



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

714 Westmoreland Avenue
PO Box 3
Slickville, PA 15684-0003
www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org
Very Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor
23 Station Street
Carnegie, PA 15106-3014
[412] 956-6626 cell
rpopichak@alumni.cmu.edu

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Father Bob, Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Archbishop Jovan, Metropolitan Savas, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Paul Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynec, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father Joe & Protinica Linda Cervo, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Igumen Patrick, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Fr. Vasyl Sendeha, Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Father Angelo Artemas, Father John Haluszczak, Father Simon & Dr. Christina Nellis, Father Joshua [Anna], Father Justin (Todd) Mokhiber, Pani Cathy Danczak, Protopresbyter Gerald Ozlanski, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Gaele Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary

Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Strozh [young lady with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszcuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaughaupt, Louis & Terri Berceli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Joe Samchuck—vocations, Albert Heckman, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat & Jan Jennings, Tim Sams, Mike Ruzzi, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Mary Kay Ludovicy, Pastor Sara Irwin, George Dilendorf, Sharon Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Joe Veto, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Theresa Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Monk Andrew, Jeff & Buschra Kerr,

Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Rita & Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik, Pastor Terry Polen, Eleanor Kitt, Stacie & Gary, Maria Warholak, Stacie & Gary, Anna Sekelik, Christy, Mariruth, Rich & Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Father Joe Uzar, Tim—surgery, John Wakin, Olivia—young girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko, John, Kris & Kait, Kristi Wilson, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Amy Forbeck, David Salazar, Kitty Mary, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Alexandra Roberts, Candace Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Stacie Riley, Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr. [infant], Elizabeth [5-year-old], Lillian Skowvron, Sue & Greg Heinen, Paul Simpson [Father Bob's cousin], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Adam Snow, the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, Robert Rodrigues & family, Father Deacon James & Diakonissa Kari Rossetti, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, Samantha & Lisa Houser, Sarah Stepanovich Clark, Julia Baloga, Brett Crosby, Randy Lapuh, Henry & Shirley Tkacik, Diane & Arthur Chaklis, Denny Mader, Zoe Oswalt—Fr. Bob's cousin [cancer], Barbette [cancer] & Scott, Kristin [cancer], Erm Hartmann, Barbara Bookser [cancer], Bob Mazzuca [cancer], Marko, Taylor, Terri Crosby-Vega [knee replacement], Christine Mohamed, Sue Demko, Tammy Marsico, Terry & David Hartnett, Jamie Ball, Kay Williams, Hannah Stewart, Jim Wyko—Alex's friend, Dan Losego, Lisa Bruce, Yvette, Barry Bender, Scott McDougall, Andrew Zelleznick, Jill Bailey, Byron & Cecilia Scott, Laura, Christopher, & Baby Jane Dickson, Vespina, Michelle Russo, Julie Tripodi, Alby Oxenreiter, Debbie—HTUCC [knee], Jackie May, Barbara Morvay, David Salsar, N&O, Randy & Adrienne Kuny, Vince Berardinelli, Mason Martin [Karns City HS QB] & family, Martin Mrvos, Jeff McCoy, Lauren & Sloane Valentina Persico, Alexis & baby Colton Rosati, Jessica Shirley, Steve Milcic, Wilbert Wagner, Bob Wojciechowski, and Jill Morocco. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is NOTHING to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters, police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be SAFE!!! God Bless!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and ALL American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. ***If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.***

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 956-6626.

SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE

SUNDAY, January 14 OBEDNITZA—SAINT BASIL THE GREAT—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM
32ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY; SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY; JULIAN NEW YEAR'S DAY; CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD; SAINT BASIL THE GREAT-ARCHBISHOP OF CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA; MARTYR BASIL OF ANCYRA; SAINT EMELIA-MOTHER OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

Tone 7

Colossians 2:8-12; Hebrews 7:26-8:2; 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Luke 2:20-21, 40-52; Luke 6:17-23; Mark 1:1-8

Litany in Blessed Memory of Rose Zalenchak, Stephen Kuzman, Timothy Stutchell, Cecilia Pysh, Nicholas Vetosky, Robert Rohal, Gary Atutes, & Father Simon Nellist—Fr. Bob

THURSDAY, January 18 THEOPHANY EVE—STRICT FAST DAY

FRIDAY, January 19 THEOPHANY—BAPTISM OF OUR LORD IN THE JORDAN

SUNDAY, January 21 OBEDNITZA—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM
33RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY; VENERABLE GEORGE THE CHOZEBITE-ABBOT & SAINT EMILIAN-BISHOP OF CYZICUS; VENERABLE DOMNICA OF CONSTANTINOPLE; HIEROMARTYR CARTERIUS OF CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA; MARTYRS THEOPHILUS-DEACON & HELLADIUS IN LIBYA; ELIAS THE HERMIT OF EGYPT; VENERABLE GREGORY THE WONDERWORKER & VENERABLE GREGORY-HERMIT OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

Tone 8

Ephesians 4:7-13; Galatians 5:22-6:2

Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 6:17-23

SUNDAY, January 28 OBEDNITZA—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM
34TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; VENERABLE PAUL OF THEBES & JOHN CALABYTES; MONK-MARTYR PANSOPHIUS; VENERABLE PROCHORUS & VENERABLE GABRIEL

Tone 1

Colossians 3:12-16

Luke 18:18-27

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 14 JANUARY 2024

**32ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY;
SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY; JULIAN NEW YEAR'S DAY;
CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD; SAINT BASIL THE GREAT-
ARCHBISHOP OF CAESAREA IN CAPPADOCIA; MARTYR BASIL OF
ANCYRA; SAINT EMELIA-MOTHER OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT**

TROPARION—TONE 7

By Thy Cross, Thou didst destroy death!
To the thief, Thou didst open Paradise!
For the Myrrhbearers, Thou didst change weeping into joy.
And Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God,
To proclaim that Thou art risen, granting the world great mercy!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 7

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive,
For Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers!
Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry:
The Savior has come to those in faith!
Enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 7

READER: The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall bless
His people with peace!

**PEOPLE: The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall
bless His people with peace!**

READER: Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the
Lord!

**PEOPLE: The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall
bless His people with peace!**

READER: The Lord shall give strength to His people!

PEOPLE: The Lord shall bless His people with peace!

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 7

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy name, O Most
High!

To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night!

The Feast of the Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ Matthew 2:1-12

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. (KJV)

Peace of God! Christ is Born! Indeed He is Born!

Believers around the world gather today in God's Holy Church to worship and celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hearts, minds, and souls are filled with Christ's love.

Jesus' birth permeates the centuries. Jesus' birth is always new! The Church celebrates Jesus' birth in the present. Believers are renewed each year with Jesus taking on human flesh.

Hearts of believers embrace the miracle of the Virgin Birth. The Virgin Birth exceeds the limits of the finite mind. With God all things are possible.

•(Mt.19:26)

Believers' minds, hearts, and souls welcome the Lord taking on human flesh.

God's churches and monasteries are filled with exceeding joy on the Feast of the Nativity. Families in homes throughout the world take time to celebrate Jesus' birth. Peace fills believers' homes and hearts.

Believers share the joy of Jesus Christ's birth in their greetings on the Feast of the Nativity. The need for God's peace extends to human daily

relationships. The world needs and benefits from the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even during times of war, combatants have been known to pause to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity. The Feast of the Nativity is a time for peace to be restored in homes, communities, and among nations.

Jesus Christ is the Exemplary Model of Peace. He remained peaceful when arrested and taken to be crucified. He did not raise a hand in self-defense or call others to defend Him. (Luke 22:47-54) (Mt.26:50-54)

Leaders everywhere do well in promoting peace and in emulating Jesus' humility and example of serving others. Jesus established the clear and lasting example of humility and service in washing His disciples' feet. (Jn.13:13-14)

In today's world, having lasting peace and humility as primary virtues seems to be greatly lacking. If true peace and humility were valued in more human hearts, greater peace would abound in the world.

The number of people and countries arming themselves and the daily news about violence and wars shows clearly that peace is not primary in hearts everywhere.

The Feast of Christ's birth is a renewed call for peace among humans.

The world faces challenges today as has every generation. Herod was troubled by Jesus' birth. Corrupt leaders of every age are troubled with the presence of serious believers living in the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Honest and moral believers are disconcerting in places filled with corruption. Corruption and falsehoods are addressed and uncovered when serious believers pursue and reveal truth.

The Lord Jesus Christ is clear in saying: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (Jn.14:6) The Feast of the Nativity is a time for believers to reflect deeply in the heart, and soul on Jesus' words. ... Jesus Christ taking on flesh opens the new way of living. Jesus Christ's birth opens the path to the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Forgiveness of sins and renewal of life became possible in the Living Christ.

Today is a time for peace and joy. Today give abundant thanks to the Lord God. Christ's birth fills the hunger of the soul. Christ's birth fills the essential primary need of Life for the whole world.

The Feast of the Nativity challenges believers to think deeply and seriously about Jesus taking on human flesh. The Divine taking on human flesh as a newborn infant child in simple surroundings is a most humble action.

In this world where glory is too often misplaced, giving glory to the Living God taking on human flesh is the timely message for today. Giving glory to the Living God is always the timely message for every day.

The Gospel states the wise men put forth the effort to find the newborn Christ Child. They worshipped him and gave Him gifts. Wise men and women always seek, worship, and give gifts to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace of God! Christ is Born! Indeed He is Born!

Feast of the Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ. December 25, 2023/January 7, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic



***Thy Nativity, O Christ our God
Has shone to the world the light of Wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
Were taught by a star to adore Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee,
The Orient from on high, O Lord, Glory to Thee!***

Abbot Tryphon—The Nativity Sermon
The Nativity Sermon by Saint John Chrysostom

"I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn!

The angels sing!

The archangels blend their voices in harmony!

The cherubim resound their joyful praise!

The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead herein... on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice!

Ask not how this is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He had the powers He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today He Who Is, is born ! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man—while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor powers, nor principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold kings have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; Women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin...

Infants, that they may adore Him who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; Children, to the Child who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men, to Him who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants;

Shepherds, to the Good Shepherd who was laid down His life for His sheep; Priests, to Him who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek;

Servants, to Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom (Philippians 2:7);

Fishermen, to the Fisher of humanity;

Publicans, to Him who from among them named a chosen evangelist;

Sinful women, to Him who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope! This is my life!

This is my salvation!

This is my pipe, my harp!

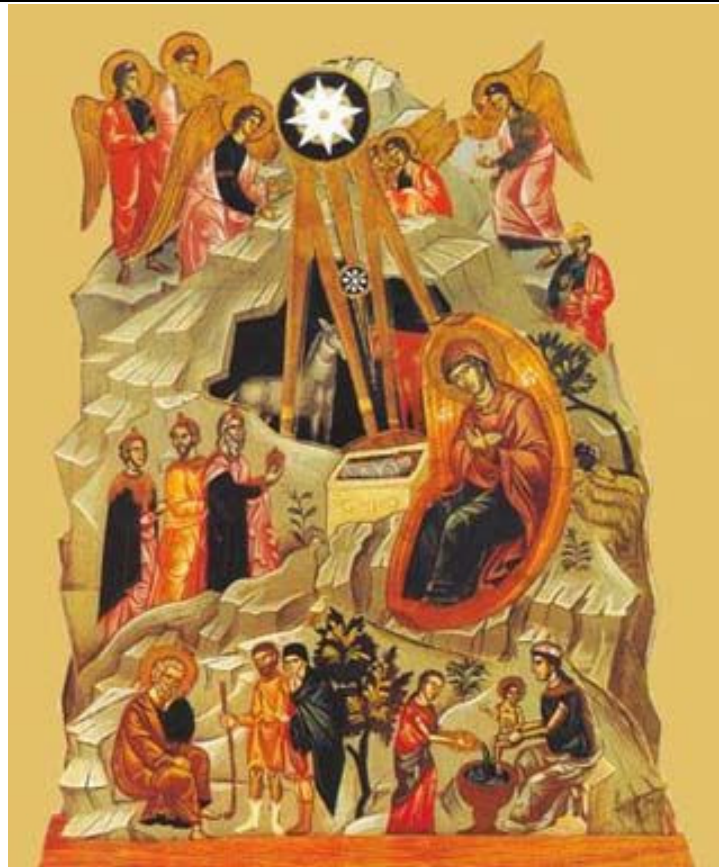
And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing:

"Glory to God in the Highest! And on earth peace to men of good will!"

Wishing all of you a blessed Holy Nativity.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Abbot Tryphon



Some thoughts on the Nativity—and Pascha...Fr. Bob

Many times, clergy form a sermon that they try to mold into a great and memorable homily...taking the words of the Scriptures and molding their own words in an effort to explain and expound upon the Holy Gospel or Epistle lesson of the day.

The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Flesh is one such opportunity. The churches are filled with the C&E crowd—those who visit family and friends and make the effort to attend church with them...Christmas and Easter are by far the most telling examples.

Some priests and ministers take this time to rant about the empty pews the other 50 Sundays of the year, expounding upon the great need of the people for "GOD EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES!" While this is a great and true statement, I remember my "kid days" when the priest yelled "How come you don't come EVERY SUNDAY???" in the middle of his sermon and at the announcements section at the end of Divine Liturgy.

Looking back over those 60 years, and after 26 as a parish priest, I came to the conclusion very early in my priesthood that if you berate the people that actually DO come to church, you are giving them a great reason

NOT to come back—or it reinforces their ideas that C&E [Christmas and Easter] are quite enough times to be scorned.

With joy, we had 36 people attend the Nativity Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great last Sunday. The pot-luck dinner lasted almost 3 hours—new friends were made, old friends reconnected, and great food was shared among our PARISH FAMILY!

The holidays are the time for family to get together...and we did with bells on!

Reflecting on this, it is interesting to note that the holiday seasons of Nativity and Pascha each are punctuated by THREE WORDS: Christ IS Born! and Christ IS Risen! The ACTIVE VERB in both phrases is normally a passive one, but the emphasis is on PRESENT TIME...Christ IS Born as surely as he was over 2,000 years ago. Christ IS Risen is the guiding light of our lives, of our Church, of our parish, and of our parish family. Each of these short phrases summarizes the hope and joy of each Holy Day, reminding us that God GAVE His Son to us FREELY and WITHOUT RESTRICTION!

Take a moment and think about this...the services of the Feast—Compline and Liturgy for Nativity and the Holy Week through Resurrection Liturgy are long with pages and pages of words...BUT, we can summarize each of them with three words! AMAZING!

Look around you—at the smiling faces of family and friends, and the joy the Christmas season brings us...and say a quick “Thank YOU!” to God for this great gift...of His Son...and a reason to gather together in happiness and joy!

God Bless us one and all, Tiny Tim says in Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown” ends Linus’ soliloquy in “A Charlie Brown Christmas” [Father Bob’s FAVORITE!] The Church gives us “Z’nami Boh!” in hymn...God IS with us!

May your family, friends, and parish family continue to warm your heart with His Love, His Grace, and His Compassion...

**Christ IS Born! Glorify Him! Christos Rozdietsia! Slavite Yeho!
Christos Rodivsia! Slavim Yeho! Christos Se Rodi! Vaistinu Se
Rodi! Mir Bozhe! The PEACE of God!**

With Love,

*The Holy Ghost Parish Family, the Parish Board, Pani Gina, Reader Alex,
EMT Matt, Sydney, and Fr. Bob*

We are not going to enter Paradise by chance. It requires struggle, hardships, and enduring mockery, insults, and slaps. It takes everything. We should never ask, Why? We should say, This is what God allowed. Not one hair of my head falls without the will of God. **Gerondissa Makrina (Vassopoulou)**, Words of the Heart p.368

You easily forgive yourself, if you have sinned against God, or against men; accordingly easily forgive other people too. Love your neighbour as yourself, forgive him much. ***Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt***, My Life in Christ p.177

Orthodox Christian churches celebrate Christmas, Theophany this weekend



Father David Hyatt and Father Larry Daniels at the Blessing of Waters at Twin Lakes State Park, January 6th...

TRIB
LIVE

[Julia Maruca](#) | Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024 12:01 a.m.

TribLIVE's Daily and Weekly [email newsletters](#) deliver the news you want and information you need, right to your inbox.

On a blustery, snowy Saturday afternoon at Twin Lakes Park east of Greensburg, a little over a dozen people huddled in a semicircle, singing hymns and watching intently for the Rev. David Hyatt to give his signal.

After leading the group in prayer and calling for blessings, Hyatt made his move — pushing a large cross made of ice off the edge of the pier and into the Upper Lake.

The lakeside Blessing of the Waters ceremony, in which ice crosses are dropped into the water, is an annual event for St. Michael's Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church. It commemorates the Theophany, or the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River.

The celebration of the Feast of Theophany dates far back in Orthodox history, Hyatt said.

"It's a very ancient feast," he said. "It's been celebrated by the church since way back."

It's a longtime tradition at St. Michael's, too — one that often is held in cold, snowy weather. Church members gathered around to help prepare smaller ice crosses that some of those attending could toss in to bless the lake.

"It's really kind of ideal when it's like this — when it's nice and it's cold and it's frozen," said church member Connie Volchko. She appreciates the church getting to gather for the winter season.

"There were years in the past that we had to get the chainsaw out and cut a hole in the ice!" said member Gust Flizanes.

While the South Greensburg-area church was busy with its outdoor event for Theophany, other Orthodox Christian churches in the region were getting ready for a different holiday — Orthodox Christmas, which falls Jan. 7.

Because some Orthodox church jurisdictions follow the "old calendar," or Julian Calendar, which honors Christmas in January, and some the "new calendar," which slates it for Dec. 25, Orthodox churchgoers of all sorts were busy this weekend — but for varying reasons.

"Historically, the Orthodox Church is a family of churches," said the Rev. William Evansky, chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America's Pittsburgh diocese. His jurisdiction celebrates on Dec. 25, but he knows many other churches that celebrate Jan. 7.

"It really comes down to a lot of heritage. Some congregations, some jurisdictions feel strongly that they want to keep that ethnic remembrance," Evansky said. "We're all celebrating the birth of Christ."

Celebrating the holiday

The Rev. Dave Urban of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Allison Park said Orthodox Christians prepare for Christmas 40 days ahead of time with a Nativity fast. The week before Christmas is known as the "pre-festive" period.

This year, the church's Christmas Eve services Saturday, were held earlier in the day to make it easier for members to get to the church. The

congregation was previously on the North Side of Pittsburgh but moved to Allison Park last year.

Urban noted some people who celebrate Jan. 7 refer to it as “church Christmas” or “sacred Christmas” and to Dec. 25 as “secular Christmas” or “media Christmas.”

“With Jan. 7, it’s an opportunity to focus on the services,” he said. “To not focus on what St. Nicholas is bringing me for Christmas, but, ‘Hey, let’s go to church, and let’s celebrate the Nativity of our Lord.’”

Urban noted that his diocese of the American Carpatho- Russian Orthodox Church has some churches that celebrate on the 25th, and some on the 7th.

“Our Pittsburgh deanery is all old-calendar,” he said.

The Rev. Michael Zak of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Homestead says the majority of his church’s 250 members attend church for Orthodox Christmas.

“I believe that we’re more focused on coming to church and celebrating the feast in your church of worship, rather than merely centering your attention on what the family’s doing come Christmas morning,” he said. “It’s always been the focus on your church attendance—going to church and worshipping there in church itself.”

Traditions persist

Many Orthodox Christians maintain particular traditions for Christmas Eve on Jan. 6, including a special meatless evening dinner that features particular ingredients and dishes.

“A little more authentic Carpatho- Russian tradition is to have twelve dishes,” said Urban. “In my family, we actually host Christmas Eve supper at my house. We’re going to have the sour (mushroom) soup, a couple kinds of fish, the pierogi, halušky, and we always make a couple kinds of steamed vegetables, dried fruit, and then you sometimes will have some mixed nuts on the table.”

A tradition of dipping raw garlic in honey at the Christmas Eve dinner highlights the “bittersweetness of life,” he said.

“Growing up, I can remember singing in the Homestead St. Nicholas church choir, and if I was standing in front of a certain guy, I could tell he’d been eating a lot of garlic at the dinner!” Urban joked.

Other variations on the Christmas Eve supper include more specific traditions at the table. The Rev. Robert Teklinski of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in East Pittsburgh says he and his family lay straw and white cloth on the table to represent the baby Jesus.

An extra place setting is sometimes left at the table — some families consider it to represent Christ in the form of a stranger invited to dinner,

and others say it represents all people who have recently died in the family, Teklinski explained.

"There's different traditions for different families," he said. "Dinner is served in courses. There's prayer with everything that's put on the table."

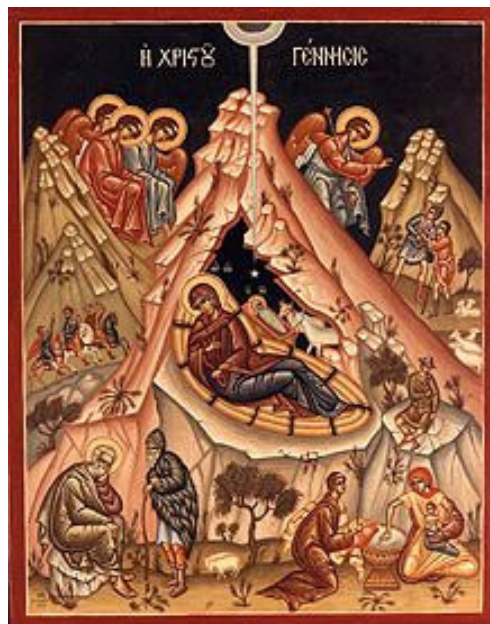
Teklinski's family also opens their gifts on Jan. 7. He's expecting a good turnout at church for Christmas this year.

"It'll probably be a pretty good crowd for Christmas," he said. "Attendance is up on Sundays, so I'm happy with that. ... We're getting a really faithful crowd here. Covid hurt a lot of churches, and so we're working on getting people back in, but we're doing OK."

Church leaders from Holy Virgin Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Arnold, St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in New Kensington, and St George Orthodox Church in New Kensington did not return calls to participate in this story.

Julia Maruca is a Tribune-Review staff writer. You can contact Julia at jmaruca@triblive.com.

You are entering the sea of monasticism on the vessel of faith. With this faith you are transported over the waves of the monastic sea; these comprise a variety of trials, allowed by God's Providence for our salvation, brought about both by our own shortcomings and by our enemy the devil. **St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov), Bishop of the Caucasus and the Black Sea**, Harbor for Our Hope: On Acquiring Peace Amidst Suffering p.20



Courtesy is a great virtue, and the Fathers struggled to acquire it. No one can reach their level of courtesy and good manners. **Gerondissa Makrina (Vassopoulou)**, Words of the Heart p.449



HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our January babies: Lyndsey Weisner on the 4th, Demetra [Mother Alexandra's friend] on the 4th, Marcy Jones on the 8th, Henry Tkacik, Jr., on the 23rd, Brenna Scott on the 29th, Kristin Scott on the 29th, and Kayla Weiser on the 29th! May God grant you all Many Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Blessed Years! M'nohaya Lita! Christ IS Born! God Bless their families and friends!