



THE FORERUNNER

The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

Orthodox Church o.c.a.

420 Laura Street

Philipsburg, PA 16866

(814) 342-2011

<http://nativityofstjohn-oca.org>

V. Rev. Mark Meholick, Dean: Priest-in-charge

John Conkey - Council President

December 2015

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Service Schedule

Note: The following schedule assumes that Father Basil is available to serve @ St. John's that day. If not, we will have a Reader's Service, and notify everyone via the Phone Tree.

December 5

Vespers @ 6:00 PM
Confession following Vespers

December 6 St. Nicholas

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

December 13 Sunday of Forefathers

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

December 19

Vespers @ 6:00 PM
Confession following Vespers

December 20

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

December 24

Compline @ 6:00 PM

December 25 Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Hours @ 9:30 AM
Divine Liturgy @ 10:00 AM
No Coffee Hour following Liturgy

December 27 First Martyr Stephen

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

Reminders:

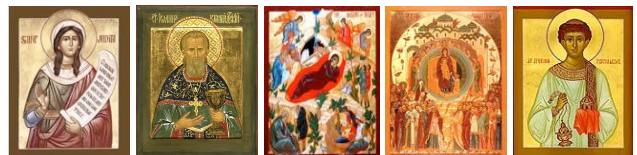
- Please make sure your Assessments are up to date for 2015.
- Christmas food drive

Reader's Schedule

	Hours	Epistle
12/5	Vespers Readings	Choir member
12/6	Julia Biberdorf	George Sura
12/13	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
12/19	Vesper Readings	Choir member
12/20	Tom Demchak	Mark Ammerman
12/24	Compline Readings	Choir member
12/25	Doug Donovan	Doug Donovan
12/27	John Conkey	John Conkey

Feast & Saints

12/4	St. Barbara
12/6	St. Nicholas
12/9	The Conception by Righteous Anna of the Most Holy Mother of God
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 & Father John Horosky	12/18
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Remember in your prayers: Archbishop MELCHISEDEK, Father John, Father Adam, Father Ted, Father Paul, Father Michael, Father Andrew, Father John, Matushka Judy Horosky, Matushka Ksenia Batchko, Larry Ammerman, Mary Ann Ammerman, Jen Ammerman and Victor, Alexis Blackburn, Karen Blackburn, Chris 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, Eugene Minarich, Evan Morgan, Richard Nakles, Gloria Rice, John Saupp, Mary Sura Saupp, Harry Socie, Alexandra Stine, Karen Stine, Eleanor Sura, Andrew Tocimak, Irene Tocimak, Louise Tocimak, Walter Varagea, Delores Varagea, Patricia Wood

“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

***God has a purpose for your pain,
A reason for your struggles,
And a reward for your faithfulness.
Don't give up.***

St. Ann's Guild

We hope to officially add to the membership of St. Ann's Guild. If you are interested, please see Mary Ann Conkey or Bonnie Fetcenko. We are blessed to have three of the original members to guide us: Mary Ann Ammerman, Rose Marie Fetcenko and Mary Foster.

Coffee Hour: At St. John's we are blessed to have so many fine cooks/food connoisseurs and our coffee hours continue to flourish with a vast array of tasty foods. Beginning November 15, we plan to begin our rotation of teams of cooks for the meal after the Divine Liturgy. Each Sunday, two cooks will prepare the coffee hour, which will include a main dish and dessert to serve 25-30 people. *Cooks will be mindful of fasts.* Our goal with the rotation is to provide a tasty meal and give the cooks a chance to share their talents and also give them a few weeks break throughout the rotation.

We continue to welcome food, drink or monetary contributions that will allow us to purchase paper goods (plates, cups, napkins, cutlery), coffee, cream, sugar, donuts and juice. If contributing, please give your contribution to Mary Ann Conkey.

Please contact Mary Ann Conkey at 867-2926 or mfoster@hamiltoninsurance.com or Shirley Donovan at 360-3615 or donovansf@comcast.net to sign up for one of the teams which will be posted in the bulletin and at the back of the church. If at anytime a team member needs to change, contact Mary Ann to reschedule.

We hope you will plan to join us for good food, good fellowship and good times!

Coffee Hour Sign up for December:

December 6 th	Svetlana Blake and the Lilia McGraw (Fast period)
December 13 th	Shirley Donovan and the Dea Biberdorf (Fast Period)
December 20 th	Mary Foster and the Mary Ann Conkey (Fast Period)
December 27 th	Bonnie Fetcenko and Karen Stine

Nativity Food Drive

Please bring nonperishable food items, toiletries or check/cash. Drop-off for these items will be in the parish office. Thank you. Those who do not have appreciate your kindness. We will deliver food December 21.

More work done on the Iconostasis.



Before



After

The Archdiocesan Assembly was held at the Nativity of St. John's on November 7th. Over sixty clergy and delegates attended the Divine Liturgy and meeting that followed. The Nativity of St. John's choir sang the responses and the St. Ann's Guild served the brunch and luncheon. We wish to thank all who helped in any way to make this day a huge success.



A note from Father Bill Evansky, Chancellor follows:

“Fr Basil

*I want to personally **thank** everyone who helped make last Saturday's annual Archdiocesan Assembly a success - your cooperation is greatly appreciated by everyone at the chancery. His Eminence mentioned to me yesterday in a meeting that he was very pleased with the “pleasant tone” and “open discussions” that took place among us. This is important for the Holy Spirit to truly “come and abide in us.” We again also thank the wonderful people of the Philipsburg parish who did an outstanding job at hosting this important event for the first time.”*

Matushka Judy's friend, Marianne who attended, also shares: *“This was one of the nicest Assemblies I have attended. The church is beautiful with a warm, welcoming feeling. The choir sang beautifully and the food was awesome. I couldn't believe that they served quiche for brunch with fresh fruit and a turkey dinner with real mashed potatoes and homemade gravy. The people of St. John's were so friendly and welcoming. I hope to visit again soon.”*

This is who we are, who we have been and with God's blessing who we will continue to be. It takes all of us to make our church God's home! Thank you to all.

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 the Tocimak family.

Feast of St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were so full of bishops, priests, and deacons, there was no room for the real criminals—murderers, thieves and robbers. After his release, Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and was buried in his cathedral church, where a unique relic, called manna, formed in his grave. This liquid substance, said to have healing powers, fostered the growth of devotion to Nicholas. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day, December 6th (December 19 on the Julian Calendar).

Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need. time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

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O, Who Loves Nicholas the Saintry – The young people at St. John's do!



Glad Tidings of Great Joy

The following is an excerpt from The Winter Pascha, Chapter 23 by Fr. Thomas Hopko

The joy of the Messiah's appearance abounds in the Church's liturgical services of the Winter Pascha. When the "Hail" of the angelic salutation is translated "Rejoice," as it often is in the church services since in Greek that is what it literally means, there is an even greater presence of the "good news of great joy" for the faithful, since they, together with the whole of creation, are greeted with this salutation again and again in the songs of the festal celebration.

Let creation exceedingly rejoice,
For the Creator fashions himself as a creature.
And He who was before all things now manifests Himself as God newly revealed.
Let the wise men go to meet Him with their gifts;
Let the shepherds clap their hands in faith at the wonder;
and let mortal men join the angels with rejoicing.¹
Be joyful, O earth!
Behold, Christ draws near to be born in Bethlehem.
Be glad, O sea!
And dance for joy, O company of prophets,
For today you behold the fulfillment of your words.
Rejoice, all you righteous!
Let the kings of the whole earth sing with rejoicing,
And let the nations be in exceeding joy!
Mountains, hills, and valleys,
Rivers, seas, and the whole of creation:
Magnify the Lord who now is born.
Rejoice, O Virgin,
The Theotokos who of the Holy Spirit
Has borne life into the world
For the salvation of all!²

One of the most devastating accusations that can be made against Christians is that they have no joy. Joyless Christians are a contradiction in terms. People who are bitter, complaining, condemning, accusing, dissatisfied and depressed are certainly not Christians. They can only be people whose life is untouched by grace, people whose existence is confined to the suffocating limitations of "this world" whose "ruler" is the devil and whose "form... is passing away" (Jn 12:31; 1 Cor 7:31). They cannot possibly be those who belong to Christ and the kingdom of God. For Christians by definition have Christ's "joy fulfilled in themselves" (Jn 17:13). They are people whose joy, which no one can take away, is literally full and complete (Jn 15:11; 16:22, 24).

In his famous book *For the Life of the World*, Father Alexander Schmemmann speaks about the joy of Christians. From its very beginning, he says,

Christianity has been the proclamation of joy, of the only possible joy on earth. It rendered impossible all the joy we usually think of as possible. But within this impossibility, at the very bottom of this darkness, it announced and conveyed a new all-embracing joy, and with this joy it transformed the End into a Beginning. Without the proclamation of this joy, Christianity is incomprehensible. It is only as joy that the Church was victorious in the world, and it lost the world when it lost that joy, and ceased to be a credible witness to it. Of all the accusations against Christians, the most terrible one was uttered by Nietzsche when he said that Christians had no joy.³

Father Alexander goes on to say that before Christians can do anything else with all of their "programs and missions, projects and techniques," they "must recover the meaning of this great joy." he says that joy "is not something one can define or analyze. One enters into joy. 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' (Mt 25:21)." And one enters into this joy, this exceeding great joy, he insists, only by entering into the liturgical, eucharistic life of the Church herself. Here, and only here, as in the celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Epiphany in the world, can a person partake of that joyful reality for which the world itself was created in the beginning.

¹ *Compline of the final day of the prefeast of the Nativity, December 24.* ² *Matins of the final day of the prefeast of the Nativity, December 24.* ³ *For the Life of the World, p. 24.*
<http://www.antiiochian.org/node/18661>

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

The following is an excerpt from The Winter Pascha, by Fr. Thomas Hopko

The adoration of Jesus by the wise men from the East is part of the Nativity celebration in the Orthodox Church. Whatever the actual historical circumstances of the event-- and Orthodox tradition takes them quite literally-- the spiritual and theological significance of the coming of the kings with their gifts is of paramount importance.

...

The gifts of the Magi are of particular significance. They are interpreted symbolically in the liturgy of the feast. The gift of **gold** is taken as the sign that Jesus is the king of Israel, of the entire universe, and of the kingdom of God to come. This is a crucial part of the Christmas story in the gospels. It caused Herod to kill all the "male children in Bethlehem and in all the region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men" (Mt 2:16).

...

The gift of **frankincense** is taken by the liturgy to signify the fact that Jesus is God, since incense is for worship, and only God may be worshipped.

And the gift of **myrrh** is for the Lord Jesus who has come to die as the perfect sacrifice for the people. For the dead were anointed with myrrh, as Jesus Himself was anointed, according to the scriptures, at the time of His death (Jn 19:39-40). In the gifts of the Magi, therefore, are contained all the mysteries of Christ's coming. They point to the purpose of His appearance on earth. He is the royal king, the Son of David, whose kingdom will have no end. He is the victim, the Lamb of God, who by His death takes away the sins of the world. And He is God Himself, the divine Son of the Father: "Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven..." as the Nicene Creed declares.

Both lack the glitter and cache of **gold**, being dried tree saps, or resins. **Frankincense** comes from the deciduous trees of the genus *Boswellia*, and **myrrh** from some species in the genus *Commiphora*, all of which are found on the Horn of Africa and the coastal countries of the Arabian Peninsula. Dec 21, 2012

Were the gifts of the magi meant to save **Jesus** from the pain of arthritis? It's possible, according to researchers at Cardiff University in Wales who have been studying the medical uses of frankincense.

Since the early days of Christianity, Biblical scholars and theologians have offered varying interpretations of the meaning and significance of the gold, frankincense and myrrh that the magi presented to Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew (2:11). These valuable items were standard gifts to honor a king or deity in the ancient world: gold as a precious metal, frankincense as perfume or incense, and myrrh as anointing oil. In fact, these same three items were apparently among the gifts, recorded in ancient inscriptions, that King Seleucus II Callinicus offered to the god Apollo at the temple in Miletus in 243 B.C.E. The Book of Isaiah, when describing Jerusalem's glorious restoration, tells of nations and kings who will come and "bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord" (Isaiah 60:6). Although Matthew's gospel does not include the names or number of the Magi, many believe that the number of the gifts is what led to the tradition of the Three Wise Men. Were the gifts of the magi meant to save **Jesus** from the pain of arthritis? It's possible, according to researchers at Cardiff University in Wales who have been studying the medical uses of frankincense.

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For a Child is Born to Us, A Son is Given to Us
And the Government is on His Shoulder
And His Name will Be Called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ISA. 9:6