



## Welcome!

Whether you are searching for a new church home or just visiting, we are 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

### Tuesday, December 17

**9:00 am** Matins (Morning Service)

**9:30 am-12:00 pm** Office Hours/Church Open

### Wednesday, December 18

**6:30 pm** Vespers (Evening Service)

**7:00 pm** Bible Study (Romans 2)

### Thursday, December 19

**9:00 am** Matins (Morning Service)

**9:30 am-12:00 pm** Office Hours/Church Open

### Saturday, December 21

**4:30 pm** Confessions

**5:00 pm** Vespers with Cathedral Vigil

### Sunday, December 22

**10:00 am** Divine Liturgy

**After Services** Yolka (Christmas Program)

**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 of the Holy Forefathers

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA

OrthodoxPittsburgh.org

December 15, 2019

## Announcements

➤ St. Nick's Corner News: Newly discovered items from St. Nick's Corner will be on sale at reduced prices in the church hall for the next few Sundays. There are many small icons, kitchen towels, an amber pendant, music boxes, and bells. Stop by for some last minute gifts!

➤ **We are in need of your** generous donations for Christmas flowers which adorn our temple. You may use the envelopes earmarked for Christmas flowers, or give your donation at the candle desk. Thank you and God bless you!

➤ Congratulations to Michelle Bittner on receiving the St Nicholas Award last Sunday at the St Nicholas Dinner. Michelle has devoted decades of essential "behind the scenes" work in building up our parish, and we are grateful for her efforts. May God richly bless and strengthen her!

## Thank You

➤ to our December donors! Bulletin (\$60) **Jan and Chuck Widel**, in memory of departed members of the Puskar and Morris families. Holy Bread (\$50) and Communion Wine (\$40) from **Alex and Olga Noskov** for the health and salvation of newly wed couple Ilya and Kara Noskov. Candles (\$50) from **Donya Yewisiak** in memory of mother, Matushka Olga Soroka. Incense (\$10) from **Jim and Leslie Wokutch** in memory of Deacon Joseph Mell. May God richly bless all of our donors for thoughtfulness and generosity!

## Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized* (none). *Home:* Georgiann Robes. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Garnette Kerchum, Eleanor Kovacs, Olga Tryszyn, Mary Zapp.

➤ **From Mat. Nancy K. Mell and Gregory Mell** for the departed servant, Dn. Joseph Mell; for the health of family and Michelle Bittner. **From Doris Wasilko** for the health of Michelle Bittner, Helen Billak and Nancy Pravlochak. **From Marsha Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family. **From Lindy Hamilton** for the health of Elaine Hamilton. **From John & Olga** for the health of Galina Vilcova and Elizabeth Kowalcheck on her birthday. **From George & Nancy Shaytar** for the health of Michelle Bittner. **From Mat. Joni Soroka** for the departed servant, (mother) Barbara; for the health of (father) John and safe travels for Natalie. **From Irene Kulchock** for the departed servants, Richard Kulchock and Frank Kulchock (12/18/87). **From Charles A. Wasilko** for the health of (sisters) Doris & Marsha and Michelle Bittner. **From Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servants, (grandfather) Nicholas--Memory Eternal; for the health and salvation of my family and Stephen, on his birthday; special intentions. **From Carol Horan** for the departed servants, Veronica, Nicholas and Jack Robert; for the health of (sister) Susan; for the protection of Baby Nicholas.

Thank you to everyone who **helped at Matushka Martha's**, including Chris Humphrey, Tom Hoffman, Doug Dean, Chris Rune, the Summers family, Aaron Pease, and the Loboda boys. It was our most efficient effort yet and we had fun!

**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.**

## The Profit of Preparation

This profitable observance, dearly beloved, is especially laid down for the fasts of the Church, which, in accordance with the Holy Spirit's teaching, are so distributed over the whole year that the law of abstinence may be kept before us at all times. Accordingly we keep the spring fast in Lent, the summer fast at Whitsuntide, the autumn fast in the seventh month, and the winter fast in this which is the tenth month, knowing that there is nothing unconnected with the Divine commands, and that all the elements serve the Word of God to our instruction, so that from the very hinges on which the world turns, as if by four gospels we learn unceasingly what to preach and what to do. By day and by night His voices are heard, and the beauty of the things made by the workmanship of the One God ceases not to instil the teachings of Reason into our hearts' ears, so that "the invisible things of God may be perceived and seen through the things which are made," and men may serve the Creator of all, not His creatures. Since therefore all vices are destroyed by self-restraint, and whatever avarice thirsts for, pride strives for, luxury lusts after, is overcome by the solid force of this virtue, who can fail to understand the aid which is given us by fastings? For therein we are bidden to restrain ourselves, not only in food, but also in all carnal desires. Otherwise it is lost labor to endure hunger and yet not put away wrong wishes; to afflict oneself by curtailing food, and yet not to flee from sinful thoughts. That is a carnal, not a spiritual fast, where the body only is stunted, and those things persisted in, which are more harmful than all delights. What profit is it to the soul to act outwardly as mistress and inwardly to be a captive and a slave, to issue orders to the limbs and to lose the right to her own liberty? That soul for the most part (and deservedly) meets with rebellion in her servant, which does not pay to God the service that is due. When the body therefore fasts from food, let the mind fast from vices, and pass judgment upon all earthly cares and desires according to the law of its King.

# Hymns and Readings for Today

## **Troparion of the Resurrection Tone 1**

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!”

## **Troparion of the Forefathers Tone 2**

Through faith Thou didst justify 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 Thee without seed.//

So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

## **Kontakion of the Forefathers Tone 6**

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

## **Prokeimenon (Song 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 (Col 3:4-11)**

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

## **Gospel of the Sunday (Luke 14:16-24)**

Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’

But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’

And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’

Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’”

## Tradition of “Holy Supper”

Throughout much of Central Eastern Europe families gather for Holy Supper on the Eve of the Nativity. The tradition is strong with peoples throughout the Carpathian region, though usually not in Russia. The Holy Supper is a family or village based tradition. As a result, the details of the ritual and menu vary significantly. What follows is an outline of the typical events for this evening in Eastern Europe and carried on by their descendants all over the world. Many of those who have converted to the Orthodox faith also follow some of these traditions.

The Holy Supper consists of family blessings, prayerful anticipation for the Birth of Christ, and a fasting meal of up to twelve dishes. These are the essential components of the evening gathering. The details can be adjusted to fit your family's situation. Enjoy your time together as you prepare for the coming of our Lord into Bethlehem.

In preparation, the table is covered with a white linen cloth in memory of the swaddling clothes of Christ Child. An extra place is set to receive a stranger, in remembrance of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph who found no lodging in Bethlehem's Inn. Straw is trewn on the floor and some of it is also placed under the white tablecloth, symbolizing the fact that Jesus lay humbly in poverty on the straw in a manger.

The children vie to spot the first star in the sky after sundown, the star that symbolized the Star of Bethlehem. When joyful cries announce the first star, the various foods are set in their proper places on the table. The foods, prepared without dairy products due to the fast, include fish or seafood, herring, bobalki, mushroom soup, sauerkraut, pierogi, stewed fruit, kutya, honey, garlic, and other foods. Some serve as many as twelve dishes.

In the center of the table is sometimes placed a large round loaf of bread, which symbolizes Jesus as the Bread of Life. A tall candle, is placed in the bread, as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, which guided the shepherds and wise men to worship and adore Christ, the Light of the World.

The head of the household greets everyone with words of the approaching feast: We wish happiness, fortune and health with the approaching Feast Day of the Nativity of Our Lord, and we hope all of us may live to another Christmas, in peace and happiness, and we ask God's blessings upon all of us.

Everyone greets each other with Christ is born! Glorify Him! They gather around the table and the head of the household, opening the Holy Supper with prayer, asks God's blessings on the food they are about to eat.

In many families, the head of the household will break a Lenten bread and give everyone at the table a piece of it. A toast is also proposed, such as: "Grant, O God, that we may live to an even better Holy Night next year. May the Lord give good health to you, my family, our children, to my good and bad neighbors, to my friends and enemies. May God bless all Christians here and abroad, and may He grant eternal memory and the kingdom of heaven to the departed. And above all, my Jesus, born this day, bring peace, health and happiness!"

The mother sprinkles all the family members with holy water so that their minds and hearts will open to the meaning of the Birth of Christ. Everyone enjoys the dinner in the evening's pre-festive atmosphere. A prayer ends the Holy Supper.

After Holy Supper, house-to-house singing of carols and hymns begins. Carolers, upon entering the house, sings the Nativity Troparion, and various traditional carols, after which one of them extends the traditional greeting: "Following an ancient custom we, too, like shepherds of old, have come to adore Jesus. May we, with His help, be able to celebrate these joyous Holy Days in peace and happiness. We wish all of you peaceful and happy holy days." Then all depart to the church for the Nativity Eve Vigil, glorifying God for all of their blessings.