

SAINTS PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN DECEMBER 18, 2016

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 18

Sunday Before the Nativity

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy;
Coffee Hour; Church School & Teen Class
Vespers at St. Simon of Cyrene
Mission, 80 Livingston Ave. (Ukrainian Church)
New Brunswick with Archbishop Michael

MONDAY/DECEMBER 19

7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

TUESDAY/DECEMBER 20

3:00p.m. Confessions
7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

WEDNESDAY/DECEMBER 21

7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

THURSDAY/DECEMBER 22

7:00p.m. Compline & Confessions

FRIDAY/DECEMBER 23

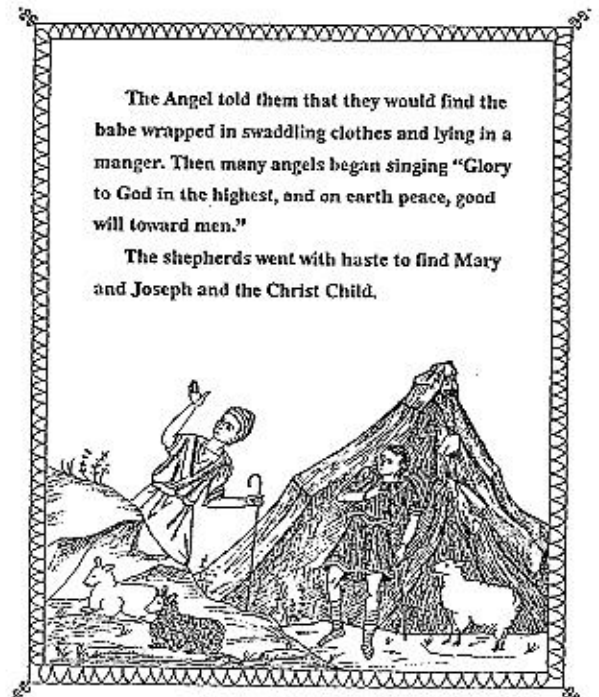
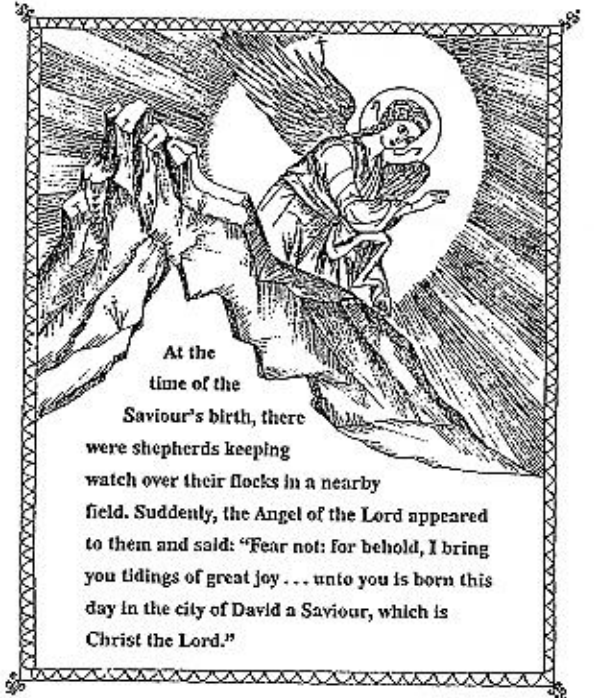
3:00p.m. Confessions
7:00p.m. Royal Hours
8:00p.m. Confessions

SATURDAY/DECEMBER 24

Eve of Nativity – Fast Day
4:00p.m. Vigil Service

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
(40 Day Fast ends after Liturgy)
Coffee Hour
6:30p.m. Vespers



Offerings Week of December 18

Olive Oil: in memory of Michael, Justina, Rosalie, Anna, Michael and Anastasia; in memory of Sarchisian and Bocai families; for the health of John (birthday); for the health of Kaliashvili family.

Wine: for the health of Saba (names day); for the health of Parascevi and Sister Theophano.

Synodicon: Memory Eternal!

Dec. 20, 1962 Michael Popko
Dec. 20, 1980 Anna Martin
Dec. 21, 1946 Helen Semoskovich
Dec. 21, 1997 Nadia Marchuk
Dec. 21, 2006 Nicholas Chabra
Dec. 23, 1950 Gregory Persurance
Dec. 23, 1989 Peter Kozura
Dec. 23, 1991 Olga Barna
Dec. 24, 1946 Steven Holovach
Dec. 24, 1947 Catherine Hriniak
Dec. 24, 1961 Sophie O'Connell
Dec. 24, 1978 Anna Martinchuk
Dec. 25, 1990 Alexander Kuntzevich
Dec. 25, 1991 Helen Wislosky

Coffee Hour Schedule

- Coffee Hour Hosts are reminded to prepare foods that are simple enough that you leave the church only after Communion.
- Coffee Hour Hosts, please place trash in the garbage cans outside, or if the cans are full, on top of the cans, but not on the ground.
- Please allow church school teachers and students to be first in line so they can prepare for classes.

Nativity Fast: Nov. 15-Dec. 24: No meat or dairy

Dec. 18 Peterson, Bakaletz, Mattei, Erkman & Stone
Dec. 25 Kita, Keller, Turri, Torrisi, & Kachek

Usher Schedule

Dec. 18 Dennis F.
Dec. 25 Edward S. & Kahka K.

Counters

Dec. 18 Ekaterini M. & Irina S.
Dec. 25 Jill P. & Paulina N.

Sunday Readers Schedule

Dec. 18 Ciprian C.

Dec. 25 Daniel T.

Names Day Greetings

St. Anastasia/Dec. 22: Anastasia Mickel, Anastasia Kita

St. Eugenia/Dec. 24: Joan Bongiorno

Many Blessed Years!

Nativity 40 Day Lent: Nov. 15-Dec. 24

In this one of "The Four Lents," of the year, a fast is observed from eat, dairy, fish, wine and oil. The Parish Wall Calendar and the Monthly Printed Wall Calendar indicate modifications to the fast.

Dec. 18/Sun. fish, wine and oil allowed

Dec. 19/Mon. -

Dec. 20/Tue. -

Dec. 21/Wed. -

Dec. 22/Thur. wine and oil allowed

Dec. 23/Fri. -

Dec. 24/Sat. wine and oil allowed

Dec. 25/Sun. 40 Day Fast ends after Liturgy

The Mysteries of Confession & Holy Communion in the Nativity 40 Days

One of the aspects of a Lenten season is receiving the Mysteries of Confession & Communion. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion for Nativity Day (Dec. 25th) ought to have gone to Confession sometime in the months of November or December. Please be attentive to this discipline.

Fast Free Festal Season

From December 25th thru January 4th, we do not fast, kneel or make prostrations. The next fasting day – a strict one – will be Tuesday, January 5th, the eve of Holy Theophany.

2017 Parish Wall Calendars

The calendars are available for pick-up in the church. They are limited. Please only one per household.

Congratulations & Many Years!

To Samuel Davis on his tonsure into the order of Reader by Archbishop Michael.

The Christmas Cookie Walk

Thanks to our bakers and buyers. This year we realized a profit of \$1,600.00

Appreciation to Laborers

Thanks to those that came and helped out on our two Church Cleaning Saturdays this month.

The Parish Nativity Greetings Letter

The offerings made were dedicated to our charitable fund of St. Philaret the Merciful. The amount was \$2,490. The Lord bless your offerings!

Three Welcoming Videos to our Parish

Three welcoming videos, each about 2 to 3 minutes long have been produced as an introduction to our parish. These videos are posted both on our website and Facebook, "Friends of Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church." Please share these videos with others. We want everyone to know what the Church offers. You can be an evangelist by "sharing," these videos. Many thanks to Fr. John Parsells, who took the time to formulate these videos without charge.

Enrolled as a Catechumen

Your prayers are asked for Raria (Mary) Raymond, on her being enlisted into the rankings of a catechumen.

January 2017 Considerations

- The Great Blessing of Waters on the Feast of the Theophany, January 6th.
- The Blessing of Homes Season: January 7th thru February 24th.
- Parish Council Meeting, January 19th.
- All Printed Reports for Annual Meeting Deadline, January 31st.
- Annual Parish Meeting, Sunday, February 12th at 12:30p.m.

The Parish Monthly Calendar For the Year 2017 may be viewed on our Website

By clicking on any month in the year 2017, you will find posted the services, study classes, church school, and parish events. All is subject to change. Please consult the on-line calendar when planning your own domestic calendar.

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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A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

O Lord Jesus Christ our God: let Thy holy Body be my eternal life; Thy precious Blood, my remission of sins. Let this Eucharist be my joy, health, and gladness. Make me, a sinner, worthy to stand on the right hand of Thy glory at Thine awesome second Coming, through the prayers of Thy most pure Mother and of all the saints. Amen.





CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF RECEIVING THE BODY AND BLOOD OF OUR LORD

There are at least four major benefits which may be expected after partaking of Christ's Body and Blood, namely:

1. Intimate union with Christ through His love.

Through this union we mingle with God and share with Him. As God is love, when we partake of Him through Holy Communion we become partakers of His love. It should be added that these Gifts from God are truly free. He compels no one to accept, just as in true love there is no compulsion, but absolute free to either accept or reject.

2. Strengthening of the body and soul.

Eating ordinary food only nourishes a person's body; but eating Christ's Flesh and Blood strengthens and nourishes both the body and soul. When the soul is nourished, a person is better able to live, grow and develop spiritually. This means that the ability to resist sin is greatly increased, thus enhancing the desire and capacity to be more virtuous, righteous, compassionate and considerate. We can be sure that this is so since Christ said: "I am the bread of life, he who comes to Me shall not hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:35), and then: "For My Flesh is true food and My Blood is true drink" (Jn 6:55).

With these statements Christ expounded the eternal nourishment value of His Flesh and Blood. Unlike ordinary food which only temporarily strengthens the body, true Divine food strengthens the soul eternally.

The strengthening effect of these Gifts, is another indicator of Christ's great love for us. Christ gave us certain Commandments to follow if we are able to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Scripture teaches that evil is spread through man by various demonic powers (Eph 6:12). Without Divine intervention man does not have the strength to fight these extremely powerful, fleshless creatures – as Christ said: "...for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). Man alone does not have the strength to become perfect. Not wishing man to be condemned to hell, Christ nourishes us with His Body

and Blood – giving us a Perfect Food with which to become perfect.

3. Preparation for eternal life with God.

Partaking in Communion prepares us to share with God, an eternally joyful life after the resurrection of the dead. Christ is God and therefore lives forever – by eating His Body and Blood, we are blended with Him and will likewise live forever. This is Christ's promise when He said: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:54).

This "life" that Christ refers to is not related to the life here on earth, since it is obvious that all men "live" here, even non-Christians. Nor does He refer to "life" of the general resurrection. Rather,

Christ refers to the glorious life which some Christians will inherit as a reward for righteous living. How necessary it is for us to partake in Christ's Body and Blood; by being with Him, our souls are washed and transformed – made beautiful – then, after death, we would not expect punishment and hell, but the unspeakable rewards of the Heavenly Kingdom.



4. Unity through love with other Christians.

Christ has only one Body, by partaking of It, each and everyone of us also becomes united into one body – the Body of Christ. Christ's love for us is made perfect in unity, since not only is it reciprocated between ourselves and Christ, but amongst ourselves as well. This is what Christ meant when He established the Church.

The Church is not a building where people pray, it is the Body of Christ – a living organism, in which we all unite in love with Him and amongst ourselves, when we partake of Holy Communion (1 Cor 10:17). Christ is the head of His Body, the Church (Col 1:18), and not some bishop, patriarch, theologian or other mortal man. The Orthodox Church is thus infallible, since Christ being God, is infallible; we can then be sure that our Divine nourishment can never be false or corrupted, even if those who perform this Sacrament are themselves imperfect or unworthy.



NATIVITY DEVOTION: I CAN ONLY IMAGINE

By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis / MyOCN.net



And going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him. Matthew 2:11

What would your first reaction be if you walked into a room and Christ was there? One can only imagine the scene when the Magi walked into the house where Jesus was, when they opened the door and laid their eyes on the reason that they had left home and followed a star for two years. They fell down and they worshipped Him. They must have had feelings of joy and awe, and probably also humility and unworthiness.

What will it be like the first time we cast our gaze on our Creator? We will all see God face-to-face at the Last Judgment. I remember hearing once that those who are not destined to be forever with God, those who are headed toward eternal condemnation, will not need to wait to hear that they are condemned. They will see the face of God and know that they have no business being with God because their earthly lives will not have reflected the preparation needed to enter eternal life. They will know this, they will



not need for God to tell them. On the other hand, those who have prepared for eternal life in this life, will gaze upon the face of God with joy. It will be the triumphant end of a long journey. Just like the Magi traveled over deserts and mountains for two years, trusting in a star, that it would lead them somewhere magnificent, those who travel the journey of life with their eyes on Christ will experience the joy of the Magi when God opens the gates of heaven for them.

Many people still don't understand the concept of worship. Many think that worship is only paying homage to God, even "giving Him His due." Worship is so much more than this.

Worship is learning. We learn about God through worship. As we sing hymns about the Lord, and hear Scripture passage and sermons, we learn about the Lord.

Worship helps us remember. We are so bombarded with all kinds of information and stimulation in the

world that it is easy to forget what God did for us. One of the reasons we worship is to remember what Jesus did for us in coming to earth to teach us, heal us, and ultimately to die for our sins.

Worship provides a good support group. Can you imagine a solitary wise man following a star for two years? I can imagine a group of wise men following the star, and occasionally one becoming discouraged in the journey and being encouraged by the others to continue. It's hard to imagine how one person could make the journey of the wise men alone. It would not only be dangerous, but lonely. But for two years, to have no one to talk to

about the journey, to have no one to offer encouragement, could the journey even have been made by one solitary man on a camel? Could this person maintain his enthusiasm, even sanity, without someone to help and encourage him? Because God made us in His image and likeness, then we

crave to be in union with others. Just as God exists in Trinity, we crave to exist in "unity" with others. Worship helps in this regard. Worship helps us to find encouragement in our faith because we are sharing the journey with others.

Worship offers us the opportunity to commune with God. There is no such thing as a private "Communion." Communion by its very definition requires that it be shared. In the context of worship, we are able to share in Holy Communion with one another. Even when I am visiting someone who is sick, and it is just two of us, I am able to offer Communion in the context of two people worshipping God.

Worship affords us the opportunity to stand with God, to come to God in His house. When we worship, we step out of the world temporarily and we enter into the Kingdom of God, made present on earth.

Worship puts us in the role of the Magi. As we open the door to God's house, we gaze in wonder on God Himself, in the sacrament of Holy Communion. We stand with God, together with the saints and the angels and one another. I heard a priest once say that if we understood fully what we are doing in worship, that we stand in the presence of God, that people would come to church and fall flat on their faces in awe.

The Magi made a long journey to the Christ, but when the star came to rest over the place where He was, they opened the door, beheld the Lord with their own eyes and fell down and worshipped Him.

Each week, we endure a difficult journey of life. Each Sunday, we are supposed to come to the house where Christ is, with Mary, His Mother, and all the saints, and we are supposed to walk in the door and fall down and worship Him. Today's verse about the arrival of the Magi is

something we should be experiencing on a weekly basis.



May the same faith and trust that sustained them in their journey to Christ sustain us in our journeys. And may the same awe that they felt when they laid their eyes on Him, that caused them to fall down and worship Him, may that same awe come upon us in our journeys, that we too may fall down and worship Him, and that we may one day have the doors of heaven opened to us so we can gaze upon Him with our own eyes.

You rose from the Virgin O Christ, the noetic Sun of Righteousness, and a star pointed to You, the Uncontainable contained in a

cave. It led the Magi to worship You; and with them we magnify You. O Giver of Life, glory to You! (From Vespers of the Nativity, Trans. Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

Leave time for worship this (and every) week!



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 THE VIRGIN BIRTH

According to the Law, "Every male child that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." Only with Christ did this literally occur. He Himself opened the womb of the Virgin at birth, while all other wombs which have born a child have first been opened by a man.

