



Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church

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



Father Dave Urban, Pastor
Very Reverend Father 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

2688 California Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pa 15212
412-748-0148, Talk or Text
OrthodoxPittsburgh1932@gmail.com
www.OrthodoxPittsburgh.com

December 22, 2019

A Three (3) Week Bulletin

Volume V

27th Sunday after Pentecost / Conception by St. Anna of the Holy Theotokos

9:20 – Nativity Canon & Carols (*Kol'ady*); 9:30 - Divine Liturgy Tone 2 Liturgical Color: **Purple**
Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17; Gospel: Luke 17:12-19 (*12th Sunday of Luke*)
Panachida for +Mildred Gavulich (1-year) offered by family and 40-day for +Evalyn T. Brudnak (11/14)

SERVICES, SAINTS, AND READINGS FOR THE WEEK

The opportunity for the Holy Mystery of Confession is available following every service.

# Monday	Martyr Menas the Melodius (310)	2 Timothy 2:20-26	Mark 8:11-21
# Tuesday	Venerable Daniel the Stylite (490)	2 Timothy 3:16-4:4	Mark 8:22-26
# Wednesday	St. Spyridon the Wonderworker of Tremithon (348)	2 Timothy 4:9-22	Mark 8:30-34
# Thursday	Venerable Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska (1836) & Synaxis of the First Martyrs of the American land	Titus 1:5-2:1	Mark 9:10-16
# Friday	Martyrs Thyrsus and Callinicus of Apollonia (250)	Titus 1:15-2:10	Mark 9:33-41
# Saturday	Venerable Paul of Mt. Latros (956)	Ephesians 1:16-23	Luke 14:1-11

* Let us Imitate Christ and the Saints and Fast as they did! # Nativity (Philip's) Fast (Advent)

December 29 – 28th Sunday after Pentecost / Prophet Haggai (Aggaeus) (500 B.C.) Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, the Patriarchs

9:20 – Nativity Canon & Carols (*Kol'ady*); 9:30 - Divine Liturgy Tone 3 Liturgical Color: **Purple**
Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11; Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

Additional collection for our community outreach / Church School

+++ +++ +++

Thursday, January 2 – 9:30am Prefestive Moleben (Service) of the Nativity of our Lord

Saturday, January 4 – 11a-1p Mystery of Holy Confession offered

The opportunity for the Holy Mystery of Confession is available following every service.

# Monday	The Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths	Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19	Mark 9:42-10:1
# Tuesday	Martyr Sebastian at Rome and his companions (287)	Hebrews 4:1-13	Mark 10:2-12
# Wednesday	Martyr Boniface at Tarsus in Cilicia (290)	Hebrews 5:11-6:8	Mark 10:11-15
# Thursday	Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer of Antioch (107)	Hebrews 7:1-6	Mark 10:17-27
# Friday	Virgin-martyr Juliana of Nicomedia (304)	Hebrews 7:18-25	Luke 2:1-20
# Saturday	Great-martyr Anastasia of Rome (304)	Hebrews 13:17-21	Matthew 2:1-12

* Let us Imitate Christ and the Saints and Fast as they did! # Nativity (Philip's) Fast (Advent)

January 5 – 29th Sunday after Pentecost / Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ Sunday of the Holy Fathers / St. Theoctistus, archbishop of Novgorod (1310)

9:20 – Nativity Canon & Carols (*Kol'ady*); 9:30 - Divine Liturgy Tone 4 Liturgical Color: **Purple**
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40; Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Church School

+++ +++ +++

Monday, January 6 – A Day of Strict Fasting / 9:30 Royal Hours of the Nativity

Tuesday, January 7 – 9:30a Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

A Warm Welcome To Our Visitors!

Glory Be To Jesus Christ!

(responded with: **Glory Be Forever!**)

Slava Isusu Christu! (Slava Na Viki!)

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

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

This Bulletin Is Offered:

If you wish to sponsor a bulletin In Honor of (anniversary, birthday, etc.) or In Memory of someone, please do so by signing up on the sheet in the vestibule of the Church or by contacting Fr. Dave. An additional stewardship offering to the Church is requested.

The first Christmas

was pretty simple.

It's okay if yours is too.



+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++



PARISH BULLETIN BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS



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

No, Father Does Not Want You To Buy Gift Cards for a Parishioner in Need

Cyber crime has been infiltrating our lives and our homes for years. It is now knocking at the door of our parishes. Parishes are being targeted by a phishing scam via an email or text message where the attacker poses falsely as the priest and asks the recipient for money or gift cards. [This has happened at least 5 times in the past couple months!] I can guarantee that I will never ask you to do something like this! If you receive something out of the ordinary, be sure to call me and I will contact the *Federal Trade Commission* and *FBI*. Thank you!

Fr. Dave Urban (and please use the phone number in the header)

+++ +++ +++

The Nativity Fast (*Filipovka / Advent*) – The Fast runs until the Eve of the Nativity of our Lord on Monday, January 6. As in Great Lent, you should establish for yourself a rule of fasting and stick to it. It is often said that the Nativity Fast is so much more difficult because of the nature of society around us (and being on the *Old Calendar, the false thought of celebrating ‘two Christmases’*). We can enjoy the season with our extended family and friends and still keep the spirit of the Fast. Everyone should try, at a minimum, to keep Monday, Wednesday and Friday as fast days, no matter what is happening on the ‘new calendar.’ If you have questions, please talk with Father Dave. **Prepare the Manger of your Soul for the coming of the new borne Messiah!** His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory has once again initiated his **Advent Prayer Challenge**. (The prayer for this is at the end of the bulletin.) Each person in every home is to have a card to have by their bedside to add the prayer to their evening prayers. Families are also encouraged to say the prayer together.

+++ +++ +++

Confessions will be heard after ALL services, from 11a-1p on Saturday January 4, and by appointment. All faithful are encouraged to come to this Mystery each of the four fasting periods of the Church to help maintain spiritual health. *Prepare the Manger of your Soul for the coming of the new borne Messiah!*

+++ +++ +++



Nativity Commemorations – We offer you the opportunity to sponsor items to be used for Nativity as commemorations: *anonymously, in memory of departed loved ones, OR for the health of loved ones*. If you are interested in making any of these commemorations, please sign up on the sheet in the Vestibule and give an *additional free-will stewardship offering* to the Church.

+++ +++ +++

Changes to our Parish Directory – Has any of your information changed since our 2018 Parish Directory was published? Please contact Father Dave ASAP. Thank you!

Our Stewardship Gifts To God

Stewardship:	\$ 1073
Candles/Eternal Lamp:	\$ 212
Envelopes/Stewardship:	\$ 435
Stewardship for new Altar Boy Robes:	\$ 1000
Total Collections:	\$ 2720
Capital Improvement Fund:	\$ 10
Fundraising Account (Candy Sale):	\$ 569.50
Relocation Fund (*includes raffle):	\$ 400

Give Generously: “For they gave according to their means... and beyond their means, of their own free will.” 2 Cor 8:3

+++ +++ +++

Weekly Candle Intentions / Memorials were offered last week by Viola Peifer; Tim Martin; Shuster Family; Kathy Schrmack; Olga Radick; Mary Jane Hudak; Mirilovich Family; Margaret Rusnak; Joanne Nelson; Theresa Sharpless; Patty Watson; Cindy Pavilonis.

“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

The Eternal Lamp was offered last week by Tim Martin for the Health of Valerie Enslin. Many Years!

+++ +++ +++

Stewardship is due - The end of the civil calendar year is here. Have you made a financial contribution to your parish yet? Please fulfill your stewardship responsibility of *time, talent, and treasure*.

+++ +++ +++

2020 Calendars have arrived and are in the Church Vestibule to be picked up.

+++ +++ +++

Nativity Coffee Social – will be a cover-dish surprise supplied by everyone in the parish. Bring in your favorite dish and let’s celebrate the Feast with a feast on January 7th!

+++ +++ +++

Christmas Raffle – Items are requested and being collected on the bar top in the church hall for our Christmas Raffle. Typically people will bring in a nice bottle of wine, but feel free to be creative!

+++ +++ +++

Prayer requests – During the Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, prayers are said for the sick and those celebrating special occasions listed in the bulletin. If silent prayers are requested, they will be offered quietly at the altar at all services. All those listed in the “Prayer Corner” are prayed for during the Proskomedia (*Preparation of the Bread and Wine for Communion*). Prayer requests will remain for (about) 40 days unless requested otherwise. Please let Fr. Dave know if you wish to make additions or subtractions (in the case of answered prayers) to our parish prayer list.

+++ +++ +++

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

+++ +++ +++

ACRY NEWS

Jr. ACRY to restart! We are excited to announce that a local Jr. ACRY chapter is going to be restarted at our parish!

+++

Ice Skating – Our Jr. ACRY’s 1st social event will be ice skating at the PPG rink downtown on Sunday, January 5th following our coffee social. **ALL** are encouraged to come! One of the beauties of this ice rink is that anyone can come and watch (and eat) without paying to skate. I pray that many of you will be able to attend!

+++ +++ +++

Coffee Social Steward Schedule

December 29: **Open / Meat-Free Potluck**

January 5: **Open / Meat-Free Potluck**

January 12: **Open / Potluck**

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. (Everyone is also encouraged to help clean up after.) Thank you to all those who support and keep this critical ministry alive in our parish!

+++ +++ +++



Home Blessings – will begin **1/19/20**. It is **NOT TOO EARLY** to schedule your annual home blessing! Fr. Dave is

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

interested in visiting and catching up with **EVERYONE** this coming Theophany season. Please catch Father when he has his phone to plan ahead.

+++ +++ +++

Part Time Work – D car Transportation, operating out of the Northside Pittsburgh, is looking for part time drivers who have a clean driving record, a PA drivers license, are dependable, and customer friendly (having a CDL is a bonus). Anyone looking to make a little extra money driving some high-end clientele around Pittsburgh and back-and-forth to the airport, please call Denny at 412-725-3345.

+++ +++ +++

Snowed In? Physically unable to make it to church? – Our diocese is blessed with the opportunity to watch our Cathedral’s Divine Liturgy every Sunday at 9am. Of course, the best scenario is to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive the Eucharist. When limitations occur, please consider taking the time Sunday morning to pray with our brothers and sisters via the web. Go to www.acrod.org/organizations/cathedral/live/ to watch the *live broadcast*.

+++ +++ +++

LOOKING AHEAD LOCALLY

- ✘ **Wednesday**, January 8 – 9:30 Divine Liturgy
- ✘ **Thursday**, January 9 – 9:30 Divine Liturgy

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

“Of all the afflictions that burden the human race, there is not one, whether spiritual or bodily, that cannot be healed by the Holy Scriptures.” +Saint John Chrysostom

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-17

The Whole Armor of God

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For 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. ¹³Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

+++ +++ +++

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then said Jesus, “Were not ten



cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

+++ +++ +++

December 29: Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷In these you once walked, when you lived in them. ⁸But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth’ian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

+++ +++ +++

December 29: Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

¹⁶But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; ¹⁷and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for all is now ready.’ ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.’ ¹⁹And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.’ ²⁰And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I

cannot come.’²¹ So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.’²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.”

+++ +++ +++

January 5: Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40

⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions,³⁴ quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.³⁵ Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.³⁶ Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment.³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—³⁸of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised,⁴⁰ since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

+++ +++ +++

January 5: Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,⁴ and Ram the father of Ammin'adab, and Ammin'adab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

father of Salmon,⁵ and Salmon the father of Bo'az by Rahab, and Bo'az the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uri'ah,⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehobo'am, and Rehobo'am the father of Abi'jah, and Abi'jah the father of Asa,⁸ and Asa the father of Jehosh'aphat, and Jehosh'aphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzzi'ah,⁹ and Uzzi'ah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezeki'ah,¹⁰ and Hezeki'ah the father of Manas'seh, and Manas'seh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josi'ah,¹¹ and Josi'ah the father of Jechoni'ah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoni'ah was the father of She-al'ti-el, and She-al'ti-el the father of Zerub'babel,¹³ and Zerub'babel the father of Abi'ud, and Abi'ud the father of Eli'akim, and Eli'akim the father of Azor,¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eli'ud,¹⁵ and Eli'ud the father of Elea'zar, and Elea'zar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob,¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit;¹⁹ and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.²⁰ But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit;²¹ she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called *Emman'u-el*” (which means, *God with us*).²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife,²⁵ but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The Conception by Saint Anna, “Whence is Conceived the Holy Mother of God”

Commemorated on December 22/9

The Conception by Saint Anna, of “Whence is Conceived the Holy Mother of God”: Saint Anna, the mother of the Most Holy Mother of God, was the youngest daughter of the priest Nathan from Bethlehem, descended from the tribe of Levi. She entered into marriage with Saint Joakim, who was a native of Galilee. For a long time Saint Anna was childless, but after a span of some 20 years, through the fervent prayer of both spouses, an Angel of the Lord announced to them the Conception of a Daughter, Who would bring blessing to all the human race. The Conception by Saint Anna took place at Jerusalem, where also was born the Most Holy Virgin Mary by



name. The majority of icons, dedicated to the Conception by Saint Anna, portray the Most Holy Virgin trampling underfoot the serpent. “Down the icon, along its sides, Saints Joakim and Anna are depicted usually with upraised hands prayerfully folded; their eyes also are directed upward and they contemplate the Mother of God, Who as it were soars in the air with outstretched hands; under Her feet is portrayed an orb wound round with a serpent symbolizing the devil, which in the face of fallen forefathers strives to conquer with its power all the universe”.

There also exist icons, upon which Saint Anna holds on her left arm the Most Holy Virgin at an infant age. Upon the face of Saint Anna is portrayed a special reverence. And from ancient times this feast was especially venerated by pregnant women.

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

LIVING ORTHODOXY

Christmas Is What We Make It

By Deacon Haralambos Joiner,
from his blog Orthodox Way of Life

Awake! God is becoming man. He wants to show us the path to paradise.

When I look around me the signs of this season to not point to such a great event. The images that I found with a google search are mainly about Santa Clause, reindeer, Elves, presents, decorated trees, office parties... Seems like the season is all about this world's pleasures. Where is Christ? What kind of Christmas will WE make?

To tell the truth, it seems like most of us are asleep spiritually. We enjoy Christmas time with all its celebrations. But in the midst of these God is distant from us, we are unaware of our sinfulness, we rarely pray, only attend church periodically out of duty, and only periodically participate in the sacrament when we do come, and many have never been to confession. Maybe the secular Christmas celebration fits us. Are we are making Christmas fit what we believe?

We all need to be awakened to the Truth!

What is Christmas all about? Are we celebrating the birth of a baby boy? No! We are celebrating the beginning of the way to our salvation. God becomes man, a human being who is also God! Christmas is about the Incarnation of our Lord, Savior, our Creator. God becomes man to show us our true potential created in His image and likeness. After His birth He lives with humility, heals, teaches and then is unjustly and voluntarily killed by Crucifixion, suffers, is beaten, humiliated, and hung naked nailed to the Cross. His life and death was to show



us our path to paradise. After His death He is resurrected, defeating death with His death. He then Ascends into Heaven and is seated at right hand of God. After teaching His disciples the mysteries sends the Holy Spirit empowering them to establish ecclesias, gatherings of believers, communities where they can grow spiritually. This all begins with the event we call Christmas. We are celebrating our very entrance into the pathway of our salvation.

"The festival approaches, the most to be revered, the most awesome, and which we might justly term the center of all festivals, that of the birth and manifestation of Christ in the flesh."

+St. John Chrysostom

Let's not be lulled to sleep with all the secular attachments that merchants have created to stimulate our shopping habits and desires. Our secular values have stripped the true meaning from all aspects of the activities of this season.

How was Christmas celebrated traditionally?

It began with a fast, an inner period of reflection, preparing ourselves to become more worthy to receive the King. It was only after the Christmas Day that we celebrated, exchanged gifts, visited friends and relatives. This is the 12 days of Christmas which are fast free and set aside for celebration of this great event. Before this awesome day we are preparing to receive God as man and then, after His birth, to glorify His coming for our salvation. The celebration ends with another important celebration, Epiphany, the baptism of Christ and the beginning of His ministry.

www.orthodoxwayoflife.blogspot.com/2019/

+++ +++ +++

The Orthodox Church And The Immaculate Conception

By Very Rev. Daniel Rohan (2002)

[In the West, the *Feast of the Conception of Holy Mary Theotokos* by her mother Anna is known as *the Feast of the Immaculate Conception*. This article is written about the difference between the meaning of the two feasts.]

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God was first promulgated as a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church in the year 1854, by Pope Pius IX. The official statement of it is as follows:

"The doctrine which declares that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore must be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church."

The declaration of this doctrine to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church marked the end of a period of often bitter controversy between its adherents and those who denied it, a controversy

that involved some of the most well-known Roman theologians.

Throughout the Eastern part of the Roman Empire from as far back as the fifth century a feast day was observed on December 22/9 entitled, "The Conception of St. Ann." This feast day celebrated the events surrounding the conception of the Mother of God by St. Ann in her and her husband Joachim's old age, as set forth in the apocryphal Protoevangelion of James. There was no attempt on the part of hymn writers to suggest that there was any other miracle than conception in the face of prolonged sterility. This feast day soon became popular with Western Christians by the 8th century and was celebrated on December 8th. Soon, some Western churchmen began teaching that Mary, from the moment of her conception, was "miraculously innocent" of the guilt of original sin. This teaching was bitterly opposed by such churchmen as Bernard of Clairvaux and even the great Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican order. Eventually, however, in 1854 those who accepted it gained the attention of the Pope, who effectively ended all the controversy about it.

In order to understand the position of the Orthodox Church on this teaching we must begin

with understanding the Orthodox concept of original sin as opposed to that prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church's teaching of original sin, based in part on the writings of St. Augustine, states that each human being at the moment of conception is guilty of the sin of Adam's disobedience. This was based on St. Augustine's slightly flawed Latin translation of Roman's 5:12 (he did not read Greek with proficiency), "so death spread to all men in whom (Adam) all men sinned," rather than ... "because all men sinned." It is this teaching that caused the Roman Catholic Church to create a place called "Limbo" (from the Latin word *limbus* meaning "border" or "hem") on the border of heaven where the souls of unbaptized infants could find refuge since, though not all guilty of any personal sin, they still had the guilt of original sin on their souls and could not enter heaven proper.

In the medieval Roman Catholic Church, original sin was believed to be transmitted in a physical sense through conception; it thus became important to many that Mary be preserved from this "taint." Hence, the creation in the ninth century of the doctrine of the "immaculate conception."

The Orthodox Church has kept alive the original understanding of the early Church as regards "original sin." The early Church did not understand "original sin" as having anything to do with "transmitted guilt" but with "transmitted mortality." Because Adam sinned all humanity shares not in his guilt but in his punishment. We are tempted by sin and we become guilty of it through our own personal sins committed; we therefore suffer and we die. This is the Orthodox understanding of "original sin." It is not something that we are guilty of personally but an action whose consequences have affected our lives by leading us to sin and our own guilt by way of our own personal sin.

In the light of this, the Roman doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is unnecessary. In the Orthodox eyes there is simply no original "guilt"

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

SPIRITUAL VITAMINS FOR THE WEEK

"Don't forget these words: God has given you time to build your eternal salvation. Do not waste it!" +St. Sophrony

+++

"The enemy enters the hearts of men because they have given themselves up to a carnal mode of life—to gluttony, and because they do not pray. It is, therefore, natural that he can be driven out from them by opposite means—that is, by prayer and fasting." +St. John of Kronstadt

+++

"Thus, if we have made a few efforts in the new

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

for Mary to be made innocent of (which is why we have no "Limbo" for unbaptized infants who die, either). This was also at one time the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Often, those advocating the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception have sought to discover it in Orthodox writers of the Middle Ages or in Orthodox hymns. It must be remembered, though, that these writers who often refer to Mary as having been "prepared," and "sanctified," and who hail her as the "immaculate one," are thinking in the context of the Orthodox view of original sin and not the Western. None of these writers put forth a claim that Mary was immortal — which is a necessary claim if they accepted the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the context of the Orthodox view of original sin. Many of these theologians held to a view that by special grace the Mother of God did not commit any personal sins; others asserted that Mary was sanctified through her response to Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).



Taken at face value, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is seen by Orthodox as separating the Mother of God from the rest of the human race. This would have made it impossible for Christ to become "truly man" if Mary were not subject to the same conditions of humanity as those who Christ has become incarnate to save. Mary is human, and through her, God became fully human as well.

During this Advent season, the Orthodox Church frequently remembers the Virgin Mary as a gift of humanity to God, through whom God gave Himself back to humanity: "What shall we offer You, O Christ," says one of our Christmas hymns, "who for our sake has appeared on the earth as a man? Every creature which You have made offers You thanks ... we offer You a Virgin Mother. O pre-eternal God, have mercy on us."

Very Rev. Daniel Rohan is pastor of St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church, Youngstown, OH.

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



order of life, the enemy hammers into our head the illusion: "I have worked so hard, have fasted so long, spent so many nights without sleep and so on. It's time for a rest." "Rest a while," the enemy suggests, "give the flesh a break. It's time for a little amusement." Then, just as soon as the inexperienced beginner agrees to this, indulgence follows indulgence till the whole order of righteous life is upset. Back we drop into the life we had abandoned, beginning to live carelessly and thoughtlessly, never rolling up our sleeves. " Fr. Jack Sparks, *Victory in the Unseen Warfare*, p.54

visit Your suffering servant **name(s)**. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver **him/her/them** from sickness and bitter pain. Heal **him/her/them** so that **he/she/they** may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us. Amen.

+++ +++ +++

For the Health of... Daniel, Lexi, Susan, Stelian, John, Alexandra D., Annie, Pañi Marie, Jake, Anna Mae, Eleanor D., Viola, Juliana, Fredrick, Kenneth, Michael, Roberta, Gary, Lino, June, Doug, Joanne ...*through the prayers of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker; St. Luke, the Surgeon; and St. Panteleimon, the Healer.*

+++ +++ +++

For the Special Intentions of... Metropolitan Gregory, Stephen, David, Anastasia, Nicholas, Cassandra, Alexander, Nancy, Andrea, Jason, Tyrone, Sarah, Ameer, Joshua, John, Kathryn, Rose, Charles, Justin our seminarians: Thomas, John, Daniel and Dylan and our Church Council, Curators, and Relocation Committee: Matthew, Lawrence, Timothy, Theresa, Rich, Gina, Robert, Jane, Anthony, Mary Jane, Steven, Kenneth, Jillian, John, Wendy, John, Margaret, John, John, Todd and for those who labor towards our Community Outreach ...*through the prayers of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; St. John the Baptist; the Archangels Michael & Gabriel; and the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.*

+++ +++ +++

Patronal Feast Days (Name's Day):

(contact Fr. Dave with your Patron Saint)

+++ +++ +++

Birthday Prayers for... Jaydon Maruscak (12/23), Caitlin Brozell (12/28), Eleanor Dussling (12/28) ...*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!*

+++ +++ +++

For our Catechumens & Inquirers... Dustin, Stephen,

+++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++ +++

Daniel, Susan ...*through the prayers of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. John Maximovitch.*

+++ +++ +++

For those preparing for Marriage... Ashley & Derek ...*through the prayers of Sts. Adrian & Natalia and all Holy Martyrs.*

+++ +++ +++

For Pregnant Mothers... Caitlenn, Allison, Pañi Ileana, Faith...*through the prayers of St Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary, & St Irene Chrysovalantou.*

+++ +++ +++

For those serving in the Armed Forces & Civil Authorities... Thomas R. Dzadoovsky, Devin Meegan, and Trevor Meegan ...*through the prayers of St George, the Great-Martyr & Wonderworker.*

+++ +++ +++

For the souls of the newly departed... +Archpriest Stephen Shuga (12/16), +Kelly Leone (11/25), +Francis (Smoley) Zatorsky (11/19) ...*May the Lord God grant them blessed repose where there is no pain sorrow or mourning. May their Memory in God be Eternal*

+++ +++ +++

* This is to be used for the special intentions of our brothers and sisters in Christ and can be inserted as a prayer itself into our daily prayers. Please let Fr. Dave know if you 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 only Orthodox Christians.



DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS FOR THE NATIVITY FAST:



A PRAYER FOR PEACE - NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2019

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

O Christ our God, at Your Holy Birth, the choirs of angels proclaimed peace to the shepherds in the fields. (Luke 2:14) After Your Glorious Resurrection, You came to Your disciples saying "Peace be with you!" (John 20:19) May Your Holy Peace be pre- sent in our hearts, in our homes, in Your Church, and in the entire world. Cleanse us of all impurity, O Lord, so that we may be filled with Your peace which surpasses all understanding, and which will guard our hearts and minds. (Philippians 4:7) Sanctify us completely, O God of Peace, so that our whole spirit, soul, and body be pre- served blameless at Your coming. (1 Thessalonians 5:23) For You are the King of Peace and the Savior of our Souls, and to You we give glory forever. Amen.

THE CANON OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Ode 1: Christ is born, glorify him! Christ comes from heaven, meet Him! Christ is an earth, be exalted! O all the earth, sing to the Lord, and sing praises in gladness, all people, for He has been glorified.

Ode 3: To the Son Who was begotten of the Father without change before all ages, and in the last times was without seed made flesh of the Virgin, to Christ our God, let us cry aloud: You have raised up our horn, holy are You, O Lord!

Ode 4: Rod of the root of Jesse, and flower that blossomed from his stem, O Christ, You have sprung forth from the Virgin. From the mountain overshadowed by the forest You came, made flesh for her that knew not wedlock, O God not formed from matter. Glory to Your power O Lord!

Ode 5: As You are God of Peace and Father of mercies, You have sent to us Your Angel of Great Counsel, granting unto us peace. So are we guided towards the light of the knowledge of God. And watching by night, we glorify You, O Lover of mankind.

Ode 6: The sea monster spat forth Jonah as it had received him, like a babe from the womb: while the Word, having dwelt in the Virgin and taken flesh: came forth from her yet kept her undefiled. For being Himself not subject to decay. He preserved His Mother free from harm.

Ode 7: Scorning the impious decree, the three children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire: but standing in the midst of the flame they sang: "O God of our fathers, blessed are You!"

Ode 8: The furnace moist with dew was the image of a wonder past nature. For it burned not the children whom it had received, even as the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin's womb into which It had descended. Therefore in praise, let us sing: let the whole creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him above all forever.

Ode 9: I behold a strange and wonderful mystery. The cave has become heaven, the throne of the Cherubim, the Virgin. The manger a noble place where lies Christ our God Who cannot be contained. Let us praise Him in song and magnify You!