



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH



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

Father Dave Urban, *Pastor*
Very Reverend Father John Brancho, *Pastor Emeritus*
Subdeacon Ryan Ferko
Timothy Martin, *Reader*
Matthew Peifer, Stephen Brancho, & John Radick, *Cantors*
Lawrence Martin, *Parish Council President*
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January 7, 2023

Volume VIII

The Feast of the Nativity, according to the Flesh of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ Christ Is Born! (responded with: *Glorify Him!*) Christos Raždajetsja! (*Slavite Jeho!*)

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NATIVITY COMMEMORATIONS

(remembered at *Proskomedia [The Preparation Prayers]*)

- Incense For Censer (Kadilo)** For The Health And Future Of Our Parish Family
- Charcoal For Censer & Vespertal Loaves** In Memory Of The Departed In Ukraine
- Prosporhan (Eucharistic Bread)** For The Health Of The Martin Family
- Sacramental Wine** In Memory Of The Departed From The Martin Family
- 6 Candles In Candelabras** In Memory Of +Nicholas & +Anna Buhonick
- 1 Large Candle On Altar** For The Health Of The Hudak Family
- 1 Large Candle On Altar** For The Health Of The Shelpman Family
- 4 Large Candles On Altar** In Memory Of The Departed From The Sanger Family & Friends
- 2 Decorated Candles On The Altar, 2 Candles On Preparation Table, & 4 Iconostasis Candles**
For The Health Of The Shuster Family And Friends
- Altar Server Candles** In Memory Of +Stelian Popescu (3-Year)
- 2 Decorated Candles On Tetrapod** In Memory Of +Olga Radick

UPCOMING SERVICES

*** SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 2023

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
Parish Family Photo
Nativity Pot-Luck Meal
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*** = *FAST FREE until the eve of Theophany*
(*Sviatki – “Holy Days”*)

*** SUNDAY, JANUARY 8 – 2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

30th Sunday after Pentecost
Afterfeast of the Nativity
Commemoration of the Most Holy Theotokos
Sunday of the Holy Ancestors
9:15 Nativity Canon and Carols (*Kol'ady*)
9:30 Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19
Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23
Tone 5; Liturgical Color: **Gold**
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*** MONDAY, JANUARY 9 – 3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN
9:30 Divine Liturgy
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*** FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ
St. Peter Mogila, Metropolitan of Kiev (1646)
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*** SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

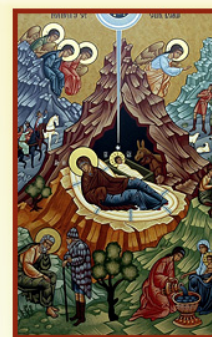
FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD
FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT (379)
9:30 Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

*** SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

31st Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday before the Baptism of our Lord
Forefeast of the Theophany
St. Sylvester, pope of Rome (335)
9:20 am Theophany Canon
9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8
Tone 6; Liturgical Color: **Gold**

Late Edition of “THE VOICE” Our Parish Monthly Newsletter

John the Baptist said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ (*Jn 1:23*)”



The Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ

“A mystery I behold which is strange and wondrous: the cave is Heaven and Virgin is the throne of the Cherubim; in the confines of the manger is laid the Infinite, Christ our God...”

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS!

Christ is Born! (responded with: *Glory Him!*) Christos Raždajetsja! (*Slavite Jeho!*)

We are happy that you have joined us today! 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 again soon! Please see Fr. Dave if you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy.

Dear Family of St. John’s,

Christ Is Born! (*Glorify Him!*) Christos Raždajetsja! (*Slavite Jeho!*)

May the joy of the Nativity Christmas Season fill our hearts and souls! Don’t allow any bitterness of this world take away from this joy. As the Kings and Shepherds came to the Christ-Child, let us do the same! Quite frequently people make New Year’s resolutions to go back to the gym for their physical health.

In 2023, let’s get back to church for our spiritual health.

Christ the Lord is born. Come and behold Him. Choirs of angels singing. Wise men appearing.

Christ they are greeting. Shepherds are retelling. Joyfully the wondrous story!

With Love in Christ,

Maria, Sophia, Pañi Alexandra, and Father Dave (and Snoopy)

JANUARY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1 #NATIVITY FAST

9:15 Nativity Canon and Carols (*Kol'ady*)

9:30 Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5 #NATIVITY FAST

9:30 Prefestive Moleben for the Nativity

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6 ## STRICT FAST DAY

9:30 Royal Hours of Nativity

Great Compline (Velikij Povečerije)

7:00 pm in East Pittsburgh (211 Cable Avenue)

in McKeesport (424 Ninth Street)

in Rankin (146 Third Avenue)

8:00 pm in Ambridge (450 Glenwood Drive)

in Homestead (903 Ann Street)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:30 Divine Liturgy

Parish Family Photo

Nativity Pot-Luck Meal

FAST FREE THROUGH JANUARY 17

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8 – 2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

9:15 Nativity Canon and Carols (*Kol'ady*)

9:30 Divine Liturgy

MONDAY, JANUARY 9 – 3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN

9:30 Divine Liturgy

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

Leavetaking (*Apodosis*) of the Nativity of Christ

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

FEAST OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

9:20 Theophany Canon

9:30 Divine Liturgy (and Youth Sunday) followed

by Church School

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18 ## STRICT FAST DAY

9:30 Royal Hours of Theophany

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD

9:30 Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22

9:20 Theophany Canon

9:30 Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

ZACCHAEUS SUNDAY

9:30 Divine Liturgy

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AND Looking FURTHER Ahead...

Some 2023 dates of interest at St. John's:

- Feb. 12 – Feast of Three Holy Hierarchs
- Feb. 15 – Feast of the Meeting of Our Lord
- **Feb. 18** – 1st All Soul's Saturday
- **Feb. 27** – The Great Fast Begins (*Services for Great Lent are on the Parish Calendar Online*)
- Mar. 9 – 1st & 2nd Findings of the Head of St. John the Baptist
- **Mar. 1 – Apr. 5** – 6:00 pm Wednesday Evening Presanctified Liturgies
- **Mar. 5** – Sunday of Orthodoxy – 4:30 pm Vespers at St. George Cathedral in Oakland
- **Mar. 11** – 2nd All Soul's Saturday
- **Mar. 12** – Deanery Lenten Mission in Ambridge
- **Mar. 18** – 3rd All Soul's Saturday
- **Mar. 19** – Deanery Lenten Mission in East Pgh
- **Mar. 25** – 4th All Soul's Saturday
- **Mar. 26** – Deanery Lenten Mission on North Side
- **Apr. 1** – Parish Spring Maintenance Morning
- **Apr. 1** – Diocesan Lenten Retreat
- **Apr. 2** – Deanery Lenten Mission in Rankin
- Apr. 7 – Feast of the Annunciation
- **Apr. 8** – Lazarus Saturday
The beginning of Holy Week
- **Apr. 9** – Feast of Palm Sunday
- **Apr. 16** – **Pascha, the Feast of Feasts**
- **Apr. 23** – Cemetery Grave Blessings
- **May 10** – Feast of Mid-Pentecost
- **May 25** – Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord
- **Jun. 3** – 5th All Souls Saturday
- **Jun. 4** – Feast of Pentecost
- Jun. 7 – 3rd Finding of the Head of St. John
- **Jun. 12** – Apostles' Fast begins
- Jul. 7 – Feast of the Nativity of St. John
- Jul. 12 – Feast of Saints Peter and Paul
- **Jul. 23** – Divine Liturgy and our Parish Picnic at "The Cabin" in North Park

Please, Save the Dates!

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AND Some 2023 Camp Nazareth Events:

- ✦ February 17-19 - OCF Retreat
- ✦ March 10-12 - ACRY Spring Encounter
- ✦ March 17-19 - Young Adult Retreat
- ✦ April 28-30 - Religious Education Conference
- ✦ May 1-3 - Sts. Joachim and Anna Seniors Retreat
- ✦ June 9-11 - Family Camp
- ✦ June 11 - Family Day
- ✦ July 23-29 - Pittsburgh Deanery Camping Week
- ✦ August 6-12 - Science & Nature Camp (ages 8-18)
- ✦ October 27-29 - Young Adult Retreat
- ✦ November 10-12 - ACRY Encounter

Please, Save the Dates!

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RELOCATION UPDATE

**** Car accident at the Parish House** – After 2am on Saturday, December 17, an SUV came down Woodland and did not stop until hitting and going into the house. Thank God, no one was injured! It is a miracle that none of the kids having a sleepover in the living room were injured. Due to the severe damage to the house, Josh and his family are displaced. A GoFundMe page has been set up for those able to help them at this time: <https://gofund.me/a34435df>

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***** Insurance Adjustor** – On Friday 12/30, our insurance adjustor did a thorough inspection of the parish house. As we wait for more reports, the following is advised: *no one under the age of 18 should be on the property, *specifically the front entrance and yard are off limits, and *the structure is still sound. As he mentioned after hearing that no one got hurt – *that is a miracle!* Glory to God!

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* The Allison Park Church has extended our contract an additional 30 days to January 13.

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Contact Fr. Dave or Larry Martin if you are interested in being added to the *Construction Committee*.

May God continue to guide our journey to 2201 Duncan Avenue, Allison Park, PA 15101

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As updates are available, they will be shared here. Please contact Larry or Fr. Dave with any questions

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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions to Fr. Dave by Wednesday)

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***** Seasonal Greeting** - The greeting used amongst Orthodox Christians for the period from the Nativity until Theophany is "Christ is born!" with the response "Glorify Him!"

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***** Fast-Free Period** – There is rejoicing in the celebration of the Birth of Christ! The Church reminds us of this as no fasting is required from Jan 7th until Jan 17th. We fasted - now we feast (in moderation). This is a time of joy when the Christ-Child, our Savior, is Born! Enjoy!

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***** THANK YOU** to everyone who brought items in for today's Nativity Pot-Luck community meal!

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**** Calendars and Envelopes** for 2023 have arrived and are in the vestibule and hall. If you are interested in getting envelopes for the year, please see Larry Martin.

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***** Framed Icons** – Please consider framing your previous church calendar tops: cut them out, use a 5x7 frame, and hang them on your walls. Each year you can add an icon to another room in your home. This is also a nice project to do with our youth!

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***** Greeting Cards** – Please repurpose your greeting cards (and if you do not frame them, calendar icons) after the season concludes. The collection box is in the vestibule for the *Holy Transfiguration Monastery*. Thank you for giving back!

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Mystery of Confession – Father is available to hear Confessions after every service

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Calendar - Future Services are updated online at: www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar (Please see Fr. Dave if you want a printed copy)

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Live-Broadcast – If you are unable to attend church services, please pray along with our Cathedral online: www.acrod.org/directories/cathedral/live/

* **Sr. ACRY NEWS: Lots–O–Luck Calendars** – The National ACRY Lots-O-Luck Calendars are available. \$25 per ticket gets you a years worth of prizes totaling \$10,000! Please see Theresa Sharpless for tickets. (We are able to get more tickets if needed)

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* **Broken Windows** – Prior to the morning of Saturday, December 3, two windows were broken at the church (the vent in the glass block window heading to the ladies room and one of the windows in the middle of the glass block in the hall). They have both been repaired.

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Additional Church Curators Needed – A synonym for *curator* is *steward*. Our curator list needs expanded! If anyone is interested in being a *steward of their time* and be “on-the-door”, please see Larry Martin or Theresa Sharpless.

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Bulletin Sponsor – If you wish to sponsor a bulletin In Honor of (nameday, birthday, anniversary, etc.) or In Memory of someone, please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule or by contacting Fr. Dave (email, text, or call). An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested. *Remember, sponsoring a bulletin in memory of someone does not replace having a Panachida (short Memorial Service) for them.*

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Speaking With Your Priest - Please know you can call me anytime if there is something troubling you. It is not a sign of weakness to share something that may be heavy on your heart or mind. As a priest and Father to our parish, I am here for you. Please call if you need someone to listen or to pray with you. Every heart has a cross and you do not need to carry it alone. Please also call if you have an idea for the growth of our parish. I am praying for you and am grateful for your prayers. With love in Christ, Fr. Dave

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VISIT OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE
 Diocesan Website: www.acrod.org
 Camp Nazareth: www.campnazareth.org
 FB: www.facebook.com/acroddioocese
 Twitter: twitter.com/acrodnews
 YouTube: youtube.com/acroddioocese

OUR STEWARDSHIP GIFTS TO GOD	
Stewardship Offerings:	\$ 175
Candle Stewardship:	\$ 169
Envelope Stewardship:	\$ 125
Community Outreach:	\$ 10
Total Collections:	\$ 479
Relocation Fund:	\$ 35

In faith that God provides: “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, ‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.’” – 2 Cor. 9:8-9

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Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Nelson Family; Tim Martin; Melanie Shuster; Mary Jane Hudak.

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December Financial Report:
General Stewardship = \$ 14,859.92
(includes \$ 392.92 from online stewardship)
***Expenses = \$ 4732.47**
Net Surplus = \$ 10,127.45
Relocation Fund = \$ 135
Capital Improvement Fund = \$ 115
 Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 19
**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*

Fiscal Year-to-Date Financial Report:
(September through last month)
General Stewardship = \$ 27,005
***Expenses = \$ 21,171**
Net Surplus = \$ 5834
**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*
 Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 26

Calendar Year-End Financial Report:
General Stewardship = \$ 73,228
***Expenses = \$ 77,182**
Net Deficit = \$ 3954
**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*
 Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: 27


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** **End-of-Calendar-Year** - The end of the civil calendar year is passed. Did you make a financial contribution to your parish? Please fulfill your stewardship responsibility of time, talent, & *treasure*.

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** **Anonymous Offering** – THANK YOU to the anonymous donor of \$10,000 last month! Your generosity, along with everyone else’s, allows the church to pursue our ministries to live the Beatitudes of Christ! May God grant you many & blessed years!

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 **On-Line Giving** is available from our parish website to donate to the: *General Stewardship Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and/or Relocation Fund*. The best option is to come to church and give your offering to God in His Temple (2nd best is to mail it in to Tim Martin, 2225 McAleer Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143). If you miss coming to church for a week, online giving allows you another option to “catch up” on your weekly stewardship. You can also set up a recurring donation online. For our parish to continue it’s ministries, outreach, and general bill paying, your generosity and stewardship is needed.

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** **2-years of On-Line Giving** – We have had the option of on-line giving from our parish website now for 2 years! The best option is to come to church and give your offering to God in His Temple, but you can also donate from your home and set up a recurring donation.

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MINISTRY OF THE MONTH

 This month, through the efforts of our Sr. ACRY, we will be collecting donations for the **Orthodox Christian Network**. *(This is the site that Father uses to get the “Children’s Word” that is distributed each week.)* The Orthodox Christian Network (OCN) is an official agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. **MyOCN is YourOCN!** Visit www.myocn.net to see the variety of materials they provide online! *Thank you in advance for your prayers and offerings this month!*

ORTHODOXY AROUND THE ‘BURGH AND OUR DIOCESE

*** **Free Health Center** – Join the Neighborhood Resilience Project (2038 Bedford Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15219) for a *Volunteer Information Session* on Tuesday, **January 17** at 6:30 pm. The evening will include a tour, refreshments, and a discussion of the vision for the Free Health Center and how you can play a part. RSVPs requested at freehealthcenter@neighborhoodresilience.org

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*** **Winter Retreat** – On Saturday, **January 28th**, St. John the Baptist Church (150 Elmtree Rd. New Kensington, PA 15068) will host a retreat entitled **A Christian Ending** from 9:15 am to 5 pm. *“Dcn Mark Barna and his wife Elizabeth, authors of “A Christian Ending,” will be presenting a workshop talking about practical things that we can do to prepare for our departure from this life and how we can offer funerals that are fully Orthodox, and significantly less expensive than most funeral services”*

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* **Neighborhood Resilience Project Volunteers Needed** to help pack weekend meals for children in local schools and the Hill District. All ages are welcome on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10 am to 2 pm (or contact them for a different time). Call 412-261-1234 or visit www.neighborhoodresilience.org.

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*** **OMG Ministry** – Did you know that there is an Orthodox Mom’s Group here in Pittsburgh! Over 100 women are on the email distribution list. They organize a monthly play date and a periodic mom nights out. Contact Fr. Dave for more information.

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*** **The Saint Constantine School** - In 2023, new and exciting developments will come that will help move towards welcoming The Saint Constantine School’s first branch campus in the fall of 2024 - bringing outstanding, classical, Christian education to Pittsburgh’s children. If you are interested in getting more involved, please email pittsburgh@saintconstantine.org. For more info, visit: www.saintconstantine.org/pittsburgh

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nativity Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7

⁴But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

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Nativity Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12:

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ²"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; ⁸and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; ¹¹and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

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Sunday's Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship

¹¹For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹²For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, ¹⁶was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus.

¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

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Sunday's Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

The Escape to Egypt

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

The Massacre of the Infants

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more."

The Return from Egypt

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ²⁰"Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archela'us reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

SAINT JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

Commemorated Sunday after Nativity

Saint Joseph the Betrothed was descended from the lineage of King David. In his first marriage, he had four sons and two daughters. Having become a widower, Saint Joseph led a life of strict temperance. As an eighty year old elder Saint Joseph was chosen by the high-priests as a protector of the virginity of the Most Holy Mother of God, Who had taken a vow of virginity. An Angel announced to him about the Incarnation through Her of the Son of God. Saint Joseph was present during the worship of the NewBorn Divine-Infant by the shepherds, and also by the Magi. On the orders of the Angel he fled with the Mother of God and the God-Infant Jesus into Egypt, saving them from the wrath of king Herod. In Egypt he lived with the Virgin Mary and the God-Infant, earning his livelihood by work as a carpenter. Saint Joseph died at about one hundred years old (a 2nd Commemoration of Saint Joseph is on the Sunday of the Holy ForeFathers).

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ORTHODOX WORDS OF THE WEEK

INCARNATE – From Latin, meaning "to become flesh." Christ is God Incarnate: He became flesh – that is, human – thereby sanctifying human flesh and reuniting all humanity to God. According to Orthodox doctrine, Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect Man. (See Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-14; Phil 2:5-7)

LIVING ORTHODOXY



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST:

LIVING ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS

Christmas is before us. How will we choose to celebrate it? And what, by the way, are we actually celebrating?

For Christians, Christmas is the Great Feast of the Nativity according to the flesh of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ... The Word Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and the door to the mystery of His Incarnation is opened by the Church's beautiful hymnology.

St. Joseph the Hymnographer chants: "The Son of the Father...has appeared to us...to give light to those in darkness and to gather the dispersed. Therefore, the far-famed Theotokos do we magnify."...

Using Orthodox theology as a springboard, we can harness the celebration of Christmas to live a more fulfilling life -- to live in the spirit (*cf.* Gal 5:25).

Let us begin with a central tenet which has been experienced by, and passed down from, the Church Fathers: that **God became man in order that man may become god** -- through grace and adoption (*cf.* Eph 1:5). The Incarnation of Christ invites us to be holy; it is not only to be experienced by a small number of people, beyond the grasp of regular folk -- it is for everyone, in every part of the planet.

Orthodoxy is not an ideology, a philosophy or a legalistic, rigid set of rules. Moreover, God is not an abstract idea, a faceless Person with Who we have no possibility of communication.

The Orthodox Faith preaches a personal God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit -- Three Persons, One Kingship. God reveals Himself to us through the God-Man (*Theanthropos*, in Greek) Jesus Christ. ... "The unapproachable God becomes approachable. The unknown God becomes known. The strange God becomes familiar and a friend."

On Christmas we celebrate the destruction of the barrier that separated man from God.

And how do we know that this barrier has indeed been destroyed? Well, for one, through the Saints of the Church. The Saints show us that man can personally see and communicate with God.

"Saints," according to the renowned 20th century theologian Fr. John Romanides, "is the name given to those who, through purification and illumination, reach glorification [*theosis*] and share in the glorifying energies of God." Thus, Orthodoxy is a positive science, the experience of revelation and not speculation.

It is the experience of communicating with God through prayer, especially noetic prayer. It is the experiencing of communicating with God by doing His will, by fasting giving alms, being humble and loving one another. It is the experiencing of communicating with God by living a Christ-centered life in the Church and by participating in the Holy Sacraments, especially confession/repentance and communion.

It is the experience of having true freedom, not the pseudo-freedom and trappings conferred by the world. **Contrary to many critics, authentic Christianity does not restrict man but the opposite, it gives man his freedom to live.** It gives light to those in darkness.

This is a life-long challenge, a ladder to climb one step at a time. And how do we know if we are making progress, if we are in fact living in the spirit? Well, for one, if we cultivate the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22-23).

This is all made possible because of Christmas.

Let us choose to celebrate it correctly.

From: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/evangelos-sotiropoulos/the-nativity-of-christ-li_b_8801822.html

STEWARDSHIP SNIPPET

Treasure, Rust and Thieves "...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matthew 5:21 RSV)

So many of God's people have come under the complete control of the spirit of this world. Thereby have these same people of God denied their identification as people of God, and could easily be called people of *this* world, not of the next.

People of this world develop a love for money and what it can buy: houses, land, trinkets, electronics, gourmet food and up-to-date fashions. Love of money becomes so well-developed that such love is absorbed into one's whole mind and being. Such a love of money shuts out love for the One who created and owns all money. It further drives out love for people and often turns others into competitors for the same money.

The god of this world, money, has blinded so many eyes. Eternal and everlasting concerns are made secondary...In what place in one's life are those eternal and everlasting concerns? The words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount are eternal and everlasting: "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.*"

He says "*for yourselves.*" These eternal and everlasting concerns are what are to motivate us, to fill us up – for they are eternal, they will not pass away, they will not be subject to the ups and downs of this life. God's promises do not fluctuate like the stock market, or lose their value like the dollar. They do not rust away. No one can steal them...

from: <http://www.acrod.org/ministries/stewardship/stewardship-blog/stewardship-75>

Stewardship of Treasure Guide												
Weekly offering to God through the Sunday Offertory - Will you take a step up?												
Weekly Income	Beyond a Tithe 15%	Tithe 12%	Upper Range Giving 10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%
\$200	\$30	\$24	\$20	\$18	\$16	\$14	\$12	\$10	\$8	\$6	\$4	\$2
\$300	\$45	\$36	\$30	\$27	\$24	\$21	\$18	\$15	\$12	\$9	\$6	\$3
\$400	\$60	\$48	\$40	\$36	\$32	\$28	\$24	\$20	\$16	\$12	\$8	\$4
\$500	\$75	\$60	\$50	\$45	\$40	\$35	\$30	\$25	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$5
\$600	\$90	\$72	\$60	\$54	\$48	\$42	\$36	\$30	\$24	\$18	\$12	\$6
\$700	\$105	\$84	\$70	\$63	\$56	\$49	\$42	\$35	\$28	\$21	\$14	\$7
\$800	\$120	\$96	\$80	\$72	\$64	\$56	\$48	\$40	\$32	\$24	\$16	\$8
\$900	\$135	\$108	\$90	\$81	\$72	\$63	\$54	\$45	\$36	\$27	\$18	\$9
\$1,000	\$150	\$120	\$100	\$90	\$80	\$70	\$60	\$50	\$40	\$30	\$20	\$10
\$1,100	\$165	\$132	\$110	\$99	\$88	\$77	\$66	\$55	\$44	\$33	\$22	\$11
\$2,000	\$300	\$240	\$200	\$180	\$160	\$140	\$120	\$100	\$80	\$60	\$40	\$20
\$3,000	\$450	\$360	\$300	\$270	\$240	\$210	\$180	\$150	\$120	\$90	\$60	\$30

1. Find where YOU are on the chart (your weekly income/giving).
2. Move one block to the left to determine what GROW ONE% would be.

FEAST DAY FEATURES OF THE MONTH

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Commemorated on January 7 / December 25

The **Nativity** according to the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, also called **Christmas**, is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church.

In the fullness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ was born to the Holy Theotokos and Virgin Mary, thus entering into the world as a man and revealing Himself to mankind.

According to the Bible and to Holy Tradition, Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in a cave, surrounded by farm animals and shepherds. The baby Jesus was born into a manger from the Virgin Mary, assisted by her husband St. Joseph. St. Joseph and the Theotokos were forced to travel due to a Roman census; the odd location of the birth was the result of the refusal of a nearby inn to accommodate the expecting couple (Luke 2:1-20). Since it is known historically that dwellings were built directly over such caves housing livestock--in order to make use of the heat

Though three magi from the East are commonly depicted as visiting during the event itself (or, in Roman Catholic tradition, twelve days thereafter), the Bible records the coming of an unspecified number of wise men as being a few years after Jesus' birth (see Matthew 2). In either case, these magi came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt 2:11). In the hymnography for the feast, these gifts are interpreted to signify Christ's royalty, divinity, and suffering.

From: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Nativity>

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THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD

Commemorated on January 14/1

The Circumcision (Obrezanie) of the Lord: On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ – in accordance with the Old Testament Law, accepted circumcision, which was decreed for all infants of the male gender as a sign of the Covenant of God with the Forefather Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17: 10-14, Lev. 12: 3). Upon the performing of this ritual the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, which had been announced by the Archangel Gabriel on the day

of the Annunciation (Blagoveschenie) to the Most Holy Virgin Mary (Lk. 1: 31-33, 2: 21). According to the explanation of the fathers of the Church the Lord, the Creator of the Law, accepted circumcision, giving example for people how faithfully the Divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord accepted circumcision for this reason – so that later on no one should be in doubt that He was truly Man, rather than merely being the bearer of illusion-seeming flesh as certain heretics (Docetism) happened to teach. In the New Testament (Covenant) the ritual of circumcision gave way to the sacrament of Baptism, which it pre-figured (Col. 2: 11-12). Accounts about the feastday of the Circumcision of the Lord in the Eastern Church continue right up through the IV Century. The Canon of the feast was written by the Monk Stephen Savvaites (Comm. 28 October and 13 July). Together with the Circumcision, accepted by the Lord as a sign of the Covenant of God with mankind, He received also the Name Jesus (Saviour) as the seal of His service – the deed of the Salvation of the world (Mt. 1: 21; Mk. 9: 38-39, 16: 17; Lk. 10: 17; Acts 3: 6, 16; Phil. 2: 9-10). These two events, the Circumcision and Naming, remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant (Testament) with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision not done by hand, in putting off the sinful body of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11). The very name "Christian" witnesses to an entrance of mankind into a New Covenant with God.

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THEOPHANY

Commemorated on January 19/6

Theophany / Bogoyavlenie denotes the feast whereby through the Baptism of the Lord the Most Holy Trinity has been revealed to the world (Mt. 3: 13-17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptised by the holy ForeRunner of the Lord John, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a Dove. From ancient times this feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since that God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death" (Mt. 4: 16) and to save through grace the fallen race of mankind.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptise catechumens at the vespers of Theophany, such that Baptism also is revealed as a spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the feast of Theophany came about in Apostolic times. Mention is made concerning it in the Apostolic Decretals. From the II Century there is preserved the testimony of Sainted Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord and performing the night vigil before this feast.

In the III Century on the feast of Theophany there is known the dialogue concerning Divine-services between the holy martyr Hyppolitus and Saint Gregory the WonderWorker. In the following centuries – from the IV to IX Century – all the great fathers of the Church – Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostomos, Ambrose of Milan, John Damascene, had their own comments about the feast of Theophany. The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this feastday, which even now is sung for Divine-services. The Monk John Damascene said, that the Lord was baptised not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but so that "by water to bury human sin", to fulfill the law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify "watery nature" and to proffer it to us in the form and example of Baptism.

On the feastday of the Baptism of Christ, Holy Church asserts our faith in the mystery – most sublime and incomprehensible to human intellect – of the Three Persons of the One God. It teaches us to confess and glorify as equally-honoured the Holy Trinity One-Essence and Undivided. It exposes and collapses the fallacies of the ancient pseudo-teachings, which attempted with reason and by human terms to explain the Creator of the world. The Church shews the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires for us a sense of deep gratitude for the Illumination and Purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, wherefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism – keeping clean this priceless garb, about which the

feast of the Baptism tells us: "As many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). [Translator Note: literally rendered from Greek "Theophany" means "Manifestation of God", whereas "Epiphany" connotes "Manifest upon"; "Theophany" is the more accurate rendering of Slavonic "Bogoyavlenie".]

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ASSEMBLAGE ("SOBOR" OR SYNAXIS") OF THE FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST OF THE LORD, JOHN

Commemorated on January 20/7

In the Orthodox Church it is customary, on the day following the Great Feasts of the Lord and the Mother of God, to remember those saints who participated directly in the sacred event. So, on the day following the Theophany of the Lord, the Church honors the one who participated directly in the Baptism of Christ, placing his own hand upon the head of the Savior.

Saint John, the holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, whom the Lord called the greatest of the prophets, concludes the history of the Old Testament and opens the era of the New Testament. The holy Prophet John bore witness to the Only-Begotten Son of God, incarnate in the flesh. Saint John was accounted worthy to baptize Him in the waters of the Jordan, and he was a witness of the Theophany of the Most Holy Trinity on the day of the Savior's Baptism. The holy Prophet John, the son of the Priest Zachariah and Righteous Elizabeth, was related to the Lord on His mother's side. The holy Forerunner, John, was born six months before Christ. The Archangel Gabriel announced his birth in the Temple at Jerusalem, revealing to Zachariah that a son was to be born to him.

Through the prayers offered beforehand, the child was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saint John prepared himself in the wilds of the desert for his great service by a strict life, by fasting, prayer and sympathy for the fate of God's people.

At the age of thirty, he came forth preaching repentance. He appeared on the banks of the Jordan, to prepare the people by his preaching to accept the Savior of the world. In church hymnology, Saint John is called a "bright morning star," whose gleaming outshone the brilliance of all the other stars, announcing the coming dawn of the day of grace, illumined with the light of the spiritual Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having baptized the sinless Lamb of God, Saint John soon died a martyr's death, beheaded by the sword on orders of King Herod at the request of his daughter Salome. (On Saint John the Baptist, see Mt.3:1-16, 11:1-19, 14:1-12; Mark 1:2-8, 6:14-29; Luke 1:5-25, 39-80, 3:1-20, 7:18-35, 9:7-9; John 1:19-34, 3:22-26).

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SPIRITUAL VITAMINS



"Matthew, writing for Jewish Christians, cites Gentiles as the first worshipers of Jesus. Luke, writing for Gentile Christians, cites as the first worshipers the Jewish poor – shepherds from surrounding fields (Luke 2:8-17). The Magi, firstfruits of the Gentiles, come to Christ bearing gifts: gold, for a King; frankincense, for God; and myrrh, for a Man who is to suffer and die. The wise men have received some knowledge about the newborn King through their observation of the star, but when they see Him, they recognize Him as the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2), the Orient (the rising sun) from on high (Is. 59:19), the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)." – *From the Orthodox Study Bible: Matthew 2:11*

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"Help one another with the generosity of the Lord, and despise no one. When you have the opportunity to do good, do not let it go by." – *St Polycarp of Smyrna*

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"A most glorious mystery is accomplished today: nature is renewed, and God becomes Man. What He was, He has remained; and what He was not, He has taken on Himself without suffering commingling or division." – *St John of Damascus*

SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Father is available to meet Monday thru Friday from 8:30am to 3:00pm or by appointment.

Online Community: Please email Fr. Dave to receive the weekly bulletin via email.

Parish 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. He will pray with you and you will receive the Mystery of Holy Anointing (Unction) to be fully prepared.

Mystery of Confession – Opportunities are available after every service, most Saturdays during fasting periods from 11am to 1pm, OR by appointment.

Holy Communion/Eucharist – The reception of the Holy Eucharist is encouraged for 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.

Lapsed Members – You are always welcome home and we want you back! Generally speaking, sincere participation in the Mysteries of Confession, Communion, and regular attendance at the divine services are all that is required to begin parish life anew! See Fr. Dave for specific details.

Parishioners in "good standing" are those Orthodox Christians who, as members of Saint John's Orthodox Church, strive to live according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church; participate in the life of the parish through regular attendance of services, regular reception of Holy Communion and periodic Holy Confession (and receive these Mysteries no less than once a year); if married, having been married in the Orthodox Church; and share their stewardship of their time, talents, and treasures which includes financially supporting the parish.

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The Jesus Prayer

(Inhale) O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God,
(Exhale) have mercy on me, a sinner!

(Repeat until your heart is calm...)

Baptisms – Two God-parents are required, at least one of whom must be Orthodox by faith (and the other a practicing Christian). In the case of infants, the newly-baptized must have one name that is Christian in origin. Parents/grandparents/guardians must also promise to bring the child up in an Orthodox Christian way of life. Please consult Fr. Dave for more details.

Adult Chrismation – New parishioners are always welcome! In the case of adults seeking entrance into the Church, a period of prescribed catechism will be established with Fr. Dave before administration of the Mysteries. An Orthodox Christian sponsor is also required.

Marriages – are only solemnized on Saturdays or Sundays in the church. They are not performed during fasting periods and certain Feast Days. Please consult Fr. Dave ASAP for more details (*before* arrangements are made for the hall). It is critical that marriages are blessed in the church.

Church Funerals – are provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual responsibilities and their stewardship. 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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PRAYER CORNER

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

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A Prayer For The Sick:

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

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For the Health of... Mary Jane, Theresa, Thomas, David, Donna, Gregory, Joshua, George, John, Beverly, Kelly, Paul, Kathleen, Joanne, Marie, Barbara, Brian, Kristina, Sean, Julia, Susan, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, Michael, and Roberta *...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... His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Fr. David S., Fr. Myron, Dcn. Dean, Michael L., Laura & family, Carlene, Georgia, Eleanora, Mark, Michaleana, Dorell, Donald, Susan, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Ameer, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin *our diocesan seminarians:* Nicholas, Dylan, Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, Nicholas, Aydin, Subdeacon Seamus, Nicholas, *and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee:* Lawrence, Matthew, Timothy, Theresa, Rich, Gina, Robert, Jane, Mary Jane, Katherine, Kenneth, John, Wendy, Margaret, John, Patricia, John, Todd *and for those who labor towards our Community Outreaches ...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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January Namedays:

Juliana Anton – Virgin-martyr Juliana of Nicomedia (1/3)
Stephen Brancho - Holy Protomartyr & Archdeacon Stephen (1/9)
Melanie Shuster - Venerable Melania the Younger (1/13)
John Sharpless - St John the Baptist (1/20)
Ashley Wertz - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)
Anthony Winkler - Venerable Anthony the Great (1/30)
...May God grant them many and blessed years!

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January Birthdays:

Carol Lorenzi (1/2), Joshua Mainolfi (1/3), Anna Martellotti (1/4), Steven Buhonick (1/7), Jason Shelpman (1/9), Pañi Kathy Fester (1/13), Brenda Labas (1/15), Fred G. Anton (1/16), Pañi Fedornock (1/16), *Father's Godson*, Alex Schreiber (1/18), *Father's Goddaughter*, Jenna Schreiber (1/18), Kevynn Anton (1/19), Patricia Watson (1/19), *Father's Nephew*, Nicholas Ditmore (1/19), Fr Joseph

Fester (1/19), Katherine Schrmack (1/22), *Father's niece*, Abiageal Verbanick (1/22), Thomas Lorenzi (1/23), Mary Ann Brady (1/26), Fr Frank Miloro (1/26), Roberta 'Bobbie' Kruchkevich (1/27), Allison Kretchek (1/29) *...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!*

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For our Catechumens & Inquirers... Tyler, Susan *...through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, & St. John Maximovitch.*

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For those preparing for Marriage... Francis & Alexandra, Nicole & Dustin *...through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

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January Anniversaries:

...through the prayers of St. Nicholas Planas

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For Pregnant Mothers... Erica (*due in April*), Lindsay, Nicole (*June*) *...through the prayers of St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, and St. Irene Chrysovalantou.*

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For those serving in the Armed Forces & Civil Authorities... Thomas R. Dzadovsky *...through the prayers of St. George, the Great-Martyr & Wonderworker.*

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For the souls of the newly departed...

The Priest, Protopresbyter +John Duranko (12/8), +Donald Babin (12/6) *...May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May they be Eternal in God's Memory.*

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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave know if you wish to make additions or subtractions (*in the case of answered prayers*) to our Parish List. The words of the Gospel are true: **it is good to pray for one another.** Let this be a place where we lay out our concerns and beg the help of our brothers & sisters in Christ. *This prayer list is NOT limited to only Orthodox Christians.*

DEVOTIONAL PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

THE CANON OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Ode 1: Christ is born, glorify him! Christ comes from heaven, meet Him! Christ is an earth, be exalted! O all the earth, sing to the Lord, and sing praises in gladness, all people, for He has been glorified.

Ode 3: To the Son Who was begotten of the Father without change before all ages, and in the last times was without seed made flesh of the Virgin, to Christ our God, let us cry aloud: You have raised up our horn, holy are You, O Lord!

Ode 4: Rod of the root of Jesse, and flower that blossomed from his stem, O Christ, You have sprung forth from the Virgin. From the mountain overshadowed by the forest You came, made flesh for her that knew not wedlock, O God not formed from matter. Glory to Your power O Lord!

Ode 5: As You are God of Peace and Father of mercies, You have sent to us Your Angel of Great Counsel, granting unto us peace. So are we guided towards the light of the knowledge of God. And watching by night, we glorify You, O Lover of mankind.

Ode 6: The sea monster spat forth Jonah as it had received him, like a babe from the womb: while the Word, having dwelt in the Virgin and taken flesh: came forth from her yet kept her undefiled. For being Himself not subject to decay. He preserved His Mother free from harm.

Ode 7: Scorning the impious decree, the three children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire: but standing in the midst of the flame they sang: "O God of our fathers, blessed are You!"

Ode 8: The furnace moist with dew was the image of a wonder past nature. For it burned not the children whom it had received, even as the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin's womb into which It had descended. Therefore in praise, let us sing: let the whole creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him above all forever.

Ode 9: I behold a strange and wonderful mystery. The cave has become heaven, the throne of the Cherubim, the Virgin. The manger a noble place where lies Christ our God Who cannot be contained. Let us praise Him in song and magnify You!

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A prayer for our Neighborhoods

by Archbishop Demetrios of America

I pray to you, God, for the families of my neighborhood. Visit them. Throw their troubles out of them and bring hope. Make the daily cares that devour the heart disappear. Present solutions to life's problems. Settle the disturbed relationships among members of different families whom I know or do not know. O Lord, remind the people of our area that You exist, that You are a strong and loving Protector. Keep away, Lord, anything that causes the disappearance of peace from souls, and the escape of sleep from our eyes. Stay a little while more tonight in our neighborhood. Spread peace along with the night. Let the harshness of the day and its struggles not spread over the night. Amen.

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A Prayer for our Diocesan Clergy

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of Your sheep, light the fire of ardent love in the hearts of all Your priests, that they may ever and in all things seek only Your glory. Remember especially, Lord, our Bishop (*name*), and our spiritual father (*name*), and all our diocesan clergy, who are laboring in Your vineyard for the salvation of all those whom You have entrusted to them. Make their lives as holy as the word they preach. Keep them from being discouraged. Hear their prayers for our salvation. Give them wisdom and courage to proclaim Your truth. Make them priests after Your own heart. For You are a merciful God Who loves us and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-giving- Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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ONLINE BULLETIN BONUSES

I Dream of A Church... (to be continued next week)

- + I dream of a church; her master is Jesus Christ alone.
- + I dream of a church; her members seek the life of righteousness at all times.
- + I dream of a church; her youth see the Life flow from their church.
- + I dream of a church; her elders enjoy her warmth in the sunset of their lives.
- + I dream of a church; rooted in her heritage, and present always to face all new.
- + I dream of a church; who allows the Holy Spirit to act.
- + I dream of a church; who does not attribute false names to the Holy Spirit, to justify her decay.
- + I dream of a church; her spiritual fathers are pure and righteous.
- + I dream of a church; who welcomes the world with joy.
- + I dream of a church; who opens the door for the youth to find themselves in Christ. And I detest a church who teaches the youth that the only way to God is the blind obedience that erases their personality that God created.
- + I dream of a church; who does not confine the world within its walls, but goes off into the world to make it a church.
- + I dream of a church; who does not handle the issues with human wisdom, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- + I dream of a church; that gives the last word to her Master and seeks, ceaselessly, to determine the compatibility of her decisions with His vision.
- + I dream of a church; who gets up after every fall.
- + I dream of a church; who plants her feet on the ground but she looks up to heavens.
- + I dream of a church; who leaves the human scales and seeks to take on the stature of Jesus Christ.
- + I dream of a church; who deals with money to serve the needs of God's people.
- + I dream of a church; who does not limit herself to just being a building, but realizes that the true church is the living church.
- + I dream of a church; who shares with the believers

their worries, and concerns, and sorrows.

- + I dream of a church; who is an oasis for consolation in the desert of this world.
 - + I dream of a church; who knows how to rejoice in God, and how to give this joy to the people.
 - + I dream of a church; who discerns the peace of Jesus Christ from the peace of the world.
 - + I dream of a church; who lives the fulfillment of the life.
 - + I dream of a resurrectional church.
 - + I dream of a church; who prioritizes welfare.
 - + I dream of a church; who knows the language of this world, and evangelizes it in a language that the people of the world will understand.
 - + I dream of a church; who lives love every day.
 - + I dream of a church; who integrates the talents of her people without putting them in the race of completion.
 - + I dream of a church; who does not differentiate between clergy and laity, but deals with all as royal priesthood.
 - + I dream of a church; who does not accept a goal less than sainthood, and works to nourish the life with the kingdom of God.
 - + I dream of a church; who is not led by human desires.
 - + I dream of a church; who her poorest and richest are equal in value and respect.
 - + I dream of a church; who doesn't stop working to actualize the Kingdom of God.
 - + I dream of a church; who is the body of Christ on earth.
- O God save us from the institutionalized church that puts her Master to death and keeps only His name.
- by Metropolitan Saba (Esber) of Bosra, Horan and Jabal Al-Arabia
(Translated by Fr. Damaskinos Issa)

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Legend Has It...

The twelve days of Christmas are not the days before the Feast Day. The first day of the twelve days is Christmas day and the last day is January 18, the Eve of the Theophany of our Lord when we commemorate His Baptism at the hands of John in the Jordan River. The familiar song the *Twelve Days of Christmas* has an interesting history.

It was originally a catechetical song. From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were forbidden to practice their faith openly and the common carol was written as a secret catechism that could be sung in public without persecution. It had a hidden meaning known only to church members which reminded them publicly of the teachings of Christ in a secret way. So what's it mean?

The partridge in a pear tree: **Jesus Christ**

The 2 turtle doves: **The Old & New Testaments**

The 3 French hens: **Faith, Hope and Love**
(1 Corinthians 13:13)

The 4 calling birds: **The Four Gospels** (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John)

The 5 rings: **The Torah** (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy)

The 6 laying geese: **The Six Days of Creation**
(Genesis 1:1-31)

The 7 swimming swans: **The Sevenfold gifts of the Spirit** (Isaiah 11:1-3)

The 8 milking maids: **The Eight Beatitudes**
(Matthew 5:1-12)

The 9 dancing ladies: **The Nine Fruits of the Spirit**
(Galatians 5:22-23)

The 10 leaping lords: **The Ten Commandments**
(Exodus 20:1-17)

The 11 piping pipers: **The Eleven Faithful Disciples**
The 12 drumming drummers: **The Twelve Points of Belief in the Apostle's Creed**

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A Prayer for Peace

Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray, all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honor and praise.

Amen.

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