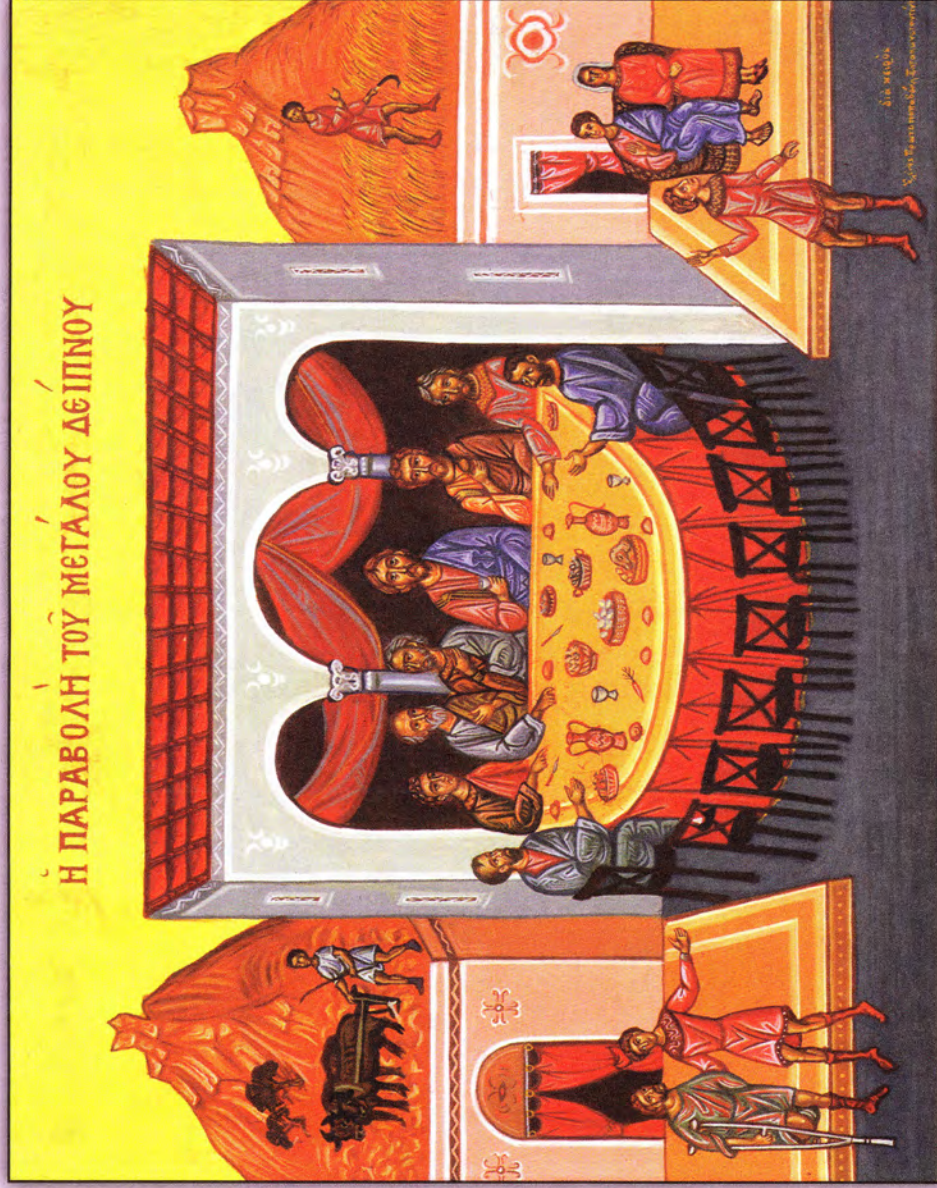


SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS
ELEVENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE



Icon of the Parable of the Great Banquet



December 14, 2014

TONE 2

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS

THE HOLY MARTYRS THYRSUS, LEUCIUS, PHILEMON, APOLLONIUS, ARIANUS AND CALLINICUS

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 8 – DECEMBER 14

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21 – *SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY - HOLY ANCESTORS; THE HOLY MARTYR JULIANA*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily),
please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважні!*

St. Nicholas Celebration

On Sunday, December 21st we will welcome St. Nicholas on his annual visit to our parish:

- We will have a pancake brunch following the Divine Liturgy.
- Parents please note: «*Небесна Канцелярія*» (The Heavenly Office) will be open starting at 9:00 AM. Please see Olena in the Pastor's Office.
- **We need volunteers** to help make verenyky. Please see Olena.

Warm Welcome!

We warmly welcome all of our visitors!
It's good to have you with us!

Last Sunday's Bulletin

If you haven't yet picked up last Sunday's bulletin, it is available in the church hall, or on our website, stjohnthebaptizer.org.

December Birthdays:

Mary Kitt	–	12/03
Stefan Oborski	–	12/07
Jeanine Soucie	–	12/12
Sofia Bankston	–	12/13
John Heltsley, Jr.	–	12/13
Stefania Moore	–	12/15
Lesia Loznycky	–	12/17
Julia Lozovyj	–	12/22
Maria Sysyn	–	12/24

*Многая і благая літа!
Many blessed years!*

Haven't seen someone in a while?

Give them a call. See how they are doing. Let them know that you not only miss them but also care enough to see if everything is okay. A kind word can go a long way.

FLOWER COLLECTION

Special envelopes are available in the back of the church do help with the purchase of flowers for the Feast of Nativity.

UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH FACES POSSIBLE BAN 25 YEARS AFTER LEGALIZATION

2014-12-13 *Vatican Radio*

(Vatican Radio) Twenty-five years after its legalization in the former Soviet Union, the leader of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church says his Church is faced once again with the possibility of being outlawed in parts of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church marked the 25th anniversary of its legalization this past week. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna was in Kiev on Wednesday for the celebration.

But in an interview with Austrian Catholic news agency Kathpress, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk remarked on the recent developments in Crimea regarding his Church. Russia's annexation of Crimea in March after an unconstitutional referendum is not recognized by international law.

"The local so-called authorities issued a special law, which obliged each religious community to renew its registration and perhaps for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church it is very difficult to get a new registration," said Archbishop Shevchuk. "That means that starting in January 2015, we simply will be (outside) the law."

"It is some sort of irony because we are celebrating 25 years of our legalization in the former Soviet Union but right now in some parts of Ukraine, we will lose the legal right to exist," he continued.

Archbishop Shevchuk said the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine, caused by the eight-month conflict between pro-Russia separatists and Ukrainian troops, is "very, very difficult because more or less 5 million people in that region are affected by war, hunger and right now... cold."

To date, more than 4,000 people have been killed in the fighting. In the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk, where the conflict is rife, only three Catholic priests remain—two Greek Catholic and one Roman Catholic, he said.

"We are trying to be present in that territory so our priests are with our people," he stated. "We are trying to provide some sort of humanitarian

help through the Caritas organizations."

The archbishop called for greater efforts from the Orthodox Churches to help bring peace to the region and between Ukraine and Russia.

"I believe, and this is I would say a hope for Ukraine and for Russia, that the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate can do a lot more for the reconciliation of our two countries," he said. "They can do a lot more in order to stop bloodshed and war in eastern Ukraine."

In response to a separate question, Archbishop Shevchuk reflected on the role of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in serving as a bridge between East and West.

"We are trying to be the mediators and it is the image of our own mission as the Eastern Catholic Church, which is both in communion with the Holy Father, with Western Christianity, but embodies the Eastern Christian spirituality, liturgical, theological tradition," he said. "And because of that,... we can be good mediators to help to discover the East for the West and discover the West for the East."

The archbishop also remarked on the significant growth experienced in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the past 25 years, since the Church came out from the underground.

"The Church which went out of the catacombs had more or less 300 priests and the average age was 60 years old," he said. "But right now, we have more than 3,000 priests and the average (age) is 35 years. I am, as the head of the Church, I'm 44 years old. And this is just very concrete signs of the vibrancy and today's situation, and it is a miracle."

The interview with Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk was conducted by Kathpress and made available to Vatican Radio.

Article by Laura Ieraci

DON'T PRE-CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS!

by Priest Andrew George, pravmir.com November 19

The Advent Season, which began for us on November 15, is a time for anticipating the “Good News” of the Lord’s Birth. As with all things in life, Scripture reminds us that we must be careful of being “in the world, but not of the world”. This is especially true of the celebration of Christmas. Many lament that the stores are decorated for Christmas from the end of October – an example of the over-stressing and “early-stressing” of this great Christian Holy Day. But what do we do in our homes? I have noticed that on the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving, people begin to put up their decorations and turn on their Christmas lights and trees.

Our Eastern Christian Advent tradition gives us some guidelines of which many of us perhaps are not aware. Within this 40-day preparation period, a slow progression of events and remembrances unfolds. This is seen in the general attitude, hymnology, prayers, and fasting practices which begin to intensify on the Feast of St. Nicholas (December 6), and progress through the feasts of St. Spyridon (December 12), St. Daniel (December 17) and St. Ignatios (December 20). The latter is specifically called “the day of preparation”. What do you think this tells us?

Add to this the tradition of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” that begins on Christmas Day, and runs to January 5, the day before Theophany, the next great feast. The ‘food fast’ is most intense on the 12 days preceding December 25, and there is no fasting on the 12 days after Christmas, not on Wednesday or Friday! Again, what do you think this tells us?

It is interesting to note that historically we do not have an exact date of Jesus birth. The date of His Nativity was specifically selected by the early Church to coincide with the pagan celebrations held in late December. They were rather riotous and foolish in nature, not becoming of a follower of Christ. Thus this date had a dual purpose: (1) to mark the Lord’s coming to earth in human form, and (2) to do it at a time which would help defeat an attitude and lifestyle which went against the Lord’s teachings. The early Church leaders knew that these Christians struggled with the temptation to return to their former ways. Once again, what would you think this tells us? The Eastern Christian tradition is clearly not to “pre-celebrate” Christmas, but rather to withhold the celebration until the designated time. Once it arrives, we are to celebrate it joyously, not with over riotous activity as did the pagans. Some 40 or 50 years ago here in America, people decorated their Christmas trees on Christmas Eve. Slowly, through the influence of merchants and media, we started to put up our decorations and trees earlier and earlier each year. As a result, we take them down earlier and earlier, not waiting for the Theophany observances of January 5-7, which are specifically part of the 12-day cycle beginning on Christmas.

Every year there are more and more parties held during the height of the Christmas Fast, instead of during the festive period of December 25-January 5. On the day after Christmas we hear people say that Christmas is over, and the Christmas trees

are out on the curb. Since they have pre-decorated and pre-celebrated and feasted, in their minds “it’s over”, when really it should just be beginning.

I offer the following practical applications of our Eastern Christian theology and practice:

- **Do decorate, but don’t pre-decorate. Use the December 6-20 guide as a starting point.**
- **Do celebrate, but don’t pre-celebrate. Use the December 25-January 5 time -frame for your festivities.**

The Scriptures instruct us: “In all things be not like the pagans, but rather calm, joyful

in praise and giving of love to glorify Christ who came for us.” Since we Christians are called to be “in the world, but not of the world”, we are to transform the world and not have the secular world transform us. Secularism has crept into our Christmas observances. It is up to us as individuals to purify the celebration. This begins with our families, our households, doing the more proper and fitting things and teaching others to do likewise by example. I urge you to plan for a Christmas observance that will hold true to our Eastern Christian view and pattern for celebration.

Fr. Andrew George is the pastor of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Cranston, Rhode Island.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICE FOR THE FEAST OF NATIVITY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 - *VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY*

10:00 AM - Royal Hours

10:00 PM - *3 Нами Бог!*” Велике Повечір’я “God is with us” Great Complines followed by Divine Liturgy

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25 – *THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For all parishioners



"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas."



Greeting Cards

Christmas Cards and various other greeting cards are for sale in the Church Hall. Please see Mary Kitt to purchase.

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL CONFESSION

by Simcha Fisher 12/09/2014

On Saturday, we went to confession. Mine was a pretty standard operation: "Bless me, father, for I have sinned. It has been two months since my last confession. I did that thing I always do, and that other thing I always do. I also did that other thing I always do, except more so than usual. And I stopped doing that thing I usually do, but then I started again. And I was mean on the internet. For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry."

And the priest said what this particular priest always says: "Thank you for that beautiful confession." He says this when I have a long and sordid list, or a short and sordid list, or when he can barely understand me because my nose is running from the sordidness of it all. The point is, I am not aware of ever having made a confession that any normal human being would consider "beautiful."

But the confessional is not a normal place. It's the one place that no one would ever go for normal, worldly reasons. No penitent goes to confession to get ahead in life, or to make money, or to get a full belly, or to impress anyone; and no priest goes to confession to be amused or entertained. It's where we go to unload our miseries, to show our wounds and our infections, to take off the disguises that make us appear palatable to each other.

So, not beautiful. No, not especially.

Or is it? If the ugliness, the squalor, the sordidness, and the running nose were all that happened inside a confessional, then it really would be an ugly place -- just a latrine, a ditch, a sewer. But of course, the part where we lay out our sins is only the first part.

What happens afterward is more obviously beautiful. The priest reaches out and picks up the ugly little load you've laid in front of him. And right then and there, he pours the living

water over it until the parts that are worth saving are healthy and whole again, and the parts that cannot be salvaged have been washed away entirely. What is useless is gone; what was dead is alive again.

This is beautiful!

And the beauty of absolution does one of those neat Catholic tricks where eternal things reach back in time and impart beauty wherever they want, regardless of chronology. The beauty of absolution makes the confession itself beautiful. Even though my sins are ugly, the very fact that I'm bringing them into the confessional has something beautiful in it: the beauty of trust that I will be forgiven; the beauty of believing that something real and life-changing will happen; the beauty of being willing to accept forgiveness even though I know that I don't deserve it; and the beauty of knowing that, whoever's turn it is to sit behind the screen, it is really Christ who is waiting to meet me.

If that isn't beautiful, then nothing is.

The cross that redeems us and brings us peace and pardon has a long shadow, and it stretches backward in time, covering us not only at the moment of absolution, but drawing us into its beautiful shelter of mercy from the very moment we decide, "This can't go on. I gotta get to confession for real this weekend."

So, all right, Father, my confession was beautiful! It's beautiful that you are willing to spend your weekends behind that screen, helping us turn our garbage into a garden. You were right. It was a beautiful confession.

Simcha Fisher, author of *The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning* writes for several publications and blogs at *I Have to Sit Down*. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband and nine children. Without supernatural aid, she would hardly be a human being.

Do not do anything without signing yourself with the sign of the Cross! When you depart on a journey, when you begin your work, when you go to study, when you are alone, and when you are with other people, seal yourself with the Holy Cross.

—Elder Cleopa of Romania

Sunday offering for December 7

Amount	Number
\$4.00	1 (loose)
\$5.00	1
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	2
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	1
\$50.00	3
\$80.00	2
\$150.00	1
\$200.00	1
<hr/>	
\$819.00	

Parishioner Total: \$814.00
Guest: \$5.00

Average / parish household (42): \$19.85
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00
Deficit: **(\$1311.00)**

Please Note:

When you are away, please don't forget that the church still relies on your contributions. Our bills do not go on vacation. Your absence on any Sunday does not negate your obligation to support your home parish.

Goal:
\$120000

Pledges:
\$39116

2014

Stewardship Pledges
Pledges received: 18

It is impossible to plan any sort of budget until all pledge forms are turned in. If you haven't returned your pledge, please do so.

Parishioners That Are Home Bound

If you or a loved one cannot make it to Church, Fr. James would be more than pleased to visit at your home, in the hospital, at a nursing home, or any other place. Please schedule a visit with Fr. James.

Let's go Caroling!

Between December 25 and February 2 we will be organizing visits to our parishioners, shut-ins, and nursing homes. If you are interested in participating or you would like to be visited or you know of someone who would like to be visited, please contact Fr. James or Olena.

Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

Pastoral Council:

Fr. Deacon Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667
Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279
Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357
Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008
Jeanine Soucie: (718) 674-4529

Social Committee Chairperson:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

Finance Committee:

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698
Fr. Deacon Frank Avant: (760) 805-1667



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йона Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue
La Mesa, CA 91941
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston

frjames@mac.com

Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

Deacon: Fr. Deacon Frank Avant

fhavant@mac.com

Fr. Dcn Frank's cell phone: (760) 805-1667

I Want My House Full

The Savior is ever present in every fashion with those who dwell in Him; He supplies their every need and is all things to them, nor does He suffer them to look to anything else whatever nor seek anything from elsewhere. There is nothing of which the saints are in need which He is not Himself. He gives them birth, growth, and nourishment; He is life and breath. By means of Himself He forms an eye for them and, in addition, gives them light and enables them to see Himself. He is the one who feeds and is Himself the Food; it is He who provides the Bread of Life and who is Himself what He provides. He is life for those who live, the sweet odor to those who breathe, the garment for those who would be clothed. Indeed, He is the One who enables us to walk; He himself is the way (Jn 14: 6), and in addition He is the lodging on the way and its destination. We are members,

He is the head. When we must struggle, He struggles on our side. For those who are champions in the contest He is the awarder of the prizes; when we are the victors He is the crown of victory. Thus He turns our mind to Himself from every side and does not permit it to occupy itself with anything else nor to be seized by love of anything else. ... By a wondrous compulsion and gracious governance He draws us to Himself alone and unites us to Himself only. This, I think, is the same compulsion by which He gathered those whom He invited to the house and the banquet when He said to the servant, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Lk 14: 23).

Nicholas Cabasilas

**For more information on the Eastern Churches,
visit www.mytheosis.com**