



Welcome!

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 fill out a visitor's card and drop it in the offering basket as your offering today. We want to get to know you! God bless you!

This Week

Monday, December 24 Christmas Eve

- 8:30 am Royal Hours
- 9:30 am Vespers Divine Liturgy
- 7:00 pm Confessions
- 8:00 pm Vigil of the Nativity of Christ

Tuesday, December 25 Christmas Day

- 10:00 am Festal Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, December 26 Synaxis of the Theotokos

- 9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 29

- 4:30 pm Confessions
- 5:00 pm Great Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

Sunday, December 30

- 9:00 am Adult Education
- 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
- Church School after the Divine Liturgy

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*
 Mat. Janet Mihalick, *Choir Director*

Sunday before the Nativity of Christ

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA
 OrthodoxPittsburgh.org
 December 23, 2018

Announcements

➤ **Tomorrow, Christmas Eve, is a strict fast day.** Even if you have not been following the fast to the fullest extent, everyone should make every effort to keep tomorrow as a fast day. This prepares us to celebrate feast the Nativity of Christ in an appropriate way.

There is a beautiful Slavic tradition of the "Holy Supper" (*Svati vecher*) where many families participate in a meal of fasting-friendly foods before attending the Nativity Vigil. We encourage everyone to gather with their families to celebrate this special night and **then attend the Vigil service at 8:00 pm.**

It has become fashionable in recent years with many heterodox churches to not schedule Christmas Day services. **We strongly encourage everyone to entirely reject this notion and to attend the Festal Divine Liturgy with your family on December 25 at 10:00 am.** It is fitting that we would gather around the Lord's Table before we gather around own dining room tables to celebrate His Birth.

The festal period from December 25 to the January 4 is a fast-free period.

➤ **The 2019 Envelopes** are available in the vestibule. Please financially support your church on a regular basis. (Calendars have not yet arrived. Fr Thomas will check on them this week.)



Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be Hospitalized; (None). Home:* Georgiann Robes. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Olga Bednar, Garnette Kerchum, Olga Tryszyn, Mary Zapp.

➤ **From Mat. Nancy K. Mell and Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family. **From Charles A. Wasilko** for the departed servant, (godfather) Joseph Dichko. **From Marsha Wasilko** for the departed servant, (uncle) Joseph Dichko; Happy Birthday & Many Years to (cousin) Michael! **From Doris Wasilko** for the departed servant Joseph Dichko; for the health of the Wasilko family. **From Lindy Hamilton** for the health of Elaine Hamilton. **From Rick Porter** for the departed servants, Richard & Pricella Porter, Michael & Louella Tripoli and Patricia Porter; for the health of Susan, Thomas, Anne Marie, Bria, Kaelin, Travis, Bob & Carole Herm, Jane Siefers and Susan Grove. **From Mat. Joni Soroka** for the departed servant, (mother) Barbara (2yrs.-12/24); for the health of (godfather) Larry. **From Donya Yewisiak** for the departed servant, Mat. Olga Soroka (12/31/07). **From Carol Horan** for the health of my sister, Susan and Michael. **From Irene Kulchock** for the departed servants, Richard Kulchock, Frank Kulchock, Stephen & Mary Pravlochak. **From Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servant, (grandmother) Mary-Memory Eternal; for the health of my family; special intentions.

Thank you

➤ to **Jan and Chuck Widell** for donating the December monthly Bulletin (\$60) in memory of the departed members of the Puskar and Morris families
 To **John Barsom** for donating the flowers which adorn the church in memory of his beloved wife, Valentina.

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.

This Week in Church School

Today's lesson: St. Nicholas

Questions to ask/review:

- Where was St. Nicholas from?
- What was his role in the Church?
- Why is St. Nicholas known as a "Wonderworker"?
- Give an example of an act of generosity done by St. Nicholas.
- Compare Santa Claus to the real St. Nicholas.

Suggested Activities at home:

- Sing St. Nicholas songs together, or perform the songs from the Yolka for visiting family members.
- Do a charitable act as a family, or ask your child to consider how they can be generous like St. Nicholas.
- Prayer: Lord, bless all the children of the world, through the prayers of our holy father, Nicholas.

This Nativity night bestowed peace on the whole world; So let no one threaten;
 This is the night of the Most Gentle One
 Let no one be cruel;
 This is the night of the Humble One
 Let no one be proud.
 Now is the day of joy – Let us not revenge;
 Now is the day of Good Will – Let us not be mean.
 In this Day of Peace
 Let us not be conquered by anger.
 Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake; So, rich one, invite the poor to your table.
 Today we receive a Gift for which we did not ask; So let us give alms to those who implore and beg us.
 This present Day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers;
 Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.
 Today the DIVINE BEING took upon Himself the seal of our humanity,
 In order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of DIVINITY.
St. Isaac Syrian, Nativity Sermon

Hymns and Readings for Today

Dec 23, 2018

Troparion of the Resurrection Tone 5

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, Co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin. For He willed to be lifted up on the cross in the flesh to endure death and to raise the dead, by His glorious resurrection

Troparion of the Prefeast Tone 4

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 comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Troparion of the Fathers Tone 2

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!

Kontakion of the Fathers Tone 1

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, 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.

Kontakion of the Prefeast Tone 3

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!

Prokeimenon of the Fathers Tone 4

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name forever

Epistle of the Sunday before the Nativity (Heb 11:9-19, 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 of the Sunday before the Nativity (Mt 1:1-25)

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 (Psalm 148)

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!

