

SAINT JOHN'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Clergy:

Rev. Father David Mastroberte
Very Rev. Protopresbyter Michael Polanichka
Rev. Deacon John Anderson

A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese – Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

Bulletin for December 23, 2018-January 5, 2019 ***– Christmas & New Year's Edition –***



CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Joyous Christmas Greetings



Best wishes to all for a merry Christmas
and a happy and healthy New Year of 2019!

Rev. David M. Mastroberte

Very Rev. Protopresbyter Michael Polanichka

Rev. Deacon John Anderson

&

Pres. Steven Lukac and Our Church Board Officers and Trustees

A Word of Thanks

As we remember Our Lord's Birth and celebrate this festive season, we express our thanks to many within our parish:

- We thank all who donated towards the **Christmas Flowers** that beautify our church for this festive time.
- We thank Cantor Professor **Joseph Jaeger**, Choir Director **Paula Kudelko**, our **Choir Members**, and **Dan Hromyak** for their offering of their singing at the divine services throughout the Nativity Fast and Christmas feast.
- We thank our **altar servers** for their assistance at the Holy Altar.
- We thank all those who gave of their time to help **decorate** the church on December 2nd and December 22nd.
- We thank all those who gave of their time and talent to organize, bake, and work at our 2nd Annual Christmas Market. We thank **Mary Ann Lavin** and **Renee Maceyko** for organizing the event.
- We thank **Lorraine Amos** and all **Pirohi Workers** for our Fall Pirohi projects, and for preparing Pirohi for the Christmas Market.
- We thank **Shannon Baker and our Church School families** for organizing the St. Nicholas Luncheon, to **"St. Nicholas"** for visiting, and to **Pani Vikkie Mastroberte** for working with our youth for their presentation.
- And we thank **ALL of our parishioners and friends** who gave offerings and donations in honor of Christmas, and throughout the entirety of 2018.

**May Our Lord, born in a manger for our salvation,
bless and keep you now and in the coming new year!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

¶ **Christmas Services:** The word “Christmas” comes from “Christ’s Mass” and thus the name of the holiday itself indicates where our celebration needs to begin. Do not neglect the Divine Services on Christmas! *Just as you’d expect someone to go to your house to celebrate your birthday, Our Lord is inviting us all to HIS house to celebrate HIS birthday!*

¶ **Reminder: Bring in Cookies for Christmas Day Fellowship.** As is customary in our parish, we will have a Fellowship Hour following Liturgy on Christmas. We are asking our parishioners to bring in a dozen cookies or another small “finger” snack (*i.e. nothing that needs a fork, spoon, or knife!*) to share together. Don’t skip this! *Share a cookie—and some time—with your fellow parishioners to celebrate Our Lord’s Birth!*

¶ **The “Christian Greeting”** for the 12 Days of Christmas is “Christ is born” and the response “Glorify Him”! *Be sure to know the response when you come forward for mirovanije after services.*

¶ **Christmas isn’t over on December 25th!** December 25th isn’t the last day of Christmas—it is the *first* day! The

festive, fast-free period goes from December 25th through January 4th. January 5th, as the eve of Theophany, is a strict fast day. January 6th, Theophany, commemorates the Baptism of Christ and is the close of the 12-day season; it is fast-free. Aside from coming to services to mark these joyful days, find ways of celebrating at home as well. One simple way is to leave your decorations and lights up for the “12 Days of Christmas.” *Give glory to the newborn King!*

¶ **Sunday School is currently on “Christmas Break”.** Classes will resume on January 13th.

¶ **January 6 is the holyday of the Baptism of Christ,** known as Theophany (“the Revelation of God” in Greek). This year, it falls on a Sunday, so the majority of our parishioners will get to participate in the service of the Great Blessing of Water, as is customary on this holyday. **Remember to bring a container to take some newly-sanctified holy water home!**

¶ **Mark Your Calendars:** The Annual Blessing of the Shenango River will be on Sunday, January 13th. More info to come soon!



The Holy Supper on Christmas Eve

By Fr. David

The day before Christmas has been observed as a day of fasting among both Eastern and Western Christians since the earliest centuries. While the Roman Catholics broke with this ancient tradition by eliminating the Christmas Eve fast after their Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, Orthodox Christians (*as well as most Eastern Catholics*) continue to keep Christmas Eve as a strict-fast day: no meat or dairy are eaten on this day, as it is the final day of the Nativity Fast. That being said, Christmas Eve is *not* somber!

In the church's cycle of services, the new day begins at sunset—just as was the custom in the Old Testament. Fasting, however, doesn't end until midnight and, on days when there is a Divine Liturgy, after Liturgy and the reception of Holy Communion. To balance the fact that Christmas has begun but the fast has not ended, many Christian peoples of Central and Eastern Europe such as Carpatho-Rusins, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Slovaks and Poles, developed a festive-yet-fasting meal known as the “Holy Supper” (*Svyaty Vecher*) or “Veliya” (*from “vigil”*).

One possible origin of this dinner is the common monastic practice of eating sweetened boiled wheat kernels known as *koliva*—in Slavonic, *kutya*—on days of fasting. This food is still made for Christmas Eve in some locales.

Customs for this meal vary from region to region, village to village, and family to family. Here is a rough outline of some common traditions among Carpatho-Rusins:

- The table is covered with a white cloth, to remember the swaddling clothes of the Infant Jesus. Straw is placed either under or on the tablecloth, as a reminder of the manger.
- The meal begins after the first star appears, as a reminder of the star of Bethlehem. The head of the household signals the start of the meal by saying “Christ is born!” with all replying “Glorify Him!”
- Before food is served, any number of customs might take place. Participants may wash their hands, as a sign of purity. Some tie a rope around the table legs

to symbolize unity. Rural families even bless the animals in the barn to recall the animals present at the birth of Christ. (*These days, some people bless their pets!*)

- A candle is lit, to remember that Christ is the Light of the World. Everyone then joins in a prayer like the Lord's Prayer or the Tropar of Christmas "*Your nativity, O Christ our God...*"
- A loaf of bread is cut and shared, since Jesus is the "Bread of Life." This simple leavened bread (*made from flour, water, yeast, and perhaps a little salt, sugar, or oil*) is similar to the "prosfora" used for Holy Communion. (*Wafers—oplatky—are used by Roman Catholics, since they use unleavened bread for Communion.*)
- Everyone gets a glass of wine and a toast is given, wishing good health for the new year.
- Some families share pieces of garlic dipped in honey—a symbol of accepting both the sweet and the bitter in life. Others dip the bread in honey.
- After these preliminary actions, the meal itself begins. As noted before, it is a strict-fast meal, so the foods are prepared without meat or dairy products. However, this doesn't mean the foods aren't plentiful and delicious! Some families serve 12 dishes, in honor of the 12 apostles. Familiar dishes utilize the kinds of foods that could be preserved for the winter, and include: a **soup**, of beans, mushrooms, cabbage, or other similar ingredients; **bobalky** (*bread dough made into small balls, baked, and seasoned with cabbage/sauerkraut, or sweetened with honey, poppy seeds, or ground nuts*); **pirohy** (*filled with potato, cabbage, prunes, or apricots*); beans, mushrooms, or cabbage made with *zaprashka* or roux; potatoes of some sort; rice-stuffed cabbage; seafood or fish. (*This is not an exhaustive list!*)
- Dessert of fruit, nuts, and/or sweets concludes the meal. The family then goes to church for the evening service.

This variety of custom and food shows that the exact details of this "holy supper" are less important than the underlying concept: that meals can be sacred occasions to celebrate our Christian faith in the home. Whether you grew up with this tradition or not, all Orthodox Christians from all backgrounds can make this tradition their own by gathering as a family on Christmas Eve to pray together, break bread, make a toast of wine, and share a fasting meal. This is a worthy way to begin the celebration of Our Lord's Nativity. *This Christmas Eve, make your supper a Holy Supper!*

House Blessings 2019

Notes from Fr. David

House Blessings will begin on Monday, January 7th. The “master schedule” of house blessings will be posted on Sunday, December 30th. If you would like your house blessed but you did not fill out a card yet, please do so ASAP. The requested deadline is Christmas Day – December 25th.

I am always happy to sit and visit, but one request: **no food or snacks!** I really appreciate the desire to show hospitality, but food and beverages are not necessary.

Please call me (724-813-3172) if you have any questions about scheduling a house blessing.

How to prepare: Arrange a place for prayer at your dining room table or another location with an icon and/or cross, and a candle. Please make a list of any living and departed persons that you would like prayed for in the short service. (*Fr. David will bring a holy water sprinkler with holy water, so you do not need to place any holy water on the table.*)

Sacramental and Membership Information

Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please phone the rectory (724-346-4457) when a family member is admitted to the hospital, or to request a home visit.

Marriages are solemnized on Saturdays or Sundays. Circumstances may require a dispensation from the diocesan bishop. Consult the pastor at least six months in advance and before any plans have been made for the wedding reception. Marriages cannot be celebrated during the fasting seasons of the church, or on Fridays.

Baptisms are usually scheduled on Saturdays or Sundays. Consult the pastor. Two godparents (godfather and godmother) are required, at least one of whom must be a practicing Orthodox Christian in good standing, and the other a practicing, baptized Christian.

Church Funerals are, under ordinary circumstances, provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual and material obligations to the parish; otherwise, the funeral service is conducted at the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

Parishioners in “good standing” are those Orthodox Christians who, as members of Saint John’s Orthodox Church, strive to live according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church; participate in the life of the parish through regular church attendance, regular reception of Holy Communion and periodic Holy Confession (and receive these sacraments no less than once a year); and financially support the parish (especially through an annual “pledge”). **Prospective members and returning members** are asked to fill out an application form, copies of which are available in the church office.

Winter Weather, Illnesses, and Church Attendance

Orthodox Christians are expected—even obligated—to be at Divine Liturgy on Sundays **under ordinary circumstances**. That last part is key. There may be any number of mitigating factors excusing us from attending Divine Liturgy. Winter weather and sickness can fall into that category.

As a priest, it is both my great honor and my great responsibility to offer the Divine Liturgy. I avoid cancelling any scheduled liturgies on Sundays and holydays. In *most* circumstances when there is snow, Sunday Liturgy will *not* be cancelled. In the rare event that weather conditions make it impossible for us to assemble for Sunday Liturgy, our board members and I will spread this information as soon as possible.

However, I want to stress the following: **when it comes to winter weather, use “common sense” and your best judgment**. This is something you have to determine for yourself. Whether it is snow, ice, or extremely low temperatures—if you feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or just unsure about driving, *don't* risk it. Be cautious! God wants us to be brave, but He doesn't want us to be foolhardy.

Even if we are unable to make to church due to poor winter weather, we are still expected to keep the Lord's Day “holy”. Prayer doesn't take a snow day! How can we sanctify the Lord's Day from home?

- Silence distractions (cell phones, TV, music, computer) for a time.
- Gather for prayer before your icons, or at your dining room table.
- Offer Morning Prayers from your prayer book. If you don't have your prayer book handy, go to the “Prayer Corner” section on acrod.org.
- If there are multiple people at home, take turns reading the prayers, or read them together.
- Read the Bible Readings for the day. Look on your wall calendar for the references, or access them on acrod.org.
- As you pray, remember that you are *spiritually* united to God, the Saints, and to your fellow Orthodox Christians.

On a related note: “flu season” will hit us soon enough. There are many things we should share as Christians, but the flu and other contagious illnesses are not in that category. **If you are sick, it is NOT a sin to miss Divine Liturgy**. If you have the “sniffles” of the common cold, you may feel well enough to go to church. But if you have the flu, a stomach bug, or any other such illness—**stay home, rest, and work on your recovery**. (*In elementary school, they say you have to be symptom-free for 24 hours before coming back; it's not a bad idea for church, either!*)

As always, if you have any questions, feel free to speak to me. Stay warm! Be safe! To your health! And God bless you!

Fr. David

Stewardship

By Dan Hromyak

*"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."
- Philippians 4:6*

St. Paul reminds us that our God, the ultimate giver of gifts. He promises to give us all that we need. When we trust that God will take care of us, it is easier for us to share what we have been given.

"For behold when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy." - Luke 1:44

When you hear the scripture readings and Gospel reading each Sunday, do you "leap for joy?" If not, don't blame the reader or priest, rather look inside yourself. Do you prepare for Liturgy each week or do you just show up and expect to be entertained? We are called to be active participants, not passive by-standers.

If you have yet to submit your pledge card for 2019, there's still time! Please return your pledge card as soon as possible. Additional cards are available in the vestibule.

2019 STEWARDS OF SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH (To Date!)

Amos, Robert and Lorraine
Andras, Bob
Blaschak, Fr. Thomas
Bobanick, Robert and Janice
Burprich, Dennis
Christy, Dolores
Chupak, Jerry
Chupak, Julie
Chupak, Mary
Cook, Helen
Cross, Debbie
Everett, Chester
Fabian, Ed and Francine
Fabian, Matthew and Dina
Good, Natasha
Hartley, Katie
Hellmann, Kelly
Holmes, Margaret
Hromyak, Daniel
Hromyak, Margaret
Hynes, Brent
Hynes, Jim and Karen
Hynes, Katie
Jaeger, Joseph and Helen
Koval, Pauline

Kroko, Melinda
Kudelko, Anne
Lukac, Steven and Natalie
Lutz, Andy and Billie
Mastroberte, Fr. David and Pani Vikkie
Maykowski, Carol
Moon, Brandon
Moon, John and Deborah
Moon, Taylor
Pacinda, Dorothy
Parimuha, Alex
Patterson, Betty Jo
Polanichka, Fr. Michael and Pani Eleanor
Radu, Marilyn and George
Ristvey, Dan and Carol
Ristvey, Thomas and Melinda
Saluga, David
Saluga, Michael
Saluga, Steve and Cyndy
Slovesko, Edward
Yasnowsky, Donald and Joann
Yasnowsky, Kevin
Yourema, Katherine

We take this opportunity to thank all those who have made a pledge for 2019 to support the work and ministry of Saint John's. Your sacrifices of time, talent, and treasure are what enable us to continue to be a beacon of the Orthodox Faith in Mercer County.

MEN TO HOLD

CANDLES

Sunday, December 30th

Steven Lukac
Steve Lukac
Andy Lutz
Ken Maceyko
Emil Maurer

Sunday, January 6th

Paul McMahon
Robert Miller
John Moon
John Parimuha
Tom Patrick

Bulletin Sponsor

In Loving Memory of Father /
Grandfather **John Andras, Jr.**

Sponsored by: Dorothy Pacinda, Bob &
Michael Andras

BIRTHDAYS

December 24th Natalie Lukac
December 25th Stephen Bartko
December 28th Emil Maurer
December 30th Debby Doyle
January 3rd Julie Chupak
January 3rd Taylor Moon

Coffee Hour Sponsors

Coffee Hour Sponsor for Sunday,
December 23rd is **Chester Everett**
as his way of saying "Thank You" to all
of the Parishioners who called, stopped
to visit and prayed for him during his
recent surgery.

Tuesday, December 25th
Christmas Day Fellowship
By All Parishioners are invited



Eternal Lamp Sponsor

Sunday, December 23rd

In Loving Memory of
Husband

John Kolbrich

Sponsored by: Nona Kolbrich

**Happy Wedding
Anniversary**

December 27th
Marilyn & George
Radu