

SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS -- SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord

December 19, 2010
Sunday Before Nativity - of the Holy Fathers

Tone 5

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 20 – DECEMBER 26

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24	VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY	
	10:00 AM	ROYAL HOURS
	10:00 PM	“З Нами Бог!” Велике Повечір’я “GOD IS WITH US” GREAT COMPLINES FOLLOWED BY DIVINE LITURGY
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25	– THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST	
	10:00 AM	DIVINE LITURGY
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26	– SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY – FEAST OF DAVID, JOSEPH AND JAMES - SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS	
	9:30 AM LITURGY	FOR ALL PARISHIONERS

***Pancake Breakfast and Bake
Sale***

Please join us in the hall after today’s Liturgy for our annual pre-Nativity pancake breakfast and bake sale..



Greeting Cards

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

Suggestions for Celebrating Christmas

- 1) Give thanks to God by attending Church.
- 2) Seek peace with those with whom we may be at odds.
- 3) Give an anonymous gift to a stranger in need.

Fast Free Period

During the twelve days of Christmas, Dec. 25th, through Theophany, Jan. 6th, we do not fast, even on Wednesday and Fridays. A one day fast is observed on January 5th, the Eve of Theophany.

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.

Behold, the Virgin shall be with child.

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

WHO WERE THE MAGI?

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

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

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

The wise men, on behalf of the entire human race, brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh: gold because they were returning to the acknowledgment that God is the only

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

What subsequently happened to these gifts is never mentioned in the Scriptures, but several traditions have developed. One story has the gold being stolen by the two thieves who were later crucified alongside Jesus. Another tale has it being entrusted to and then misappropriated by Judas.

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

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

CHRISTMAS AND THEOPHANY

THE INCARNATION AND MANIFESTATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST



Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker

December 6th

When you appeared in a dream to Constantine the King, you gave him this warning: Release at once from prison those you have unjustly confined, for they are innocent; no murder did they commit as you claim. O King, listen to me, or else I shall call upon the Lord.

O holy Nicholas, holy preacher of Christ, always ready to help all on land or at sea. Whether they be near or far, you have compassion for all. You are a precious helper; therefore, we who gather here ask you to pray to the Lord that we be delivered from all distress and sorrow.

Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs

Today we commemorate the ancestors of Christ. Sing with fervor a hymn of praise to Christ the Savior who exalted them among all nations. He is the Lord who does wondrous deeds because He is powerful and mighty. From them He brought forth a royal scepter, the immaculate maiden of God and virgin Mary. From her, Christ our God came forth to give life and eternal salvation for all.

The three holy youths were refreshed by the Holy Spirit when they walked in the fire as in a cool place. In them the Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ were prefigured in a mystical manner. By their wisdom and faith they overcame the power of fire. As for the just Daniel, he stopped the mouths of lions. Through their intercession, we beseech You: O Savior and Lover of Mankind, protect us from eternal fire and make us worthy of your heavenly kingdom.





Sunday of the Holy Fathers

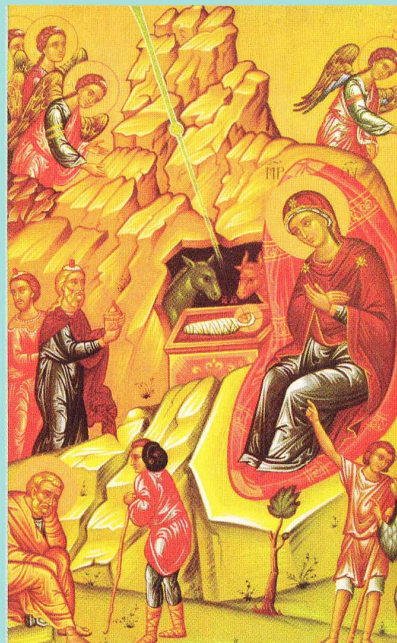
The commemoration of the Holy Fathers is manifested to the ends of the world. It is truly of splendor, and it glistens with the rays of grace; for Christ the splendrous Sun has shone forth on high from afar. He forms the assembly of stars which glisten with Him, and the star reveals that the nativity of the God-man will be in Bethlehem. Therefore, we piously and faithfully clap our hands and leap for joy at this nativity, and we give praise before the feast.

The Holy Fathers are adorned by the glory of the divine sharing of our nature. Adam rejoices today, since he is the foundation and the strength of the wise Forefathers; Abel leaps for joy as well. Enoch is glad; Seth and Noah dance together. The praiseworthy Abraham sings with the Patriarchs. Melchisedek now sees from on high the birth without a father.

Nativity of Our Lord

December 25th

O Christ our God, your kingdom is eternal, and your reign is from generation to generation. You became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and became man from the ever-virgin Mary. Your coming, O Christ, has shed a great light upon us. You are the Light of Light and the radiance of the Father. You have illumined the whole creation. Therefore, everything that breathes sings a hymn of praise to You. You are the image of the Father's glory. You are the eternal God, existing before all ages, who shone forth from the Virgin. O Lord our God, have mercy on us.





Synaxis of the Holy Mother of God

December 26th

O Christ, what shall we offer You for your coming on earth in our humanity for our sake? Every creature that has its being from You gives thanks to You: the angels offer hymns of praise, the heavens give a star; the Magi present their gifts and the shepherds, their wonder; the earth provides a cave and the desert, a manger. As for us, we offer a Virgin Mother. O God who are from all eternity, have mercy on us.

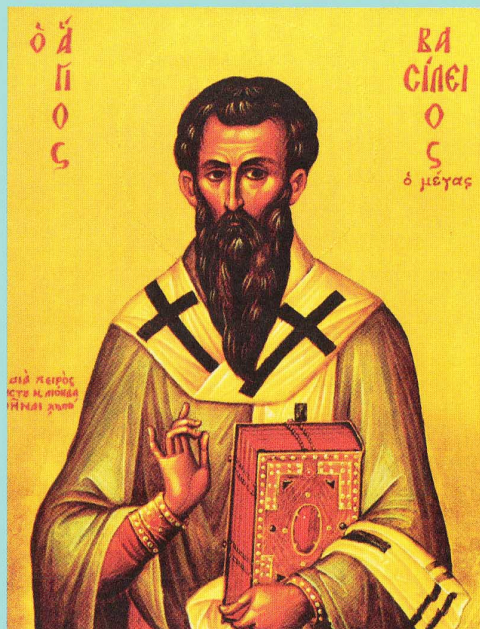
Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth. Today Bethlehem receives the One who at all times sits with the Father. Today the angels sing the praises of the newborn infant. Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and good will to all.

Saint Basil the Great

January 1st

You have been called by the name of Basil, after the kingdom. In your kingly rank you led the people of Christ to wisdom and knowledge. Then the Lord of all and King of Kings adorned you with the crown of the kingdom, O Basil. He is the everlasting and co-eternal Son who was united to her that bore Him. Therefore, intercede with Him that He may enlighten and save our souls.

Adorned with the vestments of a bishop, O Basil, you gladly proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom and poured out the teachings of the true faith for the Church. Now enlightened by them, we confess and glorify the one Godhead, indivisible in three Persons; namely the Almighty Father, the only-begotten Word of God, and the Divine Spirit. Intercede with Him that He may enlighten and save our souls.





Theophany of Our Lord in the Jordan

January 6th

When the Jordan received You, O Fountainhead, the Comforter descended in the form of a dove. Now behold the marvel: the One who bowed the heavens bows his head to the Forerunner, and the one made of clay cries out to his Maker: Why do you command me to perform what is beyond my power? It is I who need to be baptized by You. O Christ our God, O Sinless One, glory to You!

You have bowed your head before the Forerunner, and You have crushed the heads of the demons. You have descended into the waters and given light to all things that they may glorify You, O Savior, and Enlightenment of our souls.

Synaxis of John the Baptist

January 7th

The Forerunner said to the Creator: For my part I am held back, and I do not know where to flee. O generous One, You are the river of delight. How is it, therefore, that the streams of the river receive You as You enter them? To all those who venerate your holy manifestation, You pour out salvation, O Word!

O luminary in the flesh and Forerunner of the Savior, O offspring of the barren one, O friend, by leaping in the womb you adored the One who is born of the Virgin; and you baptized Him in the waters of the Jordan. O prophet, we pray to you: Implore Him that we may escape the future torments.



All text from Vesper Stichera of each feastday in The Festal Menaion, Sisters of Saint Basil, Uniontown, PA



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

Святкуємо 50-років! Celebrating 50 Years!

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Heaven, Earth and Nature Sing

I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn.

The Angels sing! The Archangels blend their voices in harmony! The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise! The Seraphim exalt His glory! All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

This day He Who Is, is Born; and He Who Is becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassibility, remaining unchanged.

Since therefore all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice. I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival. But I take my part, not plucking the harp, not shaking the Thyrsian staff, not with the music of pipes, nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ. For this is all my hope, this my life, this my salvation, this my pipe, my harp. And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels, sing: Glory to God in the Highest; and with the shepherds: and on earth peace to men of good will.

St. John Chrysostom