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THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

December 17, 2006

SUNDAY/DEC. 17th (fish, wine & oil)
Sunday of the Holy Forefathers (Tone 2);

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour
Question & Answer Period

TUESDAY/DEC. 19th (Wine & oil)

7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 20th
Prefast of the Nativity; St. John of Kronstadt

7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

THURSDAY/DEC. 21st (Wine & oil)
Prefast of the Nativity

9:30a.m. Confessions
4:00p.m. Confessions
7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

FRIDAY/DEC. 22nd
Prefast of the Nativity

7:00p.m. Royal Hours;
8:00p.m. Confessions

SATURDAY/DEC. 23rd (Wine & oil)
Prefast of the Nativity

9:30a.m. Akathist; Confessions
5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

SUNDAY/DEC. 24th (Wine & oil)
Sunday Before the Nativity; Eve of the Nativity(Tone 3)

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour
5:30p.m. Vigil

SUNDAY/DEC. 25th
Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour
6:30p.m. Vespers

On the Second Sunday Before the Nativity of our Lord, we celebrate the Holy Forefathers. These are the holy men and women of the Old Testament who shone forth in righteousness.

God worked great signs and wonders through our Holy Forefathers, to prepare for the Entrance into the world of His Son, born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary.

These righteous men and women responded to the call of God, served Him with devotion, and many of them fervently anticipated the coming of the Messiah, the Promised One.

As we remember them on this day, we too, seek to respond to God's call to us, to lift up our hearts in thankful prayer to Him for His promises and to expectantly prepare for the celebration of the coming of Christ into our lives, in an ever more profound and intimate way.

Mentioned in the hymns of this feast day are the following saints of the Old Testament: Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Issac and Jacob and his twelve sons, known as the Twelve Patriarchs. Among the women saints we find, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachael, Judith among others. All the Prophets are named such as Elias, Isaiah, Daniel, Moses, and others down to St. John the Baptist. The King-Priest Melchizedek, Job, David and the Three Youths – Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego are also hymned.

*Let us offer praise to the Fathers,
Who shone forth before and during the Law;
With righteous minds they served the Lord
And Master
Who shone forth from the Virgin,
And now they delight in the unending Light!*

COMMENTARY ON PSALM 118 by St. Theophan the Recluse (+1894)

Verse 21: Thou has rebuked the proud; cursed are they that decline Thy Commandments.

Pride and conceit are repugnant to God. He who has a high opinion of himself often trips on a trifle, and if not brought to his senses, he is attacked by shameful passions and made to feel the removal of God's grace. This is inner temptation, the outer one is made by the proud one and can be very painful, and the Prophet prays to be spared that one.

Verse 22: Remove from me reproach and contempt, for after Thy testimonies have I sought.

Those who live in the fear of the Lord have to suffer contempt, But when this gets unbearable, they ask help of Him Who promised To protect His servants. Contempt suppresses energy, he who has To bear it asks either for strength to endure it or deliverance From it, understanding however that nothing removes the pus of Conceit as well as contempt.



Verse 23: For princes sat and spoke against me, but Thy servant Pondered on Thy statutes.

The Lord promised blessedness for slander, yet how difficult it is to be borne! Assurance of the conscience is a solace against slander, but who is without sin? For Christians something else is revealed here, namely: love for one's enemies. He who fulfills this Christ's commandment receives from it such a benevolent disposition that the bitterness of hatred is eliminated.



The Parish Synodicon: Memory Eternal!

Joseph Pituck	Dec. 18, 1980	Nadia Marchuk	Dec. 21, 1997
Michael Popko	Dec. 20, 1962	Gregory Persurance	Dec. 23, 1950
Anna Martin	Dec. 20, 1980	Peter Kozura	Dec. 23, 1989
Helen Semoskovich	Dec. 21, 1946	Olga Barna	Dec. 23, 1991

Namesday Greetings – Many Blessed Years!

2nd Sunday Before Nativity

Rebecca Oliver, Rachael Oliver, Sarah Oliver, Sarah Kita, Sarah Fedechko, Isabel(Eve)Melnikov

St. Daniel of Voronets/Dec. 18th: Daniel-George Lignerres

St. Anastasia/Dec. 22nd: Anastasia Kita, Anasatasia Mickel, Anastasia Hansen, Anastasia Barna

2006 Christmas Gifts for a Seminarian

A total of 10 gifts have been received in the amount of \$420. The Lord bless!

2006 Christmas Cookie Sale

A profit of \$906.20 was realized. Thank you for your baking and purchasing!

The Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion

Are received by the faithful in the time of the Nativity Lent (Nov. 15th-Dec. 24th). If we desire to receive the Body and Blood of Christ on Nativity Day, Dec. 25th, we should have been to Confession during this 40 day Lent. If you will be visiting another Orthodox Church and wish to receive Holy Communion, be sure the priest knows - in advance - who you are.

The Parish Website: www.sspoc.org

Has posted under the section, "Schedule of Services" the filled-in calendar for the year 2007. You are encouraged to make reference to it, in your planning. If there be any changes or cancellations of parish life activities due to weather or other reasons, they will be posted on the website at least one hour before the scheduled time. You may also call the rectory to see if a service or activity has been cancelled or postponed. We are entering into the winter season.

The Nativity 40 Day Lent

Ends on the Feast of the Nativity, Dec. 25th after the Divine Liturgy. The Eve of the Nativity, Dec. 24th remains a fast day, permitting no meat, dairy or fish, but wine and oil are allowed.

Fast Free Season

During the period from Dec. 25th thru Jan. 4th, in celebrating the Postfeast of the Nativity and the Prefeast of the Theophany, we do not fast on any day, nor do we kneel or make prostrations.

Offerings for the Week of Dec. 17th

Olive Oil - in memory of Emilia; in memory of Michael And Anna; in memory of William; for the health of John (birthday); for health and in thanksgiving by Laurentiu and Liliana.

Wine - in memory of newly-departed Galina; in memory of Joan.

Flowers - on the anniversary of Holy Baptism of Joseph; For the health of Daniel-George (namesday).



2007 Offering Sheet is on the Vestibule Stand

You may sign-up for flowers, olive oil or wine. Please make your offering when you sign-up and mark the envelope with the date and product.

The January 2007 Monthly Calendar and Home Blessing Schedule

Will be distributed next Sunday Dec. 24th.

Tropar of the Prefeast of Nativity : Dec. 20th – 24th (Tone 4)

The tropar sung at the liturgical services that we may sing or read at home in these days of final preparation for the Feast.

Prepare O Bethlehem / for Eden has been opened to all /
Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, /
For the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave. /
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the fruit divine /
If we eat of it, we shall not die like Adam /
Christ is coming to restore the image which He made in the beginning.



OCA News

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OCA Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council conclude first day of joint meeting

Article posted: 12/12/2006 9:30 PM

SYOSSET, NY [OCA Communications] — Members of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and the Metropolitan Council concluded the first day of their extraordinary two-day joint meeting here on Tuesday, December 12, 2006.

The complete text of a statement issued at the end of their session reads as follows.

"The questions regarding the allegations of financial improprieties were addressed today in an all-day joint session of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council in a historic step forward. Presentations by the accounting firm Lambrides Lamos Moulthrop LLP and the law firm Proskauer Rose LLP, confirmed the following allegations:

"1. Processes in place for administrative and financial controls have been circumvented since at least 1998.

"2. There were numerous unsubstantiated large cash withdrawals.

"3. Personal credit card abuses using Church funds were documented.

"4. Numerous trips were taken without the submission of appropriate documentation but were nonetheless reimbursed.

"5. Attempts to divert monies designated to various charities were clearly indicated and in some cases documented.

"6. Examination of Church appeals from 2001 to 2005 revealed that meaningful reports could not be rendered due to lack of appropriate documentation.

"7. Pattern of personal use of Church money was exhibited for a number of years.

"8. Lack of timely financial reports and in some cases, false reports, were submitted.

"9. Large amounts of Church funds were used to improperly pay for personal items.

"The severity of some of the problems could not be fully determined due to a lack of documentation. However, these abuses of Church trust were determined to be centered on and around one individual and were not found to be widespread among the employees of the Church.

"The participants of the joint session were stunned by the magnitude of today's revelations and have agreed to implement the following actions:

"1. A Special Committee was appointed by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman to complete the investigation by Proskauer Rose and to keep the Metropolitan Council advised of developments as they occur. The Committee consists of His Eminence, Job, Archbishop of Chicago, Diocese of the Midwest; His Grace, Benjamin, Bishop of Berkeley, Administrator of the Diocese of the West; Very Reverend Vladimir Berzonsky, Diocese of the Midwest; Very Reverend John Reeves, Diocese of Western Pennsylvania; Mr. Gregory Nescott, Diocese of Western Pennsylvania; and Dr. Faith Skordinski, Diocese of Washington and New York.

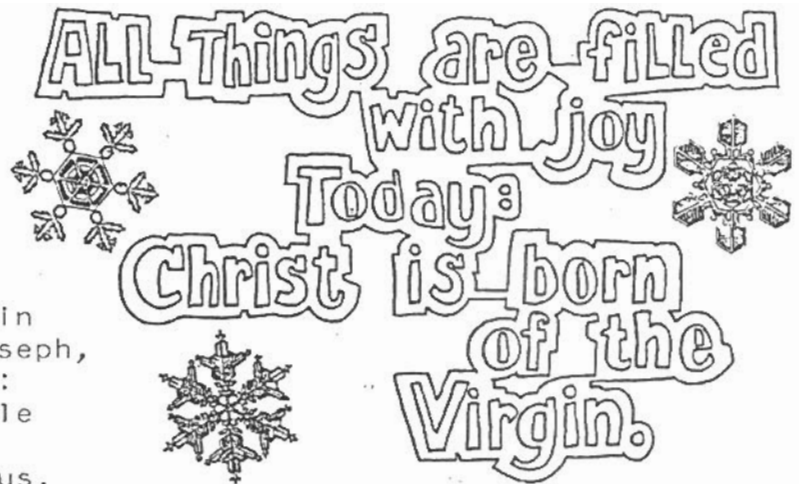
"2. The Holy Synod will discuss what disciplinary action, if any, will be recommended.

"3. The Metropolitan Council will oversee the implementation of appropriate accounting procedures in the OCA's accounting office, which will include the replacement of antiquated accounting systems.

"There is still much work to do, and many details need attention. But the new direction is clear — changes need to be made in order to bring the Church up to the high level of accountability that is expected of it."

**TWO QUESTIONS WE NEED TO ASK
ABOUT THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

by St. John of Kronstadt



1) Why did God become man while remaining God?

The answer to this may be found in the words of the Archangel to Joseph, the betrothed of the Holy Virgin: God became man to save "His people from their sin" (Matthew 1:21).

For this reason He is called Jesus, which means "Saviour." And so, it was for our salvation that the Lord came to earth and became man, for the regeneration in us of the image of God which had fallen. The Son of God became the Son of Man in order to make us sons of God who were called the children of wrath and eternal damnation. In the words of the Apostle John the Theologian: that we should be called the sons of God (1 John 3:1); "Now God became man, that He may make Adam a god" (Stichera for the Praises of the Annunciation).

And so, my brethren, the feast of the Nativity of Christ reminds us that we are born of God, that we are sons of God, that we have been saved from sin and that we must live for God and not for sin; not for flesh and blood, not for the world which lies in evil (1 John 5:19), not for earthly corruption, but for an inheritance incorruptible...reserved in heaven the Lord Himself will give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

2) What does God's incarnation require of us?

As we prepare to meet the feast of the Nativity of Christ, you must ask yourself:

- Have you preserved the spiritual birth from God which we each received in Baptism?
- Are you always heedful to the divine sonship and the sacred treasure of the Spirit which you acquired in Baptism?
- Have you grown closer to God through faith and love, like His beloved children?
- Have you loved one another as befits children of God?
- Have you despised evil and all-destructive sin?
- Have you loved truth and every virtue?
- Have you loved immortal and eternal life prepared in a land which will not pass away and to which we are called by Him Who now has come to our corrupt earth?

These are the questions which we must ask ourselves now and decide; not only with our minds, but above all, with our hearts and our very deeds.

The birth of Christ requires of us to remember and hold in sacred honor the fact that we are born of God; and if we have sullied and trampled upon this birthright with our sins, we must restore it by washing it with tears of repentance.

The feast requires of us mutual love, humility, that we help one another; for how can we not love one another when we see the love of God for us? Like the Wise Men, let us brothers, also prepare gifts for the new-born King. Instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh, let us bring Him the Gifts of faith, hope and love.

ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
- *Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafaktos*

The Birth of Christ is a historical event, because it took place at a specific moment in history, when Caesar Augustus was Emperor of Rome and Herod was ruler of Judaea. The Evangelists insist on emphasising the historicity of the event, because they want to say that Christ is a historical person. This means that Christ assumed real human flesh, and the incarnation was not merely seeming or imagined.

In spite of its historicity, this event remains a mystery. We know that the Godman, perfect God and perfect man, exists, but it remains a mystery how the divine nature united with human nature in the person of the Logos. Moreover, what happened to the person of Christ, that the divine nature was united hypostatically with human nature, happened just once. Therefore St. John of Damaskos said that Christ is "the only new thing under the sun". This means that since the creation of the world and man, nothing new has happened in the world. Everything is repeated. The birth of a man is a consequence and result of God's words: "Let us make man in our image and likeness", and "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1, 26-28). The only new thing is the Godman Christ.

Thus the fact that the event is historical does not remove the mystery, but also the mystery does not do away with the historicity. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Christ, but at the same time we experience mysteriously in our hearts all the events connected with it, for when we are alive in the Church, we are participating in and experiencing all the stages of the divine incarnation.

