



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 18, 2016

A Warm Welcome!

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

Clean-Up Today – December 18th

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

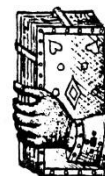


Church School to Resume!

This January, Church School classes will begin again as Nissa Nancy has offered to teach the class. There will be a short meeting with all the parents today. A big "thank you" to Nissa Nancy! May the Lord bless!

Bible Study to Resume!

This January, we will restart our Bible Study on Saturday evenings from 5:00-5:45pm, before the Great Vespers at 6:00pm. Everyone is invited to attend, including non-Orthodox visitors. We will start with the Gospel of St. Mark.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18TH

Sunday Before Nativity

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour
Church School Meeting

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21ST

7:00p.m. Vespers

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

Eve of Nativity

9:00a.m. Vespersal Liturgy
6:00p.m. Matins w/ Litiya

SUNDAY, 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

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26TH

Synaxis of the Theotokos

9:00a.m. Akathist



Helping a Needy Family

This month you are invited to donate 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".

Schedule of services for Christmas

- Saturday, Dec. 24th – Eve of Nativity
 - 9:00am: Vespersal Divine Liturgy
 - 6:00pm: Matins with Litiya
- Sunday, Dec. 25th – Nativity of the Lord
 - 8:40am: Hours
 - 9:00am: Divine Liturgy
 - 7:00pm: Great Vespers
- Monday, Dec. 26th – Synaxis of the Virgin
 - 9:00am: Akathist



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. 25th

Gabriela Jones

Sunday, Jan. 1st

Nicholas Borodulia



CASH FLOWS THROUGH 11/30/16					CASH FLOWS IN DECEMBER 2016					FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT		
OPERATING		OTHER		ALL	OPERATING		OTHER		ALL	AS OF: 12/18		
Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Net	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Net	Available	Restricted	Savings
81,439	73,369	13,044	16,521	+4,593	2,842	6,598	190	0	-3,566	4,786	2,690	0



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.



CHRISTMAS TREE TRADITIONS

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Traditionally, Christmas trees were not brought in and decorated until Christmas Eve (24 December), and then removed the day after twelfth night (i.e., 6 January); to have a tree up before or after these dates was even considered bad luck. Modern commercialization of Christmas has resulted in trees being put up much earlier; in shops often as early as late October (in the UK, Selfridge's Christmas department is up by early September, complete with Christmas trees). A common tradition in U.S. homes is to put the tree up right after Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday in November) and to take it down right after the New Year. Some households in the U.S. do not put up the tree until the second week of December, and leave it up until the 6th of January (Epiphany). In Germany, traditionally the tree is put up 24th of December and taken down 7th of January, though many start one or two weeks earlier. In Australia, the Christmas tree is usually put up on the 1st of December, which occurs about a week before the school summer holidays; except for South Australia, where most people put up their tree after the Adelaide Credit Union Christmas Pageant, which is in early November. Some traditions suggest that Christmas trees may be kept up until no later than the 2nd of February, the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Candlemas), when the Christmas season effectively closes. Superstitions warn of negative consequences if Christmas greenery is not removed by Candlemas Eve.



ASK FATHER: 6 QUESTIONS / 6 ANSWERS

Q. Why is the Nativity of Christ celebrated on December 25th?

A. There are two main explanations as to why the Church chose to celebrate the Nativity of Christ on December 25th.

The first says that the day was chosen to oppose the great pagan feast of the sun god, which was celebrated near December 22nd at the Winter Solstice, the time of year when the days started to get longer again (at least in the northern hemisphere). It is believed that the Church chose December 25th, because it ensured that Christians would be fasting during the pagan celebration and would therefore not easily be tempted to participate. And also because it would help the pagan peoples to leave off worshiping the false sun god and instead celebrate the coming of the True God, "the Sun of Righteousness".

The second explanation says that the day was chosen in relation to the feast of the Annunciation, which was celebrated on March 25th commemorating the supernatural conception of the Lord in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Annunciation was celebrated on this day because of the belief in the ancient world that great men died on the same day as they were conceived. Since the Lord was believed to have been crucified on March 25th, it also came to be believed that He was likewise conceived on this day. And since it followed that the Lord's birth would be nine months after His conception, the feast of His Nativity was set on December 25th.



Q. How old was Saint Joseph the Betrothed when he became the guardian of the Mother of God?

A. According to early Church Tradition, Saint Joseph was eighty years old when betrothed to the Virgin Mary. The Chaste Joseph, as he is sometimes called, was a widower who had four sons and two daughters from his previous marriage; in the Scriptures, these children are called the brothers and sisters of Jesus, though there is no blood relation since Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Besides his irreproachable, trustworthy, and honorable life, the elder Joseph's great age made him a suitable guardian for the



young virgin girl who had vowed to live in perpetual virginity. When the Virgin Mary was found to be with child the elderly Joseph feared to take her as his wife, not because people would think that he fathered the child because he was too old for this, but because people would think that she had fallen into sin with another man; this is why Saint Joseph thought to put her away privately (Matt. 1:19).

Saint Joseph reposed at the age of about 100. The last reference to him in Holy Scripture is in Chapter 2 of St. Luke's Gospel, when he, together with the Virgin Mary, brought the 12-year-old Christ to the Temple in Jerusalem. By the time of the Lord's crucifixion the elderly Joseph had already reposed; since Jewish law did not require the Virgin Mary to be entrusted to the brothers of Christ because they were only half-brothers, the Lord entrusted the care of His Mother to his beloved disciple Saint John the Evangelist.

Q. Why do the Church's guidelines say that we are to go to Confession at least during the four fasting seasons in order to receive Holy Communion?

A. In answer to your question: the Church's guidelines concerning Confession before Communion are actually much stricter than four times a year, calling for frequent communicants to receive Confession at least once a month (see the OCA Guidelines for Clergy). These guidelines were put in place long ago to help prepare us for a joyful and untroubled union with God through the Body and Blood of Christ. However, as we have said elsewhere, guidelines are not unbendable rules which require legalistic fulfillment, rather they are meant to be pastorally applied in a manner helpful to our own personal circumstances. Guidelines are meant to "meet us where we are at" and help lead us up to heaven. For this reason, as your priest, and as one who must give an account for your souls (Heb. 13:17), it seemed appropriate to modify the guidelines, lessening the "rule" to only four times a year, to encourage those unaccustomed to making regular confession to at least start doing so during the fasts of the year. If this guideline is still too difficult, please speak with me and we can address your personal circumstances.



Q. Why is it said that Confession should precede receiving Holy Unction and Holy Communion?

A. Each Sacrament in the Orthodox Church has its own unique function in bringing about the healing and restoration of man, who, as we read in Genesis, was tricked by the serpent and became sick and subject to death having been infected with the poisonous venom of sin. Confession is the first step on the road to healing, for through Confession man can spit out the devil's deadly poison and purge himself from sin. Then once the poison has been expelled, the spiritual and physical wounds left by the bite can be healed through the anointing of Holy Unction. And through the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Sustenance of eternal life, man can regain his strength and return to health of body and soul. Yet, just as anointing a snake bite with oil and feeding a man healthy food, will not bring about healing unless the poison is first removed, so too the reception of Holy Unction and Holy Communion will not profit a man unless he first purges himself of sin through Holy Confession.

Q. How often should I confess my sins?

A. One should confess one's sins and spit out the devil's poison whenever one is spiritually bitten and one's health is in danger. One may reach this point from a single deadly bite, such as murder, adultery, fornication, or some other very serious sin, or from a series of lesser bites, such as anger, overeating, judging others, or lustful thoughts. As a general rule, the frequency of one's confession should depend on the amount of poison with which one has been infected, one's personal desire for spiritual health, and the Church's guidelines, which exist to heal us and save us from spiritual death.

Q. Is it necessary to confess every time I receive Holy Communion?

A. If one receives from the Holy Chalice infrequently, say once or twice a year, then yes, one should go to confession each time before receiving Holy Communion. However, for the frequent communicant, one who receives Holy Communion every Sunday, it is not necessary to confess one's sins before each time one receives, that is, unless one has fallen into a serious sin. In such cases, one should not approach the Chalice until one has first confessed the sin and fulfilled the advice or penance of one's father confessor. Finally, although it is not necessary for the frequent communicant to confess his or her sins each time he or she approaches the Chalice, sacramental confession should be made at least during each of the four fasting seasons (as said earlier), lest the poison received over time through small sins lead to the same spiritual death as that which comes through a single deadly bite.