

# ST. MARK'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA (OCA.ORG)

DIocese of Eastern Pennsylvania (DOEPA.ORG)

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**Church School Director:** Jennifer Sremanak



## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2015

21st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 4. Martyrs  
Marcian and Martyrius the Notaries, of Constantinople  
(ca. 355). Ven. Martyrii (Martyrius) the Deacon and  
Martyrii the Recluse, of the Kiev Caves (Far Caves—  
13th-14th c.). Martyr Athanasius the Fuller, at Salona  
in Dalmatia (3rd c.). St. Tabitha, the widow raised from  
the dead by the Apostle Peter (1st c.).

**Epistle:** Galatians 2:16-20

**Gospel:** Luke 16:19-31

## SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

<b>Confessions:</b>	Saturdays Following Vespers <i>Also by appointment</i>
<b>Great Vespers: Vigil</b>	Saturdays at 6pm Eve of Feasts at 7pm
<b>Divine Liturgy:</b>	Sundays at 9:30am Feast Days at 9:15am

## UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS:

<b>Sunday, October 25:</b>	Hours and Divine Liturgy – 9:10am; Church School, Coffee Hour
<b>Monday, October 26:</b>	Parish Development Committee – 7pm
<b>Wednesday, October 28:</b>	Akathist – 9:15am; Prison Ministry – 7pm
<b>Thursday, October 29:</b>	Pre School Church School – 12:30pm - 2pm; Parish Council Meeting – 7pm
<b>Saturday, October 31:</b>	Service at Golden Living in Doylestown – 11am; Great Vespers and Confessions – 6pm
<b>Sunday, November 1:</b>	Hours and Divine Liturgy – 9:10am; Church School, Coffee Hour

### BIRTHDAY:

Sonja Lengel

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY:

Charles (Buddy) & Judith Rybny

# ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Abbot Tryphon:** Thank you to all those who made Thursday night's visit/talk by Fr. Tryphon such a success. Those who hosted him while he visited us, and those who provided and set up and cleaned up the refreshments. It was wonderful to welcome so many of our neighbors as well. Thank you all.

**Church Cleaning/Grounds Care:** Want to pick a month or other time in 2016? Signup will be posted soon.

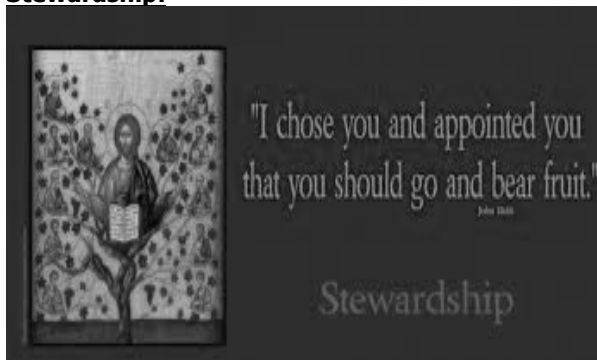
**Church Family:** As announced last week, our Church Family has grown with the birth of David Joseph Domzalski. As we did with the Crosby family when Anna was born, we are offering the new parents meals. If you would like to participate in this go to [www.takethemameal.com/php?t=VAYO1713](http://www.takethemameal.com/php?t=VAYO1713) to sign up and see the options.

**Church School:** Church School for 3-5 year olds this Thursday, Oct. 29 from 12:30 – 2pm. There will be stories, art activities and singing, as well as a light lunch. Please join us!

**Operation Christmas Child:** We hope to send at least the 30 boxes we sent last year. Toys, school supplies, hygiene items (toothbrush, mild bar soap, combs, washcloths), T-Shirts, socks, ball caps, sunglasses, hair clips, toy jewelry, watches, flashlights with extra batteries. Ages 2-4, 5-9, 10-14. Cash also welcome to pay \$7 shipping for each box. Items may be left in the Vestibule, marked Op. Christmas Child. Deadline is November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Scrip Program: Today. Thank you to those who participated last Sunday, profit was \$118.30, YTD \$1205.40** Please check the website and the posted flyers on changes in the program designed to make it more accessible for all, and bring greater benefit to our parish. Questions? Call Mat. Heidi at (570) 906-1389.

## **Stewardship:**



**Wrightstown Food Cupboard:** Pasta, sauce, tea, coffee, juice are always welcome. **If you would rather make a monetary donation put it in an envelope with "Food Pantry" and drop in the Question Box. These donations will go towards purchasing Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas hams for the baskets.**

## **OPENING OUR EYE:**

*As one cannot rightly enjoy the sunlight, except by opening one's eyes, so neither can one largely share this splendor, unless one has expanded the eye of the soul, and rendered it in every way keen of sight. But how is this effected? Only when we have cleansed the soul from all the passions. For sin is darkness and a deep darkness.*

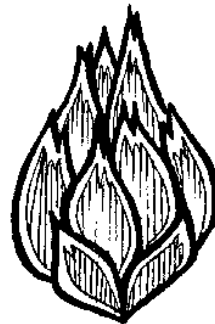
**St. John Chrysostom. Homily V on John 1, 4**

## REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

The sick and the suffering.  
Those persecuted for their faith.  
The lost and the lonely.  
Those in prison.

The hungry, the homeless, the abused and the abandoned.  
The indifferent to those in need.  
Those who hate us and those who love us.

## VIGIL LIGHTS:



### **From the Perdakis Family:**

For the Health of:

Patricia, Melba, Arthur Jr.,  
Demosthenes, Evangelia, Demetrios,  
Shane, Kathryn, Jesssica, Nikolas,  
Anthony, Amy, Bruce, Angela, George,  
Irene, Raymond, Zografia, Demetra

In Memory of:

Angelo, Evangelia, Arthur, Panayiotis,  
Christopher, Anna, Spyridon, Kleo,  
Nikolas, Demetrios, Zografia

### **From the Ristveys:**

For the Health of:

George, Margaret, Andrew

### **From the Arhipovs:**

For the Health of:

Anna (Jeanette), Sergei, Dimitri, Mat. Elena

In Memory of:

Katherine, Nadezda, Anna, Maria, Ivan

### **From Jeanette Ruano:**

In Memory of:

Helen Ruano



The Orthodox Church in America  
DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania

October 23, 2015

### Scriptural Precepts of Offerings

In the first reflection, I offered some comments on God as Creator of all things visible and invisible. All that exists has the Lord God as its source, including us. Thus, there is nothing we can offer to God that does not already belong to Him, except for our “free will”. So, while we belong to Him, we must freely choose to surrender ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice.

The first reference we have of an offering to God, is found in Genesis 4.

*4 Now the man <sup>[a]</sup>had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to <sup>[b]</sup>Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a <sup>[c]</sup>manchild with the help of the LORD.”<sup>2</sup> Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. <sup>3</sup> So it came about <sup>[d]</sup>in the course of time (literally, **at the end of days**) that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. <sup>4</sup> Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; <sup>5</sup> but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup> If you do well, <sup>[e]</sup>will not your countenance be lifted up (Literally, **surely you will be accepted**)? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” <sup>8</sup> Cain <sup>[f]</sup>told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*

The passage makes reference to the Lord regarding or, better said, accepting Abel as well as his offering unto the Lord and the Cain and his offering were not. Why would God be pleased with one and his offer and not the other and his offering? A careful reading of the passage will disclose why. When we look at Cain’s offering, the literal reading is, he brought of the fruit of the ground at *the end of days*. The implication is that at the end of the time of harvest he brought what was left. He was not offering the first and choicest of the fruits, i.e., his very best, but what was left at the end of the season. Having a tomato garden, I know the tomatoes at the beginning of the season are absolutely beautiful, plump and tasty. Those at the end of the season often are of a much poorer quality, with blotches, splits, cracks and holes. Many are simply not even edible. Thus Cain was not offering his very best to God, but after he himself enjoyed the best for himself, he offered the very poorest quality of the produce to God. One could almost say he ate the corn and offered to God the husks!

On the other hand, Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock. He brought young healthy lambs and their fat. So, in contrast to Cain, Abel offers the first and the best, not an old goat that was gasping for breath.

**There are several important points to observe from this passage.**

- **One is able to offer to God from how he makes his living**, i.e., the work of his hands, i.e., livestock if one is a shepherd or produce if one is a farmer.
- **What we offer is a direct reflection of our attitude towards God.** The idea of offering the “first fruits” is intimately intertwined with the concept of offering our very best to God, before we decide what we will keep for ourselves. It is the basic acknowledgement that it all comes from Him and belongs to Him.
- **What we offer is an expression of our gratitude for all of His bountiful blessings.** Certainly, whatever is offered should be the very best and not simply what is left over or unusable.

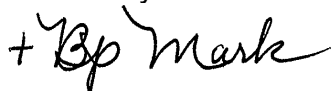
Abel offered his very best as an expression his gratitude, as he recognized God had blessed him with the increase of his flocks. Cain, on the other hand, gave begrudgingly and only after he had already enjoyed the very best for himself. The offering was unacceptable because it was not offered with a proper disposition and certainly was not worthy of offering to God.

If we love, honor and respect someone, do we not want to offer our very best? If one invites their priest to dinner after Theophany, or a loved one, he does not clean out the front of the refrigerator and look for all the old food from the back to serve his guest. One would not dig through the freezer for something that has been in there entirely too long. One would likely, make a special trip to the store and search for the freshest and best ingredients.

As we ponder our own offerings, do we offer God the first fruits of our labors? Or, what we have left after we have consumed the best portion for ourselves? Offering the “first fruits” is an act of worship and is a conscious decision to give the very best to God before we decide what we will keep for ourselves. It all belongs to Him. Does our giving reflect our, love, honor, respect and gratitude for God’s manifold blessings in our lives? Are we like Cain? Or, are we like Abel?

As we move through the Scripture, we will note that the offering of the “first fruits,” was a tenth of what God had blessed them with. The offering was to be without spot or blemish.

Your unworthy father in Christ,



Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania