



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

10315 Carey Road; Berlin, MD 21811
 302-537-6055 (church) / orthodoxdelmarva.org /
 frjohn@orthodoxdelmarva.org

BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 20, 2015

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20TH

Sunday Before Nativity

8:40a.m. Hours
 9:00a.m. Div. Liturgy
 Coffee Hour
 Parish Center Clean-Up

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

Eve of Nativity

9:00a.m. Vesperal Div. Liturgy
 7:00p.m. Matins w/ Litiya

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

Nativity of Our Lord

One of the Twelve Great Feasts
 8:40a.m. Hours
 9:00a.m. Div. Liturgy
 7:00p.m. Great Vespers

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26TH

Synaxis of the Theotokos

6:00p.m. Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27TH

Sunday After Nativity

St. Stephen the Protomartyr

8:40a.m. Hours
 9:00a.m. Div. Liturgy
 Christmas Pageant
 Open House in Rectory

A Warm Welcome!

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

Clean-Up Today – December 20th

Please consider staying after coffee hour to help clean the chapel, hall, and other facilities for Christmas. Many thanks for your help!

It is Not Too Late (Yet)!

Time for the most important Christmas preparation we can undertake is running out. Let's not forget to prepare our innermost chamber for Christ through a good Confession.



Helping a Needy Family

This month you are invited to make a donation to help buy Christmas presents for the family we will adopt this year. If you would like to donate, please do so by using the earmark "Christmas Family".

Being with Christ on Christmas

With all the hustle and bustle that revolves around Christmas and with all the temptations to spend the day "doing our own thing", let's not forget that Christmas is not just a holiday but more importantly a Holy Day that belongs to the Lord Jesus. This means that family, work, travel, entertaining, cooking, presents, etc., all come second to God. Bad habits? Break them and start new ones. Be with Christ on Christmas.



Schedule of services for Christmas

- Thursday, Dec. 24th – Eve of Nativity
 - 9:00am: Vesperal Divine Liturgy (St. Basil)
 - 7:00pm: Matins with Litiya
- Friday, Dec. 25th – Nativity of the Lord
 - 8:40am: Hours
 - 9:00am: Divine Liturgy (St. John)
 - 7:00pm: Vespers



Christ is born! Glorify Him!

During the celebration of Christmas, it is the custom of Orthodox Christians to greet one another with the joyous exclamation, "Christ is born!", to which the one greeted responds, "Glorify Him!"

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.

READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Dec. 27th

Gabriela Jones

Sunday, Jan. 3rd

Joanne Patrick



CASH FLOWS THROUGH 11/30/15					CASH FLOWS IN DECEMBER 2015					PROJECT CRAWLSPACE			FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT		
OPERATING		OTHER		ALL	OPERATING		OTHER		ALL	AS OF: 12/20			AS OF: 12/20		
Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Net	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Net	Income	Expense	Net	Checking	Overdue	Mortgage
71,226	79,392	12,200	1,380	+2,654	2,832	5,057	0	0	-2,225	29,832	17,410	+12,422	+2,459	0	328,403



NATIVITY DEVOTION: I CAN ONLY IMAGINE

By Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis / MyOCN.net

*And going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and **they fell down and worshipped Him.** Matthew 2:11*



What would your first reaction be if you walked into a room and Christ was there? One can only imagine the scene when the Magi walked into the house where Jesus was, when they opened the door and laid their eyes on the reason that they had left home and followed a star for two years. They fell down and they worshipped Him. They must have had feelings of joy and awe, and probably also humility and unworthiness.

What will it be like the first time we cast our gaze on our Creator? We will all see God face-to-face at the Last Judgment. I remember hearing once that those who are not destined to be forever with God, those who are headed toward eternal condemnation, will not need to wait to hear that they are condemned. They will see the face of God and know that they have no business being with God because their earthly lives will not have reflected the preparation needed to enter eternal life. They will know this, they will not need for God to tell them. On the other hand, those who have prepared for eternal life in this life, will gaze upon the face of God with joy. It will be the triumphant end of a long journey. Just like the Magi traveled over deserts and mountains for two years, trusting in a star, that it would lead them somewhere magnificent, those who travel the journey of life with their eyes on Christ will experience the joy of the Magi when God opens the gates of heaven for them.

Many people still don't understand the concept of worship. Many think that worship is only paying homage to God, even "giving Him His due." Worship is so much more than this.

Worship is learning. We learn about God through worship. As we sing hymns about the Lord, and hear Scripture passage and sermons, we learn about the Lord.

Worship helps us remember. We are so bombarded with all kinds of information and stimulation in the

world that it is easy to forget what God did for us. One of the reasons we worship is to remember what Jesus did for us in coming to earth to teach us, heal us, and ultimately to die for our sins.

Worship provides a good support group. Can you imagine a solitary wise man following a star for two years? I can imagine a group of wise men following the star, and occasionally one becoming discouraged in the journey and being encouraged by the others to continue. It's hard to imagine how one person could make the journey of the wise men alone. It would not only be dangerous, but lonely. But for two years, to have no one to talk to

about the journey, to have no one to offer encouragement, could the journey even have been made by one solitary man on a camel? Could this person maintain his enthusiasm, even sanity, without someone to help and encourage him? Because God made us in His image and likeness, then we

crave to be in union with others. Just as God exists in Trinity, we crave to exist in "unity" with others. Worship helps in this regard. Worship helps us to find encouragement in our faith because we are sharing the journey with others.

Worship offers us the opportunity to commune with God. There is no such thing as a private "Communion." Communion by its very definition requires that it be shared. In the context of worship, we are able to share in Holy Communion with one another. Even when I am visiting someone who is sick, and it is just two of us, I am able to offer Communion in the context of two people worshipping God.

Worship affords us the opportunity to stand with God, to come to God in His house. When we worship, we step out of the world temporarily and we enter into the Kingdom of God, made present on earth.



Worship puts us in the role of the Magi. As we open the door to God's house, we gaze in wonder on God Himself, in the sacrament of Holy Communion. We stand with God, together with the saints and the angels and one another. I heard a priest once say that if we understood fully what we are doing in worship, that we stand in the presence of God, that people would come to church and fall flat on their faces in awe.

The Magi made a long journey to the Christ, but when the star came to rest over the place where He was, they opened the door, beheld the Lord with their own eyes and fell down and worshipped Him.

Each week, we endure a difficult journey of life. Each Sunday, we are supposed to come to the house where Christ is, with Mary, His Mother, and all the saints, and we are supposed to walk in the door and fall down and worship Him. Today's verse about the arrival of the Magi is

something we should be experiencing on a weekly basis.



May the same faith and trust that sustained them in their journey to Christ sustain us in our journeys. And may the same awe that they felt when they laid their eyes on Him, that caused them to fall down and worship Him, may that same awe come upon us in our journeys, that we too may fall down and worship Him, and that we may one day have the doors of heaven opened to us so we can gaze upon Him with our own eyes.

You rose from the Virgin O Christ, the noetic Sun of Righteousness, and a star pointed to You, the Uncontainable contained in a cave. It led the Magi to worship You; and with them we magnify You. O Giver of Life, glory to You! (From Vespers of the Nativity, Trans. Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

Leave time for worship this (and every) week!



SAINT JOHN OF SAN FRANCISCO ON MATTHEW 1:25

And [Joseph] knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called His name JESUS.

The word "until" does not signify that Mary remained a virgin only until a certain time. In the Bible, the word "until" and words similar to it often signify eternity. It is said of Christ: "In His days shall shine forth righteousness and an abundance of peace, *until* the moon be taken away" (Psalm 71:7), but this does not mean that when there shall no longer be a moon at the end of the world, God's righteousness shall no longer be; precisely then, rather, will it triumph. And what does it mean when it says: "For He must reign, *until* He hath put all enemies under His feet?" (1 Cor. 15:25). Is the Lord to reign only for a time until His enemies shall be put under His feet?! The Savior in the Gospel says to the Apostles (Matt: 28:20): "Lo, I am with you always, even *until* the end of the world." Are we to believe that the Lord will no longer be with the disciples in the age to come? While there are plenty more such examples of the use of the word "until", the above are sufficient to prove that Matt 1:25 does not argue against the life-long virginity of the Mother of God.

BLESSED THEOPHYLACT ON THE VIRGIN BIRTH

According to the Law, "Every male child that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." Only with Christ did this literally occur. He Himself opened the womb of the Virgin at birth, while all other wombs which have born a child have first been opened by a man.



QUOTES FROM ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT

Commemorated on December 20th

"When you are praying alone, and your spirit is dejected, and you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that God the Trinity looks upon you with eyes brighter than the sun; also all the angels, your own Guardian Angel, and all the Saints of God. Truly they do; for they are all one in God, and where God is, there are they also. Where the sun is, thither also are directed all its rays. Try to understand what this means."

"There is nothing impossible unto those who believe; lively and unshaken faith can accomplish great miracles in the twinkling of an eye. Besides, even without our sincere and firm faith, miracles are accomplished, such as the miracles of the sacraments; for God's Mystery is always accomplished, even though we were incredulous or unbelieving at the time of its celebration. "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Rom. 3:3). Our wickedness shall not overpower the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God; our dullness shall not overpower God's wisdom, nor our infirmity God's omnipotence."

"Oh, what great happiness and bliss, what exaltation it is to address oneself to the Eternal Father. Always, without fail, value this joy which has been accorded to you by God's infinite grace and do not forget it during your prayers; God, the angels and God's holy men listen to you."

"The enemy of our salvation especially strives to draw our heart and mind away from God when we are about to serve Him, and endeavors to adulterously attach our heart to something irrelevant. Be always, every moment, with God, especially when you pray to Him. If you are inconstant, you will fall away from life, and will cast yourself into sorrow."

"Do not be despondent when fighting against the invisible enemy, but even in the midst of your afflictions and oppression praise the Lord, Who has found you worthy to suffer for Him, by struggling against the subtlety of the serpent, and to be wounded for Him at every hour; for had you not lived piously, and endeavored to become united to God, the enemy would not have attacked and tormented you."

"Do not fear the conflict, and do not flee from it; where there is no struggle, there is no virtue. Our faith, trust, and love are proved and revealed in adversities, that is, in difficult and grievous outward and inward circumstances, during sickness, sorrow, and privations."

"Prayer for others is very beneficial to the man himself who prays; it purifies the heart, strengthens faith and hope in God, and arouses love for God and our neighbor."

About St. John of Kronstadt

Saint John of Kronstadt was a Russian Orthodox archpriest. He was a striking and somewhat unconventional figure in his personality but was deeply pious and immensely energetic. He was one of the most internationally famous and beloved Orthodox Christian clerics of his time.

He was born as Ivan Ilyich Sergiyev (Russian: Иван Ильич Сергиев) in 1829. From 1855, he worked as a priest in Saint Andrew's Cathedral in Kronstadt. Here, he greatly committed himself to charity, especially for those who were outside the church, and travelled extensively throughout the Russian empire. He was a member of the right Union of the Russian People, but did not commit himself politically. In the early 1990s Father John became well known, and people from all over Russia came to him every day in thousands. Even bishops treated him with high respect. He was already greatly venerated at the time he died. He was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in 1964 and by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990.

