

The Voice in the Wilderness

“A Voice crying in the wilderness:
Prepare ye the way of the LORD....”

Matthew 3:3

The Parish Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church,
a local parish of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America and the Self-Ruled
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.



St. Nicholas is the real Santa Claus. St. Nicholas followed the words of our Lord, to "lay up treasure for yourself in Heaven," by praying every day, by fasting, and by performing good deeds. God was so pleased that he worked many miracles through Nicholas. People began to call him a "wonderworker" (a person who works wonders or performs miracles). They were so inspired by his life of service to others that many of them, too, began to lead holy lives, filled with good deeds. May it be so with us this Nativity Lent.



Special Services

- > December 07 Nativity Paraclysis 7pm
- > December 14 Nativity Paraclysis 7pm
- > December 21 Nativity Paraclysis 7pm
- > Friday, Dec 23 Orthros 5:30am; Royal Hours & Typika Noon; Vespers 5pm
Saturday Dec 24 Great Vespers 6pm (will include all the Old Testament readings for the feast)
Sunday Dec 25 ; Divine Liturgy 10am

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From the Pastor's Desk



Brothers and Sisters,
Greetings in the Name of the Lord

We're coming up on one of the busiest and most joyous times of the year. The end of December and the beginning of January are full of feasts and special activities, so please pay close attention to the schedule for all these events--and please check the web-site calendar and the weekly, online newsletter for any last minute changes (after all, there are Orthodox feasts and special activities).

Here's the schedule for the Feast of Nativity (and please notice that since the feast falls on a Sunday, there won't be a liturgy on Christmas Eve):
Friday, Dec 23 Orthros 5:30am; Royal Hours & Typika Noon; Vespers 5pm
Saturday Dec 24 Great Vespers 6pm (this service will include all the Old Testament readings for the feast)
Sunday Dec 25 Orthros 8am; Divine Liturgy 10am

Here's the schedule for the Feast of the Circumcision:
Saturday, Dec 31 Great Vespers 6pm
Sunday, Jan 1 Orthros 8am; Divine Liturgy 10am

The annual visit of our Archpastor, Bishop Basil, always coincides with the Feast of Theophany; here's the schedule for Bishop Basil's visit to Central Texas:
Friday, January 6 Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with the Great Blessing of Water at St. Elias in Austin
Saturday, January 7 Morning: Liturgy at Holy Mother of God and St. Thomas Mission in Fredericksburg; Evening: Vespers at St. Sophia in Dripping Springs
Sunday, January 8 Orthros and Hierarchical Liturgy at St. John the Forerunner in Cedar Park

It's been several years since Bishop Basil has been with us on a Sunday morning, so that will be a great way to wind up the festal season. I hope to see you at all three celebrations--Nativity, the Circumcision, and Theophany --and I pray that these feasts will be a time of blessing and joy for us all.

your unworthy priest
Aidan +



Remember that the Holy Nativity is coming , don't forget to have your Nativity Confession that is traditional within the Antiochian Archdiocese prior to taking Nativity Communion. Call Father Aidan if you need to arrange a time for Confession beyond the open Confession time following Vespers every Saturday Night.

The Two Comings of Christ

By Father Thomas Hopko

During the Christmas prefeast season, the connection between the first coming of God's Son as the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God who takes upon Himself the sins of the World, and His second coming as the triumphant King and Judge of the universe is not overtly stressed in any of the church services. But it is clearly implied in virtually all of the songs, hymns and lections. The Old Testament prophecies read at the hours, vespers and matins on the day before the Nativity quite specifically proclaim the messianic age which Jesus is born to bring, but which He will manifest in power only at the end of history. And several verses which are sung during the season directly refer to the interrelationship between the Master's two comings.

Christ our Judge commands us to be vigilant.

We wait expectantly for His visitation,

For He comes to be born of a Virgin.

At Your awesome second coming, O Christ,

Number me with the sheep at Your right hand,

For You took up Your abode in the flesh to save us.

At Your first coming to us, O Christ,

You desired to save the race of Adam;

When You come again to judge us, Show mercy on those who honor Your Holy Nativity.

Excerpt from Ode 9 of the canon of compline of the second day of the prefeast of the Nativity, December 21

The Christmas prefeast hymns, especially the canons, consciously refer to the hymns of the services of Holy Week before the spring-time Pascha. In many of them, Easter paschal themes are replaced by Winter paschal themes, with just a few words being changed in each verse. Thus, what is effected at these services is a sort of "triple connection."

Christ's Nativity, with His Epiphany in the Jordan, is referred to His Passion and Resurrection, which is then referred to His Coming at the end of the ages. In making the triple connection, the entire Mystery of Christ is placed before the believers for their contemplation and communion.

Christians live between the two comings of Christ. They remember His first coming to be sacrificed. They anticipate His second coming to reign. This is vividly portrayed in traditional Orthodox church buildings where the "royal gates" of the icon screen in front of the altar table are flanked by the icons of the Theotokos and Child on the one side, and the Lord Jesus in glory on the other. To the uninitiated it may seem as though these are simply pictures of Mary and Jesus put on the same level. This is not so. The icons which frame the Orthodox altar are images of the two comings of

Christ. Mary is not alone in her icon; she is holding the Christ Child, who is not shown as a baby, but as the Son of God incarnate "in the form of a slave... in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7). This is the icon of Christ's first coming. And the icon on the right of the doors is not a picture of Jesus as He was on the earth. It is His image in glory as King and Lord, the icon of His second coming.

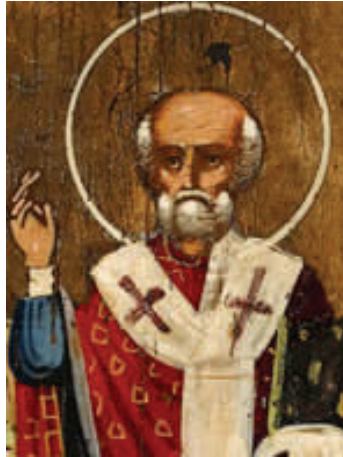
The two comings of Christ are held together in Christian thought, action, and prayer at all times. They cannot be separated. When they are, it is the end of Christian faith, life and worship. The first coming without the second is a meaningless tragedy. The second coming without the first is an absurd impossibility. Jesus is born to bring God's kingdom. He dies to prove His kingship. He rises to establish his reign. He comes again in glory to share it with His people. In the kingdom of God there are no subjects. All rule with the risen Messiah. He came, and is coming, for this purpose alone.

Excerpt from Chapter 20 of *The Winter Pascha*, by Fr. Thomas Hopko. www.antiochian.org Published by St Vladimir Press.

Saints to Follow: St. Nicholas ~ Wonderworker

December 6

St. Nicholas followed the words of our Lord, to "lay up treasure for yourself in Heaven," by praying every day, by fasting, and by performing good deeds. God was so pleased that he worked many miracles through Nicholas. People began to call him a "wonderworker" (a person who works wonders or performs miracles). They were so inspired by his life of service to others that many of them, too, began to lead holy lives, filled with good deeds.



As a faithful [bishop](#)/shepherd, St. Nicholas was revered as a [saint](#) even before his death because of his great holiness and tender care of his flock. After the Blessed Mother and St. John the Forerunner (Baptist), Nicholas was the most revered saint in the early church. He is most honored in the East, especially in Russia. Throughout the world many churches are named for him—more than for any other saint. His ministry continues to this day as a powerful intercessor for the protection and advancement of the Church.

In the weekly liturgical cycle of the Orthodox Church, Thursday is dedicated to the Holy Apostles and to Saint Nicholas, who stands as a model for all the great hierarchs, the successors to the Apostles and teachers of the Church. To be given a place in the weekly cycle indicates the great veneration the Church accords him.*As a faithful bishop/shepherd, St. Nicholas was revered as a saint even before his death because of his great holiness and tender care of his flock. After the Blessed Mother and St. John the Forerunner (Baptist), Nicholas was the most revered saint in the early church. He is most honored in the East, especially in Russia. Throughout the world many churches are named for him—more than for any other saint. His ministry continues to this day as a powerful intercessor for the protection and advancement of the Church.

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The quite exceptional veneration of St. Nicholas is well known. In the liturgical weekly cycle of the Orthodox Church, among the days of the week dedicated to the Saviour and to different orders of heavenly and earthly sanctity, only three persons are singled out by name: the Mother of God, John the Forerunner and St. Nicholas. The reason for this special veneration of this bishop, who left neither theological works nor other writings, is evidently that the Church sees in him a personification of a shepherd, of its defender and intercessor. "Having fulfilled the Gospel of Christ . . . thou hast appeared in truth as a most hallowed shepherd to the world. According to his Life, when St. Nicholas was raised to the dignity of bishop he said: ". . . This dignity and this office demand different usage, in order that one should live no longer for oneself but for others." This "life for others" is his characteristic feature and is manifested by the great variety of forms of his solicitude for [people]—his care for their preservation, their protection from the elements, from human injustice, from heresies and so forth. This solicitude was accompanied by numerous miracles both during his life and after his death. Indefatigable intercessor, steadfast, uncompromising fighter for Orthodoxy, "he was meek and gentle in his disposition and humble in spirit". (Léonide Ouspensky & Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 2nd edition, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982.)

MIRACLES OF ST NICHOLAS

Through the centuries many stories and legends have
(Continued on Page 5)

St. Nicholas ~ Wonderworker (Continued)

been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value—a dowry. The larger the dowry, the better the chance that a young woman would find a good husband. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were therefore destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home—providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for St. Nicholas. And so St. Nicholas is a gift-giver.

One of the oldest stories showing St. Nicholas as a protector of children takes place long after his death. The townspeople of Myra were celebrating the good saint on the eve of his feast day when a band of Arab pirates from Crete came into the district. They stole treasures from the Church of Saint Nicholas to take away as booty. As they were leaving town, they snatched a young boy, Basilios, to make into a slave. The emir, or ruler, selected Basilios to be his personal cupbearer, as not knowing the language, Basilios would not understand what the king said to those around him. So, for the next year Basilios waited on the king, bringing his wine in a beautiful golden cup. For Basilios' parents, devastated at the loss of their only child, the year passed slowly, filled with grief. As the next St. Nicholas' feast day approached, Basilios' mother would not join in the festivity, as it was now a day of tragedy.



However, she was persuaded to have a simple observance at home—with quiet prayers for Basilios' safekeeping. Meanwhile, as Basilios was fulfilling his tasks serving the emir, he was suddenly whisked up

and away. St. Nicholas appeared to the terrified boy, blessed him, and set him down at his home back in Myra. Imagine the joy and wonderment when Basilios amazingly appeared before his parents, still holding the king's golden cup. This is the first story told of St. Nicholas protecting children—which became his primary role in the West.

Other miracles of St. Nicholas include his rescue of many Sailors from shipwreck. For this reason, a common decoration during Nativity is a ship with an Icon of St. Nicholas prominently displayed in a Greek home.



(Continued on page 6)

St. Nicholas ~ Wonderworker (Continued)

DIVINE APPROVAL

One incident in St Nicholas' life shows that saints are not "wimps" when it comes to protecting the Church and proclaiming the Orthodox Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many icons show Saint Nicholas with Jesus on one side and Mary the Blessed Mother on the other. They hold symbols of a bishop's office: the Book of the Gospels and an omophorion. They appeared this way in two events of Nicholas' life. The first was when he was selected to be consecrated as a bishop. The second was at the Council of Nicaea. They symbolize God's favor resting upon Nicholas and confirm his vocation as a bishop.



After Nicholas, who had been foretold in a vision to one of the bishops charged with selecting the new

bishop for the See of Myra, came to the church and was recognized as the one in the vision, he modestly refused to accept the office. The other bishops persisted and led him to the throne, despite his resistance. Nicholas was compelled to accept the office, as he recalled the vision that had come to him in the days before Bishop John's death. In the vision Nicholas saw before him Jesus the Savior in all his glory, giving him a Book of the Gospels covered with gold and pearls. On the other side of himself he saw the Theotokos who placed a bishop's omophorion on his shoulders. And so Nicholas came to believe it was truly God's will for him to serve as a bishop. At the Council of Nicaea, after Nicholas had become so enraged at Arius for promoting false teachings that he hit him in the face, Nicholas was stripped of his office and put in jail. While there, Jesus and Mary, his Mother, appeared in a vision * to Constantine and all the bishops of the Council, in which Jesus and Mary gave the objects that identify a bishop—the Book of the Gospels and an omophorion—to Nicholas. This convinced the Council to reinstate Nicholas to the office of bishop.

Details of Nicholas' death are not known, but early reference is made to the manna of St. Nicholas, a liquid that formed in his tomb and was renowned for its healing properties. For 750 years St. Nicholas' tomb in Myra was an ever-increasingly popular pilgrimage site as reverence for the saint grew and spread throughout the Christian world.

As a bishop, Nicholas, servant of God, was first and foremost a shepherd of the people, caring for their needs. His active pursuit of justice for his people was demonstrated when he secured grain in time of famine, saved the lives of three men wrongly condemned, and secured lower taxes for Myra. He taught the Gospel simply, so ordinary people understood, and he lived out his faith and devotion to God in helping the poor and all in need.

Resources used:

- 1) www.stnicholascenter.org
- 2) www.antiochian.org
- 3) Service, Akathist, Life and Miracles of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York

Santa Claus and St. Nicholas

Everybody loves Santa Claus. He embodies holiday cheer, happiness, fun, and gifts—warm happy aspects of the Christmas season. How do Santa Claus and St. Nicholas differ?



Santa Claus belongs to childhood;
St. Nicholas models for all of life.

Santa Claus encourages consumption;
St. Nicholas encourages compassion.



Santa Claus, as we know him, developed to boost Christmas sales—the commercial Christmas message;
St. Nicholas told the story of Christ and peace, goodwill toward all—the hope-filled Christmas message.

Santa Claus appears each year to be seen and heard for a short time;
St. Nicholas is part of the communion of saints, surrounding us always with prayer and example.

Santa Claus flies through the air—from the North Pole;
St. Nicholas walked the earth—caring for those in need.



Santa Claus, for some,
replaces the Babe of
Bethlehem;
St. Nicholas, for all,
points to the Babe of
Bethlehem.

Santa Claus isn't bad;

**St. Nicholas is just
better.**



Holy Forefathers and the Genealogy of Christ

There are two Feast days that are related as preparatory to the Feast of the Holy Nativity of Jesus Christ. They are the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers and the Sunday of the Fathers. One deals with spiritual forefathers of the faith and the other with the physical fathers of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers is the Sunday that falls between December 11-17, the second Sunday before the Nativity. The ancestors of Christ according to the flesh are remembered on this Sunday of the Nativity Fast.

All the great Fathers and Mothers and Prophets of the Old Testament, starting with Adam, Abraham, the Righteous Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, including Holy Prophet Elias and Daniel, and concluding with Holy Prophet Zechariah (Zachary), Joachim and Anna, Holy Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist and The Theotokos. They lived before the Law and under the Law, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God said, "In thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, 22:18).

HYMNS OF THE FEAST

Troparion (Tone 2)

Through faith You justified the Forefathers,
betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles.
These saints exult in glory,
for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit:
She who bore You without seed.
So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Kontakion (Tone 6)

You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones,
but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,
you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on
God, crying:
Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid,

for You are merciful and able to do as You will.

The Sunday of the Fathers is the Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord (December 18-24). On this day the Church honors all those who were well-pleasing to God from all ages, from Adam to St Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, those who are mentioned in the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered on this day, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy. The previous Sunday, the Sunday of the Forefathers, the Church commemorated all the righteous of the Old Testament who awaited the coming of Christ, this day remembers all those in the Old Testament who were related to Christ by blood and those who spoke of his birth as a man.

This Sunday is part of the Forefeast of the Nativity, which strictly speaking begins on December 20.

HYMNS OF THE FEAST

Troparion (Tone 2)

Great are the accomplishments of faith,
for the Three Holy Youths rejoiced in the flames as
though at the waters of rest,
and the prophet Daniel appeared,
a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.
So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Kontakion (Tone 6)

You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones,
but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,
you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on
God, crying:
Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid,
for You are merciful and able to do as You will.

Nativity Resources for Orthodox Christian Families

Thy Nativity O Christ our God, hath shown forth the light of wisdom upon the world, for therein those who worship the stars have been taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Nativity Troparion

The following resources are intended to help families enter into the Orthodox spirit of fasting and preparation which is then followed by the joyful Feast of the Nativity on December 25. Christ is born! Internet connections to many of these websites is available through

www.antiochian.org/content/nativity-resources-orthodox-christian-families

Reading and Listening Room

[The Twelve Days of Christmas](#): The 12 days of Christmas refer to the period between Christmas and the Eve of Theophany/Epiphany (January 5). This is a time of celebration—rejoicing in the birth of our Lord and Savior! Nativity by proclaiming “Christ is born!” Melissa Tsongranis explains how families can extend the season of Christmas, Orthodox-style.

[The Holy Hierarch Nicholas](#): Who was the real St. Nicholas, and why has his story and life held such staying power? Nicholas of Myra was born at the end of the third century in Patara, on the south coast of Asia Minor, to godly parents who dedicated him to Christ from birth. From childhood, he evidenced a deep love for the Church and learning the services, daily reading the Holy Scriptures and praying.

[Listen to Ancient Faith Radio's Nativity podcasts](#)

[The Nativity Feast, the Holy Family, and the Domestic Church](#): Fr. George Morelli examines the Nativity of Christ, especially in light of Joseph and how he and Mary are an example for the domestic church in the home.

[The Advent Period in Home Life](#): How can we live through the preparatory period of Advent as a Christian family?

[The People who Sat in Darkness Have Seen a Great Light](#): An examination of how the Advent season prepares us to receive Christ.



Nativity Resources for Orthodox Christian Families(Continued)

Bookshelf (available on order from the Antiochian Village or Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore)

The Miracle of St. Nicholas: A curious boy named Alexi learns about how Christmas was once celebrated in his grandmother's time, and sets out to bring the Nativity celebration to his village once again.

A Perfect Christmas: This book reclaims the spirit of Christmas from the commercial secularized culture of the “winter holidays” that has almost obliterated the Christian meaning of the celebration of the birth of Christ. Author Dennis Eugene Engleman and illustrator Niko Chocheli have collaborated to restore St.Nicholas (“Santa Claus”) to his rightful place in the imagination of children, and perhaps their parents too!

For Unto Us a Child is Born: Lessons for kids about the season of Nativity, including entries about Theophany and the Presentation of the Lord.

Lucia, Saint of Light: Long revered in both East and West, St. Lucia is an early virgin martyr whose life and legacy shine as a light of faith, hope, and compassion in the darkness of winter and sin. Lucia, Saint of Light introduces young readers to both her life and her delightful festival as it is traditionally celebrated in Sweden and around the world.

The Miraculous Child: A charming, delightfully illustrated Russian folktale about a poor family who entertains an angel unawares.

Other Resources

[Orthodox Gift Giving Guide:](#) books, cards, icons and more

[Playing it Up for Christmas:](#) Five Christmas plays your family or parish can perform during the Nativity season, from the Orthodox Christian Education Commission

[An Interactive Nativity Icon](#)

[The Liturgical Year for Little Ones:](#) simple Nativity crafts and activities for families based on the Orthodox calendar

[Gift the Gift of Love:](#) The IOCC lists projects parents can adopt for family Christmas giving.

[The Winter Pascha: Make a Forty Day Advent Calendar](#)

[Discovering the truth about Santa Claus:](#) a site with games, stories, crafts and more, all aimed at teaching kids about St. Nicholas, the real Santa!



The Conception of Mary December 9

On the ninth of December the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of the conception of the Virgin Mary by her parents Joachim and Anna. On this major festival which finds its place in the Church's preparation for Christmas, the faithful rejoice in the event by which Mary is conceived in fulfillment of her parents' prayers in order to be formed in the womb, born on the earth, dedicated to the Lord, and nurtured in holiness to become by God's grace the mother of His Son the Messiah.

The Orthodox Church, particularly in the present time, does not call the feast of Mary's beginning the "immaculate conception," although perhaps in ancient times this title would have been fully acceptable. This is not because the Orthodox consider Mary's conception to have been somehow "maculate" or "stained" (macula means "stain" in Latin). It simply means that the Orthodox do not want to support the conviction that God had somehow to intervene at the moment of Mary's conception with a special action to remove the "stain" of the original sin transmitted by the act of human reproduction because, simply put, the Orthodox do not hold that such a "stain" exists.

The Orthodox Church affirms original sin. Orthodox theology teaches that all human beings, including the Virgin Mary who is a "mere human" like the rest of us-- unlike her Son Jesus who is a "real human" but not a "mere human" because He is the incarnate Son and Word of God-- are born into a fallen, death-bound, demon-riddled world whose "form is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31). We are all born mortal and tending toward sin. But we are not born guilty of any personal sin, certainly not one allegedly committed "in Adam." Nor are we born stained because of the manner in which we are conceived by the sexual union of our parents. If sexual union in marriage is in any sense sinful, or the cause in itself of any sinfulness or stain, even in the conditions of the "fallen world," then, as even the rigorous Saint John Chrysostom has taught, God is the sinner because He made us this way, male and female, from the very beginning.

Mary is conceived by her parents as we are all conceived. But in her case it is a pure act of faith and love, in obedience to God's will, as an answer to prayer. In this sense her conception is truly "immaculate." And its fruit is woman who remains forever the most pure Virgin and Mother of God.

Daily Devotions December 2011 By V. Rev. George Alberts

1. 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-3:5; LUKE 20:9-16 (FAST)
2. 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-18; LUKE 20:19-26 (FAST)
3. GALATIANS 1:3-10; LUKE 12:32-40 (FAST)
4. GALATIANS 3:23-4:5; LUKE 13:10-17 (FAST)
5. 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-7; LUKE 20:27-44 (FAST)
6. HEBREWS 13:17-21; LUKE 6:17-23 (FAST)
7. 1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20; 2:8-15; LUKE 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24 (FAST)
8. 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13; LUKE 21:28-33 (FAST)
9. GALATIANS 4:22-31; LUKE 8:16-21 (FAST)
10. GALATIANS 3:6-12; LUKE 13:18-29 (FAST)
11. COLOSSIANS 5:4-11; LUKE 14:16-24 (FAST)
12. HEBREWS 13:17-21; LUKE 6:17-23 (FAST)
13. 1 TIMOTHY 5:11-21; MARK 8:22-26 (FAST)
14. 1 TIMOTHY 5:22-6:11; MARK 8:30-34 (FAST)
15. 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-21; MARK 9:10-16 (FAST)
16. 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-2, 8-18; MARK 9:33-41 (FAST)
17. GALATIANS 5:22-6:2; LUKE 14:1-11 (FAST)
18. HEBREWS 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40; MATTHEW 1:1-25 (FAST)
19. 2 TIMOTHY 2:20-26; MARK 9:42-10:1 (FAST)
20. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-4:4; MARK 10:2-12 (FAST)
21. 2 TIMOTHY 4:9-22; MARK 10:11-16 (FAST)
22. TITUS 1:6-21:1; MARK 10:17-27 (FAST)
23. TITUS 1:15-2:10; MARK 10:23-32 (FAST)
24. HEBREWS 1:1-12; LUKE 2:1-20 (STRICT FAST)
25. NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
GALATIANS 4:4-7; MATTHEW 2:1-12
26. HEBREWS 2:11-18; MATTHEW 2:13-23
27. ACTS 6:8-16, 7:1-5, 47-60; MATTHEW 21:33-42
28. HEBREWS 5:11-6:8; MARK 11:23-26
29. HEBREWS 7:1-6; MARK 11:27-33
30. HEBREWS 7:18-25; MARK 12:1-12
31. 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16; MATTHEW 12:15-21

Food for the Kingdom

Lets be honest, Most fasting baked goods lack luster. This chocolate cake is a big exception! Sometimes I make this on nonfasting days when I am short on eggs and milk. The reaction between the vinegar and baking soda give the cake its height. Add the vinegar last and pour directly into the pan for best results. You may never go back to boxed cakes again.

A tablespoon of instant coffee is a tasty addition. Also, if you want this cake to have some protein you can use substitute 1/2 cup of oat flour (grind a 1/2 cup of oatmeal very fine) for a half cup of wheat flour and throw in some walnuts.

Enjoy!

Fasting Chocolate Cake

Ingredients

- 3 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 6 Tbsp cocoa
- 2 cups water
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 Tbsp vinegar

Directions:

Step 1. Lord, bless my work.

Step 2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl add dry ingredients, stirring to combine. Add wet ingredients in order of appearance, stirring to combine.

Step 3. Pour directly into an UNGREASED 9×13 pan. Bake 30-35 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Step 4. Sprinkle with powdered sugar to decorate.



You can make this cake into something special by dividing the cake into circular cake pans and baking two layers. When completed open a can of cherry pie filling and use it as the filling in the cake.

“Ice” the cake with a non-dairy whipped topping like “Cook Whip” and decorate with a dollop of cherry pie filling on the very top of the cake. This recipe tastes great and is the perfect fasting item to take to one of those office or family expected Christmas parties you have to attend.



St. John's Community News

Special Services

December 07 Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

December 14 Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

December 21 Nativity Paraclesis 7pm

Friday, Dec 23 Orthros 5:30am; Royal Hours & Typika Noon; Vespers 5pm

Saturday Dec 24 Great Vespers 6pm (will include all the Old Testament readings for the feast)

Sunday Dec 25 Orthros 8am; Divine Liturgy 10am

Community News:

December 4 St Nicholas Party for the All Saints Club immediately after Divine Liturgy.

Special Orthopraxis of Nativity will be done on December 10 at 1pm. Learn what the Orthodox Church Father have taught about the Nativity of Christ. You may be surprised by what you learn! Please note that the time is earlier than usual.

January 8, 2011 Annual Episcopal Visit by His Grace Bishop Basil. The annual visit of our Archpastor, Bishop Basil, always coincides with the Feast of Theophany; here's the schedule for Bishop Basil's visit to Central Texas:

Friday, January 6 Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with the Great Blessing of Water at St. Elias in Austin

Saturday, January 7 Morning: Liturgy at Holy Mother of God and St. Thomas Mission in Fredericksburg; Evening: Vespers at St. Sophia in Dripping Springs

Sunday, January 8 Orthros and Hierarchical Liturgy at St. John the Forerunner in Cedar Park

PARISH PRAYER LIST:

Pray for the health of body and soul of those who have requested your prayers:

Father Deacon Basil, Subdeacon Vladimir, Reader Matthew, Nun Elizabeth, Kh Angie, Missionaries Jeffrey and Caryn and their children (preparations for Albania), Elena, Zinaida, Irina, Despina, Chara, Eleni, LaVerne, Albert, Nicholas, Walter/Taras, George Dominica and her family, Misty, Donna, Vicki, Mary Anne, Autumn, Anna, Randell, Maria, Gayla, Carson/Brenda, Chris, Mary/Elizabeth/Amy, Paul, Mary, James, Josie, David, Chloe, Thuy, Bob, Bob, Rachel, Hayden, Becky, Clint, Pat, Jacob, Hannah, Ray, Elena, Michael, Joshua, Natalie, Tammy, Michael/Alexander, Liz, Gwen, Lee, Susan, Dotty, Robert, Rick, Brendan, Judy Alla/Anatoly, Natalia, Sophia/Natalia/Mike, Liliya/Artem/Sergey, Vasily/Pavel/Eudokia, Ricardo/Veronica, Eldon, Rachel, Rebecca, Rick/Margie, Jim/Pam, Andrew, Anna, Marci, Sergei/Jessica, Dorothy/John Margaret/Calvin, James, Helen, Brian, Elizabeth, Patty, and those serving in the armed forces at home and abroad, especially the Servants of God DAVID, MICHAEL, SAVVAS, ANTHONY, and SERGEI

Pray for the Catechumen: Alexei Kennedy, David Williams, Shanasia Brown, John and Juanita Scheer, the Chandlers (Anthony, Heather, Ryan, Allyson, Olivia, and Norah), and Sarah Chapman

Blessed Name Day:

Nov 16 Apostle Matthew-Reader MATTHEW Groh, MATTHEW Falkowski, MATTHEW Thurner

Nov 25 St Catherine the Great Martyr - CATHERINE Maclaughlin

Nov 23 Alexander Nevsky- ALEXANDER Macdonald

Nov 30 Apostle Andrew - ANDREW Treckman, Rdr ANDREW Wilson,

Dec 6 St Nichols of Myra- R. NICHOLAS Mahoney, H NICOLE Montgomery, NICHOLAS Bays,

Dec 9 Righteous Hannah the mother of the Prophet Samuel – HANNAH Lewis, HANNAH N.

Montgomery

Dec 12 -Holy Forefathers – REBECCA Carmack, CALEB Lewis, REBBECA Lewis, Amy RUTH Long, AARON Nials, AARON Wilson, RACHEL Bays, REBKAH Galloway, Sally SARAH Medford, REBECCA H Thurner, RACHEL Thurner,

Dec 17 – Prophet Daniel/ Holy Righteous Issac, - DANIEL Rigney, ISSAC Michaelis

Dec 22 – St. Anastasia – Anastasia Rigney

Dec 26 Holy King & Prophet David - DAVID Nelson, DAVID Brown, Clifton DAVID Kelly, DAVID Morgan,

Dec 27 Protomartyr Stephen – STEPHEN Bodnarchuk, Hubert STEPHEN Bays,

Happy Birthday:

Anna Nelson, Caryn Macdonald, Riley Thomas Montgomery, Hannah Montgomery, Vicki Knight, Rebecca Carmack, Kate Easley

Happy Anniversary: December 30 - Chuck and Patty Lewis

May God grant you many years!

Missionary Update

Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald have been accepted as Missionary Candidates by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, to serve the Orthodox Church in Albania. Dr. Macdonald will be assisting the Holy Resurrection Seminary outside of Durres as a long-term missionary. His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios maintains education as a top priority in his vision for the Church's social outreach in Albania.

Jeffrey says they are “slowly” making progress towards the needed funds required by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. Please take a moment to talk with Jeffrey and Caryn about how you can support their mission. If you do not have one of their missionary cards in your icon corner, please pick one up and support them with your prayers and any resources you can provide will be appreciated.



Orthodox Kid's Page: St Nicholas and the Famine

The most important saint in the Nativity Lent season is St Nicholas. His feast day is kept on the 6th December. Nicholas was a kind and generous man who shared all he possessed. He was especially kind to people who were poor and starving. The custom of giving presents at Christmas comes from St Nicholas.

He was the bishop of Myra, when his country suffered a great famine. The harvest that year was bad, and food from the previous year had been used up. A storm had destroyed all the grain and the vegetables in the fields. The people were starving. Everyday they came to Nicholas in the hope that he would give them something to eat. He helped them as best he could, but soon he had nothing else to give away.

One day a big ship sailed into the harbour of Myra: on board the ship was a large cargo of grain and other food. When Nicholas heard of this he hurried to the ship to buy some supplies. The captain refused to sell him food.

"I cannot sell you anything," he said. "I must deliver the entire cargo to my master. If only one sack is missing he will punish me severely."

Nicholas would not give up and continued to try to persuade him. The captain finally gave in and offered Nicholas two sacks of grain. Nicholas thanked him sincerely and said, "Your kindness will be rewarded."

Nicholas took the grain and distributed it to the starving people. Although he started with only two sacks of grain, all the hungry people had enough to eat.

However the captain had the biggest surprise of all. As he left the harbour he wondered how he could tell his master he had given two sacks of grain to the people of Myra. He decided to count the sacks once more, and to his great surprise the cargo was intact. No sacks were missing.

Family Activities:

- A) In the spirit of St. Nicholas, give an anonymous gift to someone who really needs it. It might be a parent, child, sibling, cousin, niece, or nephew—or someone who is not related to you at all. The gift could be tickets to a movie, a book, an article of clothing, a tool or appliance you know the person needs, or some silly item that will make the person smile and brighten up his or her day. Enclose a card that simply tells the person to enjoy the gift; sign it "A Friend." The gift will bring an element of mystery and miracle into someone's life.
- B) Custom of the Shoes This is an ancient Advent custom, widespread in Europe, Canada, and South America. When the children go to bed on the eve of St. Nicholas' Day (December 5), they put upon the window sills their shoes with little notes which they have written or dictated, addressed to the Child Jesus. These letters, containing lists of desired Christmas presents and promises of little acts of charity, are supposed to be taken to heaven by Saint Nicholas. In the letters place will be small gifts and treats of candy or cookies.

Color Page

St. Nicholas Patron Saint of Children

