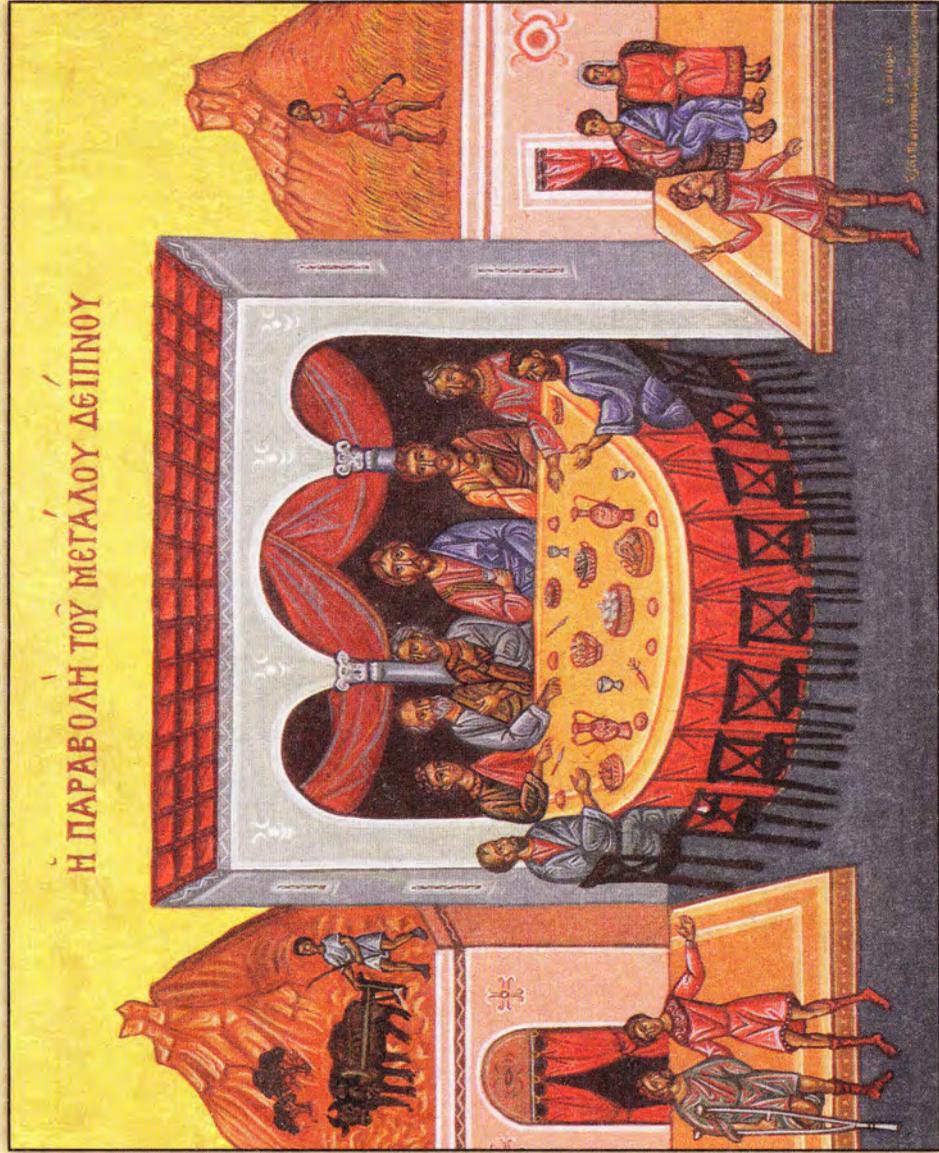


SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS



*Icon of the Great Banquet*



## December 13, 2015

### SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS – *TONE 4*

THE HOLY MARTYRS EUSTRATIUS, AUXENTIUS, EUGENE, MARDARIUS AND ORESTES;  
THE HOLY VIRGIN MARTYR LUCY

#### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 14 – DECEMBER 20

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

6:00 PM – Great Vespers

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20 – SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY - OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS;  
THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

*If you are reading the bulletin during the Liturgy (including the homily),  
please **stop** and be attentive – будьмо уважні!*

#### Suggestions for Celebrating Christmas

- 1) Give thanks to God by attending Church.
- 2) Seek peace with those we may be at odds with.
- 3) Give an anonymous gift to a stranger in need.

#### FLOWER COLLECTION

*Special envelopes are available in the back of the church do help with the purchase of flowers for the Feast of Nativity.*



#### Greeting Cards

Christmas Cards and various other greeting cards are for sale in the Church Hall. Please see Mary Kitt to purchase.

#### THE NATIVITY FAST

began November 15<sup>th</sup>, and concludes at the Divine Liturgy on Christmas day, December 25<sup>th</sup>. This 40 day fast is given to prepare us for the celebration fo the Lord's birth in the flesh. During this time we should not only modify our diet so we can change our minds and hearts, but we should also seek to avail ourselves of God's forgiveness and grace in the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Communion.

Questions? Please see Fr. James.

#### PARISHIONERS THAT ARE HOME BOUND



If you or a loved one cannot make it to Church, Fr. James would be more than pleased visit at your home, in the hospital, at a nursing home, or any other place. It is no inconvenience at all.

Please be sure to schedule a visit.

## WHO IS ST. NICHOLAS?

*From The St. Nicholas Center, [stnicholascenter.org](http://stnicholascenter.org)*

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who 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.



One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer prospective husbands something of value—a dowry. The larger the dowry, the better the chance that a young woman would find a good husband. Without a dowry, a woman was unlikely to marry. This poor man's daughters, without dowries, were therefore destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home — providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting

gifts from Saint Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for St. Nicholas. And so St. Nicholas is a gift-giver.

Through the centuries St. Nicholas has continued to be venerated by Catholics and Orthodox and honored by Protestants. By his example of generosity to those in need, especially children, St. Nicholas continues to be a model for the compassionate life.

# LOOKING FOR MIRACLES IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Fr. William J. Mills

<http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles7/MillsMiracles.php>

Sermon on Luke 8:26-39

Throughout the years people have often ask me why we don't have miracles like they did back in Jesus' time. When reading the Bible we encounter many miracles, Moses dividing the Red Sea, Elijah healing the widow's son, Jesus walking on the water, Jesus driving out demons from people, and of course the biggies, such as Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and then the biggest miracle of all, Jesus' own resurrection. If we read the Bible carefully we will encounter these miracles along with many others

Today when people encounter a miraculous event they usually chalk it up to scientific technology, good medicine, or an act of nature. At 9:00am on the morning of 9/11 many people left their offices in the Twin Towers in order to get coffee and bagels for their co-workers. Five minutes later two jet airplanes flew right into the Towers, killing thousands of people and maiming hundreds more. The survivors considered this a miracle. However, other people say well, it was just a coincidence that they left, after all, coffee runs are usual in big companies.

Just a few weeks ago a man was flying a jet plane and for some reason the plane crashed. The man was found safe and sound sitting in his cockpit in a

tree, not even getting a scratch. People said that it was the type of wind shear that allowed the cockpit to fall gently and safely. However, surely this man sees it as a miracle. Furthermore, a few months ago there was a lady who gave birth to six children who were three months premature. They survived even though they were very small and had little chance of surviving. People also chalk this up to good science. So many things happen to people and we try to "figure it out" citing science, medicine, or nature.

Perhaps these events or situations are God giving us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. After all, this is what miracles are anyway, little glimpses into God's rule and authority. However, we miss the power of the message as did the people in the time of Jesus. Not much has changed since then, as the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes says, "there is nothing new under the sun." Then as now people want to be entertained. They had magicians, fortune-tellers, and astrologers and we have circus' and Hollywood with special effects to razzle-dazzle us. Yet, Jesus was not a magician nor was he trying to entertain people, although many thought they were being entertained. At one point when Jesus multiplied the loaves and

fishes they wanted to seize him in order to make him a king! They saw his power in human terms, missing the point that Jesus was directing them to The Kingdom. Jesus' miracles are a sign of His Kingship, but his kingship is not of this world. His power is over disease, nature, and even death. God is the god over all things in creation.

Also, these miracles, like the one about the demon possessed man are an invitation of faith. Towards the end of the gospel lesson we heard that the once possessed man was found "clothed and in his right mind" sitting at Jesus' feet. This man is the male version of Mary, the one whose sister Martha was busy preparing lunch complaining that her sister Mary wasn't helping her. Yet all the while Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet as an act of faith, learning and listening from her Master.

The gospel of Luke provides us with many miracles of Jesus, the woman who was healed from her flow of blood, the Roman centurion's servant who was ill, and the cleansing of the lepers. These people approached Jesus in faith and they were healed of their disease and discomfort because of their faith; because they came to Jesus for help. And compared to the big miracles that we often think about, the parting of the Red Sea for instance, these miracles in the gospel are quite small, Jesus' really didn't do much, he says a few words and people are restored to health and well-being.

Yet all too often we overlook the hundreds of small miracles in our life, the small glimpses into the kingdom of God because we are too darn busy seeking the big miracles, the walking on water type of miracle. We overlook the many miracles of family members being reconciled to their family after being pushed out or living in self induced exile, the miracle of a restored friendship, and the miracle of life itself. I think we do this because deep down we would rather be entertained and excited and we don't want Jesus interfering in our life. After all, it is a fearful thing when we encounter the Lord. The great crowds in the reading today were afraid because of what Jesus did to the possessed man, they were so afraid that they demanded that Jesus leave them immediately. Often we push Jesus out of our life too because we can't deal with the kingdom, **we want to focus on the here and now**. How sad, because all the while Jesus was directing these people to the kingdom, offering them the bread of life, and they were satisfied with popcorn and cotton candy, how sad indeed!

*Fr. William C. Mills, Ph.D., is the rector of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church in Charlotte, NC, as well as an adjunct professor of religious studies at Queens University in Charlotte, NC. He is married to Taisia Mills and has two daughters, Hannah and Emma.*

## ON COMMUNION AND LIFE

*Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh*

We hear week after week the Lord saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me", and we always apply these words, and rightly so, to the celebration of the Last Supper, to the breaking of the bread, to the sharing of the cup, to the holy meal which Christ had with His disciples.

And we are right to do so because it was the prefiguration of the Banquet of the Lamb, of the great feast of eternity, because all of us we have been created by God in order to be His companions for eternity; and a companion is one who breaks the bread with us, who is received at the host's table, who is made an equal to his host by this law of hospitality and of love.

And the Last Supper was this; Christ broke the bread and shared the cup, He made His disciples unto His companions and, as this bread and wine were Him, He united His companions to Himself in an unspeakable way to be one body and one life

But the words which Christ told, "Do this in remembrance of Me" do not apply only to the last Supper, to the holy and divine Liturgy which we celebrate. What He was doing in the Upper Room was also an image of what His life and death were. The breaking of the bread was the breaking of His body, the sharing of the cup was the shedding of His blood, and what was signified in the last Supper was the Garden of Gethsemane with the anguish and the horror of the coming death upon Him Who was free of evil and yet chose to share with us our destiny of dereliction and mortality, and of Calvary, the actual dying for the salvation of others, - more than this: the dying of their death so that they should share and possess His life.

And if we are to take in earnest what we do here, week after week, feast after feast, celebrating the Last Supper of the Lord, breaking the bread together and sharing the cup, we must remember that this act makes us one with each other, because we become so one with Christ, but also that all that is true of the life and the sacrificial death of Christ must become true for us and in us. We must so live as Christ lived for others, we must so die as Christ died, that others may live. We must so ascend from life into this sacrificial generous life-giving death as Christ did, and this lays upon us a heavy, a stern and glorious responsibility.

Let us take it earnestly, because otherwise our celebration is empty of meaning. We cannot come day after day and ask Christ to let us become partakers of what happens in the Upper Room if we accept to be estranged, to be alien to what it stood for His life, His incarnation, His teaching, His facing the coming death, His dying our death that we may live.

Let us think about it and reconsider all our relationships with others, rethink all our attitude to those who are around us. Do we live for their sake? Is our life an offering? Are we like the Apostles of whom Paul spoke in today's Epistle, like men sent in the last times to bring a witness of love and pay the cost for it, so that life should be theirs, should belong to those who surround us whether they love or hate us, and death should be ours, the death of Christ, sacrificial, holy, an offering of love, brought not only to God, but to each person who needs it.

It is a characteristic of any  
decaying civilization that the  
great masses of the people are  
unaware of the tragedy.

Humanity in a crisis is generally  
insensitive to the gravity of the  
times in which it lives.

Men do not want to believe their  
own times are wicked, partly  
because they have no standard  
outside of themselves by  
which to measure their times.  
If there is no fixed concept of  
justice, how shall men know it  
is violated?

Only those who live by faith really  
know what is happening in  
the world; the great masses  
without faith are unconscious  
of the destructive processes  
going on, because they have  
lost the vision of the heights  
from which they have fallen.

- Venerable Fulton J. Sheen

## Sunday offering for December 6

Amount	Number
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	1
\$40.00	3
\$50.00	3
\$70.00	1
\$85.00	1
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\$475.00	

Parishioner Total: \$475.00

Average / parish household (42): \$5.72

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2200.00

**Deficit: (\$1650.00)**

**Year-to-date deficit: (\$47017.00)**



## GOD'S EXTENDED HAND

FOCUS (Fellowship of Orthodox  
Christians United to Serve) has provided  
us with a special bin for collecting  
donations of clothing, toiletries, etc. to  
be distributed at GEH. It is located near  
the door of the church hall.

### Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

### Pastoral Council:

Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

### Social Committee Chair:

Megan Hartman (619) 540-4291

### Finance Committee:

Bohdan Knianicky: (619) 303-9698



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква  
Святого Йоана Хрестителя  
St. John the Baptizer  
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

4400 Palm Avenue  
La Mesa, CA 91941  
Parish Office: (619) 697-5085

**Website:** [stjohnthebaptizer.org](http://stjohnthebaptizer.org)

**Pastor:** Fr. James Bankston  
[frjames@mac.com](mailto:frjames@mac.com)  
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

***Come and Do Not Delay***

Let no one delay in coming to the supper. Let us put aside all idle wicked excuses, and come to supper in which our souls are fed. Let no swelling of pride keep us back, or lift us above ourselves; and neither let unlawful superstition frighten us, or turn us away from God. Let not the delights of the senses keep us from the delights of the soul. Let us come, and let us be feasted. And who have come but the poor and the feeble and the lame and the blind? But the rich have not come there, nor the healthy, who as it were could walk well and see clearly, sure of themselves, and the more arrogant were they, the more endangered.

Let the poor come, for He who invites us, through rich, became poor for our sakes, that by His poverty we might be made rich.

Let the feeble come, for they who are in

health do not need the physician, but they that are ill. Let the lame come. Let the blind come.

Compel them to come in. I have prepared a great supper, a great house: I shall allow no place there to remain empty.

The Gentiles came from the streets and the lanes. Let the heretics come from the hedges; here they will find peace. For they who make hedges are seeking to bring about divisions. Let them be drawn from the hedges; let them be plucked free of the thorns. They refuse to be compelled, and they cling to their hedges. Let us, they say, come in of our will. But this is not what the Lord commanded. Compel them, He says, to come in.

*St. Augustine of Hippo*

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit  
[www.ecpubs.com](http://www.ecpubs.com)**