

# **SAINTS PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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Parish Website: [www.ssppoc.org](http://www.ssppoc.org) Diocese of NY-NJ: [www.nynjoca.org](http://www.nynjoca.org)

Face Book: "Friends of Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church"

## ***BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 13, 2015***



*View from Monks' Lagoon, St. Herman's Spruce Island*

### ***SUNDAY/DECEMBER 13***

***Sunday of the Holy Forefathers/St. Herman of Alaska (+1837)***

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

11:20a.m. Annual Christmas Cookie Walk

### ***WEDNESDAY/DECEMBER 16***

7:00p.m. Vespers with Anointing of oil from tomb of St. Dionysios; Confessions

### ***THURSDAY/ DECEMBER 17***

***St. Dionysios of Zakynthos (+1624)***

9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

### ***FRIDAY/DECEMBER 18***

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

### ***SATURDAY/DECEMBER 19***

9:30a.m. Akathist to Our Lord; Confessions

3:00p.m. Confessions

5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

### ***SUNDAY/DECEMBER 20***

***Sunday Before the Nativity/St. John of Kronstadt (+1908)***

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

Church School; Coffee Hour; Question & Answer Period

6:00p.m. Compline

### **Offerings Week of December 13**

**Olive Oil:** in memory of Michael, John, Rosalia, and Anastasia; in memory of Vachsen and Emilia; for the health of Vera and in memory of John; in memory of William; for the health of Ana and Mark (birthdays).

**Wine:** for the health of Alexander (birthday); in honor of St. Herman of Alaska.

**Flowers:** for the health of Rebecca, Sarah and Rachael (names days).

### **The Parish Synodicon: Memory Eternal!**

Dec. 31 40<sup>th</sup> Day Zinaida Neudachin

Dec. 14, 1978 Pauline Jackowlew

Dec. 16, 1933 Vladimir Shultz

Dec. 16, 1993 Ann Warin

Dec. 18, 1980 Joseph Pituck

### **Memorial Services**

For Julia Galida (+25 Dec. 2014), Mon., Dec. 21, 6:30p.m.

For John Taluc (father of Maria Torrisi) 40<sup>th</sup> day of repose, Tues., Dec. 21, 6:30p.m.

### **Coffee Hour Hosts**

(Fasting Foods: Nov. 15 thru Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>)

Dec. 13 Dunaenko, Wypych, Chirnoaga, Moldoveanu & Nemes

Dec. 20 Peterson, Bakaletz, Mattei & Erkman

Dec. 27 Kita, Nevitt, Keller & Turri

### **Usher Schedule**

Dec. 13 Jerome S. & Adrian M.

Dec. 20 Dennis F. & Peter B.

Dec. 27 Edward S. & Kahka K.

### **Counters**

Dec. 13 Lisa K. & Daniel T.

Dec. 20 Inga G. & Peter B.

Dec. 27 Ekaterini M. & Ciprian C.

### **Names Day Greetings**

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Before Nativity/ Rebecca Oliver, Sarah Fedechko, Sarah Oliver, Rachael Oliver  
Many Blessed Years!

### **Nativity Lent – Daily Prayer for Peace**

Let us be faithful in this daily prayer. (Yellow sheet on the vestibule stand.)

### **Nativity Lent Fasting Norms**

A fast is observed from meat, dairy, fish, wine and oil products. There are days permitting fish, wine and oil. These days are indicated on your Parish Wall Calendar, the November Printed Calendar and the Calendar on the Parish Website. The Nativity Lent ends after the Divine Liturgy on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Lenten Charities Expressions**

The Food Basket ends Sunday, Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>

The Winter Coat Collection ends Sun. Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>

Poor Basket by "Icon Joy of All That Sorrow," remains on-going throughout the year.

### **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary DVD orders**

The 70 minute video will soon be reproduced. Order forms are on the vestibule stand. A wonderful insight into the life of Ss. Peter & Paul Church in Manville.

### **2016 Parish Wall Calendars**

Each household is asked to take only one.

### **The Mysteries of Confession & Communion**

The Lenten Season is the appropriate time for receiving the Holy Mysteries. Those that receive Holy Communion on Sundays, be sure you have gone to Confession in this Lenten Time – Nov. 15- Dec. 24. Those that do not ordinarily receive the Holy Gifts, every week, are encouraged to benefit from these Holy Mysteries in this Lenten period.

### **Keep Informed About Church Matters**

Consult the parish website, add yourself to our parish email list and join us on our Face Book page.

### **3 Seeds of Growth for December**

- 1) Know something about the life of your Patron saint and the date of your names day.
- 2) Invoke your Patron saint daily, "O Holy (Name) my patron, pray unto God for me."
- 3) "Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! (Psalm 47). At the Divine Liturgy sing loud/soft the hymns and responses.

## NEW PARISH LIBRARY MATERIALS

The Adult Study Class of Fall 2015: *"On Prayer, based on Sermons of St. Theophan the Recluse"*

1. A Rule of Prayer
2. Mental Prayer
3. Unceasing Prayer (hint: listen while you drive)
4. A Life of Prayer
5. Spiritual Struggle

All these are available on CD for checking out as well as paper copies.

Sources: *"The Path of Prayer,"* and *"The Art of Prayer"* both by St. Theophan the Recluse and *"Wounded by Love"* by St. Porphyrios of Mt. Athos

The Adult Study Class of December 10<sup>th</sup>: *"Why and How the Son of God took on Human Nature"*

CD and study paper available. Source: *"The Feasts of the Lord"* by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, Greece.



*St. Herman beholding an angel at Monks' Lagoon blessing the waters at Epiphany.*

### **A REFLECTION OF ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA**

**Feast Days: Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> and Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>**

**By Fr. Thomas Hopko (+2015)**

American Christianity desperately needs the witness of St. Herman, for the American way of life is so radically opposed in so many ways to the life of this man and the Lord Jesus whom he served. Power, possessions, profits, pleasures: these are the things that Americans are known for. These are the goals that we are schooled to pursue. These are the things in which we take pride. And, sadly enough, these are also the things that many of us are taught to value by our "religious leaders," both by their words and their examples. But this is not the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is not the way of the saints.

By American standards, St. Herman of Alaska, like the Lord Jesus Himself, was a miserable failure. He made no name for himself. He was not in the public eye. He wielded no power. He owned no property. He had few possessions, if any at all. He has no worldly prestige. He played no role in human affairs. He partook of no carnal pleasures. He made no money. He died in obscurity among outcast people. Yet today, more than a hundred years after his death, his icon is venerated in thousands of churches and his name is honored by millions of people whom he is still trying to teach to seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness which has been brought to the world by the King who was born in a cave and killed on a cross. The example of St. Herman is crucial to the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord – especially in America.

**ABOUT BEING A PARISHIONER OF  
SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH  
MANVILLE, NEW JERSEY**

Following the Tradition of the Church, the purpose of membership in the Parish is to seek the knowledge of God and union with Him through Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to express that unity with God in Christ in all religious, moral, family and social activities. Generally, this expression consists of an enlightened obedience to the teachings of the Orthodox Faith, and is manifested in regular attendance at the divine services of the Parish, in frequent reception of the Holy Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ, in care for the Parish property and buildings, in regular contributions in fulfillment of the financial commitment, and in doing all that is possible to promote the Christian spirit of love, unity and brotherly concern among members of the parish and witnessing to our Faith commitment to those outside the Parish.

A church member must:

- a. Have been sacramentally received into the Orthodox Church and consciously uphold and profess the Orthodox Faith and Moral Teachings;
- b. Be eighteen years of age or older;
- c. Be a regular communicant, that is, participant in the Holy Mysteries of Confession and Communion;
- d. Fulfill the stewardship obligations established by the Parish:
  1. *Treasure:* All members of the Parish are urged to make a commitment to the Parish, using the envelope system, rendering back to the Lord a first portion of what God has entrusted to us.
  2. *Time:* All members of the Parish are urged to set aside the first portion of their time for worship, fellowship, charitable service, and education;
  3. *Talent:* All members of the Parish are urged to offer their talents in service to the Church, remembering that each member of the Body of Christ has been entrusted with gifts of the Holy Spirit for the ministry of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 12).
- e. Must be officially registered by the parish priest to be part of the Parish Census.

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***MEMBERSHIP IS DISCIPLESHIP – BE CO-WORKERS WITH US!***

***NOT A MEMBER? YOU ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US!***



## The Nativity of Christ -- Seven Questions, Seven Answers

His Grace, Michael – Bishop of New York & the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

**Question #1:** What are we celebrating on Christmas Day?

**Answer:** For us Orthodox Christians, Christmas is the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the joyous celebration of the Birth of the Word of God as a child. The Birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary is proclaimed in the Kontakion of the Feast: "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!" On Christmas we celebrate what we proclaim in the Nicene Creed: "... for us and for our salvation (the Son of God) came down from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man." The Nativity of Our Lord fulfills what was first revealed nine months before, in the Annunciation by the Archangel Gabriel to the Most Holy Mother of God: the Second Person of the Holy Trinity assuming flesh and becoming human. As St. John declares in the fourth Gospel: "... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

**Question #2:** In what Gospels do we read the accounts of the Nativity of our Lord?

**Answer:** There are two accounts of the Birth of Christ in the Gospels – one by Saint Matthew, and the other by Saint Luke. Saint Matthew's account relies on Saint Joseph the Betrothed as his source. Matthew's audience is primarily the Jewish people. His Gospel's purpose is to introduce the Jews to Jesus as the Messiah. He sees and presents Christ as the greatest Teacher of all, greater than even Moses. Matthew uses Old Testament prophecy regarding the promised Messiah 41 times to prove his point – he shows the fulfillment of 37 of them in Jesus; and 5 of them are in the Nativity account. Matthew presents the Magi – the rich, the famous, the educated of the world – Gentiles who come to believe in Jesus to educate the Jews who have the Hebrew Scriptures to help them believe in Christ ... an advantage that the pagans, represented by the Magi, did not have. The key passage in Matthew's account of the Nativity is the prophecy the angel reminded Joseph of: "Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel," which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:22). Saint Luke's account relies upon the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, as his source. Luke's audience is primarily the Gentiles. His Gospel's purpose is to introduce the Gentiles to Jesus as the Savior. Luke sees and presents Christ as the Savior of all the world – Gentiles as well as the Chosen People. He needs to explain Old Testament things to the Gentiles who are not familiar with them: for example "Jesus" means "Savior". Luke uses the shepherds – the poor, the unknown, the uneducated – the lowly of the world who believe in the new-born Savior. In his Gospel, other lowly ones of the world – women and children, publicans and sinners – all come to Jesus to be forgiven and saved. The key passage in Luke's Nativity Gospel is the announcement of the angels, to the shepherds, to Luke's

readers, and to all of us: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:12).

**Question #3:** What were the roles of the Virgin Mary and Joseph the Betrothed in the Nativity?

**Answer:** According to St. Dimitri of Rostov, Our Lord's Most Blessed Mother, the immaculate Virgin Mary, was betrothed (engaged) to the righteous Joseph who was then eighty years of age. Saints Gregory of Nyssa and Epiphanius of Cyprus both tell us that Mary was entrusted to the elder so that he might serve as the guardian of her virginity and a witness to her purity. It was necessary that the couple be betrothed, because God wanted to conceal from the devil the mystery of the Incarnation and the perpetual virginity of His most pure Mother. Deceived by the bonds of wedlock, the evil one did not suspect that this was the Maiden of whom Isaiah had prophesied: "Lo, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son ..." (Isaiah 7:14). Thus, St. Athanasius writes: "Joseph was made steward of the mystery so that the Virgin, appearing to have a husband, would be held in esteem." The most holy, most pure Virgin was indeed found to be with Child by the Holy Spirit before the completion of the rites of marriage, and day by day the sacred womb, that held the uncontainable God, grew larger. Her pregnancy was especially noticeable after she returned from her three-month stay with Elizabeth. Joseph was troubled by doubts and sorrow, and confronted the Virgin. According to St. Athanasius, the Virgin answered: "Wait a little, Joseph, and shepherds will reveal the truth. As the Lord lives, Who now has preserved my virginity, I have not known sin. No one has touched me and the Child I bear was conceived by God's doing." Then while he was pondering these things in his mind, "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21).

**Question #4:** If Mary gave birth to a Son, how is she considered "ever-Virgin"?

**Answer:** The Scripture tells us that rising from sleep, St. Joseph did as the angel of the Lord instructed him. He treated Mary with the honor belonging to a virgin consecrated to God, and, in the words of St. Matthew, "he knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son, and he called His name Jesus" (Matthew 1:24-25). Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid writes concerning the word "till" in this passage: "Till here does not mean that before the birth he did not know her, and afterwards he did ... but that he absolutely never knew her. Christ says, "I am with you always, even till the end of the world," meaning, when He will be more than ever with us. The Saints tell us that it was fitting that she who bore the Savior should do so without the pain of childbirth, for she was a stranger to the pleasure of marital relations. According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, "As a virgin, she conceived, as a virgin she

carried the Child in her womb, as a virgin she gave birth, remaining ever a virgin." In giving birth to God Incarnate, the Ever-Virgin Mary dispensed with the usual assistance of a midwife. Saint Athanasius writes: "She gave birth and herself wrapped the Child in swaddling clothes (fine strips of linen from Nazareth) and laid Him in a manger. She permitted no unclean hand to touch her most pure Son, but herself provided for all His needs.

**Question #5:** What is the significance of the place where Jesus was born?

**Answer:** Saint Luke tells us that a decree had been issued by Caesar Augustus, that a census be held throughout the Roman Empire. So Joseph had left Nazareth in Galilee and went to the City of David, Bethlehem in Judea, with his espoused wife Mary (Luke 2:2-7). Bethlehem, which is situated not far south from Jerusalem, was a town that lay on the road from Jerusalem to the hill country in which Hebron, the city of priests (i.e. Zachariah) is located. It was a journey of about three days by foot from Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary lived, to Bethlehem. Bethlehem is called the city of David because it was there that David had been born and anointed with the holy oil of kingship. It was there that Rachel had died, and where Jesse, David's father, was buried. Originally it was called "Ephrata," but Jacob who pastured his flocks there, foresaw and proclaimed that the Bread from Heaven, Christ the Lord, would be born in that very place; so he renamed it "Bethlehem," which means "House of Bread." There is a well there that bears David's name (II Kings 23:5). According to St. Dimitri of Rostov, opposite that well, in the hill on which the town stands, but outside the inhabited area, there was a cave, which was used as a stable ... and there, at midnight, on the 25th of December (exactly nine months after the Annunciation), as the most blessed Virgin was praying fervently to God, being entirely immersed in reflection on the Divinity, and aflame with love and longing for the Lord, she gave birth without travail to Jesus Christ.

**Question #6:** What else is of importance about that first holy night?

**Answer:** The hymns of our Church proclaim: "The angels encircled the manger as though it were the throne of the cherubim, regarding the cave as heaven and gazing on the Master, who lay therein." Tied to the manger were the ox and a donkey, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib" (Isaiah 1:3). The ox and the donkey were both brought by Joseph from Nazareth. The donkey carried Mary, and the ox Joseph had intended to sell to pay his tax to Caesar and purchase provisions. Numerous trustworthy accounts assert that the Nativity took place on a Sunday, at midnight, following a Sabbath's end. The Sixth Ecumenical Council explains in this way our celebration of Sunday as the holiest day of the week: "On this day God created light; on this day He rained manna from Heaven; on this day He was baptized by John in the Jordan; on this day the most merciful Redeemer of our race rose from the dead for our salvation; on this day He poured out the Holy Spirit upon His Disciples." It was fitting that on the day



created light appeared, the Light eternal and uncreated should be manifested to the world. Solomon had also prophesied this: "When all was encompassed by stillness, and night had reached its midpoint, Thine almighty Word descended out of heaven from amidst royal thrones to this land of destruction" (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15).

Question #7: Knowing all of this, how then should we celebrate this feast?

*Answer:* Saint Gregory the Theologian answers this question for us in his Homily on the Nativity, in which he speaks of new life and re-creation in Christ: "This is our present Festival; it is this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man, that we might go forth, or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God – that putting off the old man, we might put on the New; and that as we died in Adam ... so we might live in Christ ... being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and rising with Him ..." "Therefore let us keep the Feast, not after the manner of a heathen festival, but after a godly sort; not after the way of the world, but in a fashion above the world; not as our own but as belonging to Him Who is ours, or rather as our Master's; not as of weakness, but as of healing; not as of creation, but of re-creation."

My prayer for all of you is that your celebration of this Feast of "God becoming man so that man might become like God" – will be a joyous one, filled with all the choicest of the new-born Savior's blessings. May He grant you a prosperous and peaceful life, good health and salvation, visitation and good hastening, and may He protect and preserve you in the coming new year, and for many, blessed years!

**Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!**

