

# The Privilege of Being Listened To



This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



**Because Saint Nicholas of Myra, celebrated on December 6, is remembered for generosity and gentleness, one event in his life surprises many people.**

It happened at the Council of Nicaea in 325, which both he and the heretic Arius attended. The well-spoken Arius was confidently trying to convince the Council to accept his teaching that Jesus Christ is not truly the Son of God.

Nicholas listened until he could bear no more. He rose and struck Arius, believing that dangerous lies and distortions did not deserve the privilege of being listened to.

A number of articulate, popular atheists today write books and make public statements attempting to convince people that God does not exist. To believe in God, they say, is to subscribe to a false idea that has caused strife all over the world.

Because these writers particularly attack Christianity, we Christians should determine whether the quality of their scholarship and their actual knowledge of the faith they criticize entitles them to the privilege of being listened to.

In his book "The God Delusion" atheist Richard Dawkins writes that Adam and Eve, as a result of their sin, were "banished forever from the Garden of Eden" and "deprived of the gift of eternal life." This is nonsense; the reason for Christ's coming is to restore our eternal communion with God.

Regarding Christ Himself, Dawkins says that "Jesus was a loyal Jew. It was Paul who invented the idea of taking the Jewish God to the Gentiles." He quotes one John Hartung: "Jesus would have turned over in his grave if he had known that Paul would be taking his plan to the [Gentiles]." Reading Matthew 28: 19-20, a passage universally known as the "Great Commission", is enough to show that Dawkins is in error here—and is apparently unfamiliar with some of Jesus' best-known words.

Much more could be said about Dawkins' theological misrepresentations, but any serious reader will also take issue with his claims about other writers. For example, he writes that Martin Luther King, though a Christian, "derived his philosophy of non-violent civil disobedience directly from Gandhi..." But in his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail", King himself, having been called an extremist, lists other inspirational "extremists": Jesus, Amos, Paul. Gandhi's name does not appear.

Of fellow scientist Stephen Jay Gould, who wrote that science has nothing to say about God's existence, Dawkins says, "I simply do not believe that Gould could possibly have meant much of what he wrote..." What writer, whatever Dawkins believes, writes what he doesn't mean?

Again displaying his own beliefs, Dawkins refers to the Taliban dynamiting Buddhas in Afghanistan and writes: "I do not believe there is an atheist in the world who would bulldoze Mecca [or other holy sites]..." Is it possible he's unfamiliar with—for just one prominent example—the Soviets' destruction of countless churches in the name of atheism?

Saint Paul encourages us to "test everything" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Testing the claims of today's popular atheists shows their lack of intellectual substance. That lack means they have forfeited the privilege of being listened to.

#### Kontakion - Tone 3

You revealed yourself, O saint, in Myra as a priest,  
For you fulfilled the Gospel of Christ  
By giving up your soul for your people,  
And saving the innocent from death.  
Therefore you are blessed as one become wise in the grace of God.

## St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Christian Church

108 East Main Street

PO Box 134

Clinton, CT 06413

860-664-9434

[www.stalexischurch.org](http://www.stalexischurch.org)



Rev. Steven Hosking, attached • [frschosk@me.com](mailto:frschosk@me.com) • 860-866-5802

Bulletin for Sunday, December 1, 2013

Twenty-second Sunday of Pentecost • Tone 6

Ephesians 2:4-10, Luke 18:18-27

**Commemorations:** Prophet Nahum (7th c. B.C.). Righteous Philaret the Merciful of Amnia in Asia Minor (792). Martyr Ananias of Persia.

#### Welcome to Our Visitors

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy and services. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to participate in our prayers and hymns and to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Liturgy. Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found at the candle desk. Please sign our guest book and join us for refreshments and fellowships downstairs after Liturgy.

**Please pray for:** Olga, Vera, Richard, Sarah, Alla, June, Nina, Joan, Luke, Alex, Nadia, Glenn, Kathryn. Please remember Robert Martin in your prayers, may his memory be Eternal.

**Many Years!** to Ezekiel Watson of the occasion of his birthday.

### Upcoming Events and Services

Sunday, December 1st  
Divine Liturgy at 9:30a  
Church School to follow

Tuesday, December 3rd  
Akathist for the Sts of North America at  
6:30p

Wednesday, December 4th  
Glorification of St Alexander Hotovitzky  
Diocese Council Meeting, Springfield MA

Thursday, December 5th  
Great Vespers with Litya at 6:30p  
St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

Friday, December 6th  
Akathist for St Nicholas at 9a

Saturday, December 7th  
Great Vespers at 5:30p

Sunday, December 8th  
Divine Liturgy at 9:30a - Church School and  
Choir Rehearsal to follow

Wednesday, December 11th  
“Open Doors” beginning at 4:30p  
Choir Rehearsal at 6:30p

Thursday, December 12th  
Great Vespers with Litya at 6:30p  
St. Herman of Alaska

Friday, December 13th  
Akathist for St Herman at 9a

Saturday, December 14th  
Great Vespers at 5:30p

Sunday, December 15th  
Divine Liturgy at 9:30a - Church School and  
Choir Rehearsal to follow

Wednesday, December 18th  
“Open Doors” beginning at 4:30p

Saturday, December 21st  
Great Vespers at 5:30p

### Announcements

#### Stewardship and Outreach

The Council of Stewards is looking for two or three members of the community to volunteer their time to work with Fr Steven in identifying, researching and recommending charities and services for future Parish Appeals. The work of this team will be to help identify charities and services to which the Parish, as a whole, and direct its resources and commitments throughout the year. If you are interested, please talk with Fr Steven. If you have suggestions as to a specific charity or organization that you think we should be supporting, again, please inform Fr Steven.

#### Parish “Beautification”

The Council of Stewards would like to identify and prioritize those ways in which we can continue to improve and enhance the Church and facilities of the Parish. If you have suggestions, please talk with Fr Steven or a Council member.

#### Church School

With many thanks to Susan Egan for her years of service to the youth of this Parish, it was announced that she is “retiring” from the position of Church School Coordinator and Teacher. We are now looking for individual(s) to fill this necessary position. Please see Fr Steven if you would consider helping with the Church School.

#### Choir Rehearsals

You will see from the calendar that there are several rehearsals schedule throughout the month of December. If you sing in the choir (regularly or otherwise) you are expected to make these rehearsals. The choir is an essential ministry of the Church and you are being asked not to take this responsibility lightly.

#### Looking for Input

We are still looking for input and interest for times of morning services (including Feast Day Liturgies) and weekday evening services. Providing suggestions does not constitute a commitment to being at these services (as circumstances warrant, of course).

#### Confession

There is still plenty of “time” to come to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during this Nativity season!