

*“And the Word became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us”*  
(John 1:14)



**BULLETIN FOR DECEMBER 20, 2020-JANUARY 2, 2021**

*– 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 2021!

*Rev. David M. Mastroberte*

*Very Rev. Protopresbyter Michael Polanichka*

*Very Rev. Thomas Blaschak*

*Rev. Deacon John Anderson*

*&*

*President Steven Lukac and Our Church Board Members*

## ***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 who help throughout Christmastime:

- We thank all who donated towards the **Christmas Flowers** that beautify our church for this festive time.
- We thank all those who gave of their time to help **decorate** the church before St. Nicholas Day and before Christmas.
- We thank **Paula Kudelko** and **Dan Hromyak** for leading the responses at the divine services throughout the Nativity Fast and Christmas feast.
- We thank **Reader Gregory Cross** and our **altar servers** for their assistance at the Holy Altar.
- We thank Board President **Steve Lukac** for all his help with live-streaming our services.
- We thank "**St. Nicholas**" for visiting after Liturgy on Sunday, December 6th to pass out candy canes.
- We thank **Francine Fabian and Stephanie Shumkaroff**, and all who helped with and supported the 2020 Bake Sale.
- We thank all **board members and others** who have been working diligently "behind the scenes" to keep things operating smoothly.
- We thank **Sue Preston** for printing and mailing our bulletin to our homebound members.
- We thank **Courteney Lukac** for the updated website.
- And we thank **ALL of our parishioners and friends** who gave offerings and donations in honor of Christmas, and throughout the entirety of 2020.

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

***Christ is born! Glorify Him!***  
*Christos Raždajetsja! Slavite Jeho!*  
*Christos se rodi! Vaistinu se rodi!*  
*Christos gennatai! Doxasate!*

# SCHEDULE OF SERVICES & EVENTS

<b>Sunday, Dec. 20</b>	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy ( <i>Live Streamed</i> ) <i>Panachida:</i> ++Tripp Family ( <i>Perpetual</i> ) +John & +Helen Andras ( <i>Perpetual</i> ) ++Latcheran Family ( <i>Perpetual</i> )
<b>Thursday, Dec. 24</b>	8:00 PM	<b>Christmas Eve (<i>Strict Fast Day</i>)</b> Vigil Service with Singing of Carols ( <i>Live Streamed</i> )
<b>Friday, Dec. 25</b>	10:00 AM	<b>CHRISTMAS DAY – NATIVITY OF OUR LORD</b> Divine Liturgy ( <i>Live Streamed</i> )
<b>Saturday, Dec. 26</b>	9:00 AM	<b>Second Day of Christmas – Mother of God</b> Divine Liturgy
<b>Sunday, Dec. 27</b>	9:00 AM	<b>Sunday After Christmas</b> Divine Liturgy ( <i>Live Streamed</i> )
<b>Thursday, Dec. 31</b>	4:00 PM	Vespers for the Holyday ( <i>Note Earlier Time!</i> )
<b>Friday, Jan. 1, 2021</b>	9:00 AM	<b>Eighth Day of Christmas – Circumcision of Our Lord</b> <b>St. Basil the Great</b> <b>Civil New Year</b> Divine Liturgy ( <i>Live Streamed</i> )
<b>Sunday, Jan. 3</b>	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy ( <i>Live Streamed</i> ) <i>Panachida:</i> ++Walko Family ( <i>Perpetual</i> ) +John Sekerak ( <i>Perpetual</i> )



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Fasting and Feasting

Please remember that the Nativity Fast (Advent) continues through Christmas Eve. **Christmas Eve is a strict fast day**—no meat or dairy are to be consumed. **Christmas Day is fast-free** and there is no fasting from Christmas Day through January 4th. January 5th—the eve of Theophany—is a strict fast day.

## Seasonal Christian Greeting

The greeting used in church for the period from the Nativity until Theophany is “Christ is born!” with the response “Glorify Him!”

## House Blessings

Unless directives to the contrary are received from the Diocese, Fr. David will be available to bless homes after the holyday of the Baptism of Christ on January 6th. He plans on keeping each visit very brief (*around 5 minutes total*). As usual, house blessings will be *by request only*. Forms will be available, or you can call/text/e-mail Fr. David directly.

Also: while it is customary to have an annual house blessing with the newly-blessed Holy Water after Theophany, **house blessings are not restricted to January**. A house blessing can be conducted at any time of the year. **If you would like to wait until a later time in 2021 to have your home blessed**, just contact Fr. David when you’re ready and he’ll be happy to schedule a time.

**Offering Envelopes for 2021** are available. Please make sure that you get your envelopes and use them throughout the year.

**2021 Wall Calendars**, donated by Tomon’s Funeral Home, are available. Please help yourself!

## Graduate Day

We are looking at scheduling a day to honor our 2020 graduates. Parents/Graduates, please alert Fr. David to any graduates in your family!

## —Upcoming Divine Services for the Nativity—

- **Thursday, December 24: Vigil Service at 8:00 PM**

“Vigil” means to keep watch, and we keep watch like the shepherds and begin the celebration of Christmas. This service includes many hymns and prayers celebrating the birth of Our Savior. We hear the Gospel of the Nativity announced. We will also sing a selection of familiar carols after the service.

- **Friday, December 25: Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM**

Did you know that Bethlehem is Hebrew for “House of Bread”? We celebrate the Birth of Christ “the Bread of Life” by offering the Holy Eucharist. As they say, **“If you want to keep ‘Christ’ in CHRISTmas, then keep the ‘Mass’ in ChristMAS!”**

**The services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will be live-streamed.**

## —Prepare for & Celebrate the Nativity at Home with Prayer—

*Prayer accompanies everything in our life as Christians. In both fasting and feasting, we pray. Below are hymns taken from the services of our church which you can include in your daily prayers over the next couple weeks. If you have children at home, say these together before bed. If you have a Nativity Scene or icon of the Nativity at home, you may gather there.*

### ***From December 20 through the morning of December 24th:***

Today, the virgin comes to the cave \* to give birth in an ineffable manner to the Eternal Word. \* O universe, having heard this news, rejoice; \* and together with the angels and shepherds glorify Him, \* Who though He be the Eternal God,\* has willed to appear as a newborn Babe.

What shall we give to You, O Christ, \* Who for our sake did appear on earth as a man? \* Every creature You created offers You thanksgiving: \* the angels sing praises; \* the heavens—the star; the Magi—gifts; \* the wilderness—a manger; \* and we—a virgin mother. \* Therefore, O Eternal God, have mercy on us!

### ***From Christmas Eve until December 31st:***

Your nativity, O Christ our God, \* has shown forth the light of knowledge to the world: \* for through it, those who studied the stars \* learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of Truth, \* and to acknowledge You, rising from on high; \* O Lord, glory to You.

The Virgin today gives birth to the highest Being, \* and the earth provides the inaccessible One with a cave. \* The angels with the shepherds glorify Him; \* the Wise Men journey with the star, \* because for our sake is born a little Child, the pre-eternal God.

## **2020 Holiday Bake Sale — THANK YOU!**

Thank You to everyone that supported the Holiday Bake Sale thru generous monetary donations, baking and ordering: Fr. David, Pani Vikkie, bakers including Stephanie Shumkaroff, Julie Lukac, Francine Fabian, Dr. Kathy Piston, Cyndy Saluga, Irene Beight, Melinda Kroko, Natalie, Courteney & Steven Lukac, Jessica Nameth and Sabrina Nichols.

Thank You to Ed Fabian for personally delivering numerous orders. Dennis Burprich, Milan Shumkaroff and David Beight for making curbside possible.

We received several phone calls complimenting how delicious the baked goods were and asking if we had any more available.

Thank you again, we couldn't have pulled this off without all of you. We are humbled and appreciative of everyone's time and hard work to make this a success with a profit of **\$4,502.25** for the support of our church.

We wish everyone a Healthy New Year!  
Francine Fabian and Stephanie Shumkaroff

***And our thanks to Francine and Stephanie  
for all their hard work!***



## **Important Notice About Annual Meeting and Installation of Officers**

At the Election of Officers Parish Meeting on Sunday, December 13, 2020, a motion was made and was unanimously passed that **the 2021 Annual Meeting and Installation of Officers will be postponed until sometime after Easter.** We will continue to monitor the overall situation and determine the date of the meeting when we get closer to that time.

## **THOUGHTS ON STEWARDSHIP**

*By Dan Hromyak*

*"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" - Luke 1:28*

After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. Her entire life was lived in obedience to God's call. Mary teaches us to live with joy for all we have been given. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, Mary reflects the light of Christ. Like Mary, we are called to reflect Christ's light to the world through our gratitude and generosity.

*"...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive." - Colossians 3:13*

Forgiving is one of the hardest things for people to do. We can't give what we don't have. We need to receive God's mercy and forgiveness first before we can give it to others. Go to the sacrament of Confession and receive God's mercy and forgiveness. Then, give the gift of forgiveness with someone - a family member, a friend or a co-worker. Pick up the phone or text someone right now.



## 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-Rusyns, 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-Rusyns:

- 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 Catholic Slovaks and Poles, 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!*

# 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*

## 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. Hospitals do *not* call to alert the parish when someone is admitted.

**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 at an Orthodox parish, and the other (at least) 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); if married, having been married in the Orthodox Church; 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.

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**Website:** [stjohnacroc.org](http://stjohnacroc.org)

**YouTube:** [youtube.com/user/saintjohnsharon](https://youtube.com/user/saintjohnsharon)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/SaintJohnHermitagePA](https://facebook.com/SaintJohnHermitagePA)

**Instagram:** [instagram.com/saintjohnhermitagepa](https://instagram.com/saintjohnhermitagepa)

**Diocese:** [acrod.org](http://acrod.org)

