

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

\$18.00 each

Purchase a flower *in memory of* or *in honor of*, your loved ones. All persons will be remembered during the Great Entrance on Christmas Morning.

Fr. Andrew:

- For the health of all the parishioners & their families
- For the health of all his family & friends
- For the health of all Firefighters & first responders especially the Summit, IL Fire Department, Danbury Twp Firefighters, Marblehead Police Department and Coast Guard Station
- For the health of all my godchildren
- In memory of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas, my parents George & Dorothy and all my family and friends, as well as all those on the diptychs of this parish.

Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia Commemorated on [December 6](#)

Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia is famed as a great saint pleasing unto God. He was born in the city of Patara in the region of Lycia (on the south coast of the Asia Minor peninsula), and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had vowed to dedicate him to God.

As the fruit of the prayer of his childless parents, the infant Nicholas from the very day of his birth revealed to people the light of his future glory as a wonderworker. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth was immediately healed from illness. The newborn infant, while still in the baptismal font, stood on his feet three hours, without support from anyone, thereby honoring the Most Holy Trinity. Saint Nicholas from his infancy began a life of fasting, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he would not accept milk from his mother until after his parents had finished their evening prayers.

From his childhood Nicholas thrived on the study of Divine Scripture; by day he would not leave church, and by night he prayed and read books, making himself a worthy dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Bishop Nicholas of Patara rejoiced

at the spiritual success and deep piety of his nephew. He ordained him a reader, and then elevated Nicholas to the priesthood, making him his assistant and entrusting him to instruct the flock.

In serving the Lord the youth was fervent of spirit, and in his proficiency with questions of faith he was like an Elder, who aroused the wonder and deep respect of believers. Constantly at work and vivacious, in unceasing prayer, the priest Nicholas displayed great kind-heartedness towards the flock, and towards the afflicted who came to him for help, and he distributed all his inheritance to the poor.

There was a certain formerly rich inhabitant of Patara, whom Saint Nicholas saved from great sin. The man had three grown daughters, and in desperation he planned to sell their bodies so they would have money for food. The saint, learning of the man's poverty and of his wicked intention, secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. Saint Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, Saint Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds. The Bishop of Patara decided to go on pilgrimage to the holy places at Jerusalem, and entrusted the guidance of his flock to Saint Nicholas, who fulfilled this obedience carefully and with love. When the bishop returned, Nicholas asked his blessing for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Along the way the saint predicted a storm would arise and threaten the ship. Saint Nicholas saw the devil get on the ship, intending to sink it and kill all the passengers. At the entreaty of the despairing pilgrims, he calmed the waves of the sea by his prayers. Through his prayer a certain sailor of the ship, who had fallen from the mast and was mortally injured, was also restored to health.

When he reached the ancient city of Jerusalem and came to Golgotha, Saint Nicholas gave thanks to the Savior. He went to all the holy places, worshiping at each one. One night on Mount Sion, the closed doors *Con't Pg 10*

St Nicholas Cont

of the church opened by themselves for the great pilgrim. Going round the holy places connected with the earthly service of the Son of God, Saint Nicholas decided to withdraw into the desert, but he was stopped by a divine voice urging him to return to his native country. He returned to Lycia, and yearning for a life of quietude, the saint entered into the brotherhood of a monastery named Holy Sion, which had been founded by his uncle. But the Lord again indicated another path for him, "Nicholas, this is not the vineyard where you shall bear fruit for Me. Return to the world, and glorify My Name there." So he left Patara and went to Myra in Lycia.

Upon the death of Archbishop John, Nicholas was chosen as Bishop of Myra after one of the bishops of the Council said that a new archbishop should be revealed by God, not chosen by men. One of the elder bishops had a vision of a radiant Man, Who told him that the one who came to the church that night and was first to enter should be made archbishop. He would be named Nicholas. The bishop went to the church at night to await Nicholas. The saint, always the first to arrive at church, was stopped by the bishop. "What is your name, child?" he asked. God's chosen one replied, "My name is Nicholas, Master, and I am your servant."

After his consecration as archbishop, Saint Nicholas remained a great ascetic, appearing to his flock as an image of gentleness, kindness and love for people. This was particularly precious for the Lycian Church during the persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Bishop Nicholas, locked up in prison together with other Christians for refusing to worship idols, sustained them and exhorted them to endure the fetters, punishment and torture. The Lord preserved him unharmed. Upon the accession of Saint Constantine (May 21) as emperor, Saint Nicholas was restored to his flock, which joyfully received their guide and intercessor.

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, Saint Nicholas was a zealous and ardent warrior of the Church of Christ. Fighting evil spirits, the saint made the rounds of the pagan temples and shrines in the city of Myra and its surroundings, shattering the idols and turning the temples to dust.

In the year 325 Saint Nicholas was a participant in the First Ecumenical Council. This Council proclaimed the Nicean Symbol of Faith, and he stood up against the heretic Arius with the likes of Saints Sylvester the Bishop of Rome (January 2), Alexander of Alexandria (May 29), Spyridon of Trimythontos (December 12) and other Fathers of the Council.

Saint Nicholas, fired with zeal for the Lord, assailed the heretic Arius with his words, and also struck him upon the face. For this reason, he was deprived of the emblems of his episcopal rank and placed under guard. But several of the holy Fathers had the same vision, seeing the Lord Himself and the Mother of God returning to him the Gospel and omophorion. The Fathers of the Council agreed that the audacity of the saint was pleasing to God, and restored the saint to the office of bishop.

Having returned to his own diocese, the saint brought it peace and blessings, sowing the word of Truth, uprooting heresy, nourishing his flock with sound doctrine, and also providing food for their bodies.

Even during his life the saint worked many miracles. One of the greatest was the deliverance from death of three men unjustly condemned by the Governor, who had been bribed. The saint boldly went up to the executioner and took his sword, already suspended over the heads of the condemned. The Governor, denounced by Saint Nicholas for his wrong doing, repented and begged for forgiveness.

Witnessing this remarkable event were three military officers, who were sent to Phrygia by the emperor Constantine to put down a rebellion. They did not suspect that soon they would also be compelled to seek the intercession of Saint Nicholas. Evil men slandered them before the emperor, and the officers were sentenced to death. Appearing to Saint Constantine in a dream, Saint Nicholas called on him to overturn the unjust sentence of the military officers.

He worked many other miracles, and struggled many long years at his labor. Through the prayers of the saint, the city of Myra was rescued from a terrible famine. He appeared to a certain Italian merchant and left him three gold pieces as a pledge of payment. He requested him to sail to Myra and deliver grain there. *Con't Pg 11*

St Nicholas Con't

More than once, the saint saved those drowning in the sea, and provided release from captivity and imprisonment.

Having reached old age, Saint Nicholas peacefully fell asleep in the Lord. His venerable relics were preserved incorrupt in the local cathedral church and flowed with curative myrrh, from which many received healing. In the year 1087, his relics were transferred to the Italian city of Bari, where they rest even now (See May 9).

The name of the great saint of God, the hierarch and wonderworker Nicholas, a speedy helper and suppliant for all hastening to him, is famed in every corner of the earth, in many lands and among many peoples. In Russia there are a multitude of cathedrals, monasteries and churches consecrated in his name. There is, perhaps, not a single city without a church dedicated to him.

The first Russian Christian prince Askold (+ 882) was baptized in 866 by Patriarch Photius (February 6) with the name Nicholas. Over the grave of Askold, Saint Olga (July 11) built the first temple of Saint Nicholas in the Russian Church at Kiev. Primary cathedrals were dedicated to Saint Nicholas at Izborsk, Ostrov, Mozhaïsk, and Zaraïsk. At Novgorod the Great, one of the main churches of the city, the Nikolo-Dvorischensk church, later became a cathedral.

Famed and venerable churches and monasteries dedicated to Saint Nicholas are found at Kiev, Smolensk, Pskov, Toropetsa, Galich, Archangelsk, Great Ustiug, Tobolsk. Moscow had dozens of churches named for the saint, and also three monasteries in the Moscow diocese: the Nikolo-Greek (Staryi) in the Chinese-quarter, the Nikolo-Perervinsk and the Nikolo-Ugreshsk. One of the chief towers of the Kremlin was named the Nikolsk.

Many of the churches devoted to the saint were those established at market squares by Russian merchants, sea-farers and those who traveled by land, venerating the wonderworker Nicholas as a protector of all those journeying on dry land and sea. They sometimes received the name among the people of "Nicholas soaked."

Many village churches in Russia were dedicated to the Wonderworker Nicholas, venerated by

peasants as a merciful intercessor before the Lord for all the people in their work. And in the Russian land Saint Nicholas did not cease his intercession. Ancient Kiev preserves the memory about the miraculous rescue of a drowning infant by the saint. The great wonderworker, hearing the grief-filled prayers of the parents for the loss of their only child, took the infant from the waters, revived him and placed him in the choir-loft of the church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) before his wonderworking icon. In the morning the infant was found safe by his thrilled parents, praising Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Many wonderworking icons of Saint Nicholas appeared in Russia and came also from other lands. There is the ancient Byzantine embordered image of the saint, brought to Moscow from Novgorod, and the large icon painted in the thirteenth century by a Novgorod master.

Two depictions of the wonderworker are especially numerous in the Russian Church: Saint Nicholas of Zaraïsk, portrayed in full-length, with his right hand raised in blessing and with a Gospel (this image was brought to Ryazan in 1225 by the future wife of Prince Theodore, the Byzantine Princess Eupraxia, who perished in 1237 with her husband and infant son during the incursion of Batu); and Saint Nicholas of Mozhaïsk, also in full stature, with a sword in his right hand and a city in his left. This recalls the miraculous rescue of the city of Mozhaïsk from an invasion of enemies, through the prayers of the saint. It is impossible to list all the grace-filled icons of Saint Nicholas, or to enumerate all his miracles.

Saint Nicholas is the patron of travelers, and we pray to him for deliverance from floods, poverty, or any misfortunes. He has promised to help those who remember his parents, Theophanes and Nonna.

Saint Nicholas is also commemorated on May 9 (The transfer of his relics) and on July 29 (his nativity).



Luke 17:12-19 (*Gospel*)

Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

Ephesians 4:1-6 (*Epistle*)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

What Kids Are Capable of Doing when Focused

At the end of a recent Liturgy I had the privilege of listening to ten children aged 6 to 14 recite as a group the first two chapters of the Book of Galatians from memory. I was amazed at this. How did they do it? They did so by practice and repetition, and it had to be disciplined. You don't do something like this on an hour of practice. They needed to lay aside other wants and desires to focus over a period of time on this task to reach their goal. Why am I so surprised at what they did? Does it reflect the minimalism that lies at the heart of my own spiritual life?

This presentation of the children reflects what can happen when kids and their parents are not distracted and not plagued with multitasking. It reminds me of the Gospel reading of Martha and

Bishop Paul's Travel Schedule

St. Mary's Cathedral, Minneapolis, MINN,

December 6th to 8th

- *Ordination of the Reader Philip (Carston) Wagner to the Diaconate*

Christ the Savior/Holy Spirit Church, Cincinnati, OH, December 13th to 15th

St. Thomas/Theotokos Unexpected Joy, Springfield & Ash Grove, MO, December 20th to 22nd

- *Ordination of Seminarians Matthew McDonald and Deacon Ephrem Tauck to the Diaconate and the Priesthood*

Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, IL, December 24th to 25th

- *Festal Services for the Nativity*

St. Panteleimon, Summit, IL, December 29th to 30th

Mary that is read at feasts of the Theotokos. The problem with Martha is not that she served, but she "was distracted with much serving." Mary sat at the foot of Christ to hear his teaching and was not distracted. The reading of the feast ends with Jesus saying, "blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" How does one keep the word of God without first hearing it?

One of the biggest challenges in learning is in retention of what we hear. I am told when sermons are given, most hear about 20% of the sermon even if it is a good one. In this age of short attention spans, repetition is so important in learning. You have to know what is being said before beginning to understand the meaning. This is why we daily say our morning and evening prayers and why we daily read the scriptures. If we do these on a hit and miss basis, we retain less and learn less.

Thank you to these children that were a source of encouragement to me. The blessing of the Lord be upon them and you!

The unworthy +Paul

Exhortation of His Grace, Bishop Paul regarding Midwest Family Life initiative

In a letter posted to all rectors, deans and priests-in-charge of the Diocese, His Grace Bishop Paul reviews the history of the Diocesan Midwest Family Life Website since its establishment in January of 2017, and offers suggestions on how the clergy of the Diocese can aid in promoting the website among the faithful. The website is a forum to offer encouragement and advice to families struggling to raise their children in the Orthodox Faith in modern society.

The text of the letter reads as follows.

Letter of His Grace, Bishop Paul of Chicago and the Midwest

November 20, 2019

Ven. Gregory the Decapolite and St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople

To all Rectors, Deans, and Priests-in-Charge in the
Diocese of the Midwest

Dear Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers,
Christ is in our midst!

In January of 2017, as part of my encyclical “[On Family Life](#),” I outlined a vision for a website which would “provide resources that detail what kinds of things should be happening in the home in order to provide a positive foundation for Orthodox Christian formation.” This effort has begun to take shape as the Midwest Family Life website (<https://midwestfamily.org/>) which launched in April 2018.

Through weekly reflections and occasional live-streams, I have been able to connect directly with a small but growing number of families in our diocese who seem to be encouraged to hear their bishop directly address many of the issues affecting them. We have also published a handful of valuable articles from well-respected Orthodox writers. As we continue to grow the content of the site, I am asking you to help spread the word about this resource in your parishes. Please encourage them to read and interact with the content and offer suggestions for the kinds of topics they would like to see addressed.

As you know, there are countless websites, blogs, and social media pages with information about family life, including some that are Orthodox. My hope is to provide some clarity for the faithful of

the Midwest Diocese about Orthodox teaching, to encourage discussion and the sharing of ideas, and to give all our families the sense that they are not alone in their struggles. There is much help and there are many struggling alongside them. This project is a new journey for me in uncharted waters, but as we continue to grow and develop, I ask that you share this resource with your flocks.

Here are a few things you can do to help:

Keep up with the blog yourself. Use it as a resource when talking to parishioners or talking about family issues in sermons, etc.

If you don't find it useful as a resource, let me know how the site can be improved/made more useful.

Include a link to the website (midwestfamily.org) on your parish webpage and weekly bulletins. Once per year, at the beginning of the school year, send a special e-mail to your parish encouraging them to sign up for the e-mail list. (provide link)

Announce livestreams to your congregations as they come up. If you send out regular emails to your parish, attach the livestream flyers.

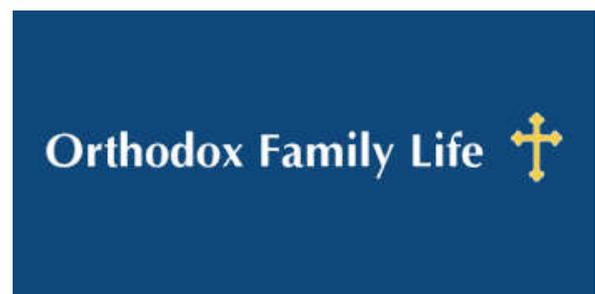
If you or one of your parishioners are willing and able to contribute a guest article on a topic relevant to family life, please let me know. I want to see more of our clergy and qualified laity contribute to this effort.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. The blessing of the Lord be upon you.

The unworthy

+PAUL

Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest



Give As You Have Been Blessed

“You shall truly tithe all the increase... year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God... the tithe of your grain and your new wine... that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always” (Deuteronomy 14:22-23)

2020 Household Estimate of Giving

\$ _____ - weekly - biweekly - monthly - (circle one)

\$ _____ Total Annually

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

****Please remember: if unforeseen hardships change your ability to give, you will not be held accountable to your original estimate. Simply speak with Fr. Andrew and different arrangements will be made. Conversely, if the Lord blesses you more than you had originally foreseen, feel free to give more than your estimate.****

Return by December 8, 2019

May our Lord God bless you as you follow His commands!

Temptation con't

James says, is our own desires, misdirected and allowed by us to lure us into places we should not go. God has given us desires and appetites, and they can either be used in a healthy way or a destructive way. The choice is ours and so is the responsibility.

If temptation doesn't come from God, what does come from Him? Verse 17a contains the answer in words that we say as part of the Divine Liturgy: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”

The next part of that verse tells us that in God “there is no variation or shadow due to change.” This God who calls us to be constant is constant Himself, we can rely forever on that. He has “brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” That is a manifestation of His love for us—a love we can also rely on forever.

(Taken from Department of Christian Education, Weekly Bulletin Inserts, www.oca.org, #229)