— *Bulletin for December 7-20, 2025* —

SAT	12/7/2025	26TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy
		St. Nicholas Celebration
TUES	12/9/2025	***Conception of the Mother of God***
	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy ***(CHAPEL)***
WED	12/10/2025	
	6:00 PM	Prayer Service for the Nativity Fast
		Reflection Topic:
		"Hark the Herald Angels Sing..."—Christology in Christmas Carols
SAT	12/13/2025	
	9 AM—1 PM	CHRISTMAS MARKET
SAT	12/14/2025	27TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS
	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy
		After Coffee Hour: *Christmas Eve Vigil Service Music Review*
		Perpetual Commemorations for the Week of December 14-20, 2025:
		TRIPP, Karl, Love & Ann
		ANDRAS, John Jr. & Helen
MON	12/15/2025	
	6:00 PM	December Board Meeting
TUES	12/16/2025	*Saint of the Day: Prophet Haggai*
	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy ***(CHAPEL)***

WED	12/17/2025	
	6:00 PM	Prayer Service for the Nativity Fast *Reflection Topic: "We Three Kings"—* *What the Gifts of the Magi Signify about Jesus*
SAT	12/20/2025	***First Day of the Prefeast of the Nativity of Christ***
	4:00 PM	Vespers ***(CHAPEL)***
SAT	12/21/2025	SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY—SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS
	9:00 AM	Divine Liturgy
		Panachida: *+Protopresbyter Michael Polanichka (4th Anniversary)*

The Sacrament of Confession

is available during the Nativity Fast...

- *Before Wednesday Evening Services from 5:00-5:50 PM*
- *Before Sunday Liturgies from 8:15-8:45 AM*
- *Before Weekday Liturgies (ending 10 minutes before service)*
- *Before Vespers on December 20 from 3:00 PM to 3:50 PM*
- *By Appointment*

Confessions will not be heard on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
Remember, if the side room door is OPEN, please walk right in!

Christmas Eve Vigil Service Music Review!

After Liturgy and Coffee Hour on **Sunday, December 14**, Fr. David will offer a review of the special Plain Chant music we sing during the Christmas Eve Vigil Service. Anyone interested in learning and practicing these hymns is invited to participate. (You can also access recordings of these hymns on the Diocesan website. Go to **www.acrod.org**, then click: "*Prayer Corner*", "*Hymns and Music*", "*Plain Chant*", and scroll down to the Christmas Eve section.)

St. John's Christmas Market And Cookie Sale

Saturday, December 13, 2025

9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Homemade Cookies, Nutroll, Cheesebreads,
Soups, Snack Mixes & More

Pickup Christmas Gifts $5 and Under

Vintage Jewelry

Chinese Auction including Signature “Basket of Cheer”

All proceeds to benefit local charities.

For more information or to find out how you can help,
please speak with Renee Maceyko and Mary Ann Lavin.

Nativity Fast Services

Wednesday, December 10, 2025: Prayer Service for the Nativity Fast at 6:00 PM
Reflection Topic: "Hark the Herald Angels Sing..." – Christology in Christmas Carols

Wednesday, December 17, 2025: Prayer Service for the Nativity Fast at 6:00 PM
Reflection Topic: "We Three Kings" – What the Gifts of the Magi Signify about Jesus

Saturday, December 20, 2025: Vespers at 4:00 PM
The period from December 20 to December 24 is called the "Prefeast" of the Nativity, as these are the final days before the celebration of Christmas.

Sunday, December 21, 2025: Divine Liturgy at 9:00 AM
As we gather for our regular weekly Sunday Liturgy on this Sunday before the Nativity, we hear the Gospel of the Genealogy from Matthew.

Services for the Nativity: Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 24, 2024:
Christmas Eve Vigil Service at 7:00 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.

Thursday, December 25, 2025: Christmas Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM
Did you know that Bethlehem is Hebrew for "House of Bread"? We celebrate the Nativity 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!"*** Can you imagine someone celebrating YOUR birthday without you? Presents and cookies can wait—don't ignore the invitation to the house of the King of Kings on His birthday!

Christmas doesn't end on December 25th—that is just beginning!
There will be Liturgy on Friday, December 26 and Saturday, December 27 at 9:00 AM. We also continue the celebration through January 1st (the Circumcision of Christ) and January 6th (the Baptism of Christ).

—Christmas Straw on December 22nd—

There are many pious, home-based customs associated with Christmas throughout the world. In this bulletin, you can read about the practice of the "Holy Supper." One custom is to place some straw on or under the tablecloth, to recall that the Infant Jesus was born in a manger. Additionally, many people place straw in their Nativity Scene or by an icon of the Nativity at home for the same reason.

This year, on Sunday, December 21, we will again distribute small packets of hay for you to use on your Christmas table and/ or in your Nativity Scene!

Christmas Day Refreshments & Fellowship

As is our parish custom, we will have an opportunity for festive celebration in the hall after our Christmas Divine Liturgy. Please plan to stay for a few moments and share the joy of the Nativity with your brothers and sisters in Christ! (For some of our parishioners, this is the only time they have to celebrate with others on Christmas.)

You are invited to bring some "finger foods" or sweets to share for this celebration!

Reminder Regarding Winter Weather and Church Services

Under *most* circumstances, Sunday Liturgy will not be cancelled. In the event that weather conditions make it impossible for us to assemble for Sunday Liturgy, Fr. David and our board members will spread this information as soon as possible by various means (e-mail, Facebook posts, phone calls, etc.) Cancelation of weekday services will follow a similar pattern.

However, even if a service is not canceled, **please use "common sense" and your best judgment regarding winter travel**! This is something **YOU** have to determine for yourself. Whether it is snow, ice, extremely low temperatures, or driving at night—if you feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or just unsure about driving, please *don't* risk it. **It is not sinful to miss Divine Liturgy if you are unable to drive to church!**

Stewardship

Dan Hromyak

"Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." - Matthew 3:10

Do you bear good fruit for Jesus? Do you spend time in prayer or do you waste it with mindless activity? Do you use your talent to help to help others or are you too busy? Do you use your treasure to support the Church or do you buy more things that go unused. Our time, talent, and treasure are gifts from God. What you do with these gifts is our gift back to Him. What gifts are you planning to give to the Lord during this upcoming Christmas season?

"You too must be patient. Make your hearts be firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand." - James 5:8

Patience is another one of those things many of us struggle with. We want things to go according to our plan and our schedule; we like things to be convenient. Any change brings anxiety and fear. Through daily prayer God reveals to us what He wants us to do with the gifts He has given us. We are able to better align ourselves with God's will and His plan, which is far better than anything we can come up with on our own.

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; **bobal'ky** *(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 customs and foods 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. (The menu is not carved in stone!) 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

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

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Our Sponsors

December 7, 2025

Eternal Lamp
In Memory of +Debbie Anderson as a Birthday Remembrance, by Debbie Cross

❄

December 14, 2025

Eternal Lamp
In Memory of Godmother Helen Benya Hammon on the 3rd Anniversary of Her Repose by Debbie & Greg Cross

Pray for Our Seminarians

Fr. Peter Sodini, Deacon Maximus Cannaverde, Fr. Alexander Hurtsellers, Bradley Shaffer, Nicholas Cizin, John Bonnewicz-Coffey, John Fedornock III, Spyridon Clay Raburn and Ignatius Leonardo

Schedule of Men to Hold Candles During the Gospel

December 7	December 14	December 21
Lucas Campbell	Jim Hynes	John Lenhart
Jerry Chupak	Abram Johnson	Ken Maceyko
Ed Fabian	Martin Johnson	Emil Maurer
Matt Fabian	Steven Lukac	Randy Martin
Chad Fette	Steve Lukac	Paul McMahon