

News from St. Nick's

Sunday, December 27, 2020

The Sunday After the Nativity

Apostolic Reading: Galatians 1:11-19

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

*The Prophet-King David; Joseph the Betrothed; James the Lord's Brother;
The Proto-Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen
The Flight Into Egypt*

Tone 4 • Matins Gospel 7

➡ For COVID Guidelines, [click here](#)

➡ For Live Streaming Link, [click here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY. On Thursday, December 24th, Christmas Eve morning, **Royal Hours will be at 9:30 am.** On Christmas Eve, **Great Vespers will be at 6:00 pm.** On Friday, December 25th, Matins for the Nativity Feast will be a 9:00 am, with **Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am.**

METROPOLITAN NICOLAE'S PASTORAL LETTER on the occasion of the Lord's Nativity is available for you to read in both [English](#) and [Romanian](#). Download by clicking the appropriate language.

OUR ANNUAL CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM was held last Sunday, and as always, it was moving and touching. It was a little different this year. Effort was made to ensure safe distancing and protocols. It also was profound in the simplicity of presenting the Scriptural prophecies of the Savior's birth. Thanks to **Gina Skaff** and other teachers 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, **Saturday, January 2nd, 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. Help is also needed during the week for shopping and stocking the Pantry. If you can help in this worthwhile ministry, please e-mail Nicole Apostola at nicole.apostola@gmail.com.

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

THE 2021 CHURCH CALENDARS are here, in both [English and Romanian](#). Pick them up at the candles. Please consider a small donation to cover the costs. If you know someone who is unable to come to Church but would like a calendar, please pick one up for them.

A NEW PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION WILL BE HELD IN JANUARY. Following Archdiocesan procedures, the Parish Council has formed a Nominating Committee to propose a slate of candidates. George Demake is the Chair of that Committee. If you would like to serve, or if you would like to nominate someone for the Parish Council, please [e-mail him](#).

DON'T FORGET to send in your **2020 Stewardship contribution**. If you haven't done so already, please send it in as soon as possible.

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICES. You may attend Liturgy on Sundays at church. **Of course the usual COVID rules apply.** Here are the [Guidelines](#) for attending Church services. Please follow the directions of ushers for everyone's safety.

WE ARE LIVE-STREAMING THE LITURGY. If you can not physically attend church, you may access the live-stream of Divine Services. Go to: www.stnicholaschurch.org and click on "**Live Streaming of Services.**" To view previous Services on our YouTube Channel, [click here](#).

WE HAVE A COVID FUND. There are people both in our parish and in the larger community who are in need during this time. **If you need help**, whatever it might be, including financial assistance, please contact Fr. Nick. We'll find a way to assist you. **ALSO**, we are asking the faithful in our parish **WHO ARE ABLE**, to perhaps contribute toward this fund. We've set up a small committee, headed by Fr. Nick, to administer this fund, and distribute what we're able to give as equitably as possible. **May God keep us all!**

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATE—Holy Trinity is experiencing residents and staff testing positive with Covid. Presently, there are 9 residents and 3 staff members positive. All residents and staff continue to be tested every 3 days. The main dining room will be temporarily closed to ensure residents are not mingling between floors. At this time Activities will continue on courtyard and Hillside with social distancing. No new admissions are being accepted at this time.

VISITATIONS— There are no changes in the visitation policy. For the protection of residents and family members, all in-person visits are being suspended.

A WARM WELCOME to the new interim CEO: Judith Nazaire. Given Covid protocols it will be a challenge for her to meet all of us, we can all offer her our prayers for her success.

JOB OPENINGS – We are hiring, and our staff is excellent to work with. We are hiring entry level housekeepers for multiple shifts. We are hiring nurses and CNAs all shifts. [Click here](#) for a full listing with detailed job descriptions. People familiar with the languages and cultures of our Orthodox communities are encouraged to apply.

HOLIDAY DECORATING /ACTIVITIES - Holy Trinity staff has and continues to brainstorm every day to think of activities that will help lift our resident's spirits during this difficult time of Covid-19. *On Wednesday, December 16th, the staff organized a Facebook live session where the residents were featured decorating gingerbread cookies and delivering them to the staff and other residents. (They are getting it up as a video we can all link to.) *Also, there's a new member of the staff: NOVA. She is a St. Bernard pup who is providing lots of joy to our residents. She's part of a new activity called: "watch me grow."

TREASURED GENERATIONS ANNUAL APPEAL– This year has been a difficult one for Holy Trinity's staff and residents. Now, more than ever, we need your help. If you wish to donate to the Treasured Generations fund please click [here](#). Every gift helps. And, we thank you for your support!

DIVINE LITURGY celebrations have been suspended until the current Covid spike has been contained.

A Prayer of Fr. Laurence

Let us pray to the Lord,

O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Today, at the celebration of the birth in the flesh of your only Son, we hasten to wreath the portals of our hearts with love and desire, that your Holy Spirit may be drawn to enter and dwell within us, sanctifying us by his very presence. Let his inspiration help us accomplish your will in all things, so that, just as your Son deigned to dwell in the womb of the virgin in a bodily way, so will he deign to dwell in our souls in a spiritual way.

By the grace and mercy and love for us of your only Son, with whom you are blest, together with your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

When the Fullness of Time Had Come

The 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 children. 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 we 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

Orthodox Links

[Romanian Orthodox Metropolia](#) of the Americas
[Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America](#) (Assembly of Bishops)
[International Orthodox Christian Charities](#) (IOCC)
[Orthodox Christian Mission Center](#) (OCMC)
[Orthodox Christian Radio Network](#) (OCN)
[Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches of Central Mass.](#) (CEOC)

Dates To Remember

Thursday, December 24 — Christmas Eve

- Royal Hours, 9:30 am
- Great Vespers, 6:00 pm

Friday, December 25 — Feast of the Lord's Nativity

- Matins, 9:00 am
- Divine Liturgy, 10:00 am

Friday, January 1 — St. Basil/New Year's, Lit. 10:00 am

Saturday, January 2 — Food Pantry, 9:00 am-noon

Wednesday, January 6 — Feast of Theophany

Thursday, January 7 — Parish Council Meeting

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Sunday Services: Matins at 9:00 am and Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am