



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 21, 2008

Please Remember in Prayer

Jane Koshutko (recovering with family in Baltimore, MD) Bill Parrish, Robert Evanusa, Olga Leisure, Valentina, Nina Gordon, Fr. Christian, Carole Boris, Constantina & Christos, Alicia & Susannah. If you have a prayer request, please let Fr. John know.

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!"

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST

SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY

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

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23RD

7:00p.m. Royal Hours

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

7:00p.m. Vigil

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

NATIVITY OF CHRIST

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27TH

6:00p.m. Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28TH

SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY

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



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.

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.

The Final Draft Copy of the 2009 Directory

Today is the final day to make additions or corrections to the directory before it goes to print. Questions? Please see Fr. John.

Stewardship Envelopes for 2009

If you haven't yet picked up your envelopes for 2009, please do so at the usher's stand. There are envelopes available for everyone.

New White Covers / Wall Decorations/ Table of Oblation

Many thanks to those who labored this week at the church: sewing, painting, wood-working, cleaning, etc.. Your work is greatly appreciated. May the Lord bless you!

Commemoration Lists

All parishioners are asked to update the list of names, both living and departed, they have submitted for commemoration at the Divine Liturgy. The list of names is in the back of the church. Questions? Please ask Fr. John.



Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!



The 2009 Calendars and Pocket Planners

from St. Tikhon's are in. Calendars are \$3.50 a piece and pocket-planners are \$2.50. We have ordered extras so you may purchase them even if you didn't order any.

Annual Meeting

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Parish will be on, Sunday, January 18th, following Coffee Hour. All full-time and part-time members, as well as visitors and contributors to the Mission are encouraged to attend.



READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Dec. 28th
Sandy St. Germain
Sunday, Jan. 4th
Jen Alexion

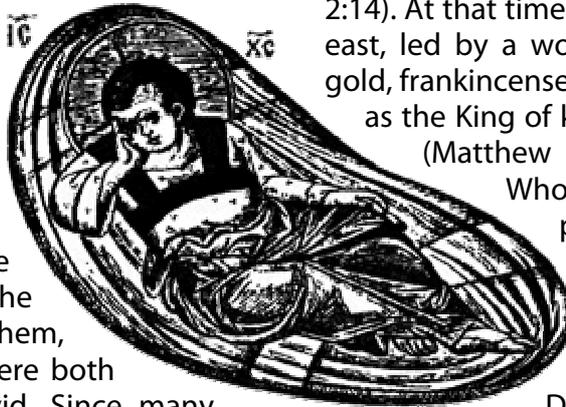




THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

From the Prologue by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4) to save the human race. And when nine months were fulfilled from the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel had appeared to the Most-holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying, Rejoice, thou that art highly favored ... behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son (Luke 1:28, 31), at that time there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the people of the Roman Empire should be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and be registered. That is why the righteous Joseph came with the Most-holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal lineage of David. Since many people descended on this small town for the census, Joseph and Mary were unable to find lodging in any house, and they sought shelter in a cave which shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave the Most-holy Virgin gave birth to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving birth to Him without pain just as He was conceived without sin by the Holy Spirit and not by man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, worshiped



Him as God, and laid Him in a manger. Then the righteous Joseph drew near and worshiped Him as the Divine Fruit of the Virgin's womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshiped Him as the Messiah and Savior. The shepherds heard a multitude of God's angels singing: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:14). At that time three wise men arrived from the east, led by a wondrous star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. They worshiped Him as the King of kings, and offered Him their gifts (Matthew 2). Thus entered the world He

Whose coming was foretold by the prophets, and Who was born in the same manner in which it had been prophesied: of a Most-holy Virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no king in Jerusalem of the lineage of Judah, but rather when Herod, a foreigner, was reigning. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind, which could not be performed by His servants. To Him be eternal glory and praise! Amen.

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.



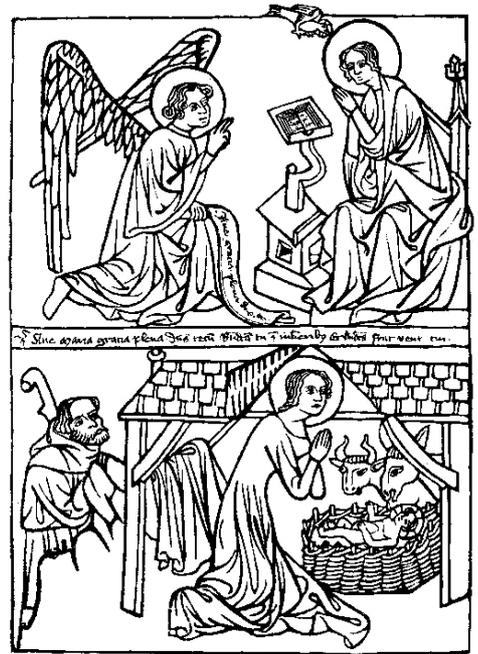
ASK FATHER: 3 QUESTIONS / 3 ANSWERS

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".

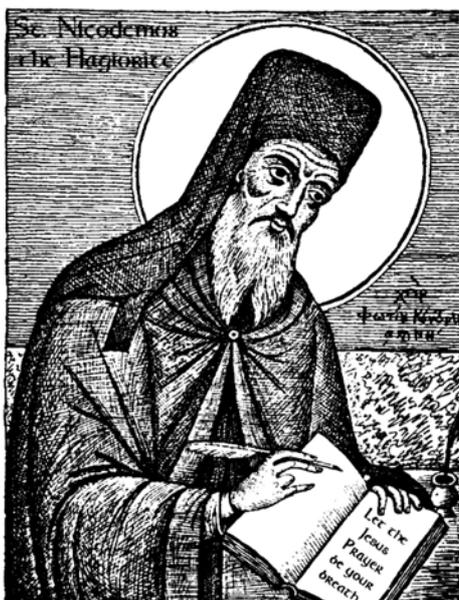
The second explanation says that the day was chosen in relation to the feast of the Annunciation, which was celebrated on March 25th commemorating the supernatural conception of the Lord in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Annunciation was celebrated on this day because of the belief in the ancient world 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. What are the Royal Hours? And why are they an important service of Christmas?

A. The Royal Hours combine the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 9th Hour services into one service which is characterized by special Psalms and hymns, as well as Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel Readings, relating to the upcoming Feast. It was customary during Byzantine times for the Emperor to be in attendance for the entire service, and for this reason it became known as the Royal Hours.

The Royal Hours are an important service of Christmas because in the reading of the prophets (Old Testament), apostles (Epistles), and evangelists (Gospels) we see the Nativity of Christ in its full Biblical context of expectation, preparation, and fulfillment. There is no other service which more beautifully foretells or proclaims the Lord's salvific coming in the flesh.



PARADOXICAL HEALING AND THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain

Briefly, I must say that in the mystery of the divine economy, the mind learns that the privations of Christ become our habits, as St. Maximos said. That is to say, the Incarnation of the Logos became our means of union with God. His kenosis or self-emptying became our fulfillment; His condescension our exaltation; His passion our dispassion; His death our life. Learning and understanding this the mind rejoices and is glad. In fact, in the mystery of divine economy the mind discovers a marvelous and paradoxical science of healing. The mind realizes that in divine economy we do not overcome our opponents with the opposite forces, as the care of the physicians and the physicists prescribe, but rather our illnesses are healed by similar illnesses. The mind discerns that through the poverty of God the Logos our own poverty was healed; through His death our death, and through His suffering our own suffering was healed.

CARING FOR THE LONELY

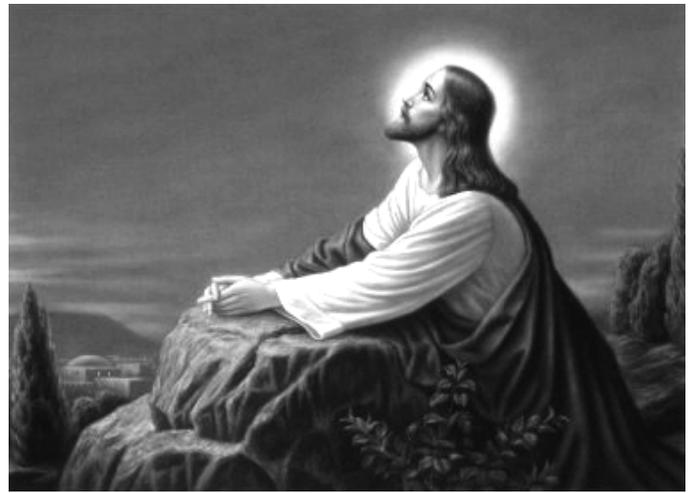
Written by the Very Rev. John Breck

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 Orthodox Church, is waging a tentative battle with alcoholism, trying with too little support to keep himself in recovery. The priest's wife, 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 *acedia*, 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 this year 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!"