

SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 22, 2019

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 22

Sunday Before Nativity

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

Church school; Teen Class

6:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

MONDAY/DECEMBER 23

3:00p.m. Confessions

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

TUESDAY/DECEMBER 24

Eve of Nativity (Strict Fast)

9:30a.m. Royal Hours

4:00p.m. Vigil; Lenten Supper
to follow (approx. 6:30p.m.)

WEDNESDAY/DECEMBER 25

Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

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

6:30p.m. Vespers

THURSDAY/DECEMBER 26

Synaxis of Theotokos

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

SATURDAY/DECEMBER 28

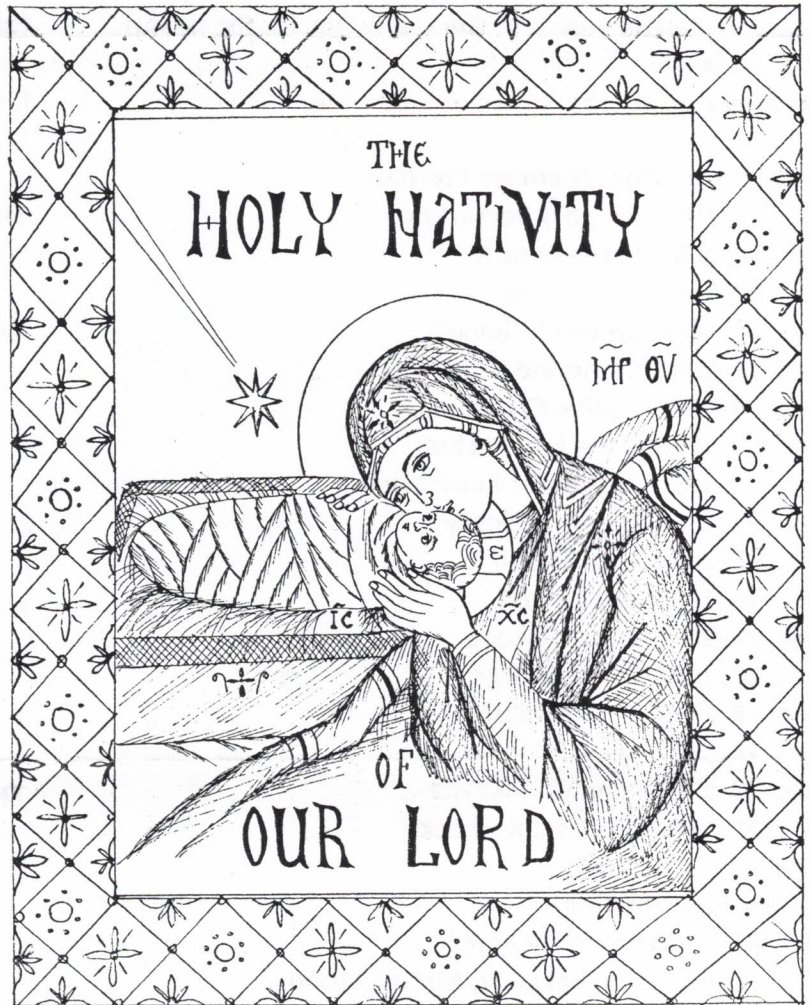
5:30p.m. Vespers & Compline; Confessions

SUNDAY/DECEMBER 29

Sunday After Nativity

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

Coffee Hour & Christmas Carols



Offerings Week of December 22

Relic Candle: in memory of Ivanna; for the health of Alexia; in memory of Michael, Justina, Rosalie, Anastasia, Melania and Ivanna; in memory of Constantin, Gabriela Floarea, Gheorghe, Aurelia, Ilie, Alexandru, Sasinca, Elena and their families.

Olive Oil: in memory of Nicholas, Eleanore, Ann Marie, John and Jerome; for the health of John (birthday) and Lilian (birthday); for the health of Ciprian, Crenguta, Anna, Antoniu, Alexandru, Adrian, Elena and Cornela.

Wine: for remission of sins and salvation of Mariana, Stefan, Simona, Gabriel, Tabitha, Ira-Crista, David, Marian and family; for the health of Anna (birthday).

Flowers: for the health of George & Lily; for the health of Turri family.

Litya Breads: for the health of Katherine.

Parish Synodicon: Memory Eternal!

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

Dec. 25, 2014 Julia Galida

Dec. 26, 1980 Jerry Russo

Dec. 26, 2004 Douglas Rose

Dec. 27, 1989 Mary George

Dec. 28, 1927 Joseph Ribsky

Dec. 28, 1927 Olga Solodiuk

Dec. 28, 1983 John Grishkevitz

Dec. 28, 1987 Edmund Kornacki

Coffee Hour Hosting

Dec. 22 *No meat, dairy or fish*

Dec. 22 Peterson, Bakaletz, Mattei, Stone

Dec. 29 Kita, Nevitt, Keller, Turri, Torrisi
& Kachek

Counters Schedule

Dec. 22 Larissa M. & Paulina N.

Dec. 29 Jill P. & Peter B.

Ushers Schedule

Dec. 22 Edward S. & Kakha K.

Dec. 29 Edward S. & Kakha K.

Readers Schedule

Dec. 22 Daniel T. / Dec. 29 Peter G.

The 40 Day Nativity Lent: Nov. 15th thru Dec. 24th

This is one of the Four Lents of the year. A fast is observed from meat, dairy, fish, wine and oil. When does the Nativity Fast end? After the Divine Liturgy, Dec. 25th.

Names Day Greetings – Many Blessed Years!

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

St. Eugenia/Dec. 24: Joan Eugenia Bongiorno

THE NATIVITY FESTAL GREETING

“Christ is Born! “Glorify Him!”

NATIVITY FAST FREE SEASON

- During this festal time, which begins after the Divine Liturgy on December 25, there is no fasting on any day thru January 4.
- In this period of time, December 25 thru January 4, in keeping the festal character, we do not kneel, make prostrations, permit marriages or serve memorial services.
- The next fasting day, will be a Sunday – January 5, the eve of Holy Theophany. On this day wine and oil are permitted but no meat, dairy or fish.

THE FEAST OF HOLY THEOPHANY

- January 5, Sunday – Eve of Theophany: 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy & Blessing of Waters; Coffee Hour; 6:00p.m. Matins for Theophany
- January 6, Monday – Holy Theophany: 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; 7:00p.m. Compline
- 2020 Blessing of Home Season: January 7 thru February 22. Appointments can now be made.
- Please schedule your home blessing for as early in the home blessing season as possible.
- Holy Water Bottles on sale at vestibule stand.



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.

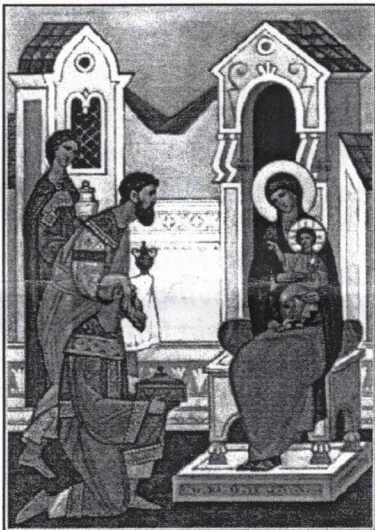


WHO WERE THE MAGI?

The Magi were Persian priestly scholars, known for their expertise in medicine, philosophy, science, astrology, and dreams. When the Prophet Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar recognized his God as the "God of gods and Lord of lords, Who reveals mysteries". Daniel was re-named Baltasar and appointed the chief of this society. (Daniel 2:48; 4:6; 5:11). The prophetic and messianic writings of Daniel had a profound effect on these scholars, who also were familiar with Balaam's prophecy about the star shining forth from Jacob (Num. 24:17).

At the time of Christ, the Magi composed the upper house of the Council of the Megistanes whose duties included the absolute choice and election of the king of the realm. Their sudden appearance in Judea caused Herod great fear as he sought to keep his fragile control over the region. However, it was in the hope a divinely-imposed dominion that the Magi had made their lengthy journey to Judea.

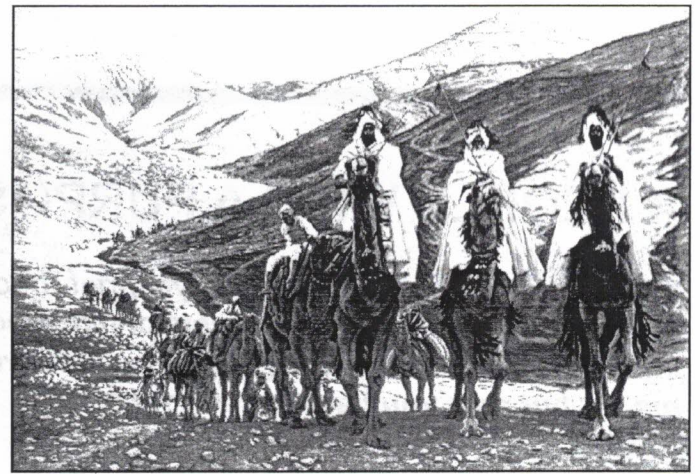
Since the Magi believed that there was a mystical influence of the stars, they would constantly study the heavens seeking extraordinary sign which might herald the "Expected One." St. Theophylact explains how the Lord used the stars to draw the Magi to Him when he writes: "Because the Magi were astrologists, the Lord brought them in a manner natural to them, just as Peter, being a fisherman, came through the catch of a multitude of fish."



The wise men, on behalf of the entire human race, brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh: gold because they were returning to the ac-

knowledgment that God is the only true King, frankincense because they were returning to the worship of the Lord as the only true God, and myrrh because Christ, as the bringer of the Resurrection, would abolish death and there would no longer be any more need for myrrh as a burial ointment.

What subsequently happened to these gifts is never mentioned in the Scriptures, but several traditions have developed. One story has the gold



being stolen by the two thieves who were later crucified alongside Jesus. Another tale has it being entrusted to and then misappropriated by Judas.

The number and identity of the Magi is not known for sure. Since three gifts were offered, it is often assumed that there were three in their company; the traditional names being Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar. Sometimes they are depicted as old, middle-aged, and young. Some consider them to be from Persia, Arabia, and Egypt as the descendants of Shem, Japheth, and Ham.

St. John Chrysostom rebukes an unbelieving Jewish nation by comparing them to the Gentile Magi: "The faith of the Magi is the condemnation of the Jews. The Magi believed on the authority of their one soothsayer Balaam and the Prophet Daniel; but the Jews, from the testimony of many prophets, refused to believe. Whereas the magi acknowledged that the coming of Christ would terminate their profane knowledge and magical arts, the Jews would not accept the Lawgiver's doing away with their sacrifices and refused to accept the mysteries of the divine dispensation. The Magi confessed a Stranger; the Jews rejected their own."

Behold, the Virgin shall be with child.

The Jews say that the prophecy in Hebrew does not say "virgin" but "young woman". However, in Hebrew the word for "young woman" and "virgin" is one and the same; it being understood that young women are to be virgins. Yet, what would be the significance of any young woman giving birth, for this happens all the time. The sign was that a Virgin, one who knew not man, would give birth. This has happened only once, with the birth of Jesus, the Savior, "God with us".



A PEOPLE WITH A PURPOSE

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9).

In the Mystery of Chrismation we were sealed as members of God’s People, a People with a Purpose: to be His priesthood, to proclaim His mighty acts of redemption and recreation. We are fully ourselves as Christians only when we are acting as His People.

“To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5-6).

The priesthood of God’s People is a common ministry: we are not each our own priest offering separate gifts to God. We are members of the Body of Christ, the High Priest, who offers the only gift capable of reuniting us to God: the gift of His own blood. In the Divine Liturgy we are connected with the Head of the Body as He offers His eternal gift to the Father in the heavenly sanctuary. We add our voices to the heavenly powers in praise of God and our prayers to those of all the saints worshipping at the throne of God.

As members of His royal priesthood we:

- Exercise a **body-ministry** –as the Body of Christ, not as individual priests.
- Join the heavenly powers and all the saints in the praises of God.
- Unite with Christ the High Priest as He offers Himself to the Father.



“During the oblation the whole Church – in heaven and upon earth, the Church of the first-born inscribed in the heavens and the Church militant fighting against the enemies of salvation upon earth – is represented typically as assembled around the Lamb, who took upon Himself the sins of the world. What a great spectacle, enrapturing and moving the soul! It is possible that I too am a joint heir with the saints, if I remain faithful to the Lamb until death. And are not all my brethren, too, members of the future kingdom? ...We are the children of God... heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” (St John of Kronstadt)

Become what you are: a member of the royal priesthood by:

- **Discovering** the riches of the Church’s worship tradition.
- **Ownership** of this tradition by accepting it as the basis of our daily life.
- **Gratitude** to God expressed in offering the sacrifice of praise.
- **Use** of your priesthood in service to God and intercession for one another.