

CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 20, 2009



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20TH **SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY**

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23RD

7:00p.m. Royal Hours

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

EVE OF THE NATIVITY

7:00p.m. Great Vespers w/ Litiya

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

NATIVITY OF THE LORD

One of the Twelve Great Feasts

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26TH

SYNAXIS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

5:00p.m. Orthodoxy 101
6:00p.m. Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27TH

SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY

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

Please Remember in Prayer

Bill Parrish, Carole Boris (newly-departed), Archpriest Michael, Monk Christian, Nadia, Kathy Parrish, Marie, Thomas, Judith Kocinski, Jane Koshutko, Robert Evanusa, Nicholas & Linda, Nicholas, Anna, Steven, Yvonne, Katherine, Michael, Gregory, Todd & Olga Leisure, Nina Gordon, Constantina & Christos, Mirela & Chris, Jaroslav, Troy Paul Duker, Frank & Mary Miranda, Kathy T. Requests? 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!"

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.

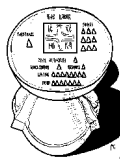


The 2010 Calendars and Pocket Planners

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.

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 lists of names can be found at the ushers' stand for the next two weeks. Questions? Please ask Fr. John.



Congratulations Father Daniel Hubiak

on his 83rd birthday, Tuesday, Dec. 29th! May the Lord bless him with many more years of health, happiness, and all things necessary for salvation! If you would like to send a card to Fr. Daniel and Mat. Dunia, their address is: 24 Wharf Court; Ocean Pines, MD 21811.

Helping a Needy Family

Today is the last day to make a donation to help buy Christmas presents for the family we have adopted this year. We already have some toys for the children (ages: 3, 6, and 12), and we would like to purchase a gift card for their parents. If you would like to make a donation, please do so via the special collection basket or by seeing Mike McFarland.



READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Dec. 27th

Jodi McElwee

Sunday, Jan. 3rd

Gabriela Vlahovici-Jones

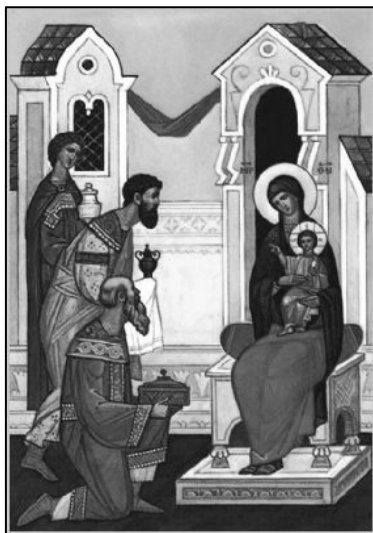


WHO WERE THE MAGI?

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

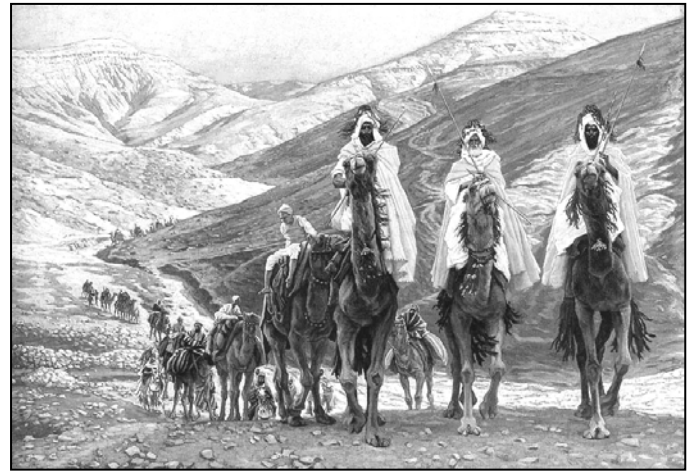


were astrologists, the Lord brought them in a manner natural to them, just as Peter, being a fisherman, came through the catch of a multitude of fish."

The wise men, on behalf of the entire human race, brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh: gold because they were returning to the ac-

knowledgment 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 Melchior, 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."

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".



ASK FATHER: 2 QUESTIONS / 2 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.



A WONDERFUL TITLE, AND NO REAL JOB DESCRIPTION?

By Matushka Valerie G. Zahirsky



What does it mean to have a wonderful title, and no real job description? The position of the wife of a priest is exactly this. The various languages or every Orthodox country have titles of honor for the priest's wife. Some might literally be translated as 'priestess', while some mean 'wife of the priest', and in at least one language — Russian — the priest's wife is 'mother' or 'little mother'.

So it's clear that our Orthodox cultures have always seen the position of priest's wife as something special. Yet there really is no "job description" for what she should do or be. This might be seen as a reason for confusion and frustration, but I think it's more true to the nature of Orthodoxy to see it as the Church's loving freedom, given to her children. It leaves a woman free to regard her posi-

tion as a ministry which can be carried out in whatever way is most suitable and comfortable for her own character and personality. If there is no job description, there is no blueprint, either, to which any woman should feel obliged to conform.

The late Jacqueline Onassis was asked early in her husband John F. Kennedy's presidency what she thought her most important role would be as First Lady. She answered that it would be to take care of the President so that he could do his job effectively. And despite the differences in "style" of various priest's wives, they, too, have this as their first task. Like any wife, the priest's wife must help her husband carry out the demanding tasks that are his, not by taking part directly in those tasks, but by seeing to his physical, spiritual, and emo-

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A Wonderful Title *continued from page 2...*

tional well-being. If the family includes children, there are other things to be seen to. The priest's family needs to be a healthy unit whose members' needs are attended to. The members must also be allowed to grow through their mistakes and experimental "trying on" of various aspects of life. Most of all, there should be continual spiritual effort in the family, involving all its members.

We can say more about each of these points. First, seeing to a husband's well-being: For a priest's wife, this includes what it does for most wives — overseeing the diet, activities, and living conditions of her family. But it can also mean helping her husband feel confident in his ministry, encouraging him during rough times, and discerning what to tell him about the things she herself observes in the parish. Because so often there is little monetary or status-related reward for the priest's work — as there is more likely to be in other professions — her support is particularly important.

The second point, the need for the priest's family to be a place in which members' needs are attended to, applies especially to the children. The demands of the priestly ministry can be — or can be allowed to become — so overwhelming that there is little time left for a busy priest to see to the needs of his own offspring. His wife is often the one who makes sure he carves out time to attend a son's concert or a daughter's game, and who encourages family conversation at the dinner table, as well as private talk between father and child at other times. There are many clergy wives who, while themselves holding down full-time jobs to meet material family needs, manage also to satisfy the family's emotional needs in this way. Their heroic efforts will surely find a great reward in heaven!

The third point, that a priest's family should be a unit whose members can make mistakes and experimentally "try on" aspects of life applies to children as well as to their parents. Green hair on the priest's son or a little gold ring in his daughter's naval, for example, should not scandalize the parish any more than they would if they appeared on other parish teens' bodies. Priest's wives need to work with their husbands to protect their children's right to try things out, and not to let those outside the family put the children into a box of

expected, impeccable, exemplary behavior — different from what is expected of any young, growing Christian. A clergy wife must also resist the temptation to impose a certain standard of behavior on her children for no other reason than "not to embarrass the family." Good behavior should be encouraged because it will help the child have a satisfying and God-pleasing life, not because he or she is a PK ('priest's kid'), and therefore has a special responsibility to make the family look good. If the priest's wife can calmly accept her children's quirks and mistakes, she will by example help other parents to have the same flexibility and calmness. In fact, this will help them to be more accepting of people in general — a healthy trait for Christians to develop.

Finally, the fourth point: The clergy family must be a place in which there is constant spiritual effort. A clergy wife with small children knows the struggle of getting little ones dressed and ready for Liturgy on a wintry Sunday morning with no help from the husband, who left for the church some time ago to begin the preparation in the altar. She knows, too, that he won't be standing with her during the services to hold a tired toddler or gently quite a baby's outburst during the sermon — because he'll be busy giving it!



Perhaps this is the place where the priest's wife has the most important aspect of her ministry. If she can make the effort — not always successfully — to get to the services even under difficult circumstances, and if she can show that she wants to be there, she will do a great deal for the people around her. We can be tempted to see worship as a beautiful but inessential adjunct to the "real" parts of our lives: work, home, school. But the priest's wife, a layperson like the others in the parish, has the same responsibilities and temptations that they do. When she makes the Church and its worship central to her life, other may see that they also can do so. They may even decide that they should do so!

If the priest's wife can encourage even one person in this way, she will have done the work of the Lord and will truly be the partner to her husband that her Orthodox title of honor calls her to be.

A noted Orthodox speaker, Matushka Valerie Zahirsky and her family live in Steubenville, Ohio. Fr. Michael Zahirsky serves as rector of St. Andrew Orthodox Church, Mingo Junction.