



# THE BASIL LEAF



## St. Basil The Great Orthodox Church

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### Parish Happenings:

December was, as it tends to be, a busy and exciting time. This is likely due to the Advent season and the anticipation of Christmas. For St. Basil’s it meant the addition of Advent Paraklysis on Friday nights and of course the festal cycle of the Nativity services.

The month began, however, with the annual St. Nicholas day celebration. This year it was held on Dec. 2nd thanks in part to many of our ladies and mothers. (continued on p. 2)

### “That’s A Mores!”

Fr. James Purdie

Rome. The glory of Rome! The pinnacle of antiquity. The foundation of modernity. The Roman Empire wasn’t always an empire. Before Caesar and Augustus, Rome existed as a Republic. Lately, I’ve been reading about the fall of the Republic and what caused its transition into an empire. There are many reasons to be sure, but Mike Duncan makes the claim that one primary cause was the erosion of the *mos maiorum*. *Mos maiorum* means “way of the elders,” and it describes the largely unwritten culture mores that undergirded the Roman identity. (Continued on p. 3)

Draw nigh to the righteous, and through them you will draw nigh to God. Communicate with those who possess humility, and you will learn morals from them. A man who follows one who loves God becomes rich in the mysteries of God; but he who follows an unrighteous and proud man gets far away from God, and will be hated by his friends.

### Church Etiquette and How To:

Several people have asked multiple questions on how to conduct themselves in Church. Perhaps their priest (that’s you Fr. James) ought to do better catechism, but for now let’s take a look at some of the more common issues that have been raised. To do so, we will be following, paraphrasing, and quoting from much of an article written by Fr. David Barr entitled, “Church Etiquette Or Some Things You Should Know While In Church.”

Fr. David sets the stage by highlighting that “In the Orthodox Church, there are a lot of customs and traditions that are important parts of our worship. Some are cultural; some are pious customs. Some are essential; some are not.” Many of you, and I’ve been there myself, been asking about the following:

#### Why do some people sit and others stand? When should I stand? Can’t I ever sit?

Truth be told, it is traditional for us Orthodox to stand. Pews are somewhat of a new thing to Orthodoxy, and tend to be prevalent in America, but in so-called “old countries” you may never find them except for “benches on the side walls are usually reserved for the elderly and infirm.” We have a few people who prefer to stand the entire service, in which case it is appropriate “to find a place closer to the back or side of the church so as not to stand out or block someone’s view. When should you definitely stand? Always during the Gospel reading, the Little and Great Entrances, the Anaphora, the distribution of Holy Communion, whenever the priest gives a blessing, and the Dismissal.” If you’re not sure, stand, or when in Rome, do as the Romans.

#### Lighting Candles

Candles are a way in which we make an offering to accompany our prayers. They represent the Light of Christ. Oil was widely used for light in antiquity. Oil meant light, anointing and health, it acted as a preservative (preserve us O God), an advantage in the darkness, and was a food (God feeds us). Today we use beeswax candles, and light them when we come “into the church - and that is usually the best time to light them, but there are times when candles should not be lit.” It is not proper to light candles during the Epistle or Gospel readings, during the Little or Great Entrances, the sermon, and most of the times when the faithful are standing. If...Liturgy has begun, a good rule of thumb to remember is - if everyone is standing, wait until they are sitting to light...” (continued on p. 3)

**Parish Happenings...**As always the children were treated to Christmas themed craft making, cookie baking, and Christmas tree decorating. They also participated in the fiercely, but joyously, contested quiz bowl about the birth of Christ and St. Nicholas. After a light dinner, vespers was held during which St. Nicholas secretly visited the nave and deposited candy in the children's shoes. After vespers we heard about the life of St. Nicholas and the children shared with us their thoughts on what the great saint would say to us if he were here today. A big thanks to all those who made the evening possible.

Then, on the 10th, we held our annual parish meeting. The budget was presented, we heard various report from Fr. James and the heads of each ministry team, and we elected two new member to Parish Council. Congratulations to David Jones, and John Gresham who have been voted in! Thank you to John Stelyn and Carmen Fragapane who are rotating off Council. Carmen served faithfully first as Secretary and then as President. John acted as Secretary and executed his duties wonderfully as well. God grant them many years!



Kh. Kelly moderates the nativity quiz bowl as Yonna Edens & Genevieve Butts go head-to-head with Paddy Edens & Katya

A couple Sundays later we were treated to the annual children's nativity play. For the past few years Sarah Simerick has led the kids in some great plays to celebrate the birth of Christ. This year they did a Charlie Brown Christmas, which featured Emanuel Elias as Charlie Brown, and Genevieve Butts in her breakout performance as Lucy. It was incredibly heartwarming and well done. Congrats to all who helped out and preformed this wonderful play!



Snoopy and the gang huddle up around Charlie Brown's Christmas tree as they hope to show the old "block head" that despite the com-

In the meantime the Missions and Evangelism Ministry has been developing our upcoming Sacred Arts Festival for the weekend of Feb. 9-10th. The two days will consist of Choral music, icon demonstrations and displays, and discussions about the place of beauty within our Orthodox faith.

Bookstore items will be available, as well as refreshments. Please help spread the word and support this event. It is a great time to learn, fellowship, and invite others to see what's happening at St. Basil and discover what Orthodoxy is all about.

Also in December the Antiochian, Women had a gift exchange, and held their luncheon at a local Thai restaurant, which is becoming something of a tradition.

Mark Nixon continues to work with our Youth Group. In October he and the kids gathered at the Eden's house for fellowship, a bonfire, and pumpkin carving. It is important that the kids have as many faithful adults in their lives to serve as Christian examples, guides, and leaders who can answer their questions, and show them the spiritual path.

#### We Will Miss You...

Yana Lowry recently took a new job in North Carolina. We will miss her beautiful voice. She served faithfully at vespers, in the woman's group, and as a Sunday school teacher. Tom Lowry, her husband, who will be with us a while longer, has served on the Stewardship Ministry team, and helped with construction. We wish them and their girls all the best!

## “That’s A Mores!”

Mike Duncan points out how people often like to compare Rome to America, and speculate as to where the U.S. falls on the Roman time. Are we in the rebellion phase? No, we’ve broken from the English. Are we in the foundation period? Clearly not, as we make constant reference to the “founding fathers.” Have we become an empire, and if so is our imperial power collapsing? No, says Duncan, if anything we are in the middle of the critical, but often overlooked and undervalued period during which the *mos maiorum*, “the way of the elders,” was repeatedly cast aside by noble and commoner alike for the sake of expedience, power, and the satisfaction of vendettas. A time in which corruption was rampant, and tradition ignored. If true, and America is on the same trajectory, we are headed down rocky roads.

Our concern, however, is not so much the state of America, but the state of the Church. Our *mos maiorum* is called Tradition, the ways and teachings of our Orthodox fathers and mothers from Christ to the Apostles on down to us. By honoring Tradition, we maintain not the body politic, but the unity and continuity of the Body of Christ. And yet we may ask, “what place does Orthodox Church have within the cultural mores of America? Is Orthodox Tradition just another part among parts of the social norms of our culture? Or, is Tradition in opposition to the mores of America?” It seems to me that the “way” of our Orthodox fathers ought to be like leaven in the dough of the American mores.

Now for that to happen implies two things. The first, is that we actually know the Traditions of the Church. I am not speaking solely of the doctrines of the faith that we might read about in a theology book, but I am speaking about the inner dimension of those doctrines; that which those doctrines point us toward. That is the first thing, and the second is like it: we must be faithful to the inner *mos maiorum* of the Church.

Space is limited in this newsletter, so rather than flesh out these ideas further let me offer several questions for us to ruminate on: What is the essence of the Orthodox way? How do we remain faithful to that way and live accordingly? In what manner do we live a pseudo-orthodox tradition, or betray the true essence of our *mos maiorum*, and what is the ultimate consequence of such a betrayal? How should we as Christians bear witness to the inner Tradition of Orthodoxy to America, our friends and our relatives, or enemies, and the poor?

I believe these questions are paramount for us as Christians, especially the question regarding the inner essence of the Orthodox way. And please don’t take this as if I am adopting a holier than thou attitude. I am sincerely posing these questions to myself as well, and I don’t presume to the know the answers, much less live without imperfection.

The gates of hell didn’t prevail upon Rome. The so-called barbarians (Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, etc.) did, but only after the people had long since abandoned their *mos maiorum* or somethings else. Christ said that the gates of Hades (death) shall not prevail against the Church. That being said, we must consider our faithfulness to the Orthodox way -Tradition, way of the fathers, the *mos maiorum*- as an essential factor in death not over taking us.

## Church Etiquette And How To...

**Wait, I shouldn’t cross my legs!? Or put my hands in my pockets!?**

It’s best not too. We know you don’t mean anything by it, but for many Orthodox cultures it is considered disrespectful. Crossing ones leg or placing his or her hands in their pockets is typically considered too causal for worshiping God. Those are posture we use when we are taking a load off or “chilling out.” We don’t want to take a load off with God or chill out. We want to worship attentively.

**Orthodox time.**

We’ve all been there: The services doesn’t start on time, we come to Church just in time for communion, or we leave right after communion. It’s funny to laugh about; “Oh, I am on Orthodox time today.” Of course it’s unreasonable to assume that we are always going to be on time to liturgy, especially if we live far away or have a tunnel/64 to contend with. And there will be times when we will need to scoot out right after communion. That being said, Orthodox time shouldn’t be the norm. Communion isn’t a drive through fast food meal, and the priest ought to be starting and ending the liturgy accordingly.

**Father, how many names are you going to read?**

As many as are there. Admittedly, the diptychs that Father reads at the Great Entrance have gotten long. What does that mean? First, that we have grown! And second, it means we care about people and we pray. You’re praying! That’s a priest’s dream. Remember, the prayers are an offering, usually done in conjunction with lighting a candle, but if you offer a candle you don’t want to write names down you don’t have to. There are also other ways you can offer prayers for your loved ones (living, or departed): Make and offer the *prosphora* (Holy Bread), supply communion wine, or offer *koliva* (please use wheat) for Trisagion prayers. You may also offer a candle either in the nave or at the iconostasis, and if your loved one(s) have an immediate, or serious ongoing need, go ahead and put their name on the diptychs list.

**“I can’t wait to become Orthodox so that I cross myself 500 times a Liturgy!”**

I once heard those words sarcastically thrown at me. But it raises a question I often get asked: “When do I cross myself?” Well, as Fr. David said, many people cross themselves according to their personal piety. Perhaps they do it ward of negative thoughts, to refocus after being distracted, or maybe there is a liturgical reason.

"Here is a brief list of when to cross and when not to cross: "When you hear one of the variations of the phrase, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"; at the beginning and end of the liturgical service or your private prayers; entering or exiting the church, or when passing in front of the Holy Altar; before venerating in icon, the cross, or Gospel book..."

...At the chalice crossing is not necessary "(you might hit the chalice with your hand); when the priest or bishop blesses saying, "Peace be to all" - bow slightly and receive the blessing (this also applies when you're being censured); when receiving a blessing from a bishop or a priest (kissing the right hand of the bishop or priest is appropriate, but not making the sign of the cross)."

### How do I greet the priest or Bishop? The Deacon?

It is proper to greet a priest or bishop by asking his blessing. How do you do this? "Approach the priest or bishop with your right hand over your left hand and say "Father (or "Master" in the case of the bishop), bless." He will bless you, at which point you can kiss his hand. "This is much more appropriate (and traditional) than shaking their hands. After all, the priest and bishop are not just "one of the boys." When you kiss their hands, you show respect for their office - they are the ones who "bless and sanctify" you and who offer the holy gifts on your behalf." But, don't be surprised if he takes his hand away so you can't kiss it. That is just his humble piety. Be sure to refer to the Deacon as such. In our case "Deacon Christopher," not Christopher, or Chris. That being said, you would *not* greet him by asking for a blessing.

### Sunday best?

Some people ask, "What should I wear?" Father is not the clothing police. A suit and tie is not a requirement, but men, women, and children should be dressed modestly. Avoid graphic t-shirts, holes, too much skin showing, light up shoes, take off your hats gentlemen, and avoid anything that would be distracting, or irreverent. I once saw a t-shirt with John Lennon smoking a cigarette, jeans, and sandals. Don't be that guy.

### Laugh at yourself and don't major in the minors.

We are going to be confused at some point, or make faux pas. Laugh at yourself. Don't be afraid to ask. Your priest loves answering questions. Lastly, don't focus on the minutia. Those things are important to pay attention to, and have definite purpose, but don't get carried away.

## Dates to Remember

Compline & Bible Study, Wednesdays 7:30pm,  
Great Vespers, Saturdays 6:30 PM. Matins, Sundays, 9:25 AM.  
Divine Liturgy, Sundays, 10:30 AM.  
Sunday School & Adult Ed, Sundays following Liturgy.

- Jan.** 14 Baptism of Jane Barnard, after coffee hour and Sunday School  
16 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson  
17 Compline & Bible Study, 6:30pm  
21 Baptism of Garland Harris & Misty Nibecker, and children, after coffee hour  
23 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson  
24 Compline & Bible Study, 6:30pm  
27 Wedding of Garland Harris & Misty Nibecker, 1pm  
30 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson  
31 Compline & Bible Study, 6:30pm
- Feb.** 1 Presentation of Christ- Vespersal Liturgy, 6:30pm  
6 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson  
7 Compline & Bible Study, 6:30pm  
9-10 Sacred Arts Festival (schedule/details TBA)  
11 Meatfare Sunday  
14 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson  
Compline & Bible Study, 6:30pm  
18 Cheesefare Sunday  
19 Canon of St. Andrew, 6:30pm  
20 Canon of St. Andrew, 6:30pm  
21 Presanctified Liturgy, 6:30pm  
22 Canon of St. Andrew, 6:30pm  
23 Akathist, 6:30pm  
25 Sunday of Orthodoxy (schedule TBA)