebrated separately on May 21/June 3). The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great was himself conquered by the power of the sign of the Cross which appeared to him and all his soldiers as a cross of light in the sky on the eve of a decisive battle in 312 A.D. In the heavens were also visible the inscription, "By this sign, conquer!" The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him that night and told him to lead his army with this sign, and that if he did so, he would conquer the enemy. Constantine believed and obeyed, was victorious in battle and thus placed his entire empire under the protection of the Cross.

Constantine desired to build churches on the Christian holy places in Palestine, where Christ was born, lived, suffered, and rose from the dead. He also desired to find the actual Cross on which the Saviour was crucified. His pious mother, Helena, journeyed to Jerusalem in 326 A.D. to fulfill the Emperor's pious wish. She devoted much labor to finding the Cross of Christ, since the enemies of the Lord had hidden it by burying it in a cave, heaped it over with dirt and debris, and built a pagan temple over the spot. After much searching,

Troparion of the Exaltation  
of the Life-giving Cross

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless  
Thine inheritance; grant victories to the Ortho-  
dox people over their adversaries; and by the vir-  
tue of Thy Cross, preserve Thy habitation.

At the Veneration of the Cross  
all the people sing:

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in wor-  
ship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we  
glorify. (3 times, with full prostrations.)

### *The Exaltation continued . . .*

she was directed to an elderly Jew who knew where it was buried, and after much questioning, he revealed its location. The Empress Helena ordered the building torn down and the cave unearthed.

They discovered three crosses, and the inscription lying separately: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." But they did not know which of the crosses was the Lord's. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Macarius, and the Empress Helena firmly believed that God would reveal it to them. They brought the crosses, one at a time, to a very sick woman. When the third cross was brought to her she was healed at once. They did the same to a dead man. When the third cross was brought to him, he came back to life. Thus they discovered the true Cross of the Lord, through which the Lord worked miracles and manifested the **life-giving** power of His Cross.

The Empress, the Patriarch, and all the people who had assembled thankfully venerated the Cross of Christ and kissed it with great joy. A great crowd gathered when they heard the wondrous news: everyone clamored to venerate the Cross, but it was impossible. So the Patriarch stood on a high place visible to all and lifted it up high several times, as the multitude bowed and cried out innumerable times, "Kyrie eleison!" that is, "Lord, have mercy!" Thus took place the **lifting up, the exaltation**, of the precious and life-giving Cross of the Lord.

At the beginning of the Vigil service of the Feast, the priest decorates a cross with sweet basil and flowers, fastens it to a tray, and lays it on the altar table. Towards the end of the Vigil, the priest in full vestments carries out the cross in solemn procession, elevates it once in front of the Royal Doors, and then places it in the center of the Church for all the people to venerate with hymns and prostrations. But if the Bishop serves, from the center of the church he elevates the Precious Cross and then bows low to the ground, in all four directions, while the choir sings "Lord, have mercy," 100 times. With such splendor and love do the Orthodox people on this day bow down before the precious wood of the Cross.

(Adapted from: The Law of God, Holy Trinity Monastery)

### *Sunday School continued . . .*

as Sunday School materials have been ordered, and should arrive shortly. This means that students will be following a set program, and attendance will be even more important. We have a very enthusiastic group of children, by God's great and abundant mercy, and most attend church and school every Sunday. This regularity is essential, just as regular attendance in secular learning is necessary for progress. Our good God asks little of us – out of seven days, He requires one for His worship, but that one He does command. Let us not neglect so great a task as our children's salvation!

Please continue to pray for the students and the teachers of this school, that we may accomplish this tremendous work in a God-pleasing manner, with love, perseverance, and the hope of life everlasting. If you have any questions or concerns (or offers of help), please contact Matushka.

### ***Berezka Dancers at Forest Park***

by Liuda Savina, Council Member



On July 15th the Berezka Dancers were invited to perform at the History Museum's International Festival at Forest Park as representatives of Russian Culture. The audience loved the dancing and music of our performers.

Our performances are part of fundraising efforts for the new Church Bells. All the participants were

thrilled to practice and perform for such a great cause. The children's group (Andrey and Lyuba Savin and Sasha Marx), lead by Vera Nikolayeva, was just incredible. The applause lasted long after these "little jewels" left the stage.

Our "Balalayka Band" (Valery Anisimov, Nikolay Dorokhov and Vlad Savin) sounded like a full-scale symphony orchestra thanks to the great acoustics. And last but not least, our Dancing Girls (Choreographed by Maria Gauze) stole the show – as always! Many thanks to: Stephany Surgant, Anya Kennedy, Natasha Dimer, Oksana Kurinskaya, Knar Nersessyan, Sveta Savina, Liuda Savina, Kristina Knott, Masha Gauze and Kolya Dorokhov!

Many-many thanks to emcee Irina Yulianova and her little helpers (Lida Minkin and Katya Boukharova) for managing the friendly audience participation throughout the performance.

Finally, special thanks go to those who worked long hours behind the scenes on the beautiful costumes (Matushka Mary, Ira Baumer, and Tatyana Guzeyev).



