



The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

Orthodox Church O.C.A.

420 Laura Street
 Philipsburg, PA 16866
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<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>

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

December 2013

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Service Schedule

December 1

General Confession @ 9:30 AM
 Hours @ 9:50 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Special collection for Seminarian
 Coffee Hour following Liturgy
 Council Meeting

December 8

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

December 15

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

December 22

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

December 24 Nativity Eve

Compline 2:00 PM

December 25 Nativity of Our Lord

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

December 29

Hours @ 9:30 AM
 Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
 Pot Luck following Liturgy

Reader's Schedule

	Hours	Epistle
12/1	Larry Ammerman	George Sura
12/8	Mike Conkey	Mike Conkey
12/15	Mark Ammerman	Mark Ammerman
12/22	Tom Demchak	Tom Demchak
12/25	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
12/29	Jan Brennish	Jan Brennish

Feast & Saints

12/4	St. Barbara
12/6	St. Nicholas
12/12	St. Spyridon
12/17	Three Youths
12/17	St. Judith
12/20	St. John Kronstad
12/25	Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
12/26	Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God
12/27	First Martyr Stephen



Birthdays

Larry Ammerman	12/11
John Conkey	12/17
Mike Demchak	12/31

Anniversaries

Matushka Judy & Very Rev. John Horosky 12/18

Thank you. Many thanks to the ladies and gents who made nut, poppy seed, apricot and raspberry rolls. Profit was \$1,000. On their feet for hours, these faithful parishioners worked with love to produce quality baked goods 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."

Remember in your prayers: Bishop MELCHISEDEK, Father John, Father Adam, Father Ted, Father Paul, Father Michael, Matushka Judy Horosky, Matushka Ksenia Batchko, Larry Ammerman, Mary Ann Ammerman, Karen Blackburn, Matthew Boroughf, Chris Conkey, Drew Conkey, John Conkey, James Crites, Helen Czar, Eugene Demchak, Joe Demchak, Mike Demchak, Steve Demchak, Kari Donovan, Matthew Donovan, Michael Evans, Bonnie Fetcenko, Randy Fetcenko, Rose Marie Fetcenko, Olga Finlayson, Kenneth Finlayson, Jack Foster, Mary Foster, Harry Horosky, Alexandra Mamrak, Evan Morgan, Richard Nakles, Harry Socie, Eleanor Sura, Andrew Tocimak, Irene Tocimak, Louise Tocimak, John Tocimak Jr., 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.”

Women Saints Icons – The Women Saints Icons are donated by Rose Marie Fetcenko and Bonnie Fetcenko in memory of Veronica Pirow and Helen Mae Harvey. *Memory Eternal!*

From the Desk of Father John Horosky

AN ANGEL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO MARY

Mary lived near the temple until she was fourteen years old. She was always quiet and at peace with herself and others. Mary learned all the things that girls her age were taught at that time. Most of all she liked to read the ancient holy books telling the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and all the prophets. She read about what happened to her people and what the prophets said of the Savior who would come some day, Mary often wondered when the Savior would come.

When Mary was fourteen years old she had to leave the temple. By that time both Joachim and Anna were dead and Mary had no home to which she could go. The priests of the temple found an old man who was a relative of Mary's. His name was Joseph, and he worked as a carpenter. The priests asked Joseph to take Mary into his home and look after her. Joseph's wife had died long before this time, and he was very happy to receive Mary.

In Joseph's home Mary continued her quiet and peaceful life. Working, reading, and praying, she made everything around her peaceful and happy. One day in early spring, while she was all by herself reading and praying, she suddenly saw an angel standing before her. The angel spoke, saying: *“Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are you among women.”*

When Mary saw the angel, she was troubled. She wondered why he had greeted her in such a strange way. But the angel said to her: *“Fear not, Mary, God has chosen you. You shall have a Son, and you shall call Him, Jesus, (Jesus means Savior). He shall be great and shall be called the Son of God, and His Kingdom shall have no end.”*

“How will this be when I am not even married?” Mary questioned.

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the strength of God will be you,” answered the angel. *“Look at your cousin Elizabeth, who is old. She is also going to have a son. Nothing is impossible for God.”*

Then Mary said, *“I am the servant of God. Let everything be as you say.”*

God Gives Zechariah and Elizabeth a Son.

The angel went away, and Mary began to wait for the Son the angel had promised her. She went to visit with her cousin Elizabeth. When Elizabeth saw her, she greeted her with strange words as the angel had done. *“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”*

The news that Mary received was the greatest news that had ever been given: the news that God Himself, Our Lord Jesus Christ, would come on earth to live with us. Every year, early in the spring we remember the day when Mary received the great news. Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned to her own house.

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What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

What does Christmas mean to you? Times with family and friends? Perhaps carols, cards, television specials. Maybe hectic shopping, parties, and eating too much. All these and more are part of North American Christmas. But what about the first Christmas? Why is the original story—the baby in a manger, shepherds, wise men, angels—important, if at all? May I invite you to consider eight reasons why the original Christmas story matters, even to you? You may not agree with all of them, but perhaps they will stimulate your thinking and maybe even kindle some feelings that resonate with that famous story. First, the Christmas story is important because it is. . .

A Story that Has Endured For two millennia, people have told of the child in a Bethlehem manger; of angels who announced his birth to shepherds; of learned men who traveled a great distance to view him. That a story persists for many years does not prove its truthfulness. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy survive in the popular imagination. But a twenty-century tenure at least merits our consideration. What deep human longings does the Christmas story portray? Why has it connected so profoundly with millions of people? Is the story factual? Curiosity prompts further investigation.

2nd, the Christmas story is also . . . **A Story of Hope and Survival** Jesus' society knew great pain and oppression. Rome ruled. Corrupt tax collectors burdened the people. Some religious leaders even sanctioned physical beating of Jewish citizens participating in compulsory religious duties. Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary traveled a long distance to Bethlehem to register for a census but could not obtain proper lodging. Mary bore her baby and laid him in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. Eventually, King Herod sought to kill the baby. Warned of impending risk, Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, then returned home after Herod's death. Imagine how Mary felt. Traveling while pregnant would be challenging. Fleeing to another nation lest some king slay your son would not be pleasant. Yet she, Joseph, and Jesus survived the ordeal. In the midst of social and cultural challenges, the Christmas story offers hope and encouragement toward survival, hope of new life linked to something—someone—greater than oneself. One of Jesus' followers said Jesus' "name . . . [would] be the hope of all the world. So, the Christmas story is important because it has endured and because it speaks of hope and survival.

3rd: the Christmas story is . . . **A Story of Peace and Goodwill** Christmas carolers sing of "peace on earth." Greeting cards extol peace, families desire it, and the news reminds us of its fleeting nature. I encountered ten-year-old Matt from Nebraska in a southern California restaurant men's room one afternoon. Alone and forlorn looking, he stood outside the lone stall. "Could I ask a favor?" inquired the sandy haired youth. "The door to this stall has no lock. Would you watch and be sure that no one comes in on me?" "Sure," I replied, happy to guard his privacy. Matt noted, "In a lot of nice restaurants the stall doors don't have locks." "I know," I agreed. "You'd think they would." After a pause, his high-pitched voice said, "You know what I wish? I wish there could be peace in all the earth and no more arguments or fighting so no one would have to die except by heart attacks." "That would be great," I agreed. "How do you think that could happen?" Matt didn't know.

"It seems that the Prince of Peace could help," I suggested. "Do you know who that is?" He didn't. "Well, at Christmas, we talk a lot about Jesus as the Prince of Peace," I explained. "Oh, I see," conceded Matt. "I don't know about those things because I don't go to church. Do you know what it's like to be the only boy in your town who doesn't go to church? I do." "Well, I'm a church member," I replied, "but really the most important thing is knowing Jesus Christ as your personal friend. When I was eighteen, some friends explained to me that He died and rose again for me and that I could begin a relationship with Him. It made a big difference and gave me a real peace inside. He can also bring peace between people." By now, Matt was out washing his hands as his father stuck his head in the door to hurry him along. I gave him a small booklet that explained more. "Thanks," smiled Matt as he walked out to join his family for lunch.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman in his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence* tells of boarding a New York City bus to find a driver whose friendly greeting and positive disposition spread contagious warmth among the initially cold and indifferent passengers. Goleman envisioned a "virus of good feeling" spreading through the city from this "urban peacemaker" whose good will had softened hearts. The Christmas angel announced to some shepherds, "'Don't be afraid! . . . I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! A crowd of angels then appeared praising God and proclaiming peace among people of good will. The Christmas story brings a message of peace that can soothe the anxious hearts and calm interpersonal strife.

4th: the Christmas story is . . . **A Story of Family** Christmas is a time for family gatherings. This interaction can bring great joy or great stress. Estrangement or ill will from past conflicts can explode. Joseph and Mary had their share of family challenges. Consider their circumstances. The historical accounts indicate that Joseph's fiancée became pregnant though she was a virgin. Mary believed an angel told her she was pregnant by God. Now, how would you feel if your fiancé/fiancée exhibited apparent evidence of sexual activity with someone else during your engagement? Suppose your intended said that God had sanctioned the whole thing. Would your trust and self-esteem take a nosedive? Would you cancel the wedding? Joseph, described as "a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace . . . [Mary] publicly." But an angel appeared to him in a dream, explaining that the child was conceived in her by God, and told him to "name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Joseph followed instructions and cared for his family. His continuing commitment to Mary and Jesus played a significant part in the boy's birth and early childhood. With God's help, the family overcame major obstacles. And so can your family.

5th, the story is Christmas is also . . . **A story of Humility** When kings, presidents, and other rulers appear in public, great pomp often ensues. From a biblical perspective, God came first not as a ruling king but as a servant, a baby born in humble circumstances. His becoming human helps humans identify with Him. Imagine that you and your child are walking in a field and encounter an ant pile with hundreds of ants scurrying about. In the distance, you see a construction bulldozer approaching. Suppose your child asks how to warn the ants of impending danger. You discuss various possibilities: shouting, holding up signs, etc. But the best solution would be if somehow your child could become an ant and warn them personally. Some ants might not believe the danger. But some might believe and take steps to ensure their safety. Paul, an early follower of Jesus, wrote of the humility Jesus displayed by becoming human: Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven.

The Christmas story speaks of family and humility. **6th** Why the Christmas story matters: it is **..A Story that Was Foretold** Jesus' followers noted numerous clues to his identity, prophecies written many years before His birth. The Hebrew writer Micah told around 700 BC of deliverance through a coming Messiah or "Anointed One" from Bethlehem. We know that ". . . Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. . . . Isaiah, writing around 700 BC, foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. He wrote, "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. The name "Immanuel" means "God is with us." Biblical accounts claim Jesus' mother was a virgin when she bore Him. Additional prophecies concern the Messiah's lineage, betrayal, suffering, execution, and resurrection. Peter Stoner, a California mathematician, once calculated the probability of just eight of the 300 prophecies Jesus fulfilled coming true in one person due to chance alone. Using estimates that both he and classes of college students considered reasonable and conservative, Stoner concluded there was one chance in 1017 that those eight were fulfilled by fluke. He says 1017 silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Mark one coin with red fingernail polish. Stir the whole batch thoroughly. What chance would a blindfolded person have of picking the marked coin on the first try? One in 1017, the same chance that just eight of the 300 prophecies "just happened" to come true in this man, Jesus.

7th why the original Christmas story matters. It is . . . **A Story that Has Substantial Support** Can we trust the biblical accounts of the Christmas story? Three important points:

- Eyewitness Testimony. The Gospels—presentations of Jesus' life—claim to be, or bear evidence of containing, eyewitness accounts. In a courtroom, eyewitness testimony is among the most reliable evidence.
- Early Date. Dr. William F. Albright, one of the world's leading archaeologists, dated every book of the New Testament (NT) before about AD 80. There is no known record of NT factual authenticity ever being successfully challenged by a contemporary.
- Manuscript Evidence. Over 24,000 early manuscript copies of portions of the NT exist today. Concerning manuscript attestation, Sir Frederic Kenyon, director and principle librarian of the British Museum, concluded, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.

The Christmas story is notable for its enduring messages of hope, peace, goodwill, family and humility. It was foretold by prophets and has substantial manuscript support. But there is another reason for considering the story of Jesus' birth, perhaps the most important.

8th: the Christmas story is . . . **A Story of Love** Jesus' followers taught that His conception and birth were part of a divine plan to bring us genuine peace, inner freedom, and self-respect. They believed the biblical God wants us to enjoy friendship with Him, and meaning and purpose. Alas, our own self-centeredness separates us from Him. Left to our own, we would spend both time and eternity in this spiritually unplugged state. Jesus came to help plug us into God. Mary's baby was born to die, paying the penalty for our self-centeredness, which the biblical documents call "sin." If I had a traffic fine I could not pay, you could offer to pay it for me. When the adult Jesus died on the cross, He carried the penalty due all our sins then rose from the dead to give new life.

Jesus explained, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." God can become your friend if you believe in Him, that is, if you trust Him to forgive you. He will never let you down. Christmas is meant to celebrate peace and joy. Amidst the busyness of shopping, parties, presents, and fun, remember that the Prince of Peace came to spread peace and joy to all who believe in Him. **Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

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.