St. Nicholas Orthodox Church Monthly Newsletter

Diocese of Toledo-Orthodox Church in America
2143 S. Center Road – Burton, Michigan 48519
Served by: Fr. Matthew-Peter Butrie – Protodeacon Kerry Luke Gonser
Email: stnicholasburtonmi@gmail.com Website: www.saintnicholasburton.org
Church Office: 810-744-0070

Services: Sunday - 9:30 a.m. Hours 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy
Wednesday- 9:30 am Divine Liturgy Adult Class 11:15 am
Saturday – 5 pm Vespers followed by Confessions
Holydays: Vespers & Liturgy as announced

"But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." St. Jude 20

DECEMBER 2020

Saint Augustine on giving to the poor

by Fr. Silviu Bunta

Arguably one of the issues at the heart of the poverty discussion today (overly cerebral to begin with) is the issue of fairness and abuse. It comes up with almost obsessive frequency. It also seems that the centrality of this concern plays a certain self-justifying evasive function. Yet, that's not the concern here. This is rather a spiritual matter that one needs to tend to in careful ways, not one that anyone should judge.

The Fathers of the Church did address this issue (since the question seems to be quite perennial). Here is one eloquent example, brought to my attention by a fellow priest and dear friend:

"It is easy, of course, to understand that we must give alms and a helping hand to the needy, because Christ receives it in them... We can understand that we have to give alms and that we must not really pick and choose to whom we give them, because we are unable to sift through people's hearts. When you do this [i.e., give alms] to all, then you also reach to the few who deserve them. Let in the unworthy, so that the worthy might not be excluded. You cannot be a judge and sifter of hearts." (St. Augustine, Sermon 359A.11)

St. Augustine's argument to give to both worthy and unworthy is threefold:

1. We must to do because it is not the person who receives our gift, but Christ Himself. This is as scriptural as it gets (Matthew 25:31-46).

2. We must give to all, worthy and unworthy, because, given that we cannot possibly know people's hearts, we only would exclude the few worthy with the unworthy. Now, the saint does even say "few" (*pauci*), so he still makes his case of giving to all even if the vast majority were unworthy.

3. Arguably this is the more powerful argument - "We do not know people's hearts." Worthiness/unworthiness is an issue of the heart, as such is then only only for the one "judge and sifter of hearts" - God (also as scriptural as it gets). It cannot be adjudicated based on human, objective criteria. Some poor may appear unworthy by all means, because they refuse work opportunities that they DO have, refuse help that IS being offered to them, turn down long-lasting solutions that ARE set in front of them. Yet, only their hearts know why they do so.

Tentative conclusion: since a perfect knowledge of the human heart inevitably escapes us, it seems to me then that we are to err always on the side of giving to the unworthy, even if the worthy are a small minority of the poor.

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2020

Dear sisters and brothers: Christ is among us!

Our celebration of Christmas is the feast of "Christ among us" because the Son of God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit took flesh from the Virgin Mary that He may live among us as one of us. He comes to us that we might return to Him.

Why did He have to come to us? We can look to nature around us for a clue. We know that most wild animals fear us humans. We're different from them in our nature, they don't know or understand us. So the deer, the rabbit, even the black bear will run away from us unfamiliar creatures. It is something similar that led the Son of God to become one of us. The Son of God comes among us to show us His face, the face of the Father, clothed in human nature. He comes to us to be among us, becoming fully human while remaining fully God so that He might save us from sin and death in and through our human nature. The humble manger, the food box for animals, is a link with the altar of sacrifice. The Lamb of God is born into the world to offer Himself up for us in death that through Him we may find life. Even the icon of Christmas foreshadows the purpose of the birth of the Son of God. The child Jesus lays in a cave, as He will be laid to rest in a man-made cave, a tomb carved out of rock. The infant Savior is wrapped in swaddling cloths that remind us of the burial garments of Lazarus, and of our Lord Himself in icons of His being laid in the tomb.

The Son of God humbles Himself to take on our flesh, our nature. He Who is God becomes one of His creatures. The full extent of His self-emptying love will be revealed upon the Cross where He offers Himself up to Death for our sakes. "Because Death was not able to devour the Son of God without a body, nor Hades able to swallow Him up without the flesh, the Son of God came to the Virgin, that from her He might obtain that which should bear Him to Hades - a human body…With the body then that was from the Virgin, He entered Hades and plundered its storehouses and emptied its treasures - that is, all those who had fallen asleep in death" (Saint Ephraim the Syrian, *Homily: On the Lord, 3*) Such is God's love for us.

The Son of God comes to us because of His great love for us. That even when we are sinners and turn our faces away from Him in our minds and hearts and deeds, He comes bearing the Father's love in the power of the Holy Spirit to persuade us to leave behind sin which brings death and instead embrace Him Who is Life itself. At His birth among us all of creation participates in receiving the Father's gift to us: "The angels offer a hymn; the heavens, a star; the wise men, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, a manger, and we offer…a virgin mother!" (Sticheron from Vespers of the Feast)

"The Son of God was a Baby, He was a Child, so that you may become a perfect human; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, that you may be loosed from the snares of death. He was in a manger, so that you may be in the Altar; He was on earth, so that you may be in the stars. He had no place in the inn, so that you may have many mansions in the heavens. It says 'He being rich, became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich.' (2 Corinthians 8:9)…He chose to lack for Himself so that He might abound for all. The sobs of that humble infancy cleanse me, those tears wash away my sins." (St. Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Saint Luke, Book 2:41)*

Let us share in His love and His mercy with one another, with those we meet, not only on this day, but every day so that we who by baptism have been joined to Him Who today joins Himself to us in the flesh, may find the fulfillment of His life in the kingdom which is and is to come.

ANGEL TREE Our parish received 38 children. Lucy Hogg has mailed out the children's names to those sponsoring them. Please call Lucy at (810)-695-3110 if you have questions. Gifts need to be placed in a gift bag or wrapped but you must include the child's names and code number on the gifts. Gift range is between $30 and $40 - no more than $40 per child; if you have more than one child please spend the same amount for each one. Gift cards are ok for children 15-17 years old. Several items may be requested but you only need to pick one or more of these items. Please return the gifts by the first week in December.

Even though all of the children's name's St. Nicholas was given have been sponsored, Catholic Charities has other things needed to bless families at Christmas. The Lord bless you for your looking after those who are in need.

MANY YEARS to the servant of God Lazaros Dimitrios Stavridis who was baptized into Christ on Sunday, November 15. Parents are Teddy and Jessica Stavridis and twin sibling is Sophie Tula who was baptized in the hospital on her birthday. Paternal grandmother is Vasilka Karatza. The godparents are Tom & Zoe Stavridis.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS If you would like to have your name(s) included on the annual Christmas greetings list please call or email the office no later than December 1st. Donations are appreciated.

ELECTION RESULTS OF PARISH COUNCIL, AUDITORS & LAY DELEGATES

Parish Council Shari Nicoloff, Stephanie Price, Jonathon Shann (There was a tie between Jonathon Shann and Michael Serra. Michael opted to withdraw his name so that Jonathon could serve).

Auditor Calvin Conrad

Lay Delegate - Oct. 2021 Diocesan Conference & July 2021 OCA All-American Council Susie Ford

Swearing in will take place on Sunday, December 20 after Liturgy. Those being sworn in – please receive Confession before that Sunday and prepare to receive Communion that Sunday.

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE Parish council met on Tuesday, November 10 with four members in person and three members virtually. The parish finances remain stable. Please continue your giving whether in person, through Givelify, or by sending in your donation to the office or dropping it off during office hours. The Diocese offers a charitable matching grant program: if a parish has up to $1,000 set aside to use for charity, the Diocese will match that $1,000. This allows a parish to use $2,000 for charitable purposes. Our parish plans to participate in this program as there is increased need at the time of this pandemic and our charitable fund is almost empty. Thank you to those who continue to donate to the charity fund. As was brought up at the October meeting, the interior of the church has not been painted in almost fourteen years. The parish council approved contracting Terry Lyons to paint the interior of the church for a cost between $5,900 and $6,400. Families with memorial funds may designate them for this project. The radiators in church will need to be cleaned to remove any soot or dust before painting begins. A new pump, dryer, and compressor were purchased for the heating system. These were costly but necessary repairs so that we will have heat this winter. Archbishop Alexander blessed the results of the parish elections on November 8.

PARISH COUNCIL plans to meet virtually on Tuesday, December 8th at 6:30 pm. The date of the meeting my be changed subject to the possibility of being able to meet in person. The Lord God bless you all for your continuing stewardship through your pledges and donations.

You can donate to St. Nicholas with an app on your phone & as always on our website https://saintnicholasburton.org/ Go to the website and on the home page click on the box "Give now with Givelify" which will walk you through the donation process; this is a secure site. If you do not wish to donate online, you may write a check to St. Nicholas Orthodox Church and send it to the parish address: 2143 S Center Rd, Burton, MI 48519.

2021 PLEDGE CARDS were mailed out in November. If you did not receive yours contact the parish office by phone 744-0070 or email stnicholasburtonmi@gmail.com so that we may get a pledge card to you. Please fill out and sign your pledge card so the parish council can budget accordingly. Remember in order to be considered a member here at St. Nicholas you must return a signed pledge card. We would like for them to be returned by December 13th.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES will be handed out December 6th. Boxes that are not given out will be mailed. If you did not receive envelopes with your name on them and you want to receive numbered & dated envelopes, please let Marcia know. Using envelopes is very helpful to those who count the money & the auditors.

2020 CHRISTMAS GREETINGS If you would like to have your name(s) included on the annual Christmas greetings list please call the office no later than December 1st. You can call or email the office. Donations are appreciated.

PAN-ORTHODOX SERVICES – DECEMBER 2020

December 5th – for the feast of St. Nicholas– 6 pm Pan-Orthodox Vespers with Litya

MICHIGAN GATHERINGS AND FACE MASK ORDER **is in effect until December 8. Religious worship is permitted. Indoor gatherings outside of a residence are not permitted. Therefore adult education class will not meet for the duration of this order.**

ST. TIKON'S SEMINARY LIVE STREAM FESTIVAL December 6th. 7-9 pm on YouTube.stots.edu and St Tikhon's Seminary Facebook

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS can be sponsored in honor of the living or as a memorial for the deceased. Forms will be included with the weekly email and the bulletins that are mailed out. You can also call or email the office by December 11th. The sponsors will be listed in the newsletter.

DECK THE HALLS AT ST. NICHOLAS! On December 15 at 10am we will arrange the flowers, wreaths & put up and decorate the church Christmas tree. Masks will be worn and a distance of six feet between households will be maintained.

2021 CALENDARS have arrived and will be handed out at the candle stand. Please, one per family.

KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS Remember to sign up for Community Rewards online at Kroger.com or go to the customer service desk in the store. Rewards will be applied when using your Kroger card at the checkout. They send a check to St. Nicholas for a portion of everything participants spend in their stores.

VISITATION TO THE SICK Presently, Fr. Matthew may bring Communion to those who are at home. When permitted, Fr. Matthew will resume bringing Holy Communion to those in nursing homes, assisting living homes, and other care facilities shut-ins on Tuesdays. If you would like to be added to this list, please contact the office. Presently, those receiving weekly visits at home are: Milica Beslach, Angelo Popoff, Eleni Servinis, and Peter & Jo Sredich.

DAILY INTERCESSION FOR OUR SICK AND HOMEBOUND

The following are our brothers and sisters of St. Nicholas who are currently homebound, suffering from chronic illness, in recovery or in need of special prayers. Please remember them in your prayers and reach out to them with a card, a phone call or a visit! Please call the office to schedule a visit for Holy Communion.

Larry Bladecki	Gladys Edwards	Mary Karayanis	Ron Salhany
Deacon John Bocek	Paul Ellis	Nick Karayanis	Bill Tadrick
Linda Branoff	Bill Haw	Macy Lemmen	Wendy Tadrick

To aid in your outreach, here is a listing of the addresses and phone numbers of our Homebound:

Larry Bladecki	3254 E. Midland Rd	Bay City, MI 48706
Gladys Edwards	2 Harbor Dr.	St. Clair, MO 63077
Paul Ellis	2360 Stonebridge Dr.	Flint, MI 48532
Vasilka Karatza	Regency 1330 Grand Pointe Ct	Grand Blanc, MI 48439
Jo Sredich	Serenity 11328 N Bray Rd	Clio, MI 48420

MEMORY ETERNAL - CHRIST IS RISEN!

Robert Oginsky of St Mary Magdalene parish, fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, November 6 with funeral at our church on Saturday, November 14 followed by burial at Sunset Hills Cemetery, Fr. Gabriel Bilas serving. Robert is the brother of parishioner Joseph Oginsky.

JoAnn Economou of Boca Raton, FL fell asleep in the Lord on Tuesday, November 10 and was buried from St. Mark Greek Orthodox Church in Boca Raton on Friday, November 13. JoAnn is the sister of parishioner Bill Economou.

May Robert and JoAnn find rest in the light of Christ's face and enjoy blessed repose among the saints. The Lord bring His comfort to their families. Bog da prosti! Memory eternal! Christ is risen!

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, & NAMESDAYS

BIRTHDAYS

3 Nick George
4 Donna Nedanis
6 Diane Todorovsky
11 Lawrence Bladecki (102)
12 Hailey Paul
13 David Vuckovich
17 Kosta Slaughter
19 Doug Brown
20 Reginald Jehnsen
21 Christine Brucksch
23 Caitlyn Rittman
John Sfetkides
Susie Ford
26 Chad Conover
Marla Houser
27 Alexandra Price
Constance Maxim
28 Bogdan Beslach
30 Marilyn Branoff

ANNIVERSARIES

17 Jim & Kristin Hart (2011)
21 Kosta & Luba Todorovsky (1954)

NAMESDAYS

4 Barbara Brown
Barbara Vuckovich
6 Nicholas Biernacki
Nicholas Karayanis
Nicholas Karayanis
Nicholas Nicoloff
Nicholas Ponomarenko
Nicholas Sfetkidis
Nick George
Nicola Pirkovic
Nicole Grousopoulos
Nicole Steiner
Nicole Zelenko
Nikolai Evanenko
9 Hannah Shann

NAMESDAYS cont.

13 Adam Ford
Adam Michael George
Cierra Joy Conover (form of Sarah)
Noah Gonser
Sarah Rose Neely
Rachel Nicevski
Ruth Conrad
16 Allison Borkovich
Alyson Wilhelm
17 Daniel Krigner
20 Debbie Neely
Deborah Adams
Deena Marie Karayanis
27 Charles Joseph Jernigan
David Batzos
David Condon
David George
David Goodman
David Houser
David Jernigan
David Mitevski
David Vuckovich
Jesse Popoff
Jessica Biggs
Jessica Chevalier
Joseph Brock
Joseph Oginsky
Joseph Oginsky, Jr.
Josephine Sredich
Kraig David Houser
Robert Steven Elieff
Stevan Pirkovic
Steve Spankie
Steven Nicoloff
Steven Nikoloff
30 Joseph Neely

If your name is missing or has the incorrect information in the birthday, anniversary or namesday list please call the office: (810) 744-0070.

JANUARY

OUTDOOR BLESSING OF WATER will be held on Sunday, January 10th following the Divine Liturgy. Bring your empty bottles to fill with Holy Water. Dress for the weather.

DOVES FOR THEOPHANY we are in need of an individual(s) to donate for the 3 white doves for the outdoor blessing of the water January 10th. The cost is $60 each.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Christmas flowers can be sponsored in honor of the living or as a memorial for the deceased. Poinsettias will be available only in the large arrangement.

Please fill out the form below as soon as possible. There are a limited number of plants available. Donations will be taken on a first come first served basis. Return the form to the office or put it into the collection basket on Sunday. The names of those honored or memorialized will be published on a later date.

I wish to donate:

_____ Red poinsettia ($20) (10 available)
(How many)

_____ 36 inch wreath ($60) (2 available)
(How many)

_____ 24 inch wreath ($40) (1 available)
(How many)

~~_____ 10 inch wreath ($25) (2 available)~~
(How many)

_____ 20 foot Garland ($25) (2 available)
(How many)

In honor of (for the living)

_____

_____

Or, in memory of (deceased)

_____

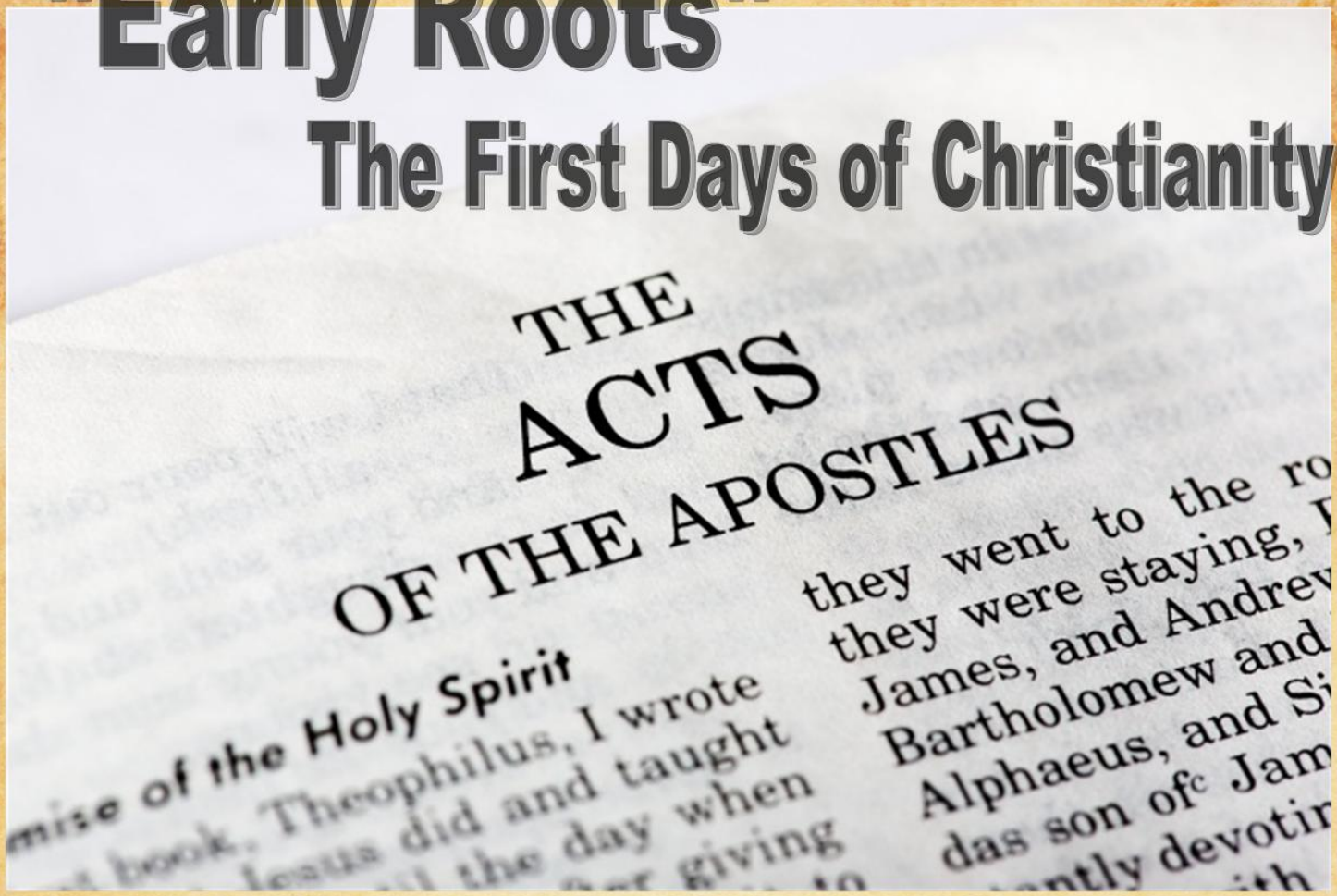
_____

Name: _____

Amount $_____

"Early Roots"

The First Days of Christianity



Advent Three Part Lecture Series

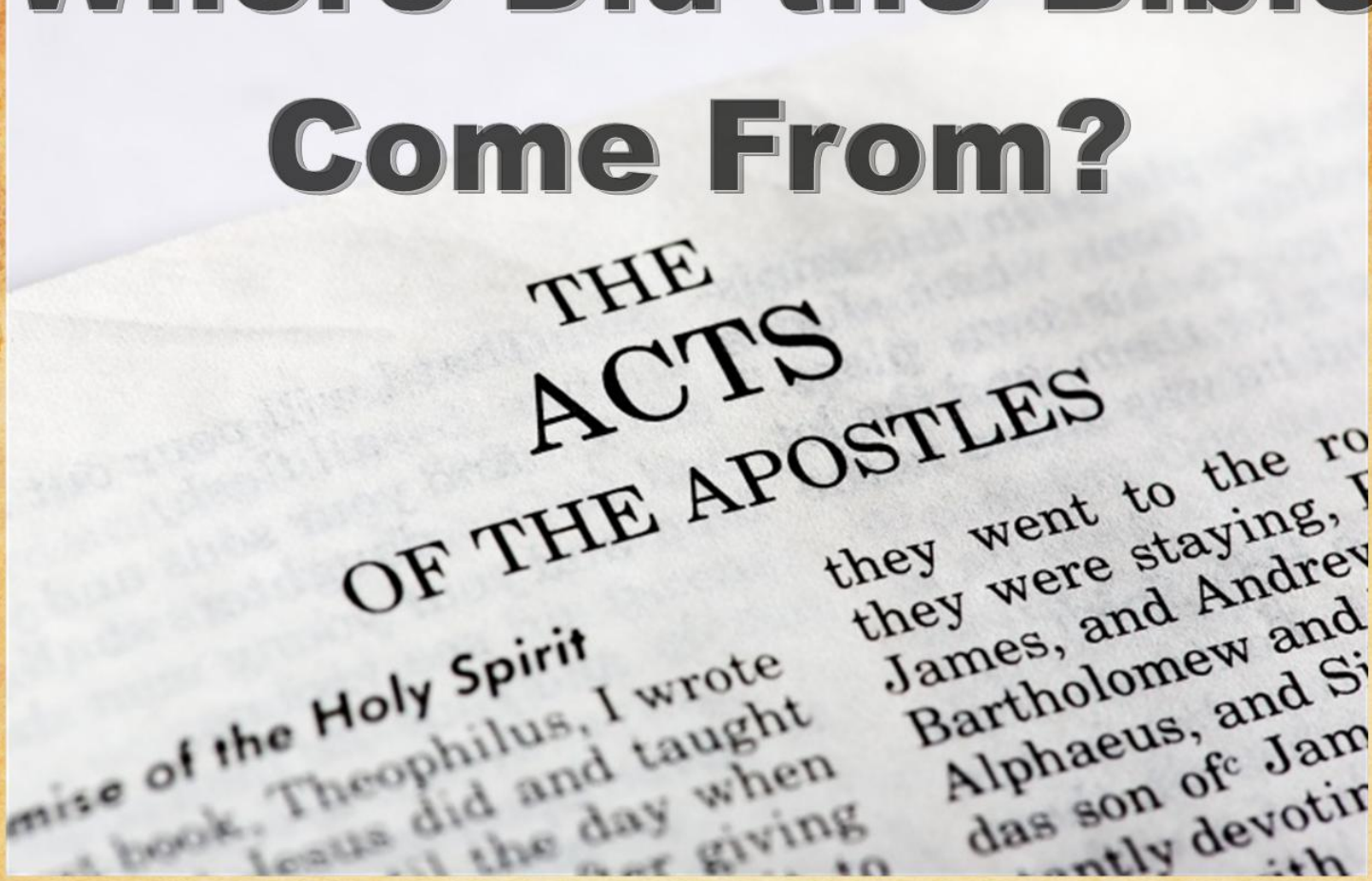
Class 1, December 2nd, 6:30 PM:
The Apostolic Fathers, What did the Church Look Like After The Book of Acts

Class 2: December 9th, 6:30 PM:
Fighting for Truth: Defending Against Heresy

St. MARY MAGDALENE ORTHODOX ✠ CHURCH

Class 3: December 16th, 6:30 PM:
Where Did the Bible Come From? With Guest Speaker, Fr. Stephen De Young

Where Did the Bible Come From?



Advent Lecture—The Pan Orthodox Churches of Genesee County

December 16th, 6:30 PM: Where Did the Bible Come From? With Guest Speaker, Fr. Stephen De Young

Rev. Dr. Stephen De Young is the Priest of Archangel Gabriel Orthodox Church in Lafayette, Louisiana. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from Amridge University. Fr. Stephen is also the host of the Whole Counsel of God podcast from Ancient Faith and author of the Whole Counsel Blog. He co-hosts the live call-in show and podcast Lord of Spirits with Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick.

CHARITY MINISTRIES

NORTH END SOUP KITCHEN December 3rd, 9 am-1 pm.

HOPE IN A BOX is collecting Socks, Towels, Blankets, Toiletries, New Toys for the month of December. Place the items in the Blue Box in the hall. Catholic Charities Community Closet will distribute the items.

FOOD DRIVE Place non-perishable food items in the other blue box in the hall.

HOPE IN A BOX	
December	**Socks, Towels, Blankets, Toiletries & New Toys**
January	**Toilet Paper & Mouthwash**
February	**Shampoo/Conditioner & Lotion**

DO YOU STILL WANT TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER? IF NOT PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL THE OFFICE TO BE TAKEN OFF OF THE MAILING LIST.

Your Business Here

$36.00 Single Space
for 6 months

$50.00 Double Space
for 6 months

$65.00 Triple Space
for 6 months

DECEMBER 2020

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810-744-0070
Email: stnicholasburtonmi@gmail.com **Website:** www.saintnicholasburton.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7 pm online Church School	2 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 6:30 pm "Early Roots" Lecture @ St. Mary via Zoom	3 Fr. in Toledo Office Closed	4	5 5 pm Vespers confessions
6 9:30 am Hours 10 am Divine Liturgy	7 Fr. in Toledo	8 6:30 pm parish council 7 pm online Church School	9 **Conception by St Anna of the Theotokos** 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 am Adult Ed 6:30 pm "Early Roots" Lecture @ St. Mary via Zoom	10 Office Closed	11	12 5 pm Vespers confessions
13 9:30 am Hours 10 am Divine Liturgy	14 Fr. in Toledo	15 **10 am Decorate Church for Christmas** 7 pm online Church School	16 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 am Adult Ed 6:30 pm "Early Roots" Lecture @ St. Mary via Zoom	17 Office Closed	18	19 5 pm Vespers confessions
20 9:30 am Hours 10 am Divine Liturgy	21	22 7 pm online Church School 6 pm Royal Hours for the Nativity of our Lord	23 9:30 am Divine Liturgy	24 **Christmas Eve** 6 pm Vespers w/Liturgy Office Closed	25 No Fast **Nativity of Christ (Christmas)** 10 am Divine Liturgy	26 No Fast 5 pm Vespers confessions
27 No Fast 9:30 am Hours 10 am Divine Liturgy	28 No Fast	29 No Fast 7 pm online Church School	30 No Fast No Liturgy No adult education	31 No Fast		

‡ Fast
Dairy Permitted (no meat)
Wine & Oil Permitted (no meat)
Fish Permitted (no other meat)