

SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 21, 2008

SUNDAY/DEC. 21st Prefeast

Sunday Before the Nativity (Tone 2)

(Wine & oil Permitted)

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

Coffee Hour; Church School

6:30p.m. Compline; Confessions

MONDAY/DEC. 22nd Prefeast

6:15p.m. Memorial of (+) Nicholas Chabra

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

TUESDAY/DEC. 23rd Prefeast

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 24th

Eve of the Nativity

9:30a.m. Royal Hours

5:30p.m. Vigil

THURSDAY/DEC. 25th

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

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

(Nativity Fast Ends)

Coffee Hour

6:30p.m. Vespers

FRIDAY/DEC. 26th Postfeast

Synaxis of the Theotokos

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 27th Postfeast

9:30a.m. Akathist to the Nativity; Confessions

5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

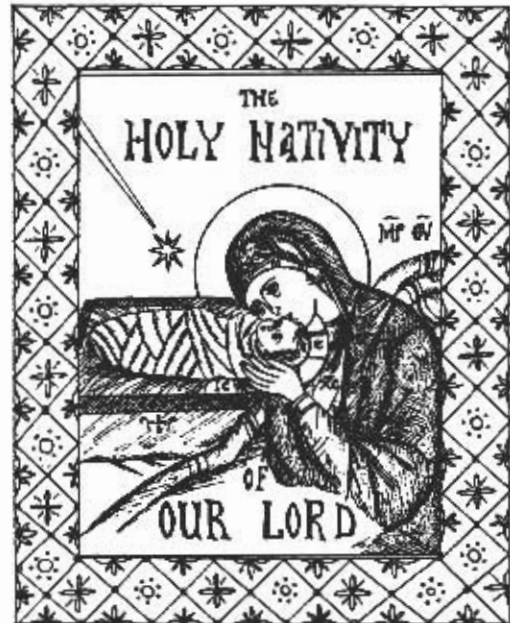
SUNDAY/DEC. 28th Postfeast

Sunday After the Nativity (Tone 3)

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

Coffee Hour

Question & Answer Period



CHRIST IS BORN!

GLORIFY HIM!

Greetings on the Feast of the Holy Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ! As we celebrate this the birth of our Saviour, and according to St. Basil the Great, the "re-birth of all the world;" may this feast bring to the souls of each one of you, dear parishioners and friends of the parish, the light, joy and manifold rich blessings of God Incarnate!

Our lives and times are troubled. We all need hope, consolation, strength, renewal and know that Jesus Christ loves us unconditionally. This feast offers us this gift of divine love.

Blessings to all! Glory to God in the highest!

F. J. Jones

Cancellations Due to Weather

The Parish Website will indicate any changes to the schedule as necessitated by the weather, at least one hour before the service or event. Please check the website before you leave home if the weather is "iffy." You may also call the rectory, or if there be no answer, Mary Holovach may be called at 908-725-8978.

The Mysteries of Holy Confession and Holy Communion

Should be received by all the faithful in the time of this 40 Day Nativity Lent. Those who desire to partake of Holy Communion on the Feast of the Nativity, December 25th, must have gone to Holy Confession in the time period after November 15th.

Namesday Greetings

St. Anastasia/Dec. 22nd: Anastasia Mickel, Anastasia Kita, Meredith Anastasia Hansen
St. Eugenia/Dec. 24th: Joan Bongiorno;
St. Stephen/Dec. 27th: Stephanie Kachek;
Many Blessed Years!

Offerings for the week of December 21st

Olive Oil – in memory of Joan; for the health of John and Liam (birthday); in memory of Michael, Justina and Anna; in memory of Vaschen; in memory of Nicholas Chabra.

Wine – in thanksgiving to God; in memory of Nicholas Chabra.

Flowers - in memory of Emilia.

Litya Breads – for the health of Mary.

Postfeast of the Nativity

Is celebrated December 26th thru the "leave-taking," on December 31st. These are the festal days that fill us with great joy. In this period of time, in keeping with the character of the days, we do not fast on any day, not do we kneel or make prostrations either in church or in our homes. The church rules forbid the serving of Memorial Services and the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage in this time.

2009 Parish Wall Calendars

They are in the church vestibule please secure one for the New Year.

Parish Synodicon – Memory Eternal!

| | | |
|----------|---------------|----------------------|
| 40 Days | Dec. 27, 2008 | Vaschen Sarichisian |
| 40 Days | Dec. 31, 2008 | Anastasia Barna |
| December | 21, 1946 | Helen Semoskovich |
| December | 21, 1997 | Nadia Marchuk |
| December | 21, 2006 | Nicholas Chabra |
| December | 23, 1950 | Gregory Persurance |
| December | 23, 1989 | Peter Kozura |
| December | 23, 1991 | Olga Barna |
| December | 24, 1946 | Steven Holovach |
| December | 24, 1947 | Catherine Hriniak |
| December | 24, 1961 | Sophie O'Connell |
| December | 24, 1978 | Anna Martinchuk |
| December | 25, 1990 | Alexander Kuntzevich |
| December | 25, 1991 | Helen Wislosky |
| December | 26, 1980 | Jerry Russo |
| December | 26, 2004 | Douglas Rose |

During the Divine Liturgy We Ought

- To remember that the Holy Angels are present and sing and pray with fear and devout piety. So should we.
- In prayer talk to God – not one another – Coffee Hour is the time and place for us to hold our conversations.
- Church business should not be engaged in during divine services by council members.
- Candles should be lighted before service begin, if you come late, light them only at times when the Royal Doors are closed.

Icon Print Collection Box

A box to bring your icon prints – from calendars, and cards is on the vestibule stand. Icon prints should not be disposed like trash. The box will be in the church until the end of January.





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 worshiping 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.



We confess one and the same individual as perfect God and perfect man. He is God the Word Which was flesh.

For if He was not man, why was Mary chosen? And if He is not God, whom does Gabriel call Lord?

If He was not man, who was laid in a manger? And if He is not God, whom did the angels who came down from heaven glorify?

If He was not man, who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, And if He is not God, in whose honor did the star appear?

If He was not man, whom did Simeon hold in his arms? And if He is God, to whom did Simeon say, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace?

If He was not man, whom did Joseph take when he fled into Egypt? And if He is not God, who fulfilled the prophecy: Out of Egypt have I called my Son?

If He was not man, whom did John baptize? And if He is not God, to whom did the Father say: This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased?

If He was not man, who hungered in the desert? And if He is not God, unto whom did the angels come and minister?

If He was not man, who was invited to the marriage in Cana of Galilee? And if He is not God, who turned the water into wine?

If He was not man, who took the loaves in the desert? And if He is not God, who fed the five thousand men and their women and children with five loaves and two fish?

If He was not man, who slept in the ship? And if He is not God, who rebuked the waves and the sea?

If He was not man, with whom did Simon the Pharisee sit at meat? And if He is not God, who forgave the sins of the harlot?

If He was not man, who wore a man's garment? And if He is not God, who healed the woman with the issue of blood when she touched His garment?

If He was not man, who spat on the ground and made clay? And if He is not God, who gave sight to the eyes of the blind man with the clay?

If He was not man, who wept at Lazarus' grave? And if He is not God, who commanded him to

come forth out of the grave four days after his death?

If He was not man, whom did the Jews arrest in the garden? And if He is not God, who cast them to the ground with the words: I am He?

If He was not man, who was judged before Pilate? And if He is not God, who frightened Pilate's wife in a dream?

If He was not man, whose garments were stripped from Him and parted by the soldiers? And if He is not God, why was the sun darkened upon His crucifixion?

If He was not man, who was crucified on the cross? And if He is not God, who shook the foundation of the earth?

If He was not man, whose hands and feet were nailed to the cross? And if He is not God, how did it happen that the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened?

If He was not man, who hung on the cross between the two thieves? And if He is not God, how could He say to the thief: Today thou shalt be with me in paradise?

If He was not man, who cried out, and gave up the ghost? And if He is not God, whose cry caused many bodies of the saints which slept to arise?

If He was not man, whom did the women see laid in the grave? And if He is not God, about whom did the angel say to them: He is arisen, He is not here?

If He was not man, whom did Thomas touch when he put his hands into the prints of the nails? And if He is not God, who entered through the doors that were shut?

If He was not man, who ate at the sea of Tiberias? And if He is not God, on whose orders were the nets filled with fishes?

If He was not man, whom did the apostles see carried up into heaven? And if He is not God, who ascended to the joyful cries of the angels, and to whom did the Father proclaim: sit at My right hand?

If He is not God and man then, indeed, our salvation is false, and false are the pronouncements of the prophets.



It is vital for the Church to preach in social networks

Christ called upon fishers, future apostles, to leave their nets, follow him and become "fishers of man". Archpriest Viktor Gorbach, head of the Missionary Department of the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Diocese, is no fisher, but he is also close to the ocean and tries to answer this appeal his own way, but also using the nets, social ones. People from various parts of the world write to him, he answers the users and moderate different thematic groups.

Whether this mission of "fisher of man" is effective, what kind of people turn to him and what they write, Fr. Viktor told the *Interfax-Religion* correspondent Olga Kiryanova.

- You intensively communicate with young people in major social networks. Can we call it an Orthodox mission?

- Yes, I have a page at *Odnoklassniki* (Russian analogue for Classmates.com - *IF*) and *V Konakte* (In contact). There are communities we organized together with young people. I can't evaluate this work, but I think it is very promising work for clerics as the majority of youth spends a lot of free time in the social nets. Today people are dissociated and Internet is the main source of communication. For this reason, Church representation is urgent here. Such work is characterized by informal communication aimed at real needs and demands of the society.

- What kind of people turns to you?

- Mission in social networks covers different people. Our geography is very extensive - people write to me from Sakhalin and Far East as well as from Central Russia, the Netherlands, the USA and Australia.

As a priest, I belong to several thematic groups. For example, at *Odnoklassniki* about seven-eight people a week ask me questions concerning them, which they're afraid to ask the parochial priest or even discuss with their relatives.

A girl complained to me about moral qualities of young men. She was concerned that most young men are socially passive, they don't have purpose in life, and some of them constantly drink and treat opposite sex like consumers. The girl's main problem is inability to set up a family.

Young men say that girls have high financial demands and lack femininity. Certainly, these problems are very difficult, but even few kind words can help a person to give fresh look at the most difficult situation and find the way out.

By the way, there's a great number of pseudo-Orthodox sects, various healers and charlatans at social websites. They claim they're priests or even elders. It proves that social networks trust in Orthodox Church and priests. It is rather difficult for an ordinary person to understand where a real priest is and who is a fraud. Thus, priests need to take part in them.

- Do followers of other religions turn to you?

- Yes, Muslims also address me. What is really interesting is that they usually question me about Islam teaching and oppose it to Orthodox dogmas. So people want direct interreligious polemics. It makes me respect them. I find it difficult to imagine an Orthodox believer who writes directly to a mufti, disputes with him, and criticizes Islam the way Muslims are writing me to say that Orthodoxy is "a false religion." They cite Koran as saying that all unfaithful should be killed. I find it interesting because it is live contact. Such polemics can help us give a fresh critical look at some questions of Christian-Islamic dialogue in order to form more reasoned and clear position in the future.

- Do you think that missionary work in social networks can indeed bring a person to the Church?

- I think, yes. The most important task is to destroy certain negative stereotype of the Church that a concrete person may have and then he will make his deliberate choice. I remember very well how a priest came to Sakhalin fourteen years ago. I was almost a boy then and but when he was talking to me, he called me "brother." He said it informally, very sincerely, and it sank into my heart. I wasn't a practicing Christian, but I sympathized with Christianity. I still warmly recall this priest. Perhaps, his sincere address helped me come to the Church afterwards.

It's difficult to evaluate the efficiency of Orthodox mission. God leads a person to the Church. It's very difficult to find criteria for saying: this thing helps come to the Church and that one doesn't. Some people sow and some come to reap. Every kind word we say and every good thing we do will give its fruit.

We have to work and remember that we work for God and not to some certain "effective" programs. Any such program stumbles over human factor. Certain technologies can help to lead a person to a certain structure, but only love leads to the Church. When a person sees this love and understands that it is not a pragmatic interest, but he is interesting and important to you because you are a Christian, it stands high. Sincere care of his Orthodox friend can help person make a choice and come to Christ. It may happen in five or ten years, but from my personal experience I can say that it won't take long. Missionary work is more effective when it is custom made. Preaching at the stadium is also important as such format covers larger audience, but personal contact is more important. It is indispensable. I am sure that social networks give a very serious resource that is vital for the Church to use.