



# Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church



A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

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Very Reverend John Brancho, *Pastor Emeritus*  
Timothy Martin, *Reader*  
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Matthew Peifer, *Church Council President*  
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December 24, 2017

Volume III

## 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost / Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs

9:15am - Canon of Nativity & Carols (*Kol'jady*) 9:30am - Divine Liturgy Tone 4 Liturgical Color: **Purple**  
Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11; Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

### SERVICES, SAINTS, AND READINGS FOR THE WEEK

*Holy Mystery of Confession available following every service*

# Monday	St. Spyridon the Wonderworker of Tremithon (348)	Hebrews 8:7-13	Mark 8:11-21
# Tuesday	Venerable Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska (1836) and Synaxis of the First Martyrs of the American land.	Hebrews 9:8-10,15-23	Mark 8:22-26
# Wednesday	Martyrs Thyrsus and Callinicus of Apollonia (250)	Hebrews 10:1-18	Mark 8:30-34
# Thursday	Venerable Paul of Mt. Latros (956)	Hebrews 10:35-11:7	Mark 9:10-16
# Friday	Prophet Haggai (Aggaeus) (500 B.C.)	Hebrews 11:8,11-16	Mark 9:33-41
# Saturday	Holy Prophet Daniel (600 B.C.) and the Three Holy Youths: Ananias, Azarias, and Misael	Ephesians 5:1-8	Luke 14:1-11

*# During the Nativity (Philip's) Fast, let us Imitate Christ and the Saints and Fast as they did!*

Sunday, December 31 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost / Sunday of the Holy Fathers

9:15am - Canon of Nativity & Carols (*Kol'jady*) 9:30am - Divine Liturgy Tone 5 Liturgical Color: **Purple**  
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40; Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

*Additional collection for our Community Outreach*

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### A Warm Welcome To Our Visitors!

**Glory Be To Jesus Christ! (Glory Be Forever!)  
Slava Isusu Christu! (Slava na v'iki!)**

**We are happy** that you have joined us today! **Please join us downstairs** for coffee and a bite to eat. It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning and we wish God's Blessings to all who visit with us today and hope you stop in again soon!  
**If you have any questions** in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy, please see Fr. Dave and he will gladly answer any of your questions to the best of his ability. He looks forward to meeting you!

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*This Bulletin is offered:*

In Memory Of  
Catherine Gaydos.  
May Her Memory  
Be Eternal!

### LOOKING AHEAD LOCALLY

Tuesday, January 2 – 9:30am Prefestive Moleben of the Nativity

Friday, January 5 – 9:30am Royal Hours of the Nativity

Saturday, January 6 – Vigil Service for the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

AMBRIDGE: 8pm / HOMESTEAD: 8pm / EAST PITTSBURGH: 7pm (*A Day of Strict Fasting*)

Sunday, January 7 – Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ /

*Additional collection for our Capital Improvement Fund*

Monday, January 8 – Afterfeast of the Nativity - 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of Christmas - Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos

Tuesday, January 9 – Afterfeast of the Nativity - 3<sup>rd</sup> Day of Christmas - Feast of Saint Stephen

Sunday, January 14 – 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas / Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord / YOUTH Sunday

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### BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS



*(Please have submissions for this section to Father by Wednesday.)*

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**2018 Calendars** have arrived and are in the Church Vestibule to be picked up.

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**Stewardship/Dues are due** - The end of the civil calendar year is here. Have you made a contribution to your parish yet? Please fulfill your financial responsibility to your Church.

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**Nativity Coffee Social** – will be a cover-dish surprise supplied by everyone in the parish. Bring in your favorite dish and let's celebrate the Feast with a feast!

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**Christmas Raffle** – Items are requested and being collected on the bar top in the church hall for our Christmas Raffle. Typically people will bring in a nice bottle of wine, but feel free to be creative!

#### **Parish Stewardship Opportunities...**

*As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.*  
(Luke 6:31)

- Bring in a bag of CALCIUM CHLORIDE
- Take a Coffee Social week
- Attend an additional service at Church
- Offer your time to help with possible snow

**Weekly Candle Intentions/Memorials** were offered last week by Tim Martin; Melanie Shuster; Viola Peifer; Lawrence Martin; John Radick; Eleanor Sanger; Roberta Kruchkevich; Joanne Nelson; Theresa Sharpless; Cindy Pavilonis; Michael Puhac; Patty Watson

***"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* - John 8:12**

**The Eternal Lamp** was offered last week by John Gaydos, Jr., in Memory of Wife, Catherine. May Her Memory Be Eternal! Vičnaya Pamjat!

**Welcome to the Newly-Baptized!** Jason Robert Shelpman, Jr. was baptized and initiated into the Orthodox faith yesterday. May God give strength to him as he begins his Christian life and bless him, his parents, God-Parents, and families!



**2017 NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE** – Bishop Gregory asks each member of our Diocese to pray the Prayer for Peace every evening of the Nativity Fast, either as a family or individually. Cut out and use the prayer daily (found on the last page). Let us unite our prayers for peace on earth! A special webpage (<http://www.acrod.org/consecration/prayerchallenge>) has been set up where additional information on this year's prayer challenge can be found.

**Mystery of Holy Confession** – All are reminded that fasting from food goes hand-in-hand with fasting from sin. This is why the Church encourages us to receive the Mystery of Holy Confession during the Nativity Fast period. Confessions will be heard following every service. Other times are available by appointment. Please contact Father Dave to arrange a time. **A blessed Nativity Fast to all!**

 **New Food Ministry at Church: Meal Train** – when someone in our community cannot get to the grocery store or make their own meals (after a major surgery, a new baby, or for any other reason is in need), this program will help allow us to help them! Here is an example: *Someone has a major surgery and will not be able to cook for themselves for 2 weeks. They notify Father Dave of this and he sets up an account for them on this website. Someone else from the parish decides to make a big pot of soup and freeze some for the one in need. They can then either deliver the food to their house or bring it to the church on Sunday and someone else will deliver it through the week.* The idea is this: that through our stewardship we will help each other out when we are able to! Please visit: [www.MealTrain.com](http://www.MealTrain.com) to learn more about it. Here are some basic terms from their website:

- ❖ **Meal Train:** Organized meal giving around a significant life event. One meal from one person per day.
- ❖ **Organizer:** The person who sets up the meal train.
- ❖ **Recipient:** Those who will receive the meals.
- ❖ **Participant/Giver:** The person who will make and take a meal.

We will figure this new system out together!

**Our Stewardship Gift To God**

Dues/Stewardship:	\$ 1050
Candles/Small C./Eternal Lamp/C. box:	\$ 142
Envelopes: Sunday/Feast Day/Special:	\$ 1228
<b>Total Collections:</b>	<b>\$ 2420</b>
Collection for the Saints: <i>"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper."</i> 1 Cor 16:2	

**Shopping on-line** – The on-line shopping store, Amazon.com, will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to our diocese! Simply go to the home page of our Diocesan website, [www.acrod.org](http://www.acrod.org), and click on the AmazonSmiles button in the far left column and then shop as usual (Same products; same prices; same service).

**Snow Removal Team** – as temperatures have begun to drop, we are reminded that snow is on it's way. Just a reminder that we will be looking for folks, as in the past, to offer some of their time prior to people getting to church on Sundays to help with snow removal. *Please let Father know if you will be able to come earlier to Church to assist with keeping the sidewalks clear.* Ideally we will have a rotation of people so that the same person is not doing it each snowfall.

**Coffee Social Steward Schedule**

- December 31: **Open "Pot Luck"**
- January 7: **Cover-Dish Surprises**
- January 14: **Open "Pot Luck"**

*Thank you to all those who support this critical ministry of our Church!*

**Coffee Social Stewards Needed** – On weeks that no one signs up to host and organize our coffee social, we will have a 'pot-luck' meal. On these weeks, we ask that every household brings something small for a pot-luck surprise spread for the community to enjoy that week! (Don't over think the menu - Plan to *keep it simple* ☺) Everyone is also encouraged to help clean up after. *The Divine Liturgy concludes at the final blessing, but the liturgy continues downstairs as we gather in love and fellowship with our parish family and visiting neighbors.* Lets keep this critical ministry alive in our parish!

**Visit Our Diocese On-Line**

- Diocesan Website: [www.acrod.org](http://www.acrod.org)
- Camp Nazareth: [www.campnazareth.org](http://www.campnazareth.org)
- FB: [www.facebook.com/acroddiocese](https://www.facebook.com/acroddiocese)
- Twitter: [twitter.com/acrodnews](https://twitter.com/acrodnews)
- You Tube: [youtube.com/acroddiocese](https://youtube.com/acroddiocese)

**ORTHODOXY AROUND DA 'BURGH**



**Orthodox Food Pantry** – Volunteers are needed every Thursday from 5:15 to 6:45 to assist at **St Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry** based out of St. Mary's Orthodox Church (105 S. 19<sup>th</sup> St, Pittsburgh, Pa). If interested, please contact Fr Patrick at 412-431-6428.

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## SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

### Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

<sup>4</sup>When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup>Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup>In these you once walked, when you lived in them. <sup>8</sup>But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup>Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth'ian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

### Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

<sup>16</sup>But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; <sup>17</sup>and at the time for

the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.'<sup>18</sup> But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.'<sup>19</sup> And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.'<sup>20</sup> And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'<sup>21</sup> So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.'<sup>22</sup> And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'<sup>23</sup> And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'<sup>24</sup> For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

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## LIVING ORTHODOXY IN REFLECTIVE PREPARATION:

meditating on the awesome miracle of the Son of God taking on flesh and becoming one of us

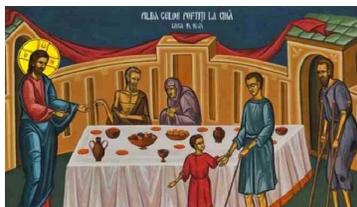
### Will You Accept the Invitation?

This morning's Gospel lesson, always read the second Sunday before the Nativity, is a parable. A parable is a story with a hidden meaning but a real life application. In this story, we read about a man who was giving a banquet, and when the food was ready, he sent out servants to tell his invited guests that the banquet was ready. Each made excuses why he could not come. The servants told the man about all the excuses people had made not to come to the banquet. The householder was angry and sent the servants into the streets of the city to invite the poor and lame to the banquet. When the servants came back to the householder there was still room, he told them to invite anyone they found to the banquet. He also gave a stern warning to those who did not accept his invitation.

In Jesus' time, this banquet referred to His message. He was inviting people to Himself. The invited guests were His own people, the Jews, who made excuses to not believe. The "poor and lame" who were invited from the city represents the Gentiles, that it wasn't only Jews who would come to the banquet, but Gentiles as well. As for going out to the "highways and hedges" and compelling everyone to come in, this meant that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be shared with ALL people, all nations everyone. As for those who were originally invited not being welcomed, this would refer to the Jewish Temple leadership, the ones who should have been the first to recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, but who instead would clamor for His crucifixion. They would not be invited to the banquet.

There are two other "banquets" that we can relate to this parable. The first is the banquet of the Divine Liturgy, specifically Holy Communion. Every time the Divine Liturgy is offered, we have the opportunity to "feast" on a "heavenly

banquet" by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ through Holy Communion. The invitation is extended each Sunday and on many other days of the church year. How often do you answer the invitation and come to partake? And when you don't, what is the excuse? If a person invited me to dinner 50 times and I only accepted the invitation once, it wouldn't really reflect well on my feelings for that person. The invitation to partake of Communion is there at every Divine Liturgy, whether we are in attendance or not. If we are only answering this invitation on



Christmas and Easter, because that is how often we attend church, it doesn't really reflect well on our feelings for Christ. The intention of Christ in instituting the Eucharist was for us to partake of it often. For those who attend Divine Liturgy each

Sunday, if we are not receiving often, we also have to ask ourselves, why?

The second "banquet" we are invited to is membership in the church. Membership in the church comes with certain blessings and with certain responsibilities. When I say "membership," I'm not referring specifically to filling out a pledge card and being able to vote at a meeting. I'm speaking about "belonging to the church." Many people feel more like "the church belongs to me," rather than "I belong to the church." The church does not belong to anyone. It is Christ's church. So, when we join the church, we are joining ourselves to Christ. After all, at the baptism service, the priest asks the person being baptized, "Do you unite yourself to Christ?" So, if we choose to belong to the church, we are in fact belonging to Christ. The greatest benefit in belonging to Christ is our potential for salvation. Along the way, there are other benefits - the sacraments, grace, forgiveness, to name a few. There are also some responsibilities - first and foremost, if we belong to Christ, it presupposes

an interest in developing a relationship with Him, through prayer and worship. One would think there would be an expectation to come to worship regularly and on time, to contribute to the life of the parish, to being involved in ministries, and to be involved in some level of service to the greater community.

I am opining here - when our children join sports teams, there are expectations for them and for us as parents. There is an expectation that they will go to every practice and game, get there early or on time, be appropriately dressed with proper equipment, that we will provide snacks when it is our turn, etc. There are expectations if you want to own a car, hold down a job, or just about anything else. However, people seem to get their nose out of joint when someone suggests there are expectations to belonging to a church. Again, remember that we belong to the church, the church doesn't belong to us. And in belonging to the church, really we belong to Christ.

There are at least two banquets that we are regularly invited to - the banquet of the Eucharist, and the banquet of belonging to the church. Will you accept Christ's invitation to these two banquets? How often? The best expression of the Christian life is when we accept both of these invitations on a regular basis.

*Come now, one and all, in faith let us celebrate the annual memorial of the Fathers before the Law, Abraham and those with him. Let us honor as is right the tribe of Judah, and let us extol the Servants in Babylon, the Trinity's image, who extinguished the furnace fire, and also Daniel. As we unerringly cling to the predictions of the Prophets, together with Isaiah we cry out in a loud voice, Behold the Virgin will conceive in the womb, and she will bear a Son, Emmanuel, which means God is with us. (Doxastikon of the Forefathers, Grave Tone, Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)*

Come to the banquet today!

+Fr. Stavros

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## SPIRITUAL VITAMINS FOR THE WEEK

### SUNDAY

"This parable operates on two levels, illustrating both the first and second coming of Christ, who is the servant sent to gather many. Supper indicates evening, the end of the age. The people invited are first the Jews, then all mankind." – *Orthodox Study Bible, Luke 14:16,17*

### MONDAY

"The bodily eye cannot tolerate even the smallest speck of dust on its surface, so too the conscience, when soiled by something, cannot attain prayer." +*Elder Moses of Optina*

### TUESDAY

"Faith is not an issue of great knowledge and learning but humble submission not to the prevailing knowledge but to the truth of the Church, timeless and eternal." - *Protopresbyter Theodore Zissis*

### WEDNESDAY

"Truly I tell you, idle-talking is love of idleness. If you do not understand yourself, can you discuss anything or teach others? Be silent, constantly be silent. Remember always the presence of God and His name." +*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov*

### THURSDAY

"God is good and all-goodness, and you, His image, must also be good. He is bountiful to all, and you too must be generous, and avoid avarice and grudging your neighbor anything material, perishable, as the greatest calamity and foolishness." + *St John of Kronstadt*

### FRIDAY

"[on the married couple] They have an obligation to struggle to practice temperance, so as not to impart these carnal passions to their children. You see, young children whose parents have a heightened carnal frame of mind, will, from a young age, also have those inclinations, because they get their carnal mindset from their parents." + *St. Paisios of Mount Athos*

### SATURDAY

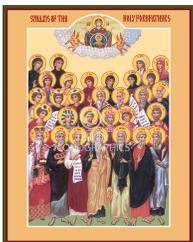
"The passion of self-esteem is a three-pronged barb heated and forged by the demons out of vanity, presumption and arrogance. Yet those who dwell under the protection of the God of heaven (cf. Ps. 91.1) detect it easily and shatter its prongs, for through their humility they rise above such vices and find repose in the tree of life." - *Nikitas Stithatos*

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## SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

*Father can meet M-F 9:30a-4p or by appointment.*  
**Online Community:** Please email Fr. Dave to receive the weekly bulletin via email.  
**Phone Tree** – Please call Fr. Dave to be added.  
**Emergency Sick Calls** – Please notify Fr Dave when you or a family member are going into the hospital or having a procedure so he can pray with you and you may receive the Anointing to be fully prepared.  
**Mystery of Confession** – Opportunities are available after every service, Saturdays during fasting periods from 11:00am to 1:00 pm, OR by appointment.  
**Holy Communion/Eucharist** – The reception of the Holy Eucharist is encouraged by all Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves, with fasting from midnight on, regular Confession, and

forgiveness for all people. Those who are not Orthodox may receive a *blessing* from the chalice.  
**Baptisms** – Please consult Father for details.  
**Marriages** – Please consult Father ASAP for details (*before* arrangements are made for the hall).  
**Church Funerals** – are provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual and financial obligations; otherwise burial is from the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.  
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*"The cremation of bodies is not a Christian act. It is a custom of modern times. The body of a Christian has been sanctified with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and as such may not be burned. God did not create our bodies for burning."* - Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica



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## LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Source: [www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar/orthodox-calendar](http://www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar/orthodox-calendar) © 1996-2001 by translator Fr. S. Janos

### Week of Holy Forefathers

Commemorated on the Sunday that falls between the December 24 & 30 (11 & 17)

On this Sunday, in preparation of the Nativity of our Lord, we remember the Patriarch Abraham and his lineage, ancestors of Christ. The story of Abraham and his faithfulness should be read in the Book of Genesis.

"Through the connection of the holy Ancestors and Patriarchs, Our Saviour Jesus Christ is Himself also, in a way, the fruit of the faith of Abraham. So, when God makes his voice known to each of us while we are still in the strange land of the passions and worldly vanities, we must like Abraham

unhesitatingly leave all that is ours, and follow the divine calling with faith until we reach the Promised Land where, in our turn, we shall be able to give birth spiritually to Christ. For, planted in us by faith and Baptism, He has to grow in us through the virtues so as to shine in the light of contemplation. We descendants of Abraham, 'children of the promise' as Isaac was, having become 'sons of God' through the gift of the Holy Spirit, out therefore to see Christ form in us... Let us then for our part become forebears of Christ and continue steadfast in the faith, so that we may keep the feast of his Nativity, saying: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Synaxarion)

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## PRAYER CORNER

Our Parish Prayer List for Special Intentions and Other Needs \*



**A Prayer For The Sick:** O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant *name*. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver *him/her* from sickness and bitter pain. Heal *him/her* so that *he/she* may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

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**For the Health of...** Mildred, Anna Mae, Julie, Jane, Eleanor D., Mark, Viola, Juliana, Katie, Kenneth, Michael, Roberta, Fredrick, Helen B., Wendy, Gary, Barbara, Matthew, Patricia, Lino, John, Fr. Jonathan Tobias, Pañi Marsha Tobias, Mary ...through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer.

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**For the Special Intentions of...** Bishop Gregory, Stephen, David, Joshua, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Nancy, Ameer, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, John S., and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee: Matthew, John, Timothy, Patricia, Theresa, Lawrence, Donald, Jane, Cynthia, Katherine, Eleanor, Kenneth, Gina, Robert, Jillian, Wendy, Olga, John, Melanie, Michael, John, Richard, John, Margaret, Sarah, Patricia, and for those working towards our Community Outreach, ZOE For Life ...through the prayers of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; St. John the Baptist; the Archangels Michael & Gabriel; and the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.



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**Birthday Prayers for...** Eleanor Dussling (12/28) and Caitlin Brozell (12/28) ...May God allow them to grow in peace and love all the days of their lives and may He grant them many and blessed years!  
Na Mnohaja I Blahaja L'ita!

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**For Expectant Mothers...** Pañi Ileana, Ameer, Ashley, Katie, Meredith, Brittany, Harmonie ...through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, & St. Irene Chrysovalantou.

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**For those preparing for Marriage...** Nicole & Seminarian Nathaniel and Kristyn & Seminarian Vince ...through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia & all Holy Martyrs.



## DEVOTIONAL PRAYER FOR THE NATIVITY FAST:



### 2017 NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE

Bishop Gregory asks each member of our Diocese to pray this **Prayer for Peace** every evening of the Nativity Fast, either as a family or individually.



Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of God, You became flesh and dwelt among us. You made the womb of Your most-pure Mother more spacious than the heavens. Yet You, the true light, were born in the darkness of a cave, thereby enlightening the world that was darkened by sin. To redeem us, You shared Your whole life. You submitted to death on the Cross and rose from the dead, bestowing life. We share in Your death and resurrection, that we may indeed be dead to sin and alive in You. As we fast and prepare to celebrate Your life-giving manifestation, we pray especially that our respect for life will prevail in the world. Directed by Your command to care for "the least of these," may we and all people heed Your call to show care and concern for life in the womb; for the lives of the poor, oppressed, and suffering; and for the lives of the sick, the elderly, and the dying. May Your peace reign in our hearts and throughout the world, especially in places of unrest, so that the shedding of blood in warfare, violence, terrorism, tyranny, and all manner of strife may come to an end. May aggression between neighbors and nations fade away. May love reign in the lives of families. O Savior, You have said "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." May we become partakers of Your abundant life, together with all the saints whose lives have pleased You from the beginning. For You are the way, the truth and the life, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your most-holy, gracious and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. AMEN.