

SAINTS PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH
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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 23, 2007

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 23rd
Sunday Before the Nativity
(Tone 5)

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
Church School; Coffee Hour;
Question & Answer Period
6:30p.m. Compline; Confession

MONDAY/DECEMBER 24th
Eve of the Nativity

9:30a.m. Royal Hours
5:30p.m. Vigil

40 Day Nativity Lent ends after the
Divine Liturgy on Dec. 25th

TUESDAY/DECEMBER 25th
NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
(One of "the 12 Great Feasts")

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

WEDNESDAY/DECEMBER 26th
Synaxis of the Theotokos

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY/DECEMBER 29th
Postfeast of the Nativity

9:30a.m. Akathist to the Nativity; Confession
5:30p.m. Vigil; Confession

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 30th
Postfeast of the Nativity
Sunday Before the Theophany

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour
(no church school classes)



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
DECEMBER 25th

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

With this festal greeting, we announce to each other the joy of this Great Feast. We celebrate in joy and in deep thanksgiving, the Gift of the Son of God to the human race.

The Gift of Jesus Christ is His Presence among us now and forever. It is the Gift of adopting us as His spiritual kin. It is the Gift of healing, regeneration and sharing in eternal life. It is indeed the Gift of Life itself.

We approach this Feast abiding in a spirit of repentance, gratitude and spiritual renewal, seeking to be like unto the Image in Whom we were created and are being perfected – Christ Himself.

May these festal days be for us a time of joy, good will, peace, reconciliation with God and one another. May we glorify Jesus Christ by word and deed. May this Feast advance us more surely as walking as children of the Light and the Day.

Wishing to all our parishioners and friends of our parish and their families, the blessings and grace of this Great Feast!

Fr. James



Thanks is Expressed

To all those who contributed to the Christmas Gifts for the Mc Cartney family.

Two Little Kittens

Are looking for a home, please contact William Kuzemchak (732-469-2962).

Inclement Weather & Cancellations

Due to ice or snow may necessitate that some schedule service or event on the parish calendar may be cancelled or postponed.

Cancellations will be posted on the parish website at least one hour before the scheduled time. You may also call Fr. James (908-685-1452) or Mary Holovach (908-725-8978) to find out about cancellations before you set out.

Congratulations!

To Fr. John and Emily Parsells on the birth of their son, Alexander on December 12th.

Nativity fast-Free Season

During the festal time from Dec. 25th thru Jan. 4th, there is no fasting on any day. In keeping with the festal character of these days, we do not kneel or make prostrations. It is prohibited to perform the Mystery of Marriage and to serve Memorial Services (except for the newly-departed) likewise in this time.

Offerings for the Week of Dec. 23rd

Olive Oil – in memory of Emilia; in memory of Michael; for the protection and health form God for Gabriela-Antoaneta; for the health of John (birthday); for the health of Liam (birthday).

Wine – for protection during travel for Marian and Stefan; in memory of Anna and health of Justina.

Flowers - in honor the Nativity of the Lord; in memory of Joan.

2008 Offering Schedule for Olive Oil (\$5), Wine (\$10) and Flowers (\$20)

May be found on the vestibule stand. Please make your offering at the time you sign-up and mark a blank envelope with amount.

Parish Synodicon

Dec. 28, 2007 (40th Day) Archbishop PETER
Dec. 28, 2007 (40th Day) Vera Somoluk
Dec. 24, 1946 Steven Holovach
Dec. 24, 1947 Catherine Hriniaik
Dec. 24, 1961 Sophie O'Connell
Dec. 24, 1978 Anna Martinchuk
Dec. 25, 1990 Alexander Kuntzevich
Dec. 25, 1991 Helen Wislosky
Dec. 26, 1980 Jerry Russo
Dec. 26, 2004 Douglas Rose
Dec. 27, 1989 Mary George
Dec. 28, 1927 Joseph Ribskey
Dec. 28, 1927 Olga Solodiuk
Dec. 28, 1983 John Grishkevitz
Dec. 28, 1987 Edmund Kornacki
Dec. 29, 1977 Alice Susko
Dec. 29, 2002 Edna Kalenik
Dec. 30, 1934 Adam Gromako
Dec. 30, 1989 Michael Barna
Dec. 30, 2006 Anna Wasitowski



Parish Educational Classes

Teen Discussion Group (high school students) a brief 20 minute informal discussion to be held on the 2nd Sunday during the Coffee Hour.

Class A (K thru 3rd grade) on the 1st and 3rd Sundays during Coffee Hour.

Class B (4 thru 8 grade) on the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Sundays during Coffee Hour.

General Question & Answer Period on the 4th Sunday during Coffee Hour.

Have You Notified the Rector?

Of any changes in parish membership status, as well as names, addresses, and phone for the new 2008 Parish Directory?

Namesday Greetings

St. David/Sun. after the Nativity; David Peterson;
St. Stephen/Dec. 27th: Stephanie Kachek;
Many Blessed Years!

Our Parish Website

Has posted an advanced calendar (schedule of services) for the year 2008. You are encouraged to make use of it in your own calendar planning for and in the year 2008.



TWO QUESTIONS WE NEED TO ASK ABOUT THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

By St. John of Kronstadt

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.

What does God’s Incarnation require of us?

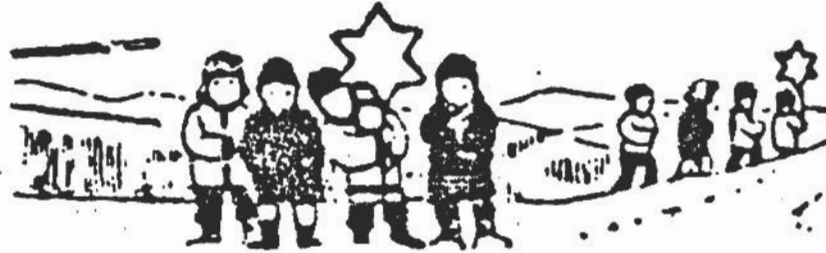
As we prepare for the feast of the Nativity of Christ, you must ask yourself:

- 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 loved one another as befits the children of God?
- Have you grown closer to God through faith and love, like His beloved children?
- 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 we must ask ourselves now and decide; not only with our minds, but above all, with our hearts and our very deeds.

The Nativity 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 may 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.



Q. Why is the Nativity of Christ celebrated on December 25th?

A. There are two main explanations as to why the Church chose to celebrate the Nativity of Christ on December 25th.

The first says that the day was chosen to oppose the great pagan feast of the sun god, which was celebrated near December 22nd at the Winter Solstice, the time of year when the days started to get longer again (at least in the northern hemisphere). It is believed that the Church chose December 25th, because it ensured that Christians would be fasting during the pagan celebration and would therefore not easily be tempted to participate. And also because it would help the pagan peoples to leave off worshipping the false sun god and instead celebrate the coming of the True God, "the Sun of Righteousness".

The second explanation says that the day was chosen in relation to the feast of the Annunciation, which was celebrated on March 25th commemorating the supernatural conception of the Lord in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Annunciation was celebrated on this day because of the belief in the ancient world that great men died on the same day as they were conceived. Since the Lord was believed to have been crucified on March 25th, it also came to be believed that He was likewise conceived on this day. And since it followed that the Lord's birth would be nine months after His conception, the feast of His Nativity was set on December 25th.



Q. What are the Royal Hours? And why are they an important service of Christmas?

A. The Royal Hours combine the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 9th Hour services into one service which is characterized by special Psalms and hymns, as well as Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel Readings, relating to the upcoming Feast. It was customary during Byzantine times for the Emperor to be in attendance for the entire service, and for this reason it became known as the Royal Hours.

The Royal Hours are an important service of Christmas because in the reading of the prophets (Old Testament), apostles (Epistles), and evangelists (Gospels) we see the Nativity of Christ in its full Biblical context of expectation, preparation, and fulfillment. There is no other service which more beautifully foretells or proclaims the Lord's salvific coming in the flesh.



Christ is born! Glorify Him!

During the celebration of the Lord's Nativity, it is the custom of Orthodox Christians to greet one another with the joyous exclamation, "Christ is born!", to which the one greeted responds, "Glorify Him!"

Troparion (Tone 4)

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the Light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshipped the stars, were taught by a Star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on High. O Lord, glory to Thee!

Kontakion (Tone 3)

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels with shepherds glorify Him! The wise men journey with a star! Since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a Little Child!

SAINT JOHN OF SAN FRANCISCO ON MATTHEW 1:25

And [Joseph] knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called His name JESUS.

The word "until" does not signify that Mary remained a virgin only until a certain time. In the Bible, the word "until" and words similar to it often signify eternity. It is said of Christ: "In His days shall shine forth righteousness and an abundance of peace, *until* the moon be taken away" (Psalm 71:7), but this does not mean that when there shall no longer be a moon at the end of the world, God's righteousness shall no longer be; precisely then, rather, will it triumph. And what does it mean when it says: "For He must reign, *until* He hath put all enemies under His feet?" (1 Cor. 15:25). *Is the Lord to reign only for a time until His enemies shall be put under His feet?* The Savior in the Gospel says to the Apostles (Matt. 28:20): "Lo, I am with you always, even *until* the end of the world." Are we to believe that the Lord will no longer be with the disciples in the age to come? While there are plenty more such examples of the use of the word "until", the above are sufficient to prove that Matt 1:25 does not argue against the life-long virginity of the Mother of God.



BLESSED THEOPHYLACT ON MATTHEW 1:19

Then Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to divorce her secretly.



The law decreed that the adulteress be exposed and punished publicly. How, then, was Joseph righteous since he intended to cover up her sin and thus transgress the law? The answer is, first, that he was righteous for intending to do this very thing. He did not wish to be harsh, but in his great goodness took compassion on her, showing himself to be above the law, and already living in a manner superior to the decrees of the law. Secondly, since he himself knew that she had conceived not by adultery but of the Holy Spirit. Behold what the evangelist says: "She was found to be with child." Found by whom? By Joseph; that is, he discerned that she had conceived of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he "was minded to divorce her secretly," for he no longer dared to take as a wife her who had been deemed worthy of such grace.

CHRISTMAS TREE TRADITIONS

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Traditionally, Christmas trees were not brought in and decorated until Christmas Eve (24 December), and then removed the day after twelfth night (i.e., 6 January); to have a tree up before or after these dates was even considered bad luck. Modern commercialization of Christmas has resulted in trees being put up much earlier; in shops often as early as late October (in the UK, Selfridge's Christmas department is up by early September, complete with Christmas trees). A common tradition in U.S. homes is to put the tree up right after Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November) and to take it down right after the New Year. Some households in the U.S. do not put up the tree until the second week of December, and leave it up until the 6th of January (Epiphany). In Germany, traditionally the tree is put up 24th of December and taken down 7th of January, though many start one or two weeks earlier. In Australia, the Christmas tree is usually put up on the 1st of December, which occurs about a week before the school summer holidays; except for South Australia, where most people put up their tree after the Adelaide Credit Union Christmas Pageant, which is in early November. Some traditions suggest that Christmas trees may be kept up until no later than the 2nd of February, the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Candlemas), when the Christmas season effectively closes. Superstitions warn of negative consequences if Christmas greenery is not removed by Candlemas Eve.



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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.

