

# ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN DECEMBER 29, 2019

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS

**OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM** was held last Sunday, and as always, it was moving and touching to see the young people in the role of those blessed to witness the Savior's birth some 2,000 years ago. Thanks to **Valarie Stamoulis and Gina Skaff** and other parents for organizing it. And thanks to the children who participated and their parents for encouraging them.

**FOOD PANTRY.** Help is needed to staff our monthly responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **next Saturday, January 4th, from 9 AM - NOON.** About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with **Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola.**

**REMEMBER DIVINE LITURGY ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.** Liturgy of and for St. Basil the Great, 10:00 AM; Matins 9:00 AM.

**METROPOLITAN NICOLAE'S PASTORAL LETTER** on the occasion of the **Lord's Nativity** is available at the candles for you to read in English and Romanian.

### GREETERS TEAM 2:

DAN MANESCU AND CHRIS SEITH

### COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:

HELP NEEDED

PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



### THE SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY

*THE PROPHET-KING DAVID; JOSEPH THE BETROTHED; JAMES THE LORD'S BROTHER  
THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT*

EPISTLE: GALATIANS 1:11-19 ☩ GOSPEL: MATTHEW 2:13-23

TONE 3 ☩ MATINS GOSPEL 6

**DONATIONS FOR ALBANIAN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF** may be made through our parish. Please clearly designate this on donation. We will forward all monies collected to the Orthodox Church of Albania. For information about their relief efforts: <http://orthodoxalbania.net/index.php/en-us/>.

**THE 2020 CHURCH CALENDARS** are here, in both English and Romanian. Pick them up at the candles.

Please consider a small donation to cover the costs.

**THIS WEEK'S COFFEE HOUR** is sponsored by Vasiliki "Bessie" Kyros for her nameday. *Many years!*

## HOLY TRINITY NEWS

**THANKS FOR ALL WHO VOLUNTEERED TO BUY GIFTS** for the Holy Trinity Residents. Also, we appreciate **Eleanor Sedares'** efforts coordinating our parish's part in this effort. *God bless each of you!*

Visit Holy Trinity's website [www.htnr.net](http://www.htnr.net) to view the **December**

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Wed, Jan 1 St. Basil/Circumcision, 10AM  
Fri, Jan 3 Royal Hours, 9:30 AM  
Sat, Jan 4 Staff Food Pantry, 9AM-NOON  
Sun, Jan 5 Sunday Before Theophany  
Great Blessing of Water

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*A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas*

Newsletter, and click “Newsletter” on the homepage.

**JOIN THE RESIDENTS FOR SEASONAL CRAFTING** with the student of Claremont Academy, **Sunday, January 12th at 2:00p.m.** Families and friends are all invited.

There will be a **COFFEE SOCIAL** on **Thursday, January 23rd at 2:00 pm**, sponsored by St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church. As always, families and friends are invited!

**DIVINE LITURGY** is celebrated every Wednesday morning at 9:30AM. And please always keep Holy Trinity Nursing Home, it’s staff, directors, residents, and families in your prayers.

**HOLY TRINITY** is a non-profit skilled nursing and rehabilitation center and a project of the Council of Orthodox Churches of Central MA. Please keep Holy Trinity in your prayer.



### A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

**G**LORY TO YOU IN THE HEIGHTS, O God, and on earth, peace to all your people! This evening, as we celebrate the birth in the flesh of your only Son—your eternal, radiant light—be pleased to surround us with his brilliance. Since he is both our brother and friend, as well as the light that liberates us from the power of darkness, in his name we beseech you: Bless the church all over the world, that she may always light the lamps of hope and peace in our hearts and in the hearts of all people everywhere.

For you are holy, O our God, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## NAMEDAYS

**December 22**

*The Sunday of the Ancestors of Our Lord, according to his humanity*

*The High Priest Aaron*

Aaron Paul Christo

*The Righteous Deborah*

Deborah Rucho

Deborah Sedares

*The Righteous Noah*

Noah Peter Christo

*The Righteous Rebecca*

Rebeka Tanacea

*The Righteous Sarah*

Sarah Maria Blanchard

Sarah Maria Bourisk

**December 25**

*The Holy Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ*

Christopher Blanchard

Chrysanthi Charalambides  
Christopher Costin  
Cristean Dumitriu  
Kristjan Endriko  
Cristina Gavala  
Cristian Ionete  
Christine Kelly  
Christian Andrew Polymeros  
Christian Prizio  
Christopher Rucho  
Fr. Milad Selim  
Christopher Seith  
Christina Soter  
Christo Spyrou  
Christian Thoren  
Christina Thoren  
Christine Toda  
Christina Marina Tonna  
Chris Zaruha  
Cristian Zaruha

**December 27**

*The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen*

Stephanie Elizabeth Demake

Stephen Fotos

Ivi Katragjini

Stephanie Keimig

Stephen Keimig

Stephen Maynard

Stephen Michael Mountzouris

Steven Thoren

**December 29**

*The holy and righteous Joseph, the betrothed of the Virgin*

Josephine Mbuti

Joseph Opio

*The Holy Prophet and King David*

David Zonia

**December 31**

*St. Melania the Younger, nun of Rome*

Melanie Mentis

## WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME HAD COME

**T**HE Epistle Lesson for the Christmas Day Divine Liturgy is taken from the St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 4:4-7. In Galatians, St. Paul takes up directly the question of the Lord's Incarnation. He gives us a full theological understanding of the Incarnation of God's Son: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, of God through Christ" (4:4-7).

One could say that in these four verses St. Paul captures the depth of the meaning of Christ's Incarnation. In the Gospel accounts found in Luke and Matthew we find the story of Jesus' birth with which most of us are familiar, but it is St. Paul who begins to explain the significance of this event to us in ways that help us understand God's purpose. Almost every word or phrase in these verses is replete with meaning, so let us take a moment to understand what he wants to tell us.

In his writings St. Paul uses the phrase the "fullness of time" twice—here, and in Ephesians. It is a wonderful phrase encompassing the expectations of both the Jewish nation and the pagan world. For those who might remember the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar," there was a line complaining about why God had chosen to come in a time where there was no mass communication, rather than in our own time. While perhaps a point well taken, it misses the essence. We see how today's mass communication twists reality such that the true hero rarely makes it onto the front page, while the pop celebrity is lionized—until, of course, they fall.

The "fullness of time" is that opportune moment when everything that

could be said, has been said. People are ready, waiting and listening. In the first century the expectation for a 'savior' hung heavily in the air. Many of the words we now use to describe Jesus were used to describe the Roman emperor or other Messiahs. It was not only the Children of Israel who were waiting for the Messiah, everyone was. In the services preceding the Lord's Nativity we read from dozens of Old Testament prophecies pointing to His coming. People were on edge, and ready: the fullness of time.

"God sent his Son." The word we translate as 'sent' (ἐξαπέστειλεν) is a form of the word 'apostle.' This word developed a special meaning in the early Church: to send someone in the service of God's kingdom. Implicit in the phrase is that God's Son existed before His birth by Mary. God is sending the pre-existing Word on a mission.

"Born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law." We can easily understand "born of a woman;" God's Son is born of Mary. What requires more explanation is "born under the law, in order to redeem those ... under the law." God chose the Jewish nation to be the people through whom He would make Himself and His purpose known. His "contract" (i.e., "Covenant") with them was in the form of a series of rules and regulations and precepts by which they were to live: the Law. Living by the Law made the Jews different from all other peoples on earth. To be "born under the Law" meant and means that when born a Jew, your sole purpose in life is to fulfill God's Law. No one except Jesus has ever been able to fulfill the Law. So, not only was He born under the Law. His mission was and is to redeem His people by *fulfilling* the Law.

"So that we might receive adoption as children." God's entire objective, His sole purpose—what we describe as His "economy"—is to make us His chil-

dren. This access to the Father is not through biological means; it is by adoption. God's Son becomes one of us so that we can share in what He is. St. Athanasius' famous phrase: "God became human so that humans could become God" is another way of saying the same thing. Another Patristic saying phrases it this way: we are given the possibility to become, by choice, what God is by nature. By choosing to follow Christ—to be one with Him in Baptism and the Eucharist—we have Jesus as our brother and God as our Father.

"And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" The Holy Spirit continually and eternally "proceeds" from the Father to rest on the Son. When we become His children through Christ, this same Spirit is poured out on us. It is this Spirit who guides us in our prayer, even when we don't know what to pray for ourselves (cf. Romans 8:26). It is the Holy Spirit who searches our hearts.

"So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." Not many of us know what it is like to be a slave (although know that there *are* people who are slaves even in our own time!). But we all know what it is like to feel trapped, without choices or freedom to really choose. God makes us His heir and truly free. Christ is born to free us from all kinds of bondage.

Brothers and sisters, we need to free ourselves from bondage to the passing things of this world. God has made us free in the birth of that Child humbly born in a cave. Cut away the noise and distractions of the world. Let us not simply put Christ back into Christmas, but rather, put our Christmas celebration back into Christ. Let us be firm in the hope of the promise given us, putting all our faith in Christ our Lord.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA

# CHRISTMAS & THEOPHANY SCHEDULE

## SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2019

Matins ..... 9:00 AM  
 Divine Liturgy ..... 10:00 AM  
 Children's Christmas Program ..... after the Liturgy

## CHRISTMAS EVE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2019

Royal Hours ..... 9:30 AM  
 Great Vespers ..... 6:00 PM

## THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2019

Matins ..... 9:00 AM  
 Divine Liturgy ..... 10:00 AM

## SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2019

Matins ..... 9:00 AM  
 Divine Liturgy ..... 10:00 AM

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

### CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD ✨ FEAST OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2020

Matins ..... 9:00 AM  
 Divine Liturgy of St. Basil ..... 10:00 AM

### FRIDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY ✨ JANUARY 3, 2020

Royal Hours ..... 9:30 AM

### SUNDAY BEFORE HOLY THEOPHANY EVE OF THE FEAST SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2020

Matins ..... 9:00 AM  
 Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom ..... 10:00 AM  
 Great Blessing of Water ..... at end of Liturgy

### SUNDAY AFTER HOLY THEOPHANY SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2020

Matins ..... 9:00 AM  
 Divine Liturgy ..... 10:00 AM



**HOUSE BLESSINGS.** The blessing of homes at Theophany will begin the week of January 6, 2020, and continue until all homes are blessed. As in the past, we will be setting times when we will be coming to bless your home. If there is a specific time that is more convenient for you, please call Fr. Nick to arrange it (508.335.7378).