

Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized ()*; *Home:* John Mahalchak (son). William Warnak, Nancy Shaytar, Natalie Toooh. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Bob Brewster (Whitehall Skilled Nursing), Natalie Popovich, Michael Soroka.

➤ **Vigil Lights** From **Mat. Nancy K. Mell & Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family. From **Doris Wasilko** for the departed servant, Grandmother, Katherine Dyczko; for the health of Michael Vanguard. From **Marsha Wasilko** for the departed servant, Grandmother, Katherine Dyczko; Happy Birthday & Many Years to cousin, Michael! From **Charles A. Wasilko** for the departed servant, Grandmother, Katherine Dyczko; for the health of cousin, Michael. From **Edith M Humphrey** for the departed servant, William Wilson. From **Lindy Hamilton** for the health of the Scott and Hamilton families; special intentions. From **Mr. & Mrs. Richard Blaha** for the departed servants, parents, brother, Uncle Eddie and Aunt Rose, and the newly departed, John & Aunt Peggy; for the health of family, friends, siblings, and serving soldiers, special prayers for Paul, and PDN. John; for special intentions, peace and birthdays for Monica and Godchild, Anastasia. From **John Mahalchak family** for the departed servant, Margaret; for the health of friends & family, John, Cheryl, John, Gregory, Cindy, Daniel, Mary, Joseph, Margaret, and Mary Pat; safe travels for family.

Thank You

➤ to our **December** donors: **Donya Yewisiak** (\$50 for Festal Altar Candles) in memory of arents, Fr Vladimir and Matushka Olga Soroka. **Jan and Chuck Widel** (\$60 for Bulletin) in memory of departed members of the Puskar and Morris families. **Fr Thomas and Matushka Joni Soroka** (\$10 Incense) in memory of our departed parents, Fr Vladimir and Mat Olga Soroka and John and Barbara Naiser.

St Nicholas Church will strive to glorify God through Orthodox Christian worship, sincere love and care for one another, and service to those in need around us.

On the Painless Birth

Concerning the birth of Christ, **the Prophet Isaiah spoke thus:** "Behold she that travailed brought forth, before the travail-pain came on, she escaped it and brought forth a male"(Is. 66:7).

Saint John of Damascus adds to this saying that: "After the normal nine-month gestational period, Christ was born at the beginning of the tenth, in accordance with the law of gestation. It was the birth that surpassed the established order of birth giving, as it was without pain; for, where pleasure had not preceded, pain did not follow. And just as at His conception He had kept her who conceived Him virgin, so also at His birth did He maintain her virginity intact, because He alone passed through her and kept her shut.

While the conception was by 'hearing', the birth was by the usual orifice through which children are born, even though there are some who concoct an idle tale of His being born from the side of the Mother of God. For it was not impossible for Him to pass through the gate without breaking its seals. Hence, the Ever-Virgin remained virgin even after giving birth and never had relations with a husband as long as she lived."

Saint Ambrose in his Synodal Letter 44 writes: "Why is it hard to believe that Mary gave birth in a way contrary to the law of natural birth and remained a virgin, when contrary to the law of nature the sea looked at Him and fled, and the waters of the Jordan returned to their source (Ps. 113:3). Is it past belief that a virgin gave birth when we read that a rock issued water (Ex. 17:6), and the waves of the sea were made solid as a wall (Ex. 14:22)? Is it past belief that a Man came from a virgin when a rock bubbled forth a flowing stream (Ex. 20:11), iron floated on water (4 Kings 6:6), a Man walked upon the waters (Mt. 14:26)? If the waters bore a Man, could not a virgin give birth to a man? What Man? Him of Whom we read: '...the Lord shall be known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day; and they shall offer sacrifices, and shall vow vows to the Lord, and pay them' (Is. 19:20)."



Whether you're searching for a new church home or just visiting, we're glad you're with us today. If you have a prayer request, are looking for more information about the Orthodox Faith, would like to join our parish, or would like to speak with Fr Thomas, we invite you to use the QR Code as your offering today. Please join us downstairs following the service. We want to get to know you! God bless you!



This Week

- Sunday, December 22**
10:00 am Divine Liturgy / Church School
- Monday, December 23**
10:00 am Royal Hours
- Tuesday, December 24**
9:30 am Vespers Divine Liturgy
5:00 pm Communal Holy Supper
7:00 pm Festal Vigil
- Wednesday, December 25**
10:00 am Festal Divine Liturgy
- Thursday, December 26**
9:30 am Divine Liturgy (no office hours)
- Saturday, December 28**
3:30 pm Exploring Orthodoxy Class
4:30 pm Confessions
5:00 pm Parish Vigil
- Sunday, December 29**
10:00 am Divine Liturgy / Church School

To our Visitors: Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting. Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, *Rector*
Deacon Luke Loboda, *Attached*
Deacon John Skowron, *Attached*
Rdr James Wargo and Danielle Bartko, Choir Dirs

Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA
OrthodoxPittsburgh.org December 22, 2024

Announcements

➤ Everyone is invited downstairs to enjoy **the Christmas pageant** (in Russian *Рождественская елка* – "yolka" meaning, Christmas tree) presented by the Church School students. May God bless them and their teachers!

➤ **Christmas caroling** to our shut ins will be done today after the conclusion of the *Yolka*. We will make three visits and everyone is welcomed to attend. Please see Fr Thomas or Deacon Luke.

➤ **Matushka Joni Soroka** expresses her deepest gratitude to everyone who shared messages of sympathy on the recent falling asleep of her father, John Naiser. May his memory be eternal!

➤ As the end of the year approaches, **please consider offering a year-end financial gift** to our parish. The need is great as we receive a greater number of inquirers who are seeking the truth of the Orthodox Christian faith. May God bless you for your faithfulness!

➤ A regular session of **Church School will be held next Sunday** after the Divine Liturgy at the normal time.

➤ Next Sunday, the Sunday after Christmas, is our annual "Cookie Sunday." **Please consider sharing any cookies, cakes, and desserts** with us at social hour after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 29.

Hymns and Readings for Sunday, December 22

Tone 1 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: “Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom!// Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou Who lovest mankind!”

Tone 2 Troparion (Holy Fathers)

Great are the accomplishments of faith, for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though in 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!

Tone 4 Troparion (Forefeast)

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all! Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave! Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit; if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.// Christ is born to raise up again what fell in former times, His image. (Glory to the Father...)

Tone 1 Kontakion (Fathers)

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha! The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her womb. The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him,// and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him. (Now and ever...)

Tone 3 Kontakion (Forefeast)

Today the Virgin comes to the cave

to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the angels and the shepherds// the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little child!

Tone 4 Prokeimenon (Holy Fathers)

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, / and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever! (Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 3)

Epistle Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and

Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Gospel Matthew 1:1-25 (Sunday Before the Nativity)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (Ps. 148:1) Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! (Ps. 32:1) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!