



SAINT STEPHEN

has the unique honor of being both the first of the seven deacons appointed by the Apostles and the first Christian martyred in the name of our Lord.

The Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox Church Of McKeesport & Duquesne, Pa

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Very Rev. Stevan (Stevo) Rocknage, Parish Priest

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January 15th, 2012 - 31ST Sunday After Pentecost - Before Epiphany -Tone 6

(Remembering: Sts. Seraphim of Sarov and Sylvester of Rome)

Today's Epistle Reading:

2 Timothy 4: 5-8

Today's Gospel Reading:

Mark 1: 1-8

Resurrection

Troparion: The angelic powers were at Thy Tomb, the guards became as dead men!
Mary stood by Thy Grave, seeking Thy most-Pure Body; Thou didst capture hell,
not being tempted by it; Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. O Lord,
Who didst rise from the dead, glory to Thee!"

(The Kontakion will also be sung!)

Spiritual Thoughts:

House Blessing

It is a wonderful Orthodox Christian practice to invite the priest to bless your new apartment or home. This can be done either before you move in or after you are settled.

The priest will conduct a brief prayer service after which he will bless each person in your family and each room of your house with Holy Water.

We read in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me." This is a beautiful picture of what Christ wants to do when we move into a new home or apartment. He wants us to open the door to let Him come in to bless us. He wants to stay and fellowship with us in a very intimate way as expressed through eating and drinking together.

This is what we do when we invite the priest to bless us and our new home: we open the door to let Jesus come in. If we have a new icon for our home, we shall give it to the priest at church for the formal blessing. He will bring it with him to install it in its proper place in your home and light the votive light before it for the first time.

In addition to the blessing received, such a home visit by the priest will afford your children an excellent opportunity to get to know the parish priest as a dear and personal friend in Christ. It will also teach them that Orthodox Christians seek God's blessing before every important venture in life.

I shall never forget the testimony of a friend, "When I was a very small child, a pastor visited in our home. His presence was so impressive that today, 45 years later, I can still describe where he sat. I do not remember the words he spoke, but I remember his presence. Our family must have been very important for him to visit us. At least, I felt very important."

Today's Special Announcements and Upcoming Activities For You:

(1) **TODAY:** we wish all of our faithful a Blessed and Spiritually Profitable New Year!

(2) **Please pray for the health and well-being of the following loved ones:**

Ellis Cannon Melva Lugares Dawn Hamm Nick Trbovich Milkie Trtica
Mara Gasparovic-NH Smilja Blagovich-NH Mimi Pavlovich-NH George Rocknage
George/Alona Evanovich-NH Boya Kecman-NH Dan Ikach Mika Rocknage

(3) **Also pray for the souls of those fallen asleep in the Lord:**

+Betty Vojnovich +Betty Milkovich +Delores Craven +Bertha Cervo +Milan Vranesevich
+Mildred Miljus +Amy Pacura +Arlene Crnkovich +Peter Miljus +Mildred Dokmanovich
+Sally Vranes +Priscilla Torbic +Ann Siebert +Arch-Priest Michael Lewis

(4) **SPECIAL ITEMS TO TAKE NOTE OF:**

- **THIS WEEK:** Check your Christmas Bulletins for Epiphany services this week!

(5) **REMEMBER THAT:** the sole purpose of the Holy Liturgy is for our participation in the Holy Mysteries of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - don't let the devil deceive you into staying away from the BEST medicine your soul will ever see

(6) **As we enter the New Year 2012** - we must offer up our THANKS to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all the Blessings we have received as His laborers in His Vineyard, NOT by Our words, but by our actions! (TRANSLATION: ALL of us must see what we can do to give a little more of our TIME, our TALENTS, and our TREASURES to His Church!)

(7) **SPECIAL NOTE:** our "Christmas Outreach Project" of taking hams and turkeys down to the Orthodox Pantry on the South Side last December 22nd was a WONDERFULLY successful event! Thanks to our donations and our Kolo's help, we were able to take down over 60 items, in addition to having 10 volunteers work the pantry from 5:45 to 7 PM that evening. **To the few of you who were critical of our "being disorganized", I suggest that you get involved with this wonderful ORTHODOX Ministry and see the "fruits of God's Laborers" manifested in the eyes of those helped!**

- As a result of the above experience, **we will have a regular container set up downstairs to collect food supplies (dry goods, etc.), that will be taken down monthly to the Pantry....in addition, our Outreach Committee will determine which Thursday of the month to serve as volunteers at the Pantry! JOIN US!**

(8) **THIS WEEK:** Blessing of homes begins on Wednesday after Church - check schedules!

(9) **NEXT SUNDAY:** Administering Oath of Office to ALL Parish Steward-leaders!

(10) **Sunday the 29th:** Church Slava Celebration - join us for a wonderful program/banquet!

THE HOLY PROTOMARTYR & ARCHDEACON STEPHEN

Each year on the third day of our celebration of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, our Holy Orthodox Church remembers St. Stephen. We read in the Book of Acts of a growing concern in the early Christian Church. The Church was growing so rapidly that the work of the Apostles was becoming overwhelming for them. The daily care for the widows, as well as the poor and needy was infringing on their real task of preaching and spreading the gospel. To offer them some much-needed assistance, seven deacons were elected to minister to the material needs of the faithful.

The first of these deacons was a young man named Stephen. Stephen soon developed a reputation for being a brilliant orator. He could more than "hold his own" when it came to debating theological issues with the Jewish leaders. It wasn't long until they could no longer tolerate Stephen constantly getting the better of them in any discussion. Stephen was accused of blasphemy — slandering God — and was brought before the Sanhedrin to defend himself. After false witnesses spoke against him, Stephen was given an opportunity to speak. His words, which are found in the 7th chapter of the Book of Acts, carefully traced the history of the Israelites and all their accomplishments. Midway through his presentation, his focus changes dramatically, as he points out how the Jews repeatedly opposed the will of God, turning their wrath on the prophets and ultimately putting the Son of God to death. When Stephen began speaking of seeing Christ in heaven at the right hand of the Father, the Sanhedrin had heard enough. Stephen was dragged outside the gates of the city, where he was stoned to death, thus becoming the first Christian martyr. His dying words have long been the cry of other martyrs throughout the ages: "Lord, do not charge these men with this sin."