

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

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March 17, 2021

Clean Wednesday

Feast of Saint Patrick of Ireland

Beloved Faithful of Our Diocesan Family:
Christ is in our midst!

With this letter, I extend to each of you my prayerful wishes for a spiritually fruitful journey into the Great Fast. Also, I ask you to seriously consider the following request, a Diocesan Appeal of Almsgiving in Great Lent of 2021.

Inspired by the ancient Church canons, which direct that in every diocese should be founded a house of hospitality for the poor, a team of faithful clergy and lay members of our Diocesan Family have recently opened **St. Basil's House**, in Trenton, New Jersey. The goal of St. Basil's House of Hospitality is "to serve the needy in respectful, personal, and attentive ways, while providing opportunities for Eastern Christians to see Jesus Christ in the persons of those with whom we build relationships."

During the pandemic, St. Basil's is providing take-out meals and online prayers and Bible study in the Orthodox Tradition. The facility is poised to offer shelter, and in-person meals and prayers, once the COVID restrictions are relaxed.

The heavenly patron of the Trenton facility is of course Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (+379). His preaching pierces the centuries and provokes our hearts during this season of intensified almsgiving: *"The one who does not clothe the naked is a robber; the cloak you keep locked in your closet belongs to the naked; the shoes that lie unused in your possession belong to the person with no shoes; the money you hoard belongs to the person in need."* (Sermon On Greed, 7)

Reflect on the incredible story of another Saint of our Church:

Saint Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours, was born at Sabaria in Pannonia (modern Hungary) in 316. Since his father was a Roman officer, he was obliged to serve in the army. Martin did so unwillingly, for he considered himself a soldier of Christ, even though he was still a catechumen at the time.

At the gates of Amiens, Martin saw a beggar shivering in the severe winter cold, so he cut his cloak in two and gave half to the beggar. That night, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the saint, wearing Martin's cloak. He heard the Savior say to the angels surrounding Him, "*Martin is only a catechumen, but he has clothed Me with this garment.*" (The saint was baptized soon after this, and reluctantly remained in the army).

Like his contemporary Saint Martin, Saint Basil saw and served Christ in "the least of the brethren". He exhausted his own personal wealth to build poorhouses throughout his diocese – most famously, the Basiliad, a large complex at the gates of Caesarea, where hospital care was given to the sick, shelter offered to the poor, and training in skilled trades provided to those who could work. Truly these great Saints were "*doers of the Word, not hearers only*" (James 1:22). Are we not called to imitate them?

The volunteers of St. Basil's House have shared the following list of particular needs. I ask that each parish undertake a Charity Drive for these types of items. Your pastor will coordinate with the local Dean for the transportation of these items to St. Basil's House:

- CLOTHING, clean and in good condition. We ask that one person in each parish take responsibility for collecting the clothing, storing it until it can be picked up, and working with your priest to coordinate transportation of the donations.
- CANNED FOOD, which will be used to stock the cupboards from which we provide meals for our neighbors. Again, one parishioner should oversee collecting and storing the food and assist your priest in arranging its transportation.
- VOLUNTEERS, from neighboring parishes, to help out at St. Basil's House in Trenton, with preparing the take-out meals that are offered, and to help with cooking, serving, cleaning and hosting, once normal post-pandemic services resume.

If you wish to learn more about St. Basil's House, or to visit or volunteer there, please contact Matushka Judith Komline, at judith@stbasilshouse.org. An informational brochure is enclosed with this letter. You can also visit their Website, at www.stbasilshouse.org.

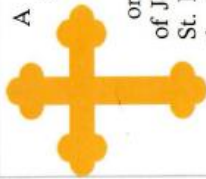
I am truly grateful for your cooperation in the manner of this urgent and timely request. May our loving Lord bless you richly for your generous response to this Lenten appeal.

With my humble prayers, my archpastoral blessing, and my sincere love,

+ Michael

+ MICHAEL

Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey



A group of Orthodox Christians is opening a house of hospitality in Trenton, New Jersey, in order to follow the command of Jesus, in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and tend the sick. The house will have a chapel, a kitchen, space for the distribution of food and clothing, space for classes, and space for neighbors and volunteers to meet, talk, and share meals. The goal is to serve the needy in respectful, personal, and attentive ways, while providing opportunities for Eastern Christians to see Jesus Christ in the persons of those with whom we build relationships.

Early action to live out the Gospel message of care for the poor dates from the ancient Church. The Council of Nicea, in its 70th canon, declared that a house of hospitality should be founded for the poor in every city and every diocese. In the late Roman Empire, the duties of the bishop included being "lover of the poor." Continuing this practice into our day, we have chosen to name the house after St. Basil of Caesarea, for his outstanding preaching on behalf of the poor and his actions for them.

The work of the house will develop in steps as we learn the needs of the people in the neighborhood. We are developing a volunteer program and a strategic financial plan.



St. Basil's House

Step 1. St. Basil's House will offer prayer services, coffee, soup, meals (shared with volunteers and neighbors), clothing, food, and up-to-date local referrals for social services and health care.

Step 2. We plan to offer classes, including a Bible study, and we will create opportunities for our neighbors to share their own gifts with us. An experienced Eastern Christian member of AA or NA will lead a regularly scheduled 11th Step Group (prayer and meditation). In addition, we will offer a lending library, focusing on children's books and Orthodox books. We plan to develop an urban garden.

Step 3. The vision for the future is to offer furnished bedrooms to those in need of temporary housing.

Step 4. Our vision is to work with neighbors to develop small businesses in the neighborhood. St. Basil's House will provide business advice and start-up funding. This will meet needs in the neighborhood while teaching skills to people who have no significant employment histories.



St. Basil's House



A House of Hospitality in Trenton, NJ



*"Whatever you do to the least of these, you do unto me."
(Mt. 25:40)*

WHO WAS ST. BASIL?



At the time of a severe drought in 369, Basil preached several sermons on wealth and possessions, stressing the theme of property as something entrusted to us, rather than as something we permanently own. In his sermon, "On Greed", he warned that "the one who does not clothe the naked is a robber, the cloak you keep locked in your closet belongs to the naked, the shoe that molders in your possession belongs to the person with no shoes, the silver that you have buried belongs to the person in need. You do an injury to as many people as you might have helped with all these things."

Basil did not simply preach about social justice and economic equality. As bishop, he developed a large complex of apartments for guests, needy travelers, and the poor, called the Basilad, where the sick received medical and hospice care and the poor who could work were employed or trained in various trades.

Get to know St. Basil better by following in his footsteps.

St. Basil's House

A House of Hospitality in Trenton, NJ

A NJ Nonprofit Corporation
and
an IRC §501(c)(3)
organization

www.stbasilshouse.org

for additional information,
please contact:

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How can you help?

1. Pray for the work of St. Basil's House.
2. Volunteer.
 - a. participate in work projects
 - b. spend time working at the house
 - c. be your parish's representative to the house
 - d. become a member of the Board of Trustees
 - e. help with fundraising
3. Donate.

mail contributions to
St. Basil's House
5 Valley View Ave.
Gladstone, NJ
07934-2024

"He who said, 'This is my body,' and made it so by His word, is the same Who said, 'You saw me hungry and you gave me no food. As you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me.' Honor Him then by sharing your property with the poor. For what God needs is not golden chalices but golden souls."

+ St. John Chrysostom, Homily 50
on the Gospel of St. Matthew