Another year gone by, and a New Year begins. What do we expect for this upcoming year? What do we leave behind in the year gone by? And most importantly, how can we assure that we will be more faithful, more fruitful, and more filled with the grace of our Lord? Well, a good place to begin is with our attitude. Do we expect anything special for the New Year? Do we believe that God will be active in our lives? What is our understanding of a Christ-centered, blessed, fruitful, and grace-filled year?

Hudson Taylor, a famous Protestant missionary to China, once said, “Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God.” To expect from God, and to attempt for God! What a wonderful attitude to carry into the New Year – expecting God to act in a special way in our lives, and then truly believing that we can become His instruments in the world around us – His instruments in bringing divine love, joy, peace and mercy to all people everywhere.

When it comes to living out our Orthodox Christian faith, can we think in terms of doing great things for God, in striving to achieve excellence for Him? Too often, when people think of the Church and of faith issues, or when they think about their spiritual lives, they think in terms of doing the minimum duty required, at best. And yet, is this attitude worthy of God; is it worthy of people calling themselves serious Christians? Mother Teresa offered a memorable challenge to her Missionaries of Charity which we can all take up as our own calling for the New Year. She said, “Let’s all do something beautiful for God.”

Can we begin the New Year with the attitude of doing something beautiful, something noble, something meaningful for God throughout the New Year? And we can strive to achieve this not only as individual Christians, but also as a Church family - doing something beautiful for God as our Sts. Constantine and Helen Church Family. This is the vision and attitude I want to instill in our new Parish Council leadership which was recently elected. I want each one of these Parish Council members, along with every Christian in this Church, to adopt this motto and attitude for the New Year - doing something beautiful for God!
The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WITNESS, and SERVICE. We invite all people to join us on this journey in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are under the jurisdiction of
His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

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Choir Directors: Tony and Nike Beaudry
Greek Dance Group: Nike Beaudry
Sunday School Teachers: Anesti Jordanoglou, Evis Jordanoglou, Pauline Mueller, Stephanie Quill, Rayne Purcell, Pres. Faith Veronis
Seminarians and Teachers: Constantine Alexandrides, Alex Limberatos, Anthony Linderman,
Ecclesiarch: Rayne Seraphim Purcell
Bookstore: Lorna McWilliams
Sexton: Mike Kokoszka
STRIVING FOR SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

Yet in order to achieve something beautiful for God, something noble and meaningful, we have to realize that such things won’t just happen on their own. Beauty and meaning require us to open up our hearts and minds and lives through spiritual effort and discipline, so that the Spirit of God will abide in our very being. It is the Holy Spirit who achieves any excellence or beauty through us. It begins, though, by at least believing that God wants to work in and through us, and will achieve excellence and beauty for His Name’s sake if we allow Him to!

Michael Angier, a motivational speaker, offers words that I’ve adapted for the New Year. “Spiritual excellence is never an accident. It is achieved as a result of vigorous insistence on the highest standards of effort. It requires an unswerving expectancy of quality from everyone.”

Spiritual excellence, or doing something beautiful for God, is contagious. It infects and affects everyone. It can chart the direction of our spiritual lives and the Church itself. It should establish the criteria for all our planning. Once achieved, the spirit of doing something beautiful for God has a means of permeating every aspect of life.

Excellence in our spiritual lives demands commitment and dedication. Once it is accepted and expected, it must be nourished and continually renewed. It is a never-ending process of learning and growing. It requires a spirit of motivation and boundless energy. It is always the result of a creatively conceived plan inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Striving for spiritual excellence will inspire and impact every person, every program, every activity. To instill it is difficult; to sustain it even more so. It demands imagination and vigor. But most of all, it requires a constant state of discovery and discipline. Spiritual excellence is the most compelling answer to apathy and inertia. It energizes a stimulating and pulsating force. Once it becomes the expected standard of life, miracles happen.”

As we enter a New Year, are we prepared to strive for excellence in our spiritual lives? Are we expecting to do something beautiful for God in our Church through all our worship, ministry, outreach and activities? This attitude of doing something beautiful for God is the spirit that we need to carry into the New Year!

The Apostle Paul challenged his disciple Timothy to spiritual excellence when he wrote, “Timothy, my son, aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.”

This is striving for excellence in the Christian perspective, excellence in living a Christ-like life. Authentic Christianity, and a sober, serious Christian life is not for those content with mediocrity. The way of the Cross, the ascetic struggle of the saints, the pursuit for spiritual perfection is an extremely difficult, and seemingly impossible path, yet it is the one that those follow who open up themselves to God’s Spirit, and expect Him to act in concrete ways. It takes courage, it takes faith, it takes commitment, it takes love, it takes wisdom and discernment. These are all traits we must cultivate in our lives if we truly want to do something beautiful and excellent for God!

I conclude with some adapted words from Teddy Roosevelt: “In the battle of life, it is not the critic who counts, nor the one who points out how the strong person stumbled, or where the doer of a deed could have done better. Credit belongs to the person in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; who does actually strive to do deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, spends oneself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at worst, if he or she fails, at least fails while daring greatly. Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those timid spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.”

As the New Year approaches, let each of us make a resolution to strive for spiritual excellence - to expect great things from God, and then to do something beautiful for God!

With love and hope in the New Year,

+Luke
Why do so many people make New Year’s resolutions? Is it because we see something in our lives we want to improve? We all look at ourselves from time to time, and see things we want to improve. A New Year gives us a reason to reflect and strive for a new beginning.

Well, as Christians, the type of self-reflection that many do for their New Year’s resolutions is something we are called to do on an ongoing basis. We are to constantly do self-evaluations, striving to reorient our lives back to God. We fall down and then we get back up. We are regularly taking stock of ourselves, confessing to God, repenting (which ultimately means changing our direction from a self-centered one and redirecting our lives toward God). God gives us a second, third, fifth, tenth and hundredth chance to start anew!

So with this in mind, what would be some good resolutions for us to make as Christians? Here are ten suggestions:

1. Pray every day. Accept a Prayer Rule in your life, and then try to follow that rule each day. Prayer connects us with God. We commune with the Source of life. Say set prayers every morning and evening, but also talk with God throughout the day. Don’t let an hour go by where you don’t “check in” with God and turn your attention to Him.

2. Do not only pray, but meditate. This means sitting in silence for 10 or 15 minutes each day, clearing your mind of all clutter, and dwelling in the presence of God. You can do this in front of an icon, or you can sit anywhere and close your eyes, reciting the Jesus Prayer — “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy On Me, a Sinner.”

3. Strive to fill your mind each day with something that is “true, noble, just, pure, lovely, holy” (Phil 4:8). In other words, take time every day to read Holy Scripture, and other edifying spiritual writings — for five or ten minutes. Fill your mind with words and thoughts that will sanctify you. Meditate on what you read, and try to apply what you read in your life.

4. Take time each day to express gratitude, first towards God and then towards others. Even when you are having a tough day pause and think of five things for which you can thank God. And make it a point that whenever you are frustrated, you thank God even more!

5. Each day hand over any anger or resentment to God. Don’t allow the day to end while holding on to any bitterness. This means that we have to practice forgiveness daily. Take time each day to reflect on your own mistakes, asking God for forgiveness. Then, offer your forgiveness to anyone who may have hurt or offended you.

6. Refuse to let jealousy, covetousness, greed, and envy preoccupy your mind. Thank God for what you have, and “rejoice with those who rejoice.”

7. Every day remember how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, and then think about how you can humbly serve others. And strive to serve others with joy, remembering that it’s a blessing to serve and to give to others.

8. Do random acts of kindness each day. Better yet, be deliberate in conscious acts of kindness. Think about how you can do something special for the people who cross your paths.

9. Smile, and try to brighten up each person who crosses your path. Say words that will “edify and bring grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29)

10. Keep an eternal perspective on life. Each day remember that some people have tragically died. Reflect on death daily. If we remember that we are but brief sojourners on this earth, and our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, it changes our perspective on how to live.

If we do these ten resolutions every day, we will be greatly blessed, while also blessing others. We will become instruments in God’s hands, shining forth His light of love to the world around us!
**PUT CHRIST FIRST**

*Thoughts for the New Year*

The goal of each Christian as envisioned by the Orthodox tradition is theosis—becoming like God by grace. The goal of theosis is reached as we daily grow in our life in union with Christ and reflect the glory of the Lord through the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. “That same glory,” according to St. Paul, “coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into His likeness in an ever greater degree of glory” (2 Cor 3:18).

How can we progress toward the goal of theosis? By placing Christ always first in our lives. Do you have educational, professional or other plans that demand a great deal of attention? Put Christ first. Are you married and caught up in home and family? Put Christ first. Do dreams and hopes fill your mind? Put Christ first. Is your heart troubled by worries, problems or needs? Put Christ first.

In all things fix your eyes on Jesus Christ and fulfill His teaching: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else shall be yours as well.”

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A beginning is a promise, a new possibility, a hope, a vision. An end is a purpose, a goal, a fulfillment, a conclusion. Another year has ended and another step has been taken in our journey of life. How many more years before the whole journey is completed? When all the steps are taken and all the years have been added up, what will truly matter but to be able to say with St. Paul, “I have done my best in the race. I have run the full distance. I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the prize of victory awarded for a righteous life” (2 Tim 4:7-8)

*Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos*

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**ANNUAL HOUSE BLESSINGS**

In memory of Christ’s Baptism on the Feast of Epiphany, when Jesus sanctified all the waters of the world, the Orthodox Church follows an ancient tradition of holding the SERVICE OF THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS on January 6. The Church asks God’s blessing to come upon the water, which we then share with all believers. *Through this water the grace of God comes upon us!*

Following the service, the priest blesses all the believers in the Church with the holy water and offers them a bottle to take home and drink each day, or whenever they feel a special need for God’s grace. The Church also has the beautiful tradition of the priest taking the holy water into the homes of all believers and blesses their home. Through this ritual we ask for God’s blessings to come upon the household for the new year.

*I am looking forward to visiting all the homes of parishioners from January 6 - 18.* The following schedule gives an idea of when I will try to visit your area. I will visit the elderly and shut-ins during the morning hours. For those of you who work, I will come between 5:00-7:00 pm. If you have a specific time that you want me to visit, call me (774-230-6985).

If you are not home when I visit your house, I will leave a Church calendar and a bottle of Holy Water at your door. If you want me to return to your home for a blessing, please call me so that we can arrange another time.

**HOUSE BLESSING SCHEDULE**

Jan 6-8 - Webster
Jan 9-10 - Dudley/Charlton
Jan 11 - Oxford, Sutton
Jan 12 - Thompson, Fabyan, N.Grosvenordale, Quinebaug, Putnam
Jan 13 - Woodstock
January 14 - 17 - Other Areas
I entreat you to persevere continually in reading the Divine Scriptures. When I have been with each of you in private, I have not stopped giving you the same advice. Do not let anyone say to me, "Reading Scriptures isn’t for me because I don’t have time. I have my business. I am running the city. I am busy with my profession. I have a wife and children, and don’t have time. I am a person of the world and reading the Bible isn’t for me, but is for those who have been set aside, the monks and nuns who keep this spiritual life continuously."

What are you saying? That reading the Scriptures is not for you, since you are busy and surrounded by a multitude of cares? This is precisely why it is more for you than for them! The monks and nuns do not need the help of the divine Scriptures as much as those who are involved in the cares of this life. The monks, who are released from the clamor of the marketplace and have fixed their huts in the wilderness, who own nothing in common with anyone, but practice wisdom without fear in the calm of the quiet life, as if resting in a harbor, enjoy great security.

We, however, who are tossed as if in the midst of the sea, are driven by a multitude of sins, and desperately need continuous and ceaseless aid of the Scriptures. The monastics rest far from the battle, and so they do not receive many wounds; but you stand continuously in the front rank, and you receive continual blows. So you need more remedies. Your spouse provokes you, for example, your child grieves you, your co-worker angers you, your enemy plots against you, your friend envies you, your neighbor curses you, your acquaintance trips you up, often a law suit threatens you, poverty troubles you, loss of your property grieves you, prosperity puffs you up, misfortune depresses you, and many causes and compulsions to discouragement and grief, to conceit and desperation surround us on all sides, and a multitude of missiles fall from everywhere.

Therefore, we have a continuous need for the full armor of the Scriptures. For recognize, it is written, that you go through the midst of snares and walk on the ramparts of the city. For example, the designs of the flesh attack more fiercely those who live in the midst of the world. A handsome face, a splendid body strikes us in the eyes; a shameful phrase piercing our ears and troubles our mind.

But why am I saying this? That which often seems the slightest of all these attacks, the scent of perfume falling from women as they pass somewhere nearby has captured and taken us away as prisoners by a mere accident. And there are many things like these which besiege our souls: we need the divine medicines to heal the wounds which we have received and to protect us from those which we have not yet received but will receive.
We must thoroughly quench the darts of the devil and beat them off by continual reading of the divine Scriptures. For it is not possible, not possible for anyone to be saved without continually taking advantage of spiritual reading. Actually, we must be content, if even with continual use of this therapy, we are barely able to be saved. But when we are struck every day, if we do not use any medical care, what hope do we have of salvation?

Reading the Scriptures is a great means of security against sinning. The ignorance of Scripture is a great cliff and a deep abyss; to know nothing of the divine laws is a great betrayal of salvation. This has given birth to heresies, this has introduced a corrupt way of life, this has put down the things above. For it is impossible, impossible for anyone to depart without benefit if he reads continually with attention.

“Do you think that reading the Scriptures is not for you, since you are busy and surrounded by a multitude of worldly cares? This is precisely why it is more for you than for the monks and nuns!... We who are driven by a multitude of sins desperately need the continuous and ceaseless aid of the Scriptures.

St John Chrysostom

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.”
Romans 15:4

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”
Colossians 3:16

“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
Hebrews 4:12

“Ignorance of the Holy Scriptures is ultimately ignorance of Jesus Christ.”
St. Jerome

At every moral decision one takes, for every act, for every thought, one should always have ready in one’s memory the teaching of the Gospel... Keep on studying the Gospel until the end of your life. Never stop!
St. Ignati Brianchaninov
The feasts of Christmas and Epiphany were known in the early Church as “THE FEAST OF LIGHTS,” since both feasts revealed Jesus Christ to the world. Our Lord is the true light that enlightens the entire world!

Jesus Christ’s entrance into the world at Christmas is a new beginning for all people. No longer do people have to live in the darkness of ignorance, in the darkness of fear, in the darkness of hatred, in the darkness of evil and sin, and even in the darkness of death. The true light of God has been revealed, and now those who choose to enter into that light, who allow the light of Christ to shine brightly within their hearts and minds, may see the world from an entirely new and fresh perspective!

The light of Christ lifts us up from our fallen, distorted nature – our tendency to hate, to be jealous, to be proud and arrogant, to be self-centered, to be unkind, unforgiving and unloving. The light of Christ shows us the path to an abundant life of godly peace and joy, divine love and mercy, contagious compassion and kindness, and ultimate meaning and purpose.

At Christmas, God takes on human flesh and reveals himself as the perfect God-man, fully divine yet fully human. Simultaneously, at Epiphany, the Baptism of our Lord, or more properly called Theophany, God again reveals Himself to the world as the Holy Trinity – God the Father speaking from the cloud, God the Son in Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Both events help the world come to a clearer and better understanding of who God is, and how He has dramatically entered into our world to help humankind!

We can understand this idea from this hymn we sing on January 6: “You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us. With fuller understanding we sing to You, “You came, O unapproachable Light, and made yourself known to us!”

In memory of Christ’s baptism, when He sanctified all the waters of the world, the Orthodox Church follows an ancient tradition of holding the SERVICE OF THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS on January 6. The Church asks God’s blessing to come upon the water, which we then share with all believers. Through this water the grace of God comes upon us!

In preparation for this special blessing, Orthodox Christians hold January 5 as a strict fast day. Our fasting is a tool which, when properly used, helps us focus more clearly on God and prepares us to enter into the celebration of the feast in a more intimate manner.

Following the service, the priest blesses all the believers in the Church with the holy water and offers them a bottle to take home and drink each day, or whenever they feel a special need for God’s grace. The Church also has the beautiful tradition of the priest taking the holy water into the homes of all believers and blesses their home. Through this ritual we ask for God’s blessings to come upon the household for the new year. Fr. Luke will come into all the homes of our Church Family throughout the month of January, and bring you this blessing. Look on page 1 for the Blessing Schedule.
Bring in the Blessing of the New Year and Come to our annual

Vasilopita Luncheon

11:15 am, Sunday, Jan. 15th following the Divine Liturgy

THE VASILOPITA TRADITION

THE TRADITION OF THE “VASILOPITA,” which means the sweet “bread of Basil” commenced in the fourth century, when Saint Basil the Great, a bishop in Cappadocia of Caesarea (Asia Minor) in the last half of the 4th century, wanted to distribute money anonymously to the poor in his Diocese. He commissioned some women to bake sweetened bread, in which he arranged to place gold coins. Thus the needy families, in cutting the bread to nourish themselves, were pleasantly surprised to find gold coins. St. Basil is considered as one of the greatest philanthropists in Church history, who was also the first person ever to establish an orphanage for children, and is the founder of the modern day hospital.

The Vasilopita tradition has been carried on until today, where special sweet bread is prepared both in Orthodox homes and in the Church community. Sweets are added to the bread which symbolize the sweetness and joy of life everlasting, as well as the hope that the New Year will be filled with the sweetness of life, health, and happiness for all who participate in the Vasilopita observance.
SHOULD WE BE EXTREMISTS?

An extremist. How many of us would like to be labeled extremists? Not a flattering label in today’s world, especially when we see in the daily news extremists of violence. We often link extremists with Islamic jihadists, or some other negative and violent depiction, and yet, this month our country pauses to remember an extremist of his time – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

When his enemies, including many in the established church, criticized MLK with the label “extremist,” he responded in a thought-provoking manner:

“Though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist… I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label:

Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those which despitefully use you and persecute you."

Was not the Prophet Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."

Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Acting as an extremist for good, for justice, for love! Yet how far have we in the Church fallen away from such “good” extremism?

I remember an inspiring ecumenical prayer service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. which Pres. Faith and I attended several years ago. The service highlighted the “extremism” of MLK’s words and actions at three critical points in his life – 1) Right after the arrest of Rosa Parks and the beginning of the Montgomery Bus boycott, 2) In the Birmingham prison right after police arrested him for his civil disobedience, and 3) On the night before he was murdered.

In each of these instances, MLK offered an extreme approach of nonviolence - willingly suffering for justice and moral truth! MLK expressed a desire and displayed a passion for justice, as well as revealed incredible courage and strength in enduring terrible suffering and persecution for righteousness sake. Would we be willing to stand up for truth in a similar situation? Are we courageous enough to witness to the evil of the world in our own contemporary setting with the radical love of God? The legacy of MLK should challenge all of us!

“If a man hasn’t discovered something he will die for, than he isn’t fit to live.” Ouch! Here’s more powerful words from MLK. Have we discovered something so precious in our lives that we would be willing to die for it? And is that which is precious something with eternal significance?!!

When I think about people like MLK, what really haunts me is the way we contemporary Christians, myself included, have become too comfortable and passive in our faith. We forget how the first Christians willingly suffered and died for the Kingdom of God. MLK called out the church of his day, lamenting the fact that “The church today is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch-supporter of the status quo.” Unlike the early Christians, we don’t want anything to disturb our comfortable way of life, even if we know that people around us are suffering from injustice and discrimination.

Too many of us choose to remain isolated from the suffering of others, and remain afraid that if we do speak up, we may face not only inconvenience, but even persecution. We forget Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteous-
ness, for they shall be filled… Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” When we struggle for what is right, for what is true, for what is good… when we walk in the path of the extreme prophets and the saints, we do not walk a comfortable or easy path.

I often think of MLK’s life – when his home was bombed and his children were threatened; when he was imprisoned numerous times and he witnessed friends being murdered; when he faced an uncertain future and knew his life was constantly in danger. All because he spoke an uncomfortable truth! And yet, how did he respond to these perils?

He confronted the evil and hatred that surrounded him in an extreme manner:

“I’ve seen too much hate to want to hate, and every time I see it, I say to myself; hate is too great a burden to bear. Somehow we must be able to stand up against our most bitter opponents and say: We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you…. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, and violence multiplies violence in a descending spiral of destruction… Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend… Thus be assured that we’ll wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and one day we will win our freedom. We will not only win freedom for ourselves; we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.”

What extreme words, combined by extreme actions – radical words and actions that imitated the Spirit of Jesus Christ! Throughout the Bible, and among the saints we honor every day in the Church, we see many extremists - men and women of extreme faith. We could chose any saint and see how they were extremists - extremists of love, of mercy, of grace, and of truth!

This month, we remember a number of saints with amazing stories. On January 18th, right around the day we honor MLK, we remember St Athanasios, one of the greatest of the Church Fathers and surely an extremist by all measures! He stood up against the world of his day, and even against most bishops and priests in the Church, all for the sake of truth! We sometimes here the phrase “Athanasios against the world” because he was not willing to compromise with the world! And he suffered for his extremism – being expelled from Alexandria several times, and even being exiled for more than 20 years from his Episcopal throne. Yet he never compromised the faith or water downed the truth. This is the faith of our forbearers, and this is the extreme faith we are called to imitate!

Let me conclude with the words, once again, of Martin Luther King:

So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?

In that dramatic scene on Calvary’s hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime - the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment.”

An extremist for God, for love, for truth and righteousness sake. This month may we all reflect upon such “good” extremism, and think about where each of us stands!

Let us all strive to be extremists of God’s love, of His truth, of Christ’s mercy and grace!
Our Christmas Pageant and Visit from Saint Nicholas
Congratulations to Elise Purcell for her entrance into the Church through Holy Chrismation!
A DAILY PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR
St. Philaret of Moscow

O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace.
Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will.
In every hour of the day reveal your will to me.
Bless my dealings with all who surround me.
Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day
with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all.
In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings.
In unforeseen events, let me not forget
that all things are under Your care.
Teach me to act firmly and wisely,
without embittering and embarrassing others.
Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day
with all that it shall bring.
Direct my will according to Your will. Teach me to pray.
Pray Yourself within me. Transform my life into a living prayer to you. Amen.

Another Daily Prayer for the New Year

THE SERENITY PRAYER
Reinhold Niebuhr

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy
with Him forever in the next.
SIGN UP FOR PROJECT MEXICO
July 21-27, 2017

For next summer, 625 spots for Project Mexico were filled within 30 minutes after registration opened. Our Church has 20 spots, and 15 are already filled. We have 5 spots open! If you are interested, you need to make a $100 deposit and contact Fr. Luke ASAP!

PHILOPTOCOS NEWS

On December 5th our Ladies Philoptochos gathered at Point Breeze for our annual Christmas party. It was a lovely evening and a great crowd. Thank you for all those who attended! We had an enjoyable meal, played bingo, collected money to donate to local charities, and enjoyed each other's company. It was nice to see old and new faces!

We will not have a meeting in January. Eleni will be making the breads for the Vasilopeta on January 15th. Thank you Eleni! Our next meeting will be on Monday February 6th at 6:00 depending on the weather.

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and I wish everyone a happy, healthy, and blessed New Year!

With love and appreciation,

Evelyn Pappas
Philoptochos President

Thank You for Special Christmas Donations!

In loving memory of Demetra Obrien from Joseph Gliniecki (16 poinsettias)
In loving memory of Dina Teguis from Eleanor Teguis
In loving memory of Dina Teguis from Mary Fatsi
In loving memory of Jim and Michael Naum from Ana Naum
In loving memory of Georgette Nicholopoulos from Leah Didonato
In loving memory of Arthur Vogel from Edna Vogel
In loving memory of Charles and Loucia Christos from Sam/Evelyn Pappas and Angelo/Dhimitra Adamopoulos
In loving memory of Stavros and Evangelia Pappas from Sam/Evelyn, Sakis/Lola and Olympia
In loving memory of Elizabeth Vriga from Louise and Richard Pavlech
In loving memory of my parents Antonis and Costa from Rita Carabina
For the glory of God from Gloria/Ted Panagiotou

www.AncientFaith.com
THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 STEWARDS

To 138 faithful Church Family members who have given $105,723 towards their 2016 Stewardship Offering as of December 25, 2016, for an average pledge of $770

138 of 170 Families have given a Stewardship Offering To Support our Beloved Church and Its Ministries.

Dhimitra/Angelo Adamopoulos
Lewis Adamopoulos
Ethel Angelo
Michael Angelo
Pauline Angelo
Rose Angelo
Gus/Ethel Anifantis
Sophie Apostal
Ted/Gail Avlas
Ann/Al Axtman
Earl/Lorraine Bahl
Tom/Mary Baxter
Eric/Rina Beland
Evelyn Belanger
Frederica Beno
Matt/Christa Benoit
Rich/Sophia Bethune
Athena Bilis
Arthur/Kathy Bilis
Frank/Connie Biondo
George/Debbie Carabina
Rita Carabina
Ann/Charlie Chito
Charlie Chito
Mike/Titi Chito
Anton/Nicoleta Cojocaru
Christine/Gary Colello
George/Laurie Condos
Bill/Despina Condos
Barbara Constantine
Chris/Helen Constantine
Nicholas Constantine
Athena Cooney
Arthur/Sara Darlagiannis
Nick/Athanasia Darlagiannis
Barbara/Norman Desrosiers
Leah Didonato
Michael/Jesse Doros
George/Annalisa Dunning
Maria Economou
Mary Fatsi
Sophia/Stephen Foisy
Thomai/Vasilis Gatsogiannis
Chris/Joan Geotis
Paul/Mona Geotis
Zachary/Barbara Gianaris
Zach Gianaris
George/Elaine Goulas
Rob/Denis Gritzner
Robert/Sharon Hayes
Helen Hazatones
Lisa/Dan Healy
David/Cindy Johnson
Anestis/Evis Jordanoglou
Harry/Tina Jordanoglou
Lou/Rozeta Kamecka
Angeliki Karapanos
James Karapanos
Ernest/Zorra Karapanos
George/Helen Kerbici
Said/Bozena Khozami
Sotiri/Lorraine Kiritsis
Bill/Christine Kiritsis
Rena/Tom Klebart
Kostas/Kristyn Aganis
Gulapka/Ilija Kostovski
Alexandra Koulax
Angela Koulax
Gus Koulax
Sophia Koulax
Gust Kraras
Sandi/Gerry Kunkel
Kathy/Scott Kunkel
Trish Lareau
Helen Lepine
Jennie Manthos
Laurie Manthos
Leslie Manthos
Olympia Margaritidis
Alex/Chris Massie
Elizabeth/Ryan McCarthy
Lorna McWilliam
Diana Megas
Helen Metropoulos
Celia Milios
Demetrios/Hariklia Milios
Vasilis/Eudoxia Milios
Yanni/Katie Mironidis
Del/Marie Monroe
Irene Mountzouris
Pauline/Carl Mueller
Ana Naum
Neal/Charlotte Neslusan
Carolyn Niemeck
George Nonis
Evangelia Pangiotou
Greg/Lindsey Panagiotou
Kosta Panagiotou
Ted/Gloria Panagiotou
Barbara Pappas
Chuck/Misty Pappas
Emanuel Pappas
Helen Pappas
James Pappas
Mary Pappas
Olga Pappas
Sam/Evelyn Pappas
Steven Pappas
Glykeria Partsalis
Louise/Richard Pavlech
Aggie Penesis
Olga Poloukhine
Christine Bilis Porazzo
Jared/Stephanie Quill
Deb Raymond
Dan/Sue Rivelli
Jaime/Garry Ross
Nick/Mary Seferi
John/Eleni Sgouritsas
Dimitri/Effie Sidopoulos
Dorothy Sosnowski
Tina/James Sullivan
Eleanor Teguis
Stelian/David Thompson
Tina Thomas
Ted/Betty Tonna
Nick/Lois Totolos
Helen Tsigaridas
Fr Luke/Faith Veronis
Niko/Susan Veronis
Edna Vogel
Tasi Vriga
David/Danielle Weiss
Evangeline Wilson
Paul/Eleni Xanthopoulos
Vasiliki Zahariadis
Helen/Bill Zenon
Tatyana/Yuri Zhuk
PARISH COUNCIL CORNER

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas!

Now we are ready to begin a New Year! This is the time when we make those New Year's resolutions and struggle to stick to them. Let us all try to include these 3 things in our goals for a better year. PRAY, FORGIVE, and GIVE BACK.

1) PRAY - We all know the importance of prayer for the sick and needy, for peace in our world so our children's children can have a better place to live, and for our Church family and our community to grow stronger every day.

2) FORGIVE - As difficult as it may be, we know we have to forgive! Imagine that holding a grudge in our hearts is having an "unclean" heart. To forgive will rid our heart and soul of any uncleanliness. I know a woman who has suffered with cancer for a few years now and is close to passing on. She refuses to see her brothers over a silly misinterpretation. Her brothers continue to call and attempt to see her but she will not allow them. It is so sad for all of them. I wonder how someone at that point in their life can continue to hold a grudge. As Christians we must forgive!

3) GIVE BACK - Not only from our financial resources but also with our actions. Visit the sick, make a meal or do something for the shut-ins, and help a needy family. Everyone has busy lives, but it's a matter of choice. Make the choice to help or to do something kind at least once a week. Start a “Random Act of Kindness” calendar for each month and this will be your reminder.

I look forward to a year of striving to do better and hope you will join me in this.

May God Bless you and your families always.

Lisa Healy
Parish Council President

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

To Tom and Mary Baxter for two very important anniversaries they celebrated in December. First, they celebrated their 70th Wedding Anniversary!!! God bless them with even more years together!!!

Tom also remembered the 75th Anniversary of the Pearl Harbor bombing. He is one of the few American veterans remaining who survived that tragic day! Thanks for serving our country!!!

CONGRATULATIONS

To Anton, Nicoleta and Smaranda Cojocaru for becoming American Citizens after 16 years in this country! (Petru is already a citizen since he was born here. Elizabeta will become a citizen following her parents citizenship). They have been the ideal immigrant story focusing on family, faith, education and strong work ethic!
COFFEE FELLOWSHIP:
Jan 1 Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi
Jan 8 Kathy Bilis, Sara Darligiannis, Marie Monroe, Charlotte Neslusan, Carolyn Niemeck, Stephanie Quill,
Jan 15 Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Betty Tonna, Deb Raymond, Evangeline Wilson
Jan 22 Donna Cooney, Athena Cooney, Leah Didonato, Jaime Ross
Jan 29 Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi

USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE
Jan 1– Nicoleta Cojocaru, Zach Gianaris, Garry Ross, Jared Quill, George Kerbici
Jan 8– Arthur Bilis, Del Monroe, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogianis, Trish Lareau
Jan 15– Marie McNally, Eric Beland, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi
Jan 22 Neal Neslusan, Mary Papageorge, Jimmy Karapanos, Cindy Johnson
Jan 29 Nicoleta Cojocaru, Zach Gianaris, Garry Ross, Jared Quill, George Kerbici

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY
10:00-11:00am
Wednesday, Jan 11, Feb 1
All Are Welcome!

EARLY RISERS BIBLE STUDY
7:00 am - 8:00 am
Saturdays, Jan 14, 28, Feb 4
Come and Join Us.

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS
Jan 1 - Olivia Neslusan
Jan 8 - Gabriella Ross
Jan 15 - Zach Beaudry
Jan 22 - Lily Mueller
Jan 29 - Maia Beaudry
Feb 5 - Theodora Veronis
Feb 12 - Panayiota Veronis

www.myocn.net
THANK YOU

To all those who helped our Church Family give 35 Christmas Presents through the Giving Tree for needy children!

Thank you also to the PHILOPTOCHOS and Sandi Kunkel and Park ‘n Shop, as well as to Angelo and Eleftheria Moutoudis and everyone else who helped us give away 31 Ham Christmas baskets and generous gift cards to 31 other families! Everyone was so grateful for the help they received to make their Christmas special!

WEEKDAY SERVICES

DIVINE LITURGIES
Jan 6 - 9:30 for Epiphany and the Blessing of the Waters
Jan 7 - 9:30 St John the Baptist
Jan 8 - One Year Memorial for Steve Angelo and Three Year Memorial for Charlie Christos
Jan 17 - 9:30 St Anthony the Great
Jan 30—9:30 The Three Hierarchs

Please send in your Stewardship offerings for 2016 if you have not done so. We still have families that have not sent in any stewardship offering for the present year!

Remember to send in your Stewardship Pledge Form for 2017.

Congratulations to our 2017 Parish Council

Michael Chito
Arthur Darligiannis
Leah Didonato
Joseph Gliniecki
Lisa Healy
Cynthia Johnson
Mary Papageorge
Sandi Kunkel
Lorna McWilliam
Neal Neslusan
Evelyn Pappas
Rayne Purcell
Nicholas Seferi

Look for our safe and convenient Online Giving at bottom left of Church webpage at www.schwebster.org

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Neal Neslusan
Evelyn Pappas
Rayne Purcell
Nicholas Seferi

Look for our safe and convenient Online Giving at bottom left of Church webpage at www.schwebster.org
## Remembering Our Church Family

### Important Dates in JANUARY:

Try to make a visit, give a call, or express your congratulations to members of our Church family who celebrate special days this month.

### BIRTHDAYS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>Kara Bilis</td>
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<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>Michael Pappas</td>
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<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>Garry Ross</td>
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<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>Mary Papageorge</td>
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<td>Smaranda Cojocaru</td>
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<td>George Papageorge</td>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
<td>Petru Cojocaru</td>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
<td>Evelyn Aperges</td>
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<td>Gloria Panagiotou</td>
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<td>Jan 14</td>
<td>Mia Beaudry</td>
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<td>Jan 16</td>
<td>Olivia Neslusian</td>
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<td>Jan</td>
<td>Thomai Gatsogiannis</td>
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<td>Jan 17</td>
<td>Ava Darlagiannis</td>
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<td>Jan 19</td>
<td>Tessa Benoit</td>
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<td>Tony Beaudry</td>
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<td>Theodora Veronis</td>
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<td>Maria Jordanoglou</td>
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<td>John Nicholopoulos</td>
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<td>Niko Milios</td>
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<td>Jan 29</td>
<td>George Condos</td>
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<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Panayiota Veronis</td>
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<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Sandi Kunkel</td>
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<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Tom Baxter</td>
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### NAMEDAYS:

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<tr>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>St Basil the Great</td>
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<td>Bill Anthopoulos</td>
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<td>Bill Condos</td>
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<td>Vasilios Gatsogiannis</td>
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<td>Celia Vasiliki Milios</td>
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<td>Vasilios Siozopoulos</td>
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<td>Vassy Tanko</td>
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<td>Jan 6</td>
<td>Epiphany - “Ta Fota”</td>
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<td>Faith Fotini Veronis</td>
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<td>Jan 7</td>
<td>St John the Baptist</td>
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<td>John Baraklilis</td>
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<td>Smaranda Ioana Cojocaru</td>
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<td>John Grzyb</td>
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<td>Yianni Moutoudis</td>
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<td>Deacon Anthony Payne</td>
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<td>St Athanasios</td>
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<td>Arthur Bilis</td>
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<td>Ava Athanasisa Darlagiannis</td>
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<td>Arthur Peterson</td>
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<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>St. Tatiana</td>
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<td>Tatiana Zhuk</td>
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THE JOY OF STEWARDSHIP

"The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”

2 Corinthians 9:6

Christian Stewardship can be a joyful and easy task. On the parish level, it requires the effort of the entire community in order to be successful and requires from each of us a commitment of self, time, talents and treasures. Stewardship is a means to support the Church and parish based on true Christian giving and individual responsibility. It is a way to meet the financial obligations of the Church and parish with Christian concern, dignity and equity.

Christian Stewardship is believing in our Church and wanting to support and perpetuate its mission. It is a way support of our Church a personal commitment. The financial support that we pledge for the year will be utilized to help meet our parish's total financial obligations for its programs and ministries and the National Ministries of our Archdiocese.

In Stewardship we are not paying for something; we are offering our commitment to the work of Jesus Christ and His Church. Our giving is an expression of our love for Christ who gave His life for our salvation and well-being. We give the first portion of our resources to continue the work of Christ in the world so that others may be blessed as we have been blessed.

This reflects our love for God and the Church and expresses our commitment to insure and promote the future of our Church. The success of the Stewardship Program over these years has been very successful because of the Grace of God and your support. "According to the commission of God given to me... I laid a foundation and another

HOLY SCRIPTURE RELATED TO EPIPHANY

“When Jesus had been baptized, he came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:16-17

“The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach and to say “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 4:16-17

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!... I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:2,11
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!
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<tr>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>HAPPY NEW YEAR! 8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 7pm AA</td>
<td>Jan 2 St Seraphim of Sarov</td>
<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>Jan 4 Fast Free</td>
<td>Jan 5</td>
<td>Jan 6 Epiphany Fast Free 8:30 Matins 9:30 Liturgy 10:30 Blessing of the Waters House Blessings in Webster</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy with Blessing of Waters Parish Council Meeting House Blessings Webster</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>11 10:00 Bible Study 11:30 Clergy Ecumenical Luncheon at our Church House Blessings in Oxford/Sutton</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>16 Martin Luther King Day 8:30 Ecumenical Breakfast at Reconciliation Church House Blessings in Dudley</td>
<td>17 St Anthony the Great 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>30 Three Hierarchs 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Feb 1 10:00 Bible Study 6:00 Vesperal Liturgy for Presentation of Christ Temple</td>
<td>Feb 2 Presentation in Temple Liturgy Wednesday Evening</td>
<td>Feb 3</td>
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RECIPE FOR A
BLESSD & HAPPY NEW YEAR

Take twelve fine, full-grown months and make sure that these are thoroughly free from old memories of bitterness, anger, hurt and hatred; cleanse them completely from every clinging spite; pick off all specks of pettiness, littleness, pride, and self-centered passion; in short, see that these months are freed from all the bad memories of the past.

Look at each month with a newness and freshness of life, clean as when God brought forth each day from the great storehouse of time. Cut each of these months into 30 or 31 equal parts. Do not attempt to make up the whole batch at one time (so many persons spoil the entire lot this way), but prepare each day one day at a time.

Into each day put equal parts (and a good share at that) of divine love, joy, faith, patience, courage, hope, generosity and kindness. Add a good portion of fidelity, tolerance, work (some people omit this ingredient and so spoil the flavor of the rest) and rest (leaving this out is like leaving the oil out of the salad dressing - don’t do it).

And make sure not to forget a good measure of prayer, meditation, Bible-reading, and a serious attempt of Christ-like living. After every six days make sure to leave the seventh day as a day for God - going to Church and being filled with His Holy Mysteries.

Put in about one teaspoonful of good spirits, a dash of fun and relaxation, a pinch of good natured folly, a sprinkling of play, and a heaping cupful of good humor. This is a sure-fire recipe for a most blessed and joyous New Year!