

SAINTS PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 17, 2017

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 17

Holy Forefathers Sunday

St. Dionysios of Zakynthos

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

Coffee Hour; Church School & Teen Class

4:00p.m. Akathist to **St. Tikhon of Moscow**

Enlightener of North America with

Archbishop Michael & Clergy at Christ the Saviour Church in Paramus

TUESDAY/DECEMBER 19

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

WEDNESDAY/DECEMBER 20

3:00p.m. Confessions;

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

THURSDAY/DECEMBER 21

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

FRIDAY/DECEMBER 22

3:00p.m. Confessions

7:00p.m. Royal Hours; Confessions

SATURDAY/DECEMBER 23

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

3:00p.m. Confessions; 5:30p.m. Vigil; Confes

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 24

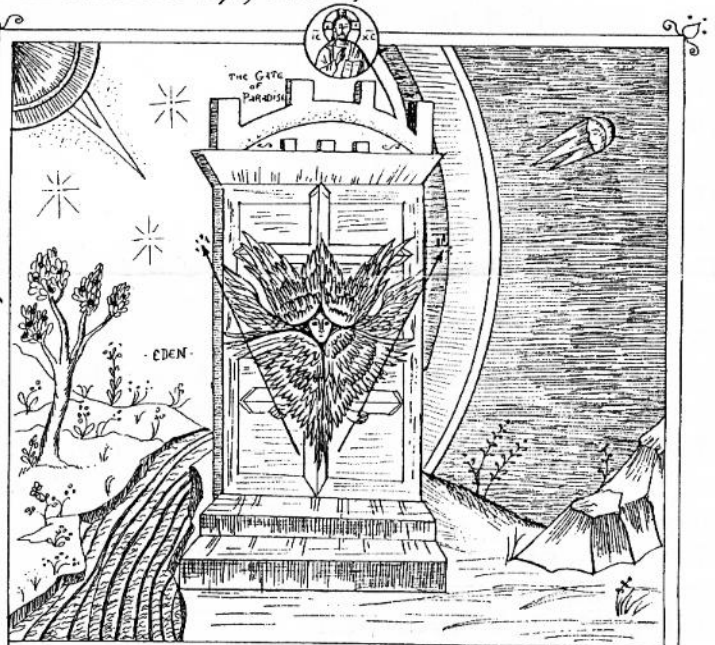
9:30a.m. Liturgy

4:00p.m. Vigil of Nativity

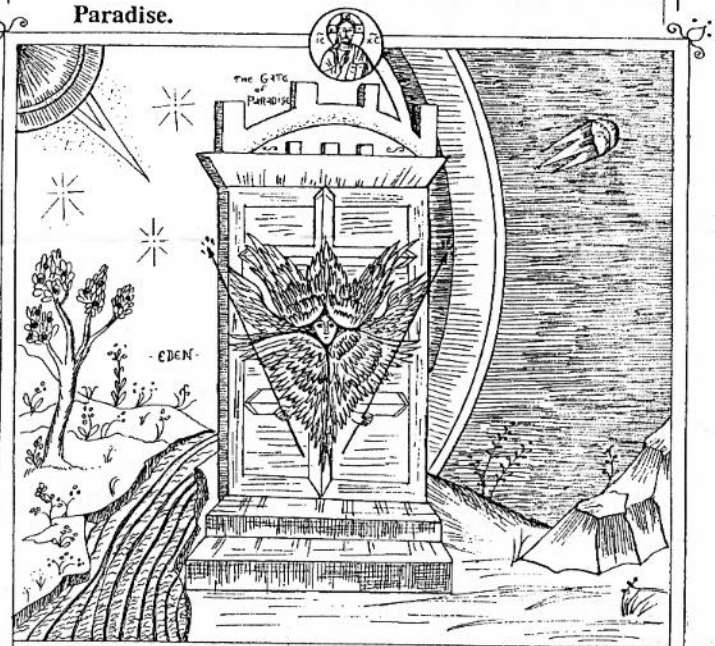
MONDAY/DECEMBER 25

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:30a.m. Liturgy; 6:30p.m. Vespers



All mankind waited for the coming of Christ the Saviour, who would open up the gates of Paradise.



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Offerings Week of December 17

Olive Oil: in memory of Michael, Justina, Rosalia, Anastasia, Anna & Ivanna; in memory of Bocai and Sarchisian families;

Synodicon: Memory Eternal!

Dec. 18, 1980 Joseph Pituck
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

Coffee Hour Schedule

Coffee Hour Hosts please prepare foods that are simple enough, so you are not absent from the Divine Liturgy. It is only after Communion, that we should leave the church and attend to food preparations.

Nov. 19 Lenten Coffee Hours Begins

Dec. 17 Chirnoaga, Moldoveanu, Vajda & Sue

Dec. 24 No fish permitted

Dec. 24 Peterson, Bakaletz, Mattei, Erkman & Stone

Counters Schedule

Dec. 17 Irina S. & Lisa K.

Dec. 24 Larissa M. & Paulina N.

Ushers Schedule

Dec. 17 Dennis F. & Robert E.

Dec. 24 Edward S. & Khaka K.

Sunday Readers Schedule

Dec. 17 Ciprian C. Dec. 24

The 40 Day Nativity Lent

On November 15, we entered into the Nativity Lent in preparation for the Nativity of our Lord (Dec. 25th). A fast is being observed from meat, dairy, fish, wine and oil. The Nativity 40 Day Lent ends after the Divine Liturgy on December 25th.

The Nativity Greeting

From the Dec. 25th thru Dec. 31st, the festal greeting is "Christ is Born!" "Glorify Him!"

The Holy Mysteries of Confession & Communion in Nativity Lent

The reception of these two Holy Mysteries of the Church is an essential part of our Lenten work. The faithful – adults and children of Confession age (7 and older) ought to receive these Mysteries in this time of the 40 days Fast (November-December Months).

The 2018 Parish Wall Calendars

Each family ought to secure one per household (there is a limited number.)

Fast Free Season: Dec. 25- Jan. 4

In this period of time we do not fast, kneel or make full prostrations. Aside from a Funeral Service, Memorial Services are not held, nor or Marriages permitted. All this is due to the festal character of these days.

Parish Directory Up-Dates

Are there any change in this past year to your phone or mailing address? If so, please make this known to Father James or Katherine Mantzafos as soon as possible. The Directory may be viewed on line, for the user word and password, e-mail frjames@ssppoc.org

Winter Weather Alert

If it is necessary to make changes in the schedule, they will be posted via 1) Parish E-Mail; 2) Parish website www.ssppoc.org ; 3) Friends of Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Face Book.

Names Day Greetings

2nd Sunday Before Nativity/Holy Ancestors:

Sarah Oliver, Sarah Fedechko, Rebecca Oliver, Rachael Oliver.

St. Anastasia/Dec. 22: Anastasia Kita & Anastasia Mickel;

Many Blessed Years!

Blessing of Homes Season 2018

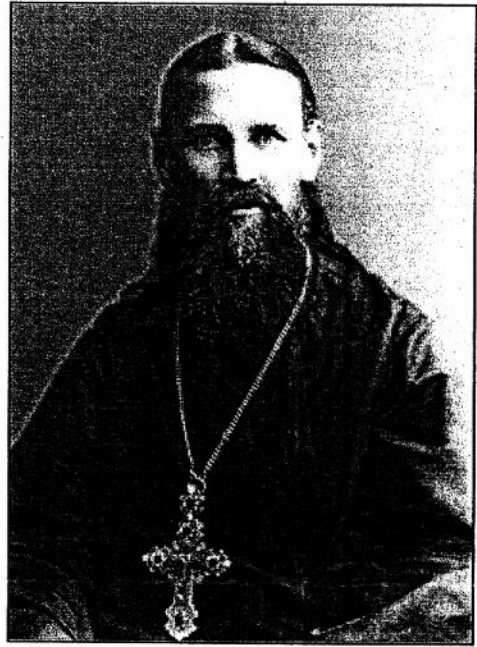
The Blessing of Homes Season will take place between January 8th – February 17th. Be sure to schedule your home blessing as early as possible.

QUOTES FROM ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT

Commemorated on December 20th

"When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means."

"There is nothing impossible unto those who believe; lively and unshaken faith can accomplish great miracles in the twinkling of an eye. Besides, even without our sincere and firm faith, miracles are accomplished, such as the miracles of the sacraments; for God's Mystery is always accomplished, even though we were incredulous or unbelieving at the time of its celebration. "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3). Our wickedness shall not overpower the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God; our dullness shall not overpower God's wisdom, nor our infirmity God's omnipotence."



"Oh, what great happiness and bliss, what exaltation it is to address oneself to the Eternal Father. Always, without fail, value this joy which has been accorded to you by God's infinite grace and do not forget it during your prayers; God, the angels and God's holy men listen to you."

"The enemy of our salvation especially strives to draw our heart and mind away from God when we are about to serve Him, and endeavors to adulterously attach our heart to something irrelevant. Be always, every moment, with God, especially when you pray to Him. If you are inconstant, you will fall away from life, and will cast yourself into sorrow."

"Do not be despondent when fighting against the invisible enemy, but even in the midst of your afflictions and oppression praise the Lord, Who has found you worthy to suffer for Him, by struggling against the subtlety of the serpent, and to be wounded for Him at every hour; for had you not lived piously, and endeavored to become united to God, the enemy would not have attacked and tormented you."

"Do not fear the conflict, and do not flee from it; where there is no struggle, there is no virtue. Our faith, trust, and love are proved and revealed in adversities, that is, in difficult and grievous outward and inward circumstances, during sickness, sorrow, and privations."

"Prayer for others is very beneficial to the man himself who prays; it purifies the heart, strengthens faith and hope in God, and arouses love for God and our neighbor."

About St. John of Kronstadt

Saint John of Kronstadt was a Russian Orthodox archpriest. He was a striking and somewhat unconventional figure in his personality but was deeply pious and immensely energetic. He was one of the most internationally famous and beloved Orthodox Christian clerics of his time.

He was born as Ivan Ilyich Sergiyev (Russian: Иван Ильич Сергиев) in 1829. From 1855, he worked as a priest in Saint Andrew's Cathedral in Kronstadt. Here, he greatly committed himself to charity, especially for those who were outside the church, and travelled extensively throughout the Russian empire. He was a member of the right Union of the Russian People, but did not commit himself politically. In the early 1990s Father John became well known, and people from all over Russia came to him every day in thousands. Even bishops treated him with high respect. He was already greatly venerated at the time he died. He was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in 1964 and by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990.

THE INCARNATION OF GOD: THE REASON FOR MAN'S DEIFICATION

The Fathers of the Church say that God became man so that man become god. Man would not have attained deification if God had not become incarnate.

In times before Christ, many wise and virtuous men had appeared. The Ancient Greeks, for example, had attained high philosophical standards as regards virtue and God. As a matter of fact, their philosophy contained elements of truth, the so called "spermatikos logos". After all, they were particularly religious men, not atheists at all, as some of our ill informed contemporaries make them out to be of course. They didn't know the true God. Although pagan, they were pious and god-fearing. For this reason all those pedagogues, teachers or political and civil leaders, at odds with the tradition of the Greek race, who attempted to eradicate faith in God from the soul of our devout people, without even their consent, commit "hybris" (in the ancient meaning of the word). They, in fact, dare to deprive the nation of its Greek character, since the tradition of the Greeks, in our ancient, later and modern history is a tradition of veneration and respect for God upon which the universal, cultural contribution of Hellenism was and is still based.

A yearning for the unknown God, for the experience of God, can be discerned in the philosophy of the Ancient Greeks. They were faithful, devout but without the right and complete knowledge of God. Communion with God was missing. Deification was not possible.

In the Old Testament, as well, we find just and virtuous men. However, the absolute union with God, deification, becomes possible, achievable with the Incarnation of God, the Word (Logos) of God.

This is the purpose of God's Incarnation. If the purpose of man's life was merely to become morally better, there would be no need for Christ's coming into the world. There would be no need to raise the issue of divine Economy, of the Incarnation of God, the cross, the death, the Lord's resurrection - everything we, as Christians, believe took place through Christ - since the human race could be taught to improve

itself morally, by Prophets, by philosophers, just men and teachers equally as well.

We know that Adam and Eve were misled by the devil and desired to become gods, not in co-operation with God, though, not with humbleness, obedience and love, but relying on their own powers, their own will, egotistically and autonomously. That is to say, the essence of the fall is egotism. By adopting egotism and self-sufficiency, they separated themselves from God and instead of attaining deification, they attained exactly the opposite: spiritual death.

The Fathers of the Church say that God is life. Whosoever turns away from God, turns away from life as well. Therefore, death and spiritual inactivity (physical and spiritual death) were the outcome of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

We all realise the consequences of the fall. The separation from God drove man to a carnal, bestial and demonic life. God's magnificent creation fell gravely ill, almost to death. "His image" was distorted. After the fall, man does not have the prerequisites to move towards deification, as he had before sinning. In this state of grave illness, almost unto death, man cannot any longer re-orientate himself towards God. Humanity needs a new root. A new healthy man, capable of orientating man's freedom

This new root, the new man is Godman (Theanthrope), Jesus Christ, the Son and the Word (Logos) of God. Who is incarnated to constitute the new root, the new beginning, humanity's new leaven.

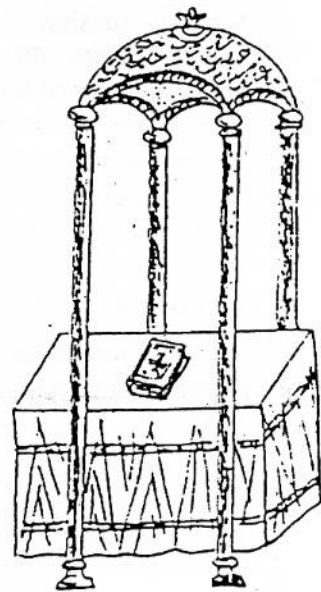
Saint John of Damascus, that great theologian of our Church, theologises that with the Incarnation of the Word a second communion between God and man is realised. The first communion, the one in Paradise, broke up and man was separated from God. Our all-compassionate God provided now for another, a second communion, that is to say, a union between God and men that can no longer be broken up because it is realised in the person of Christ.

Christ Godman, the Son and Word of God the Father, has two perfect natures: the divine and the human. These two perfect natures are unified "unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably" in the one person of God the Word, of Christ, according to the famous definition of the Holy Fourth Ecumenical Synod at Chalcedon, which in summary constitutes under the Holy Spirit, the theological armour of our Orthodox Church against all kinds of Christological heresies of all

times. So we have one Christ with two natures: the divine and the human.

So, now, human nature, through the hypostatic union of the two natures in the person of Christ, is irrevocably unified with the divine one, because Christ is eternally Godman. As Godman, he ascended into heaven. As Godman, he sits on the right hand of the Father. As Godman, he will come to judge the world in the Second Coming. Therefore, human nature is now enthroned in the bosom of the Holy Trinity. Nothing can separate human nature from God. That is why now, after the Incarnation of the Lord - as much as we, being human may commit sins, as much as we may depart from God - if in repentance we want to unite with Him again, we can do so. We can unite with Him, become gods by Grace.

ARCHIMANDRITE GEORGE
ABBOT OF THE HOLY MONASTERY
OF ST. GREGORIOS OF MT. ATHOS





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.

