



Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church

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



Reverend Dave Urban, *Pastor*
Very Reverend John Brancho, *Pastor Emeritus*
Timothy Martin, *Reader*
Matthew Peifer, Stephen Brancho, & John Radick, *Cantors*
Matthew Peifer, *Church Council President*
www.facebook.com/pg/St-John-the-Baptist-Orthodox-Church-of-Northside-Pittsburgh-169297619784149

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December 10, 2017

Volume III

27th Sun. after Pentecost / 10th Lukan Sun. / Great Martyr James the Persian (421)

9:20 am – Canon of Nativity 9:30 am – Divine Liturgy Tone 2 Liturgical Color: **Purple**
Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17; Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Additional Collection for our Capital Improvement Fund / Panachida for +Derek Christopher Anton (12/10/72 birthday remembrance) and Father's Grandmother, +Josephine (Smoley) Urban (12/15/99)

SERVICES, SAINTS, AND READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Tuesday, Dec. 12 – 9:30am Akathist Hymn to the Nativity of Christ / 7pm Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 13 – 7pm Exploring Orthodoxy at the Eat 'n Park in Wexford (*Last of the year*)

Thursday, December 14 – 9:30am Moleben of the Nativity Fast

Saturday, December 16 – 11am-1pm Mystery of Confession

Holy Mystery of Confession available following every service

# Monday	Martyr Stephen the New of Mt. St. Auxentius (767)	2 Timothy 2:20-26	Luke 19:37-44
# Tuesday	Venerable Acacius of Mt. Latros (6th c.)	2 Timothy 3:16-4:4	Luke 19:45-48
# Wed.	Holy and All-praised Apostle Andrew the First-called (62)	2 Timothy 4:9-22	Luke 20:1-8
# Thursday	Prophet Nahum (7th c. B.C.)	Titus 1:5-2:1	Luke 20:9-18
# Friday	Prophet Habakkuk (Abbacum) (7th c. B.C.)	Titus 1:15-2:10	Luke 20:19-26
# Saturday	Prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias) (635 B.C.)	Ephesians 1:16-23	Luke 6:17-23

During the Nativity (Philip's) Fast, let us Imitate Christ and the Saints and Fast as they did!

Sunday, Dec. 17 – 28th Sunday after Pentecost / 10th Lukan Sunday / Great-martyr Barbara (306)

9:20 am – Canon of Nativity 9:30 am – Divine Liturgy Tone 3 Liturgical Color: **Purple**
Epistle: Colossians 1:12-18; Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

YOUTH Sunday / St. Nicholas Breakfast

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A Warm Welcome To Our Visitors!

Glory Be To Jesus Christ! (Glory Be Forever!)

Slava Isusu Christu! (Slava na v'iki!)

We are happy that you have joined us today! **Please join us downstairs** for coffee and a bite to eat. It is our pleasure to have you in our presence this morning and we wish God's Blessings to all who visit with us today and hope you stop in again soon!

If you have any questions in regards to our worship or Orthodoxy, please see Fr.

Dave and he will gladly answer any of your questions to the best of his ability. He looks forward to meeting you!

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LOOKING AHEAD LOCALLY

Monday, December 18 – 7pm Vespers at St Nicholas (903 Ann Street, Homestead, PA 15120)

Tuesday, December 19 – 9:30am Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St Nicholas

Wednesday, December 20 – 9:30am Akathist Hymn to the Nativity of Christ

Saturday, December 23 – 11a-1p Mystery of Holy Confession

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BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Please have submissions for this section to Father by Wednesday.)



2017 NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE

– Bishop Gregory asks each member of our Diocese to pray the Prayer for Peace every evening of the Nativity Fast, either as a family or individually. Cut out and use the prayer daily (found on the last page). Let us unite our prayers for peace on earth! A special webpage (<http://www.acrod.org/consecration/prayerchallenge>) has been set up where additional information on this year's prayer challenge can be found.

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Mystery of Holy Confession – All are reminded that fasting from food goes hand-in-hand with fasting from sin. This is why the Church encourages us to receive the Mystery of Holy

Confession during the Nativity Fast period. Confessions will be heard most Saturdays from 11a–1p. Other times are available by appointment. Please contact Father Dave to arrange a time. **A blessed Nativity Fast to all!**

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Thank You! To everyone who were stewards of their time and talents yesterday in our Nativity Church clean-up and decorating!

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Lots – O – Luck Calendars – The National ACRY Lots-O-Luck Calendars are available. Only \$25 per ticket for a year's worth of prizes totaling \$10,000! Please see Theresa Sharpless for tickets.

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This Bulletin is offered:

If you wish to sponsor a Bulletin, for specific prayers for someone (*birthday, anniversary, etc.*) or for their memory, please do so by signing up on the sheet on the table in the Vestibule of the Church or by contacting Fr. Dave. An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested.



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Weekly Candle Intentions/Memorials were offered last week by Tim Martin; Melanie Shuster; Viola Peifer; Kathy Schrmack; Lawrence Martin; Olga Radick; Eleanor Sanger; Barbara Kirish; Joanne Nelson; Steve Buhonick; Cindy Pavilonis; Patty Watson.

"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." - John 8:12

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Exploring Orthodoxy Discussions –

We will meet this Wednesday from 7p to about 8:15p at Eat 'n Park (2650 Brandt School Road, Wexford, Pa 15090 / 724-940-3270). We will continue our examination of the priestly prayers of St John Chrysostom's Divine Liturgy. We hope and pray that everyone is able to attend these tangent oriented discussions about Orthodoxy! Come for a bite to eat and learn about your faith! (If you need a ride, please contact Fr. Dave.)

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Snow Removal Team – as temperatures have begun to drop, we are reminded that snow is on it's way. Just a reminder that we will be looking for folks, as in the past, to offer some of their time prior to people getting to church on Sundays to help with snow removal. *Please let Father know if you will be able to come earlier to Church to assist with keeping the sidewalks clear.* Ideally we will have a rotation of people so that the same person is not doing it each snowfall.



Parish Stewardship Opportunities...

As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. (Luke 6:31)

- Bring in a bag of CALCIUM CHLORIDE
- Take a Coffee Social week
- Attend an additional service at Church
- Offer your time to help with possible snow

Our Stewardship Gift To God

Dues/Stewardship:	\$ 1256
Candles/Small C./Eternal Lamp/C. box:	\$ 143
Envelopes: Sunday/Feast Day/Special:	\$ 797

Total Collections: \$ 2196

Collection for the Saints: "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper." 1 Cor 16:2

November Financial Report:

Donation Income = \$ 3,677

***Expenses = \$ 3,133.57**

Net Income = \$ 543.43

**details listed on the church hall bulletin board*
Average at Sunday Divine Liturgies: **39**

Coffee Social Steward Schedule

- December 17: **St Nicholas Breakfast**
- December 24: **Open "Pot Luck"**
- December 31: **Open "Pot Luck"**

Thank you to all those who support this critical ministry of our Church!

Coffee Social Stewards Needed – On weeks that no one signs up to host and organize our coffee social, we will have a 'pot-luck' meal. On these weeks, we ask that **every** household brings something **small** for a pot-luck surprise spread for the community to enjoy that week! (Don't over think the menu - Plan to *keep it simple* ☺) Everyone is also encouraged to help clean up after. *The Divine Liturgy concludes at the final blessing, but the liturgy continues downstairs as we gather in love and fellowship with our parish family and visiting neighbors.* Lets keep this critical ministry alive in our parish!

Visit Our Diocese On-Line

Diocesan Website: www.acrod.org
 Camp Nazareth: www.campnazareth.org
 FB: www.facebook.com/acroddiocese
 Twitter: twitter.com/acrodnews
 You Tube: youtube.com/acroddiocese

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ORTHODOXY AROUND DA 'BURGH

Orthodox Perspectives on the Reformation: A Symposium - will be held on **Saturday, December 16** at St Nicholas Orthodox Church (320 Munson Ave, McKees Rocks, PA) beginning with Divine Liturgy at 9am and the Symposium beginning at 10:30am. Five speakers (*Dr John Burgess, Dr Edith Humphrey, Archbishop Melchisedek (Pleska), Dr Kristie Mertz, and Andrew Weaver*) will present. Admission is free. Breakfast and lunch will be served. For more information, visit OrthodoxPittsburgh.org.

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Source: www.orthodoxpittsburgh.com/parish-calendar/orthodox-calendar © 1996-2001 by translator Fr. S. Janos

The Holy Great Martyr James the Persian

Commemorated on Dec 10 / Nov 27

The Holy GreatMartyr James the Persian (the Hewn-Apart) was born in the IV Century into a pious Christian family, both wealthy and illustrious. His wife was also a Christian, and the spouses raised their children in piety, inspiring in them a love for prayer and the Holy Scripture. James occupied an high position at the court of the Persian emperor Izdegerd (399-420) and his successor Barakhranes (420-438). But on one of the military campaigns



James, seduced by the emperor's beneficence, became afraid to acknowledge himself a Christian, and so together with the emperor he offered sacrifice to idols. Learning of this, the mother and wife of James in deep distress wrote him a letter, in which they scolded him and urged him to repent. Receiving the letter, James realised the gravity of his sin, and setting before himself the horror of being cut off not only from his family, but also from God Himself, he began loudly to weep and implore the Lord for forgiveness. His fellow-soldiers, hearing him pray to the Lord Jesus

Christ, reported about this to the emperor. Under interrogation and taking courage in spirit, Saint James bravely confessed his faith in the One True God. No amount of urgings by the emperor could shake him into renouncing Christ. The emperor then gave orders to deliver the saint over to a death by martyrdom. They placed the martyr on a chopping-block and they alternately

cut off his fingers and his toes, and then his hands and his feet. During the prolonged torture Saint James incessantly offered up prayer of thanks to the Lord, that He had granted him the possibility through the terrible torments to be redeemed of the sins committed. Flowing with blood the martyr was then beheaded.

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LIVING ORTHODOXY IN REFLECTIVE PREPARATION:

meditating on the awesome miracle of the Son of God taking on flesh and becoming one of us

The Orthodox Nativity Fast Can Help Prevent Post-Holiday Blues

by Lis DeLuca, Psychotherapist, Social Work, & Writer
<http://orthochristian.com/43144.html>

Much of the post-holiday blues that occur in the US may have something to do with the way Americans celebrate Christmas. The Orthodox Nativity Fast may be the remedy many people need.

When people are suffering in their lives with things like divorce or other losses, financial stress, aging or illness; the sudden onset of pre-Christmas cheeriness may leave them feeling even more isolated and deprived, because the rest of world is portrayed as happy and fulfilled in stark contrast to how they feel.

Others who do embrace pre-holiday celebrations often feel let down and weighed down by food and debt shortly after Christmas day. The novelty of the new material things wears off quickly, friends and family go home, and people may be left feeling blue. This is the feeling known as post-Christmas let-down.

The Orthodox way of celebrating Christmas can yield completely different results.

The Nativity Fast Addresses Pain as Well as Pleasure

“The birth of Christ brought joy and hope to those who had been in darkness and the way the Orthodox celebrate Christmas is designed to let people feel that hope again,” states Father Jonathan Ivanoff, an Orthodox Christian Priest and Pastor of St. John the Theologian Orthodox Church in Shirley, New York.

The Orthodox Church teaches that the Nativity Fast represents the time before Christ, when God’s people were lost and disconnected from God. Experiencing this loss and disconnection in some way is seen as a necessary pre-requisite to embracing the joy of Christ’s birth in its fullness.

To achieve this, instead of “pre-celebrating” the Christmas holiday during the Nativity Fast (Advent), Orthodox Christians participate in a solemn, six-week fast during this time.

What is the Nativity Fast?

Those who are fasting eat less and strive to avoid all meat, cheese, eggs, fish and wine on most days. They keep a primarily vegetarian diet. The faithful do not get caught up in the “letter of the law” and do not freak out if they have to have a piece of meat. The spirit of the practice is more important than what is eaten. There is no threat of eternal damnation.

In place of food, drink and partying during Nativity Fast, the Orthodox are asked to nourish their souls with increased prayer, communion with their fellow parishioners, and drawing closer to God.

For those who are struggling with personal problems, this period can give them a spiritual boost. Their brothers and sisters are experiencing the somber reality of the human condition with them, through the fast. They are not alone.

According to Fr. Ivanoff, Christmas parties are put off until Christmas day when the fast is finally broken. The “famine” ends and the celebration begins. In fact, the Orthodox continue to celebrate for 12 days after Christmas.

The Spirit of the Fast

Participating in the fast helps people tame their worldly appetites. It is an exercise in transcending the body and not being ruled by impulses. People who are fasting begin to feel that regardless of their worldly limitations or deprivations, they have a connection to God that sustains them through the fast and always.

In addition to increased prayer, almsgiving is expected to increase during the Nativity fast. According to Fr. Ivanoff, this means, specifically, giving money to relieve poverty and material need. Doing this offers a counterbalance to people’s urges to overspend on material goods during Christmas. It brings people in contact with others who are far worse off financially, quelling feelings of wanting more than they already have.

Feeding the Soul

These acts of almsgiving can restore feelings of connection with fellow human beings and even with our greater purpose. It reminds people that life means more than the consumption of material goods. It helps people out of the rut of day-to-day life.

If people stick to the fast, they will find themselves feeling more somber. A certain mental clarity can dawn. They may have even shed excess pounds. They can feel much more in control of themselves and their appetites, and therefore more hopeful. They may feel closer to God and have more love and compassion towards others.

Breaking the Fast

Towards the end of the fast, people feel like they have accomplished something difficult. On Christmas day they break the fast, exit the period of darkness and celebrate the birth of Christ. The feast of the Nativity is that much sweeter because of the famine that preceded it, just as a drink of water is most meaningful when one is very thirsty.

Because those observing the fast have done the work of nourishing the soul they are now ready to give and receive the God-given blessings of food, drink, material things, family, friends and fun. Orthodox Christians believe that God wants people to be joyful in this world. The world is a gift.

Even those who are still afflicted, having had their souls filled, may feel comforted and, in spite of their situation, May experience the joy and hope that tends to come after breaking the fast. They May feel a renewed connection with God and others.

Orthodox Christmas Trees

Orthodox Christians tend to put up their Christmas trees later—some don't do it until Christmas Eve—and to keep them up longer. Even as the joy of new “toys” wears off, and family and friends go home, the joy of Christ's birth continues to lift them up because they have felt this renewed connection to God and others through the fast. The hard work is behind them and they are living in the light of Christ's birth.

Just as a little baby in a manger offered hope to the world, Christians are called to follow in His footsteps and to be like lights in their worlds. No person is too flawed or too ordinary to make a difference, according to Orthodox teaching. Each person is called by God in his or her own way, to do the Lord's work. Spiritual efforts like the Nativity Fast may be a form of training for, and part of the manifestation of this.

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Authors note: I grew up in a Christian household. My family celebrated Christmas with gifts, food and family but no meaningful (to me) spiritual practice. When I was

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SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Father can be reached M-F 9a-4p or by appointment.

Online Community: Please email Fr. Dave to receive the weekly bulletin via email.

Phone Tree – Please call Fr. Dave to be added.

Emergency Sick Calls – Please notify Fr Dave when you or a family member are going into the hospital or having a procedure so he can pray with you and you may receive the Anointing to be fully prepared.

Mystery of Confession – Opportunities are available after every service, Saturdays during fasting periods from 11:00am to 1:00 pm, OR by appointment.

Holy Communion/Eucharist – The reception of the

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11 years old, I remember feeling depressed on Christmas Day. While I loved receiving many gifts and having new things, I had learned that the joy in that wore off very quickly, and I felt a sense of meaninglessness about the holiday and emptiness inside.

I remember vividly when I spoke to my mother about this problem. She knew right away what I was talking about and told me that I was experiencing the “post-Christmas let down.” I was shocked to learn there was a name for it, because if other people felt that way too, I couldn't understand why no one was talking about it or trying to fix it!

As I grew older, I constantly heard people lamenting how let down they felt days after Christmas, but people just seemed to accept it. I couldn't. Years later I converted to Orthodox Christianity. When I participated in the Nativity Fast for the first time, my past negative experience with Christmas was turned on its head. I knew I would never be subject to post-holiday blues again.

I realize that many people have Christmas spiritual traditions that they value and my personal experience is not universal. But as a mental health professional, I can't help but marvel at the complete grasp of the needs of the human soul and psyche, that informs the spiritual practice of pre-holiday fasting in the Orthodox Church.

While I wrote this article from more of an analytical point of view of why this spiritual practice can be so helpful to many, it is personal too. - Lisa C. DeLuca

Holy Eucharist is encouraged by all Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves, with fasting from midnight on, regular Confession, and forgiveness for all people. Those who are not Orthodox may receive a *blessing* from the chalice.

Baptisms – Please consult Father for details.

Marriages – Please consult Father ASAP for details (*before* arrangements are made for the hall).

Church Funerals – are provided for practicing Orthodox Christians who are current in their spiritual and financial obligations; otherwise burial is from the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

The Whole Armor of God

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹ And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.” ¹³ And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” ¹⁷ As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

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SPIRITUAL VITAMINS FOR THE WEEK

"All who stand for good must wage a constant battle with the forces of evil. For the demons still have power in the world (v. 12) until Christ comes again in glory. This is clearly acknowledged in the prayers at the conclusion of Orthodox baptism. Christians fight back with God's arms, that is, His uncreated divine energy, given to us (1: 19– 23; 3: 16– 21) and actively used by us. The Christian has "put on" (4: 24) at baptism all the qualities listed as armor in vv. 14– 17. These qualities must be exercised in the conflict of growth: no struggle, no deification." – *Orthodox Study Bible, Ephesians 6:10-17*

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"You, O Christ our Savior, have become for me the path of life which leads to the Father. There is but one path, and it is my joy, and at the end of it is the heavenly kingdom." +*St. Ephraim the Syrian*

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"All of noetic creation is filled with awe and with thanksgiving hymns of the mystery of Your nativity, O Master. The hosts of heaven rejoice, chanting: "Glory to God in the highest!" earth and men are filled with gladness, and we unceasingly cry out: O Jesus, Son of God, Who became incarnate for our sake, glory to You!" - *Akathist to the Nativity of Christ, Ikos 2*

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PRAYER CORNER

*Our Parish Prayer List for Special Intentions and Other Needs **



A Prayer For The Sick: O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant name. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver him/her from sickness and bitter pain. Heal him/her so that he/she may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

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For the Health of... Mildred, Anna Mae, Julie, Jane, Eleanor D., Mark, Viola, Juliana, Katie, Kenneth, Michael, Roberta, Fr Shuster, Fredrick, Helen B., Wendy, Gary, Barbara, Matthew, Patricia, Lino, John, Fr. Jonathan Tobias, Pañi Marsha Tobias, Mary ...*through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer.*

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For the Special Intentions of... Bishop Gregory, Stephen, David, Joshua, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Nancy, Ameer, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Olga, John, Sarah, John S., and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee: Matthew, John, Timothy, Patricia, Theresa, Lawrence, Donald, Jane, Cynthia, Katherine, Eleanor, Kenneth, Gina, Robert, Jillian, Wendy, Olga, John, Melanie, Michael, John, Richard, John, Margaret, Sarah, Patricia, and for those working towards our Community Outreach, ZOE For Life ...*through the prayers of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; St. John the Baptist; the Archangels Michael & Gabriel; and the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.*



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Birthday Prayers for... Father's "God-sister", Lauren Babbie (12/12) and Brian Gogal (12/15) ...*May God allow them to grow in peace and love all the days of their lives and may He grant them many and blessed years! Na Mnohaja I Blahaja L'ita!*

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For Expectant Mothers... Pañi Ileana, Ameer, Ashley, Katie, Meredith, Harmonie ...*through the prayers of St Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, & St Irene Chrysovalantou.*

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* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave know if you would wish to make additions or subtractions (in the case of answered prayers) to our Parish List. The words of the Gospel are true: **it is good to pray for one another**. Let this be a place where we lay out our concerns and beg the help of our brothers & sisters in Christ. *This prayer list is NOT limited to Orthodox Christians.*



DEVOTIONAL PRAYER FOR THE NATIVITY FAST:



2017 NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE

Bishop Gregory asks each member of our Diocese to pray this **Prayer for Peace** every evening of the Nativity Fast, either as a family or individually.



Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of God, You became flesh and dwelt among us. You made the womb of Your most-pure Mother more spacious than the heavens. Yet You, the true light, were born in the darkness of a cave, thereby enlightening the world that was darkened by sin. To redeem us, You shared Your whole life. You submitted to death on the Cross and rose from the dead, bestowing life. We share in Your death and resurrection, that we may indeed be dead to sin and alive in You. As we fast and prepare to celebrate Your life-giving manifestation, we pray especially that our respect for life will prevail in the world. Directed by Your command to care for "the least of these," may we and all people heed Your call to show care and concern for life in the womb; for the lives of the poor, oppressed, and suffering; and for the lives of the sick, the elderly, and the dying. May Your peace reign in our hearts and throughout the world, especially in places of unrest, so that the shedding of blood in warfare, violence, terrorism, tyranny, and all manner of strife may come to an end. May aggression between neighbors and nations fade away. May love reign in the lives of families. O Savior, You have said "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." May we become partakers of Your abundant life, together with all the saints whose lives have pleased You from the beginning. For You are the way, the truth and the life, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your eternal Father and Your most-holy, gracious and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. AMEN.