



THE FORERUNNER
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist
Orthodox Church OCA
420 Laura Street
Philipsburg, PA 16866
(814) 342-2011

Very Rev. John Horosky - Priest
Mark Ammerman - Council President

December 2012
Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

Service Schedule

December 2

- General Confession & Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Coffee Hour following Liturgy
Council Meeting

December 9

- Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Coffee Hour following Liturgy

December 16

- Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Coffee Hour following Liturgy

December 23

- Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Coffee Hour following Liturgy

December 24

- Compline @ 2:00 PM

December 25 - Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

- Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM

December 30

- Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
Coffee Hour following Liturgy

For private confession, call Father to make arrangements.

Remember in your prayers: Bishop MELCHISEDEK, Father John, Father Adam, Father Ted, Father Paul, Father Michael, Jennifer and Vincent, Larry Ammerman, Mary Ann Ammerman, Karen Blackburn, Chris Conkey, James Crites, Helen Czar, Joe Demchak, Mike Demchak, Steve Demchak, Eileen Donovan, Joe Edwards, Michael Evans, Bonnie Fetcenko, Jeffrey Fetcenko, Randy Fetcenko, Rose Marie Fetcenko, Yvonne Fetcenko, Olga Finlayson, Kenneth Finlayson, Jack Foster, Mary Foster, Harry Horosky, Evan Morgan, Richard Nakles, Anna Pennington, Karen Saupp, Harry Socie, Alexandria Stine, Karen Stine, Eleanor Sura, Holly Thompson, Andrew Tocimak, Irene Tocimak, Louise Tocimak, Walter Varagea, Delores Varagea.

"O Master, the all-sustainer, and Holy King, Who punishes, but reduces not to death, Who strengthens the failing, and raises the outcast, Who remedies the bodily sorrows of men, we pray unto Thee, O Our Lord, visit Thine infirm servants with Thy mercy; forgive them every transgression, voluntary and involuntary. Verily O Lord, send down from Heaven Thy healing power, touch the body, extinguish the fever, lessen the suffering and every infirmity of Thy servants, raise them decumbent, from sickness, and from the bed of evilness, make them whole and all-restored, return them to Thy Church well-pleasing and fulfilling Thy will. For it is of Thine own, to be merciful and to save us, O Lord, and unto Thee we send glory, to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Reader's Schedule

Hours

12/2	Doug Donovan
12/9	Mark Ammerman
12/16	John Conkey
12/23	Andrew Tocimak
12/25	Andrew Tocimak
12/30	Edward Batchko

Epistle

Doug Donovan
Mark Ammerman
John Conkey
Andrew Tocimak
Andrew Tocimak
Edward Batchko

Feast Days

12/6	St. Nicholas
12/25	Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
12/26	Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God
12/27	First Martyr Stephen



Congratulations to Ivan Switala. Ivan has been coming to the services at St. John's and learning about the Orthodox faith. He has received the sacraments and has asked to be a member of St. John's. God grant you many years!

Thank you. Many thanks to the ladies and gents who will be helping to make the nut and poppy seed rolls. On their feet for hours, these faithful parishioners work with love to produce quality baked goods and ethnic foods that are highly praised and in great demand! God grant you many years!

Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

From the Desk of Father John Horosky

The feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (section 3,13) it says, Brethren, observe the feast days: and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month." In another place it also says, "Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world.

During the time after the Church began to celebrate the Nativity of Christ with his baptism which is called Theophany ("Manifestation of God") however in support , it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that " Jesus began to be about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23) when he was baptized. So that began to separate the feast days about the fifth or sixth century. On the eve of both feast days and the feast days themselves are the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world.

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is the cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind," for the Savior is Born"

This is the reason for The Church and her people has a joyful event during this season. It is not Black Friday that people should concern themselves with, but in the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

As described in verses 8–20 of the second chapter of the [Gospel of Luke](#), shepherds were tending their flocks out in the countryside near [Bethlehem](#), when they were terrified by the appearance of an [angel](#). The angel explains that he has a message of good news for all people, namely that "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

After this, a great many more angels appear, praising God with the words "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.¹ Deciding to do as the angel had said, the shepherds travel to Bethlehem, and find Mary and Joseph and the infant [Jesus](#) lying in the [manger](#), just as they had been told.

The Hanging Vigil above the Royal Doors of the iconostasis is supported by Irene Pollock in loving memory of her sister and brother-in-law Margaret and Robert Stefanko.

The Vigils on the Tetrapod are supported by Irene Pollock in loving memory of her parents, sisters, brothers, husband, nephew and stepfather.

The votives in front of the iconostasis, on the candlestands and in front of the icons in the nave are supported by Andrew & Louise Tocimak in loving memory of George Tocimak.

The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

The celebration of the feast of the **Nativity of Christ** in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord's Resurrection. A fast of forty days precedes the feast, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Savior. Thus, on St Andrew's Day (November 30) and St Nicholas Day (December 6) songs are sung to announce the coming birthday of the Lord: Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger. O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing Christ in her womb (Vesperal Hymn of St Nicholas Day)

On the eve of Christmas, the **Royal Hours** are read and the **Divine Liturgy of St. Basil** is served with **Vespers**. At these services the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's birth are chanted, emphasizing the prophecy of **Micah** which foretells Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Savior, and the prophecies of **Isaiah** about the appearance and character of the Messiah:

The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which translated is, God with us (Is 7:14-15). God is with us, understand all ye nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us (Is 8:9). For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end (Is 9:6-7).

The **Vigil of Christmas** begins with **Great Compline**, highlighted once again by the solemn chanting of *God is with us* and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah. At Compline there is also the singing of the Troparion and Kontakion of the feast along with the special hymns glorifying the Savior's birth. There are also the special long litanies of intercession and the solemn blessing of the **five loaves** of bread together with the **wheat** and the **wine** of which the faithful partake and the **oil** with which they are anointed. This part of the festal vigil, which is done on all great feasts, is called the **litya** (in Greek, the *artoklasia* or the **breaking of the bread**).

At the beginning of the **Christmas Matins**, which together with Compline form the Christmas Vigil, the six matinal psalms begin as usual with the words; Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men (*Lk 2:14*). At the Christmas services these words of the angelic song are normally sung with great solemnity rather than being chanted as at the daily service. The Christmas Matins proceed as usual. The gospel reading from Matthew (*1:18-25*) tells of the birth of Christ, and all of the hymns and verses glorify his appearance on earth:

Christ is born, glorify him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet him. Christ is an earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For he is glorified. (First Ode of the Christmas Canon)

The **Christmas Liturgy** begins with psalms of glorification and praise. The troparion and kontakion mark the entrance with the Book of the Gospels. The baptismal line from **Galatians 3:27** once again replaces the Thrice-Holy. The Epistle reading is from **Galatians**:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir (Gal 4:4-7).

The Gospel reading is the familiar Christmas story from **Matthew (2:1-12)**, and the liturgy continues in the normal fashion. A specific two-day celebration follows, dedicated to **Mary the Theotokos** and **St Stephen, the First Martyr**. The period of Christmas rejoicing extends to Epiphany during which time the Christmas songs are sung and fasting and kneeling in prayer are not called for by the Church. The feast of Christmas is formally entitled the **Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ**. At Christmas we celebrate the birth as a man of the Son of God, the one who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is truly God from all eternity. Thus, we sing in the Church.

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the Eternal God is born as a little child (Kontakion).

The feast of Christmas was not a separate Church feast for the first four centuries of Christian history. It was celebrated with **Epiphany** in the one great feast of God's appearance on earth in the form of the human Messiah of Israel. The Nativity began to be celebrated as such on the twenty-fifth of December in order to offset the pagan festival of the Invincible Sun which occurred on that day. It was established by the Church quite consciously as an attempt to defeat the false religion of the heathens. Thus, we discover the troparion of the feast making a polemic against the worship of the sun and the stars and calling for the adoration of Christ, the **True Sun of Righteousness** (*Mal 4:2*), who is himself worshiped by all of the elements of nature. Thus, the feast of Christmas is the celebration of the world's salvation through the Son of God who became man for our sake that, through him, we might ourselves become divine, sons of God the Father by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit in us. **Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

And a Child Shall Lead Them

And a Child Shall Lead Them ...A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:1-9

We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat Erik in a high chair and noticed everyone was quietly sitting and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said, 'Hi.' He pounded his fat baby hands on the high chair tray. His eyes were crinkled in laughter and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin, as he wriggled and giggled with merriment. I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. It was a man whose pants were baggy with a zipper at half-mast and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard and his nose was so varicose it looked like a road map. We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. 'Hi there, baby; hi there, big boy. I see ya, buster,' the man said to Erik.

My husband and I exchanged looks, 'What do we do?' Erik continued to laugh and answer, 'Hi.' Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and then at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby. Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room, 'Do ya patty cake? Do you know peek-a-boo? Hey, look, he knows peek-a-boo.' Nobody thought the old man was cute. My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence; all except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn, reciprocated with his cute comments. We finally got through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot.

The old man sat poised between the door and me. 'Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik,' I prayed. As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back trying to sidestep him and avoid any air he might be breathing. As I did, Erik leaned over my arm, reaching with both arms in a baby's 'pick-me-up*' position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms to the man. Suddenly a very old smelly man and a very young baby consummated their love and kinship. Erik in an act of total trust, love, and submission laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes. His aged hands full of grime, pain, and hard labor, cradled my baby's bottom and stroked his back. No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time. I stood awestruck. The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms and his eyes opened and set squarely on mine.

He said in a firm commanding voice, "You take care of this baby". Somehow I managed, "I will", from a throat that contained a stone. He pried Erik from his chest, lovingly and longingly, as though HE were in pain. I received my baby, and the man said, 'God bless you, ma'am, you've given me my Christmas Gift.' I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car. My husband was wondering why I was crying and holding Erik so tightly, and why I was saying, "My God, my God, forgive me".

I had just witnessed Christ's love, shown through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment; a child who saw a soul, and a mother who saw a suit of clothes. I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt it was God asking, "Are you willing to share your son for a moment?" When He shared His for all eternity. How did God feel when he put his baby in our arms over 2000 years ago?

The ragged old man, unwittingly, had reminded me, To enter the Kingdom of God, we must become as little children. Sometimes, it takes a child to remind us of what is really important. We must always remember who we are, where we came from, and most importantly, how we feel about others. The clothes on your back, or the car that you drive, or the house that you live in, does NOT define you at all. It is how you treat your fellow man - that identifies Who You Are.

As we begin the New Year, the year 2013, let us remember the Christ Child and embrace each other as did the baby and the old man. "He called a little child and had him stand among men. And he said: I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-4).

