



# The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

## Orthodox Church O.C.A.

420 Laura Street  
 Philipsburg, PA 16866  
 (814) 342-2011

Very Rev. John Horosky - Priest  
 John Conkey - Council President

April 2013  
 Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

### Service Schedule

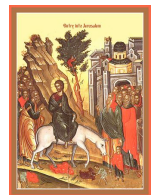
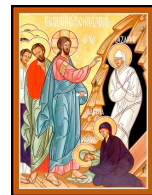
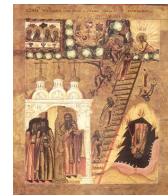
- April 6 – Soul Saturday**  
 Confession @ 9:00 AM  
 Hours @ 9:30 AM  
 Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
- April 7 – Veneration of the Cross**  
 Hours @ 9:30 AM  
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM  
 Special collection for Seminarian  
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy  
 Council Meeting following Liturgy
- April 10 – Wednesday**  
 Confession @ 5:00 PM  
 Pre-sanctified @ 6:00 PM
- April 14 – St. John Climacus**  
 Hours @ 9:30 AM  
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM  
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy
- April 17 – Wednesday**  
 Confession @ 5:00 PM  
 Pre-sanctified @ 6:00 PM
- April 21 – Mary of Egypt**  
 Hours @ 9:30 AM  
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM  
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy
- April 27 – Lazarus Saturday**  
 Confession @ 9:00 AM  
 Hours @ 9:30 AM  
 Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
- April 28 – Palm Sunday**  
 Hours @ 9:30 AM  
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM  
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy

### Reader's Schedule

	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Epistle</i>
4/7	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
4/14	D. Edward Batchko	D. Edward Batchko
4/21	Mark Ammerman	Mark Ammerman
4/28	John Conkey	John Conkey

### Feast Days

4/7	Veneration of the Cross
4/14	St. John Climacus
4/21	Mary of Egypt
4/23	Great Martyr George
4/27	Lazarus Saturday
4/28	Palm Sunday



### Reminders:

Sunday May 5 is Pascha  
 Saturday, June 15 is the Chicken BBQ

### Birthdays

Jack Foster	04/02
V. Rev. John Horosky	04/17
Charles Mason	04/17
Elaine Cardinal	04/24
Ivan Switala	04/24

### Anniversaries

none

**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, Matthew Boroughf, 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, 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.”*

Our dear sister in Christ, Veronica Pirow, fell asleep in the Lord on March 13, 2013. Memory Eternal!  
She is the sister of Rose Marie Fetcenko and the aunt of Bonnie Fetcenko.

**Saint Veronica** is known as the woman who wiped Christ’s face as He carried His cross towards Golgotha and as the woman who Christ cured of the issue of blood, who is also traditionally identified as Herod the Great’s niece. The Church celebrates her feast day on July 12.

## *From the Desk of Father John Horosky*

### Great Lent and the Paschal Cycle

The *Feast of Feasts* – the Holy Pascha – the Resurrection of the Lord – is the climax of the Church’s liturgical year and is also the most glorious, most joyful and bright festival of the Christian Church. On it Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ arose as victor over death, destroying the power of death over man once and for all and annulling the curse pronounced upon man in Paradise. But, before the bright joy of Pascha, the Church has ordained a lengthy period of repentance and spiritual searching – a period of preparation, so to speak – the 40-day Great Lent.

The Forty Days of Great Lent commemorates Israel’s forty years of wandering in the Wilderness – the forty years of painful struggle as Israel longed for and then received entrance into the Promised Land (Ex. 16:35). Moses remained fasting on Mt. Sinai for forty days (Ex. 34:28) and the Prophet Elijah fasted forty days as he journeyed to Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Great Lent also recalls the forty days the Lord spent in the Wilderness after his Baptism, when He contended with Satan, the Temptor.

The time of Great Lent encompasses forty days, to which must be added Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday and Passion Week. In addition, the Holy Church prescribed three weeks of preparation for the Great Lent itself – the Sundays of the Publican and the Pharisee, Prodigal Son, Meatfare and Cheesefare. In all, the Orthodox Church prescribes ten weeks of spiritual and bodily preparation for the joyous Pascha of the Lord.

My prayer for you, my parishioners, that this Lent you will grow spiritually and not suffer from not doing things you usually do during the year. This is a special time and used to get closer to our Lord.

### **Remaining Services for Great Lent at the Nativity of St. John’s**

May 1 Holy Wednesday - Holy Unction	6:00 PM
May 2 Holy Thursday - Twelve Gospels	6:00 PM
May 3 Holy Friday - Vespers/Compline	4:00 PM
May 4 Holy Saturday - Vesperal Liturgy	10:00 AM
May 4 Holy Saturday - Compline	6:00 PM
May 5 Holy Pascha - Resurrection Liturgy	10:00 AM

## Remaining Mission Service for Great Lent

April 7	St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral Allison Park, PA	5:00 PM
April 14	Holy Assumption Orthodox Church 635 Sunshine Ave. Central City, PA	4:00 PM
April 21	St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church 427 First St. Johnstown, PA	4:00 PM

## The Boy Who Died and The Boy Who Lived: Reflections on the Annunciation *by Douglas Cramer*

Where does the Gospel begin? I like to think that it begins with the Annunciation. It is the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, with His holy conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The visitation by the Archangel Gabriel to Mary, and his announcement that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, is the beginning of the Gospel story that concludes with the death and glorious Resurrection of Christ that we celebrate at Great and Holy Pascha. In the words of one of our hymns for Annunciation, “Today is the beginning of our salvation.”

I believe, though, that we often forget just how much reason we have to celebrate. With all the worldly blessings we in America often enjoy, it can be easy to forget how much we need salvation, how much our world needs a Savior. This was brought home to me recently by a difficult and painful story of another baby boy.

An old Irish nun used to tell this story, from the time when her people immigrated to America from Ireland. One day, on a trans-Atlantic ship, a frustrated mother kept trying to comfort her crying infant. Finally, she shrieked at the baby boy, “If you don't stop crying, I'll throw you overboard!” She asked her other young son to watch the bassinet, and walked away to calm herself. A few minutes later, she returned. But she found the bassinet was empty. She screamed at her son, “What's happened to your baby brother?!” Her son answered, “He started crying again. So I threw him overboard.”

**Acknowledging Death** It is impossible to hear a story like this without feeling a rush of emotions. Horror over the brutal death of an innocent. Outrage at a world where such a thing can happen. Pity for the son and mother, who will live the rest of their days under the shadow of this terrible moment, of their own role as bringers of death. But we all must remember that such overwhelming sorrow is as much a part of our world as comfort and happiness. We are bound up with death. We are mortal—literally, the ones who die.

There comes in each of our lives a point when we confront the reality of death. Often, it comes with the death of a loved one, something which can be even more difficult to accept than our own coming death. This is something that mankind has wrestled with since the earliest of days. It is the hinge of our greatest stories. In the Iliad, the great Greek warrior Achilles must overcome his rage at the death of his dear friend Patroclus, a friend whose death he helped bring about, and accept mortality. In the Psalms, King David struggles to understand his role in bringing about the death of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, and death itself.

Many philosophies and religions throughout time have taught that we must accept that death is the natural companion of life. But nothing could be further from the truth. This is one of the most radical claims of Christianity. It is scandalous. Only in Christianity do we find a denial of death's inevitability. In our post-Christian age, it is common for people to speak of how we must “accept” death. Of how we must “come to terms” with the death of a loved one.

No. What we must do is accept life. We must affirm life so radically that we deny death itself. We must not “come to terms” with the death of a beloved. We must “come to terms” with their everlasting life. In a famous verse, the great English poet Dylan Thomas, captured the spirit of the Christian response to death: “Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

This is what our response should be to death: outrage. Revulsion. Disgust. The emotions that a story like that of the baby thrown in to the ocean evoke are not wrong. They should be embraced, because they are a guide to the truth. C.S. Lewis once wrote that, “Nothing will reconcile us to the unnaturalness of death. We know that we were not made for it; we know how it crept into our destiny as an intruder; and we know Who has defeated it.” We know. We know the name of the One who has defeated death. We know that there is only one possible response to that infant boy drowning in the cold Atlantic. And that this response is announced at the Annunciation by the Archangel.

**Challenging Death** I'm reminded of a phrase from the Harry Potter books. Because of his escape from death as a child, one of the titles that is given to the wizard hero is “The Boy Who Lived.” This is the contrast, and the hope, at the heart of the Gospel. The boy killed by his brother is all of us. He is the “Boy Who Died.” But another has come. His name is Jesus Christ—and He is the “Boy Who Lived.”

In one of the hymns for Annunciation, we hear: “At the voice of the Archangel error has vanished; for the Virgin has received joy and earthly things have become heavenly, and the world is freed from the ancient curse. . . . Today the bond of the curse of the first father is undone.” Who is this “first father”? It is Adam. And what was Adam's curse? His curse—our curse—is death. “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life,” we read in Genesis.

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

But with the Feast of the Annunciation, we sing that the curse is lifted. That death is undone. The victory of Jesus Christ over death itself is declared by St. Paul in the Annunciation reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Through Christ, the curse is undone. Through Christ, death is defeated. Through Christ, we are freed from our bondage. The victory of the Resurrection begins with His conception. With the Feast of the Annunciation, falling near the end of Great Lent, we begin our preparation for the great hymn of Pascha: “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon us all bestowing life.” It is only when we acknowledge the existence of our enemy that we can celebrate the arrival of our champion. It is only when we confront the horror of death that we can rejoice in the victory of life. We must remember our mortal danger if we are to appreciate the Lord’s presence.

**Our Saviour** And have no doubt, He is present. The first words the Archangel Gabriel speaks to Mary are not for her alone. They are for all of us: “Rejoice . . . the Lord is with you.” He is with you. He is not merely an idea. He is not merely a hope. He is a Person, a Person with whom each and every one of us can have an intimate, vital and loving relationship. He is our Saviour, reaching out with His hand to every one of His children.

Recall the story of Christ walking on the water, from the Gospel of Matthew: “When Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’” Immediately, Jesus stretched out His hand. This is what He does. He reaches out to us, and saves us from death.

Nowhere is this more clearly depicted than in the icon of the Resurrection itself. Here is Christ, in Hell—in the realm of death itself. Here is Christ, stretching out His hands and pulling Adam and Eve from their tombs, as He pulled Peter from the waters. This is not just comforting imagery. It is fact, the fact of overpowering life so real that it overcomes death itself. Christ is there at each and every death. He overcomes death itself, and He overcomes each and every individual death at the moment it occurs. And rest assured, as that child sank beneath the sea, Christ was there, reaching out to the boy with His holy hand.

**When You Can’t Swim** A few weeks ago, a friend sent me a list of things that young children had written about God. As Jesus said, “Out of the mouth of babes . . . You have perfected praise.” One child wrote this: “If you don’t believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can’t go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He’s around you when you’re scared, in the dark, or when you can’t swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.”

The Lord is with us. So let us put aside fear and confront that in our fallen world, death—even terrible and disturbing death—holds sway. But let us remember at the same time that the inevitable destruction of this world of death is already apparent, that the victory has already been won, that a hand is extended to pull us from the waves. The Annunciation teaches us that the life of the Child in the womb has begun. The Archangel Gabriel proclaims that Jesus Christ is “the Son of the Highest”; that “of His Kingdom there will be no end”; and that “with God nothing will be impossible.” Nothing is impossible—not even the trampling down of death.

*This reflection is adapted from a speech originally written for Fr. Christopher Metropulos of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and SCOBA’s Orthodox Christian Network. Learn more about the powerful ministries of OCN on their website, [www.myocn.net](http://www.myocn.net).*

**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 candle stands and in front of the icons in the nave are supported by Andrew & Louise Tocimak in loving memory of George Tocimak.