

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CHRISTMAS



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord

December 25, 2011

THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Festal Tone

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 26 - JANUARY 1

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26 - *SYNAXIS OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS; THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR EUTHYMIUS, BISHOP OF SARDIS*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy Special Intentions

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27 - *THE HOLY APOSTLE, PROTOMARTYR AND ARCHDEACON STEPHEN; OUR VENERABLE FATHER AND*

CONFESSOR THEODORE THE BRANDED, BROTHER OF ST. THEOPHANES THE HYMNOGRAPHER

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy Special Intentions

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31 - *SATURDAY AFTER NATIVITY – OUR VENERABLE MOTHER MELANIA THE ROMAN*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy ✙ Rostyslava Nychay-Bohachevska (4th Anniversary);
Req: Maria Odezynskyj

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1 – *SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY; SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY; THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST; OUR HOLY FATHER BASIL THE GREAT, ARCHBISHOP OF CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA; THE HOLY RIGHTEOUS ONES: JOSEPH THE BETROTHED; DAVID THE KING; AND JAMES, THE BROTHER OF THE LORD ACCORDING TO THE FLESH*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

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.

Welcome Visitors

We warmly welcome all those who are visiting us today. It is good to have you all with us!

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.

Suggestions for Celebrating Christmas

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

Mark your calendars!

On Saturday January 14 we will celebrate the New Year with a meal of Traditional Ukrainian foods including varenyky, holubtsi, borshcht and kutya.

Adults: \$20.00 (\$25.00 after January 1)

Youth (13-18): \$15.00

Children (12 and under): \$5.00

Tickets are available in the Hall

THE LORD'S PRAYER

A mother was teaching her 3-year-old the Lord's prayer. For several evenings at bedtime she repeated it after her mother. One night she said she was ready to solo. The mother listened with pride as she carefully enunciated each word, right up to the end of the prayer.

"Lead us not into temptation," she prayed, "but deliver us some e-mail, Amen."

Nativity Greeting from Bishop Richard

When we look at the Nativity icon, we recognize the Jesus Whose Birth went largely unrecognized by His own people. Who would have suspected that an unwed virgin would give birth to God? Though a King, the Child was not born in a palace, but rather in a cave whose cold was warmed only by the breath of lowly beasts. The darkness of the cave reflected the darkness of the world into which the Light of the World was born; a star piercing the night borrowed His light, a light only recognized by a few gentile astrologers. Angelic choirs sang of peace, a song heeded only by shepherds living on the fringes of society; the society would know no peace, however, as a jealous tyrant prepared to spill the blood of innocent children within his realm. The Child would be rejected by His own people, a fact foreshadowed in the gift of funerary myrrh; moreover, the feedbox and swaddling clothes in which the Baby lay are eerily similar to the shroud and sepulcher in which He would lie. Yet it was by His own death that He would give life to an ungrateful people.

Christ has offered that life to the children of Kyivan Rus' for over a thousand years, to the Ukrainian Catholics of the United States for more than a century, to the faithful of the St. Nicholas eparchy for fifty years. For seventy-five years, His enlightenment has been offered to the children of Chicago at St. Nicholas School. More recently, His Resurrection has shone forth in the resurgence of our Church on its native soil, and in the vitality of the forty-one year old Ukrainian-born primate of our Church who so recently graced us with his presence.

At the end of this year of celebrations, we once again celebrate Christ's coming. May we recognize Him not only in the joy of our gatherings and in the pomp of our liturgies, but also in the myriad places to which He brings His hidden presence, "for God is with us!"

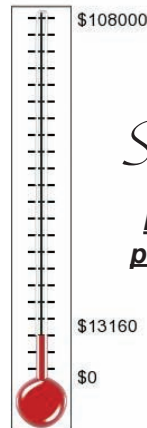
+ *Richard*



Sunday offering for December 18

Amount	Number
\$5.00	1
\$10.00	6
\$15.00	1
\$20.00	6
\$25.00	5
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	1
\$50.00	2
\$75.00	3
\$80.00	1
\$100.00	4
\$52.00	1 (loose)
<hr/> \$1,252.00	<hr/> 32 (4 guests)

Average / parish household (38): \$31.11
Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00
Shortfall: -\$943.00



Stewardship Pledges

Pledges received: 5

**If you haven't returned a
pledge form, please do so.**

CARING FOR THE LONELY

Written by the Very Rev. John Breck

A woman in the parish recently buried her husband after his long and losing battle with cancer. A thirteen-year old girl still cries herself to sleep each night several months after her parents' bitter divorce. A man off the streets, recently chrismated into the Church, is waging a tentative battle with alcoholism, trying with too little support to keep himself in recovery. The wife and mother, determined to serve everyone's needs but her own, is slipping slowly but surely into depression, overcome by a sense of abandonment. As Christmas approaches, each of these people is anticipating the coming festivities less with joy than with dread. Nostalgia this time of year can be overwhelming. In the experience of these and so many other people, that nostalgia can become a crushing weight of loneliness.

Gluttony, greed, anger, lust: the spiritual literature speaks eloquently to these and other passions, and it offers invaluable advice to those who are waging warfare with these particular demons. The Fathers, however, rarely speak of loneliness, which is one of the most pervasive and pernicious of all the passions. There is much wisdom to be found in their words about *akedia* (despondency), for example, or sloth. Yet as relevant as those words are to the problem of loneliness, it is difficult if not impossible for someone burdened by a sense of abandonment to find solace in them. Words on a page need to be translated into spoken words of grace and gestures of tenderness that will lift the burden of loneliness, and restore to the bereaved and the abandoned a genuine sense of hope.

American pop culture, with a powerful assist from the devil, has turned the

Christmas season (beginning somewhere around Halloween) into a commercial romp, a mad frenzy symbolized most brutally two years ago by the tragic fate of the Wal-Mart employee – on "Black Friday" – who was trampled to death by holiday shoppers. Those who wish to celebrate the birth in the flesh of the eternal Son of God, the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, have an uphill battle on their hands. Everything militates against proper respect and peaceful celebration of the feast. Yet somehow we need to hold fast to its theological and spiritual significance, if anticipation of joyful celebration is not to end in the loneliness of the long-distance runner.

That may not be as difficult as it first seems. Within the parish, as within our circle of friends and acquaintances, we can start simply by looking around. Being attentive to the state and needs of other people, without being intrusive, is basic to our life in Christ. Listening closely to the voices of those we encounter, while observing their faces and body language, provides clues to their spiritual and psychological condition, perhaps especially at this time of year when so many are so vulnerable. It may help us get in touch with our own sense of loneliness and our need to find fellowship and love among those who are closest to us. The most effective care and support we can offer others comes from the depths of our own experience, especially when it involves suffering.

The invitation, then, is simply to care. Care particularly in this Nativity season for those who are going through a period – or a lifetime – of abandonment and consequent loneliness.

A little poem on silence and solitude seems relevant here. It ends,

And solitude, so often faced with dread,
Reveals an unseen Presence that would bless
The solitary with the gift instead
To be alone, yet know no loneliness.

To care adequately and appropriately for those, including ourselves, who suffer the pangs of loneliness, it is perhaps enough to take the advice offered by Theophan the Recluse in his revised version of *Unseen Warfare*.

"Recall also to your mind Christ our Lord, Who, through His immeasurable sufferings

felt Himself abandoned by His heavenly Father in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, and when you feel yourself as it were crucified in your present position, cry from your heart: 'Thy will be done, O Lord!' 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt' (Matt. xxvi.39).

If you do this, your patience and your prayer will rise on high to God's presence, as the flame of your heart's sacrifice. And you will prove yourself filled with love as strong as death, and ardent readiness of will to shoulder your cross and follow after Christ our Lord on any path, by which He chooses to call you to Himself. This is true life in God!"

Gifts for the King

We all have gifts that we may bring.
We all have songs that we may sing.
We all have kind words we may say.
We all have prayers that we may pray.

We all have love and joy to give.
And what a joy life is to live
if we just scatter everywhere
the things God's given us to share.



If you have a gift—bring it.
If you have a song—sing it.
If you have a talent—use it.
If you have love—diffuse it.

If you have gladness—share it.
If you have happiness—give it.
If you have religion—live it.
If you have a prayer—pray it.

—Author unknown

“OUR SAVIOR, BOTH GOD AND MAN”

By Saint Ephrem the Syrian – 4th Century

We confess one and the same individual as perfect God and perfect man. He is God the Word Which was flesh.

For if He was not man, why was Mary chosen? And if He is not God, whom does Gabriel call Lord?

If He was not man, who was laid in a manger? And if He is not God, whom did the angels who came down from heaven glorify?

If He was not man, who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, And if He is not God, in whose honor did the star appear?

If He was not man, whom did Simeon hold in his arms? And if He is God, to whom did Simeon say, “now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace”?

If He was not man, whom did Joseph take when he fled into Egypt? And if He is not God, who fulfilled the prophecy: “Out of Egypt have I called my Son”?

If He was not man, whom did John baptize? And if He is not God, to whom did the Father say: “This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased”?

If He was not man, who hungered in the desert? And if He is not God, unto whom did the angels come and minister?

If He was not man, who was invited to the marriage in Cana of Galilee? And if He is not God, who turned the water into wine?

If He was not man, who took the loaves in the desert? And if He is not God, who fed the five thousand men and their women and children with five loaves and two fish?

If He was not man, who slept in the ship? And if He is not God, who rebuked the waves and the sea?

If He was not man, with whom did Simon the Pharisee sit at meat? And if He is not God, who forgave the sins of the harlot?

If He was not man, who wore a man’s garment? And if He is not God, who healed the woman with the issue of blood when she touched His garment?

If He was not man, who spat on the ground and made clay? And if He is not God, who gave sight to the eyes of the blind man with the clay?

If He was not man, who wept at Lazarus’ grave? And

if He is not God, who commanded him to come forth out of the grave four days after his death?

If He was not man, whom did the Jews arrest in the garden? And if He is not God, who cast them to the ground with the words: “I am He”?

If He was not man, who was judged before Pilate? And if He is not God, who frightened Pilate’s wife in a dream?

If He was not man, whose garments were stripped from Him and parted by the soldiers? And if He is not God, why was the sun darkened upon His crucifixion?

If He was not man, who was crucified on the cross? And if He is not God, who shook the foundation of the earth?

If He was not man, whose hands and feet were nailed to the cross? And if He is not God, how did it happen that the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened?

If He was not man, who hung on the cross between the two thieves? And if He is not God, how could He say to the thief: “Today thou shalt be with me in paradise”?

If He was not man, who cried out, and gave up the ghost? And if He is not God, whose cry caused many bodies of the saints which slept to arise?

If He was not man, whom did the women see laid in the grave? And if He is not God, about whom did the angel say to them: “He is arisen, He is not here”?

If He was not man, whom did Thomas touch when he put his hands into the prints of the nails? And if He is not God, who entered through the doors that were shut?

If He was not man, who ate at the sea of Tiberias? And if He is not God, on whose orders were the nets filled with fishes?

If He was not man, whom did the apostles see carried up into heaven? And if He is not God, who ascended to the joyful cries of the angels, and to whom did the Father proclaim: “sit at My right hand”?

If He is not God and man then, indeed, our salvation is false, and false are the pronouncements of the prophets.

AGAIN AND AGAIN IN PEACE

By Very Rev. Vladimir Berzonsky

“Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord”
(Little Litany)

Again I was asked, “Why is there so much repetition in our prayers?” And again I responded the way I always had before - our worship includes certain themes and terms that bear repeating, because they remind us to pay attention to something significant on the way, or else to waft us upwards into the rarefied spiritual atmosphere of the Kingdom, lest we drift back down to the temporal and mundane area where we more normally spend our mental time.

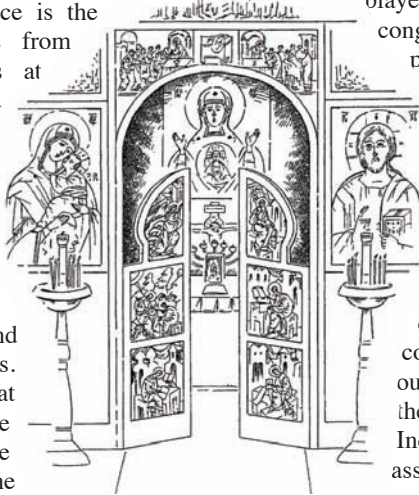
Peace is among the most prominent; wisdom, another; and mercy, a third. Peace is the spiritual state that liberates us from the environment of distractions at minimum, angst, depression, hostility and self-destruction at worst. More than thirty times one hears the term “peace” throughout the Divine Liturgy, and at each hearing one should revive within oneself the aura of serenity. Think of it as an intake of mystical oxygen that clears the head and heart from lethargy and heaviness. Let it remind you of Who it is that is blessing you with peace, the price He paid to present it to you, and the moment par excellence when by the glorious mystical contact you have with the Apostles, you are there with them in the Upper Room of the dwelling of St. Mark’s gracious mother that traumatic evening when He appeared. He greeted you also with peace. You remember that He said: “My peace I give to you; My peace I leave with you – not as the world gives, do I give to you.” (Jn 14:27)

“Wisdom!” is another power-packed word you hear “again and again.” Snap out of your daydreams, it insists. This is not the time for reveries – mooning over something disturbing or planning your afternoon. You are here and now. Make the most of it. Something ponderous, wise and precious for your soul is about to be set forth. “Attend!” Pay attention. Focus your wandering thoughts and listen attentively. You may

have heard it before, you may even know it by heart; nevertheless, even if the words of the gospel or prayer haven’t changed, you have. You are not the same person who listened in previous times of worship. Maybe then the phrases or parables didn’t mean much because it did not relate to your perceived needs at the time. Today you are another person from that stage of life. See now what you can make of it and apply it to your present situation.

The Divine Liturgy is in a sense much like classical music, an opera perhaps, a symphony – or better yet, a concert where one human “instrument,” the priest, is played against the response, the choir or congregation. It has modulated into its present form. A classic treatise on that development is called “The Shape of the Liturgy,” by Dom Gregory Dix. It has indeed taken shape from a time when the people of Christ gathered, the bishop entered and said, “Peace be with you,” and all responded, “And also with you.” They all sat or stood, heard and discussed the sacred scriptures, then continued with Eucharist. That basic outline has been enhanced through the centuries into its present form. Indeed, it is challenging to absorb and assimilate its divine beauty, then to apply it to oneself. More formidable a

venture when offered in a foreign tongue, but even in our native tongue it remains a study in constant progress. One must first love it to be comfortable in prayer. It goes without saying, of course, one must first love God with all one’s heart, soul and mind even to make the effort to immerse one’s self into the Liturgy. Granted, it’s not a simple matter to develop an appreciation for the way we pray. We live at a time when people lack the ability to focus or concentrate. They expect instant gratification, entertainment, and quick responses to their felt “needs.” Orthodox Christianity challenges its children to grow in grace, develop a mind and soul able to comprehend the value of the treasures offered to us and expressed in our sacred worship, and to return our affection to the Holy Trinity “again and again.”





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Jesus Our Joy and Peace

When our Lord and Savior came to earth and made Himself bodily present, the angels appeared in chorus and gave the good news to the shepherds: I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all the people. We, too, borrow this hymn from these holy angels and announce great joy to you.

Today, very dearly beloved, the people of Christ have been exalted, and the enemies of truth have been humbled. Today, dearly beloved, Christ is in joy, and the Devil in grief. Today, the angels are in exaltation, and the demons in confusion.

Today, Christ, the King of peace, has come forth with His peace and routed all discord, banished dissension, and dissipated conflict. As the brilliance of the sun lights up the sky, so He illumines the Church with the splendor of peace. For, the text says, there has been born to you today a Savior

of the world. O how desirable is the very name of peace! How firm a foundation peace is for the Christian religion, and what a heavenly ornament for the altar of the Lord! What can we utter worthy of peace? Peace is a name of Christ Himself, as even the Apostle says: For Christ is our peace. He it is who has made both one. The two were at variance, not over conflicting opinions or faith, but because of the Devil's envy. But, just as the streets are cleansed when the king comes forth, and the whole city decked with myriad flowers and banners to keep out of sight anything less worthy of the king's countenance, so also now, when Christ the King of peace comes forth, let everything depressing be removed from our midst. While truth is shining, let falsehood be banished, and discord flee, and concord be resplendent.

St. Peter Chrysologus