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*Serving Neighbors in Need*

Rev. Joseph Irvin

**Right:** The hungry and homeless gather round members of Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, Conn., who are distributing food and clothing.



Parishioners of Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, Conn., feed the hungry and homeless who congregate around John Street in downtown Bridgeport a couple of times a month. The pictures are from Sunday, Jan. 23, when we fed them and also distributed warm clothing that we collected.

We'll be collecting warm clothing again to distribute before winter is over. I can't describe how fulfilling it is to help those less fortunate than ourselves in this way. Several of us were moved to tears when one of the homeless fel-

lows recited a poem for us that he had written, entitled "We Are God's Instruments."

In December, the parish collected new toys that were distributed to children of our East Main Street neighbors in conjunction with St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church during their annual Three Kings parade.

[A gallery of photos of Holy Ghost's ministry, as well as a photo essay of a coat distribution in December by the Brotherhood of SS. Peter & Paul Church, Meriden, Conn., are on page 5.]



## 2011 ONE Stewards: sponsor a camper to Youth Rally!

Your donation helped make the following work possible in 2010:

- **Youth Ministry:** forty-three youth from the diocese took part in Youth Rally, at a cost to the diocese of \$20,000.
- **Seminary Scholarships:** The diocese provided a total of \$15,000 to seminarians at St. Vladimir's and St. Tikhon's Seminaries.
- **Missions:** Our mission parishes received \$15,000 from the diocese to help in providing an Orthodox presence in their communities.
- **Charity:** The diocese donated over \$3,000 in support of IOCC, OCMC, Project Mexico, FOS, and other worthy organizations.

**Join the "Bishop's Circle":** match Bishop Nikon's annual donation of \$500.

Send your contribution to **ONE Stewards**  
**PO Box 1182**  
**Torrington, CT 06790.**

## Pet Lambs preparing for Great Lent

### Marilyn Shesko

Spare, O Savior, Thine own creation,  
 and seek as Master Thy lost sheep;  
 snatch the stray from the wolf,  
 and make me a pet lamb in the pasture of  
 Thine own flock.

(From the 8th Ode of the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, Thursday of the first week of Great Lent; Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY, p. 72)

The addition of the word "pet" distinguishes this verse from the well-known passage in the Gospel according to St. John (10:1-16), in which Jesus describes His followers as sheep who follow Him because they know His voice, and Himself as the good shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. The image in the Gospel passage of a flock of sheep under the care of a loving shepherd does not convey quite the same level of intimacy that St. Andrew's verse does in using the phrase "pet lamb."

To the modern ear, the image of the Christian as a pet lamb contrasts strongly with the more usual images of "servant" or "child" of God. The servant's role has virtually disappeared from our economy. Most of us have no direct experience of either being or having a servant. What we know of servants comes from novels, films or television shows like *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

At least in our stereotypical view, servants were not very well treated. They worked hard for long hours with very low pay and little free time. Their well-being was highly dependent on the whims of their masters. They might be turned out of their jobs on the flimsiest of excuses. Provision for their old age was a constant worry.

In too many cases in our fallen world, the relationships between children and parents are not much better. Only the very youngest children love their parents unconditionally. As they grow and begin to form their own identities, they usually argue with their parents, constantly testing the limits.

Parents, in turn, become angry and punish their children, sometimes with excessive harshness. In the worst cases, they neglect or abuse their children physically or emotionally. Even in loving families, as children reach adulthood, they may rebel completely against what they have

been taught.

Our relationships with our pets, on the other hand, are often of a different nature. Our pets are always glad to see us return. They are happy just to spend time in our presence. They follow us around the house. (One woman was quoted in a magazine article on names

for cats as having named her pair "Goodness" and "Mercy," for, she said, quoting Psalm 23, "Goodness and Mercy shall follow me.") They are eager to win praise from us by doing what we want them to do. (Well, dogs at least show such eagerness; it is perhaps less often found in cats.)

Further, pets trust us, not only to treat them kindly, but also to provide everything they need—food, water, shelter, safety from predators, medical care. Of course, the intelligence and understanding possessed by our pets is of a radically more limited kind than ours is.

Aren't all these characteristics which *should* be true of our relationship with God?

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**"[Characteristics of our relationship with our pets] should be true of our relationship with God.... Shouldn't we trust that everything He does is for our benefit, and that He will provide all that we need?"**

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## *Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, Conn.*

### Arlene Potter



**Above: Visit from St. Nicholas** to New Britain.

**Right: Veteran's Day celebration** at the parish cemetery.

**Below: Members of Holy Trinity's sisterhood** display the Gramota honoring its hundred years of faithful service.

Nicholas took time out from his busy schedule to visit our children at Holy Trinity Church in New Britain. Annette Salina played on the piano and the chorus of happy children accompanied her with great glee. As couldn't have had a warmer welcome, distributed stockings full of goodies to the children who eagerly anticipated the presents that awaited them.

Church elves, Diane Dounouk, Annamaria Kowar and Gladys Labas made this occasion even brighter. A table of delicious treats awaited everyone. Arlene Potter played a very key role and everyone has been more delighted. Thank you to St. Nicholas and please come again.

On November 11, the veterans of our parish were honored with a service held at our cemetery. Father David Koles blessed the new Veteran's Monument and held a Panikhida that recognized the deceased service members of our parish. Representatives from the armed services played taps in remembrance of the sacrifices that these men had made. Honor

was also bestowed upon our living veterans. Thanks go to George Matczyk for his diligence in heading the effort for the Veteran Day services. We are especially grateful to all of our veterans.

A luncheon was held in honor of the 100th anniversary of our Sisterhood. The accomplishments of the past century of the Sisterhood were revisited by its past three presidents: Louise Balkun, Sophia Matczyk, and Ellen Santora.

His Grace, Bishop Nikon, who was unable to attend due to illness, awarded a Gramota in recognition of such a rare and wonderful celebration!



## *Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, Conn.*

### Lydia Garasimovicz

Holy Ghost Church mourns two of its faithful: Mary Kowalchuk and Joseph Curran.

Mary was born to Stephanida and Paul Kowalchuk, immigrants from Minsk, Belorus, and Zitomir, Ukraine.

A sister, Lydia, was born two years earlier. All were part of a loving Orthodox family.

Mary sang in the choir at the age of ten. She attended "Russian School" or "Church School"

three days a week after public school. The catechism was taught by the parish priest. On the other two days, the choir master taught Russian.

Mary attended the Junior College of Connecticut. She attended lectures presented by the faculty of St. Vladimir's Seminary. She was a member of the Pan-Orthodox Bible Study group, conducted by Rev. George Cocu for 25 years.

Mary was a generous donor to fund drives and food banks, and helped deliver gifts to members of the parish who were home-bound or living in nursing homes. These items were prepared by the Myrrhbearers sisterhood of Holy Ghost. She

*Bridgeport to 6*



## *Three Saints Church, Ansonia, Conn.* Barbara Ann Dixon

On Sunday, November 14, following liturgy, Three Saints Church, Ansonia, Conn., had a potluck luncheon to welcome Father Patrick Burns, Matushka Mara and Brigid. It was a joyous celebration and we wish them MANY YEARS!

Our own "Mr. Entertainment" George Seresin and his troubadours have been delighting the folks at the Milford Senior Center for many years. George is pictured, left, as Chiquita Banana.

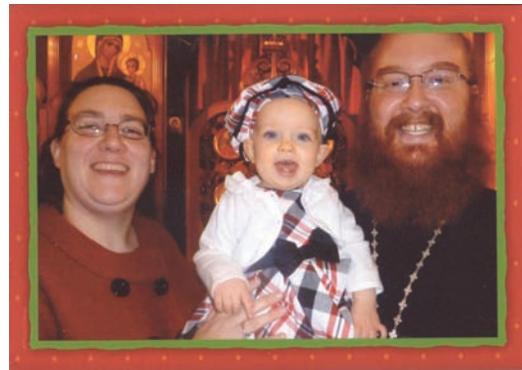
During November and December, a donation box

for Christmas gifts was placed in the church to help make the holidays brighter for the residents at the Bishop Wicke Health Center and those in the assisted living center at Wesley Heights. Thanks go to everyone who gave generously.

On Sunday, December 4, following the St. Nicholas Vespers service, parishioners attending the service received gold covered chocolate coins from Father Patrick.

On Tuesday, December 14, we once again found Father Patrick in the kitchen helping our ladies with their pierogi workshop.

Special thanks to Bob Nethery for making a beautiful Balsam Wreath which he donated for the December 19<sup>th</sup>



**Top Right:** Matushka Mara, Brigid, Father Patrick Burns of Ansonia.

*Photo by Judy Petz*

**Below:** Veronika Surkhaykhanova and her husband Lucas Oppenheimer holding their newborn twin daughters.

senior group raffle. The senior group was trying to raise funds to help support their many civic projects.

Sunday afternoon, January 10, Father Patrick and Matushka Mara invited all the parishioners to an open house at the rectory. Father Patrick blessed the rectory and all in attendance enjoyed great food and fellowship.

Our former choir director, Veronika Surkhaykhanova and her husband Lucas Oppenheimer were twice blessed on December 27 with the birth of their twin daughters. Congratulations, best wishes and may God grant them many years.



# Serving Neighbors in Need



**Top Left:** Linda Davis of St. Mark's, Kingston, Mass., collected supplies for first aid kits for the IOCC. Photo: Gina Margitich.



**Top Right:** Scenes from Holy Ghost's ministry to the homeless of Bridgeport, Conn. (Story on page 1.)

**Middle and Bottom:** SS. Peter & Paul Brotherhood, Meriden, Conn., sponsored a winter coat drive and distributed them on a Dec. Saturday. Neighbors donated more on the day—including by trike! Photos: David Zavednak and Paul Leonowich



## *Diocese explores possible Maine Mission*



**Above:** Fr. John Kreta, Diocesan Chancellor, traveled, Jan. 15–16, to Maine to meet with Christians interested in establishing an Orthodox mission. There he served Vespers followed by fellowship Saturday night. On Sunday, a Baptism, Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water was followed by an organizational meeting. The participants have committed to holding regular reader services.

### *Bridgeport from 3*

also loved to bake breads for holy days. Mary played the secunda in the Balalaika Orchestra.

She was also a member of the Fellowship of Russian Orthodox Christians, serving as Governor of the Atlantic District and a member of the National FROC Scholarship Committee.

Mary belonged to a local Girl Scout Troop and was a counselor to the Junior "R" Club. She also taught Sunday School. She chaired many affairs. She was an avid reader and traveler, seeking out Orthodox churches for worship or visits.

Joseph Curran was a convert to Orthodoxy. He served in the US Army in the Second World War. He sang in the choir and was a reader. He was a leader and organizer in the parish. As chairman of the Building Maintenance Committee, he organized a group of retirees to clean the church every Monday and polish all metal items in preparation for Pascha. Major projects he attended to included the care of church bells, a gift from Czar Nicholas, as well as the domes and cupolas. When Joseph became very ill, he expressed concern that he would not be able to see these projects completed before he died.

Both Mary and Joseph loved their church and devoted precious time to it. They were faithful servants. May their memory be eternal.

## *Pet Lamb* from 2

Shouldn't we be glad to spend time with Him, in worship and in prayer? Shouldn't we try to follow Him, and do what He wants us to do? Shouldn't we trust that everything He does is for our benefit, and that He will provide all that we need? "Consider the lilies of the field..." (Mt. 6:28-34). Also, shouldn't we recognize that our intelligence and understanding are extremely limited, in comparison with His?

All this is not meant to say that the images invoked by "child" and "servant" do not also apply to our relationship to God. Christ Himself in the Gospels teaches us to regard our-

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**“Seek as Master Thy lost sheep ... and make me a pet lamb in the pasture of Thine own flock.”**

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selves as children of God. "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Mt 7:11). "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." (Jn 1:12). In treating us as His children, He does try to teach us and raise us to be good adults. He sometimes needs to discipline us for our own good.

The medicine He administers for the health of our souls is not always easy to take. In our sinfulness, we test the limits of disobedience and even rebel against him. For many of us, our love for God is anything but the unconditional love of a small child.

Similarly, several Gospel passages make it clear that we are to regard ourselves as servants of God. "If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him" (Jn 12:26). "Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him" (Jn 13:16). "Does [the master] thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (Lk 17:9-10).

As Christ taught us by His example, our purpose in the world is to do the will of our Father and Master, to serve Him in every way. Still, at times when we are discouraged or "weary in well-doing" (from the prayers of the Litiya), we may comfort and encourage ourselves to greater effort with the thought of becoming worthy to be Christ's pet lambs, carried in His arms.

*KW*

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## O.N.E.

Diocese of New England  
Orthodox Church in America  
Published bi-monthly

His Grace, Bishop NIKON  
Rev. Joshua Mosher, Editor

Phone: 203-237-4539

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**Rate:** \$50.00 per quarter page, \$100.00 per half page, \$175.00 per full page.

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**Paid Subscriptions:**

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## Upcoming Events

- Mar 31** Deadline for next issue of the *ONE*
- Mar 20** Connecticut Deanery Lenten Mission Vespers at SS. Peter & Paul Church, Meriden, Conn., at 4 PM.
- Mar 27** Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut Lenten Vespers Service at St. Nicholas Antiochian Church, Bridgeport, Conn., at 4 PM
- Mar 31** Bishop Nikon leads a Lenten retreat with the clergy of the Connecticut Deanery
- Apr 3** Connecticut Deanery Lenten Mission Vespers at St. Peter & St. Paul Church, Springfield, Mass., at 4 PM.
- Apr 10** Connecticut Deanery Unction Service at Three Saints Church, Ansonia, Conn., at 4 PM.
- Apr 17** Connecticut Deanery Bridegroom Matins at Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church, Terryville, Conn., at 4 PM.