

THE ORTHODOX POST

January 2022
Volume XVIII, Issue 1



St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church, 181-14 Midland Parkway, Jamaica Estates, New York, NY 11432
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Pastor's Message

by Fr. Nikodhim

This month and next, we are exploring a different form of prayer: petitions from our kitchens. Most of us have Bibles and prayer books, prayer ropes and icons, and if we don't, we can obtain them very easily these days. All of us have or should have a handful of simple prayers or hymns that return to us in times of need, words that come almost instinctively to our lips. And, of course, there's always Church, full there of its familiar scents and gestures and sounds. But for many of us, Church is not as near as we might like, and lighting candles at home doesn't always seem the same (and requires a bit of attentiveness lest our piety become a fire hazard). When people ask me what to say or what to pray, I sense that what they might really be requesting is how to feel more involved, how to participate more in our shared faith, or what to do with their hopes or fears, or what to do so that the cycles of worry don't swallow them whole. For those who wish, maybe it is time to get their hands dirty.

In our Eastern Christian tradition, the holy bread—prospora/mesha—is baked of a yeasted dough, and it has long been the custom that such loaves are offered by the faithful of each community. Unlike our Roman Catholic and Protestant friends and neighbors, our Liturgy, our mass, derives its elements from the fruit of our own labor not something produced in a monastery, factory, bakery, or workshop. Instead, we ourselves offer to God these simple loaves of wheat and water, salt and yeast, that we have made, and He makes of them something more—His very self.

Traditionally, families or individuals from the parish bring in these loaves, and with these loaves often come lists of names for prayer. Once in Church, the priest carefully cuts into the bread, dividing it in prescribed manner and with many prayers between what will be distributed as a blessing, the antidoron, and what will be consecrated into Holy Communion/Kungata. As he does this, he

remembers by name the sick and the needy and those who have gone ahead into the mystery of death and hope of resurrection.

You may have heard me intone the names of those we are keeping in prayer during the services, but I assure you: the list of names commemorated in these pre-service prayers is much longer.

Everyone is welcome and invited to bake a mesha. If it's not something you've ever done, you might want to give it a try. In the mixing and kneading, the proofing and waiting to bake, we enact with our hands a type of prayer—one that is both edible and eternal. And those intentions we have and those worries we have are given an opportunity to take a physical form, one that nourishes and fills the house with a smell of warmth. And as these loaves, the fruit of our own effort, are handed in at Church, our whole community receives them, sharing in the prayer, tasting and being blessed by what we have brought to God.

If you would like more information on baking prospora/mesha or if you need tips on supplies, recipes, or the special moulds we use to shape these loaves, let me know. We are blessed at St. Nicholas to have some folks here who are particularly gifted at "praying with their hands" and I'm certain they would be happy to help you get started.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Pastor's Message</i>	1
<i>Icon Sunday</i>	2
<i>President's Message</i>	3
<i>The Hieromartyr Shen Vlashi</i>	4
<i>January Name Days</i>	5
<i>Merchant Ads</i>	6-7
<i>Church Services Schedule</i>	8





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Icon Sunday 2022

We are all looking forward to our annual Icon Presentation and Auction on the Sunday after Epiphany. This year the auction will be held on January 9, 2022. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we had to cancel this Auction last year. Things have improved dramatically compared to last year but we all have to make sure we get vaccinated and still exercise some caution.

The icon “auction” at St. Nicholas Church is part of a uniquely Albanian annual custom. Under the Ottoman oppression, the faithful of southern Albania had often to ransom their holy items and places from the ruling powers, paying taxes and fines to reclaim what they loved. Over time and as the government changed, these payments became part of a beloved local tradition around the feast of the Lord’s Baptism. Where once these tolls were paid simply to keep the Church open and properly outfitted, now the auction was an opportunity to express pride—particularly by claiming or outbidding competitors of one’s patron or family saints. So the Church reformatted its former means of subjugation and this day became one of communal joy in support of the Church. Please enjoy...and maybe see if you can outbid your neighbor! Attached is the icon listing. If you cannot join us, please consider making a donation for a specific icon.



Wishing you a happy and healthy New Year!

Your Friends at St. Nicholas Church



New Year’s Day at St. Nicholas—Guess who got the coin and the year of good luck?

Thank you to Jen Brehl for the delicious Vasilopita

(St. Basil’s Bread) that helped everyone in

attendance start the year off sweetly, and

congratulations to Britu Haile who found the coin

hidden in her slice!

President's Message

by Lou Foundos

December was a busy month as it usually is during the Christmas season. On December 5th, we had our traditional St. Nicholas Day Dinner. Planning was a bit difficult since many of our elders are still reluctant to attend any gatherings. We decided to go back to the tradition of parishioners cooking the fish dinner! Our master chef, Blendi Korovesi assisted by his daughter, Anika, lead the effort assisted by several parishioners. Others assisted with collecting the money, serving and cleaning up at the end. The meal was excellent and plentiful and hopefully we can continue this tradition in the future! A big thank you to all!

One of the highlights of the month was the Christmas play where all the young people dressed up in costumes. This was held on December 19th followed by our traditional pancake breakfast. A special thanks to Christina Liolin for preparing the pancakes and bagels with her group of helpers. Of course the highlight was when Santa came down the steps and surprised all the kids! He then proceeded to have all the kids come up individually to talk to Santa and receive their goodie bags prepared for them.

One sad note was that Iliia Luka, one of our council members, fell asleep in the Lord on December 15th. Iliia was always willing to do whatever was asked of him for the Church. His strong faith continued until the end. Our condolences to his wife, Agathia, and the rest of the family. He will be greatly missed. May his memory be eternal.

Christmas Pageant

Back to Familiar Grounds

After a year's absence the St. Nicholas Children were happy to get together and reenact the birth of Jesus through the regular Christmas Pageant. This Pageant took place on Sunday December the 19th under the care of Alexandra Liolin-Kehoe, Jonida Dervishi, Joanne Heiser and many other helpful parents. The ranks of the actors were almost doubled from the previous pageant (two years ago) as new participants joined the ranks of the characters of the wonderful Christmas Miracle story. Things once again felt familiar and the audience gave a hearty applause for the little enactors.

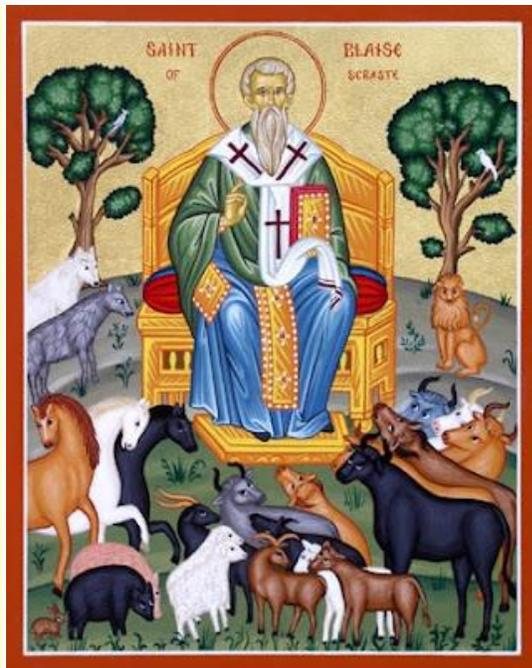
The Pageant was followed promptly by a surprise visit from St. Nick himself in bells

and whistles and the children were overjoyed. We are true believers, therefore omitted posting any pictures of St. Nick himself for his brief visit. Children and adults had a great time.

Merry Christmas Everyone and a Happy and Healthy New Year!



The Hieromartyr Shen Vlash /Saint Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste - February 11th



The Hieromartyr Shen Vlash (Saint Blaise), was known for his righteous and devout life. Unanimously chosen by the people, he was consecrated Bishop of Sebaste. This occurred during the reign of the Roman emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Licinius (307-324), fierce persecutors of Christians. Shen Vlash encouraged his flock, visited the imprisoned, and give support to the martyrs.

During this time of persecution, many Christians hid themselves in desolate and solitary places. Shen Vlash hid himself away on Mount Argeos, where he lived in a cave.

Wild beasts came to him and meekly waited until the saint finished his prayers and blessed them. The saint also healed sick animals by laying his hands upon them.

The refuge of the saint was discovered by servants of the governor Agrilaus, and he was arrested. As he was led to prison, Shen Vlash healed the sick and worked other miracles. A destitute widow complained to him that a wolf had carried off a small pig, her only possession. The bishop smiled and said to her, “Do not weep, your pig will be returned to you...” To the astonishment of everyone, the wolf came running back and returned her pig, unharmed.

Shen Vlash was repeated tortured, but he held fast to his faith, confessing Christ. The governor ordered that the martyr be thrown into a lake. The saint, approaching the lake, signed himself with the Sign of the Cross, and he walked on it as though on dry land. Addressing the pagans watching from the shore, he challenged them to come to him while calling on the help of their gods. Sixty-eight of the governor’s servants entered the water, and immediately drowned. The saint, however, heeding an angel who had appeared to him, returned to the shore.

Agrilaus, in a rage over losing his finest servants, gave orders to behead Shen Vlash. Before his death, the martyr prayed for the whole world, and especially for those honoring his memory. This occurred in about the year 316.

We pray to Shen Vlash for the health of domestic animals, and for protection from wild beasts and for physical ailments, especially those of the throat.

Troparion — Tone 4 *By sharing in the ways of the Apostles, / you became a successor to their throne. / Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God; / by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, / even to the shedding of your blood. / Hieromartyr Blaise, entreat Christ God to save our souls.*

JANUARY NAME DAYS

1 - St. Basil

Keni Gjika, Bill Nasi, Vasil Baltadori, Vasilika Dajko, Vasian Gjoka, Visjanos Papalilo, Vasil Pecani, Betty Kelapire

3 - St. Genevieve

Jenny Peters, Jennifer Slane

6 - Theophany of the Lord

Photaq Kondili, Jordan Krastev

If you do not see your name, please contact Fr. Nikodhim.
Nëse nuk sheh emrin tënd, të lutem lajmëro priftin.

7 - St. John the Baptist

John Jance, Johnny Tsamblakos, Zhani Joanidhi, Joanne Heiser, Jonida Dervishi, Jana Foundos, Jani Kolovani, Jani Panajoti, Jean Preftes, Johnny Shkurti, Yona Stefani, Jonathan Topore,

12 - St. Tatiana

Tatiana Prela

17 - St. Anthony

Andon Dede, Antoneta Mertiri, Anthony Aleko, Anthony Kelapire, Andi Mitre

18 - St. Athanasius

Nasi Pavllo, Thomas Tili, Renas Tili

25 - St. Gregory the Theologian

Gregory DiTullio, Gregory Papalexis

14 - St. Nina

Zanina Sherko



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!
GEZUAR VITIN E RI!**

**May this year be one of
health and blessings for all!**

Ads from Merchants Who Support the Church

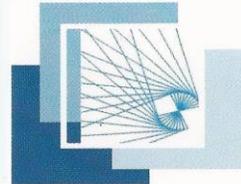
Please look at the Ads and support these Merchants by buying goods and services from them, whenever possible.

Tell the Merchant that you are from St, Nicholas Church and saw their Ad in the Church's Monthly Newsletter!!!

For new ads please contact Lou Foundos

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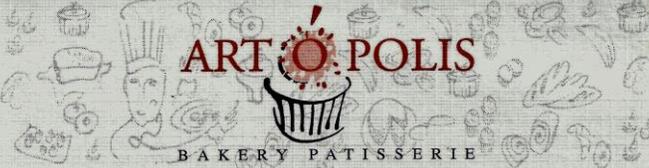
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CHURCH SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY 2022

Sat. 1 - Liturgy, 10am: St. Basil
- Vespers, 5pm
Sun. 2 - Liturgy, 10am
Wed. 5 - Royal Hours, 10am: Theophany
- Vespers, 7pm: Theophany
Thur. 6 - Liturgy, 10am: Theophany
Sat. 8 - Vespers, 5pm
Sun. 9 - Liturgy, 10am
- Icon "Auction" and Spaghetti Lunch
Sat. 15 - Vespers, 5pm
Sun. 16 - Liturgy, 10am
Sat. 22 - Vespers, 5pm
Sun. 23 - Liturgy, 10am
Sat. 29 - Vespers, 5pm
Sun. 30 - Liturgy, 10am

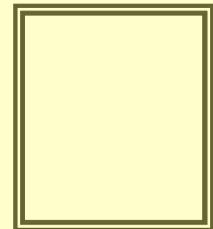
*We're on the Web, Facebook and Instagram as
St. Nicholas Albanian Orthodox Church NY
stnicholas_alb_oca or*

Visit us at:

www.stnicholasalbanian.org

St. Nicholas Church is open! Reservations for attendance are not required. However, we do ask that you plan to adhere to New York State's mask mandate while here. We have disposable masks in adult and child sizes at the door, but you are also welcomed to bring your favorite from home. Let's look to the needs of our neighbors and continue to make our care the most contagious thing here.

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