

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS



Icon of Daniel and the Three Youths -- December 17th

December 15, 2013

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS

THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR ELEUTHERIUS; OUR VENERABLE FATHER PAUL OF MOUNT LATROS;
OUR HOLY FATHER STEPHEN THE CONFESSOR, ARCHBISHOP OF SUROZH

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 16 – DECEMBER 22

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21 – SATURDAY BEFORE NATIVITY; THE HOLY MARTYR JULIANA

4:00 PM – Great Vespers for Sunday (*satisfies for Sunday obligation*) **Please note the time change!**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22 – SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY - OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS OF CHRIST; THE HOLY GREAT

MARTYR ANASTASIA

9:30 AM – Hierarchical Divine Liturgy

For All Parishioners

Pastoral Visit by Bishop Richard

Our Father and Bishop Richard, will make a pastoral visit to our parish Saturday – next Sunday, December 21 – 22. There will be Vespers on Saturday at 4:00 PM. On Sunday, December 22, there will be a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy followed by a pancake breakfast. Cost for brunch: Adults (18+) \$10.00; Youth (11-17) \$5.00; Children (10 and under) Free.

Help is still needed to prepare for Bishop Richard's visit and for Christmas. Please contact Olena Bankston at 619-567-6967 to set up a time during the week to help out.



LET'S GO CAROLING!

ON DECEMBER 28, LET'S GATHER AT THE CHURCH AT 10:00 AM TO GO CAROLING AT THE HOMES OF OUR SHUT-INS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO GO CAROLING UP UNTIL FEBRUARY 2ND - DEPENDING UPON INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING OR YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE VISITED OR YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE VISITED, PLEASE CONTACT FR. JAMES.

Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, January 11, 2014: 9:00 PM - Midnight. *Маланка (New Year's Celebration)* in the church hall. Cost: \$20 when purchased on or before January 5; \$25 at the door.

Hors d'oeuvres, borscht, wine, beer and champagne. Bring your dancing shoes!

Flower Collection

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

Sunday offering for December 8

Amount	Number
\$15.00	2
\$20.00	2
\$30.00	1
\$40.00	4
\$50.00	2
\$75.00	1
\$100.00	1
\$120.00	1
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\$655.00	

Parishioner Total: \$655.00

Average / parish household (42): \$15.60

Weekly Stewardship Goal: \$2125.00

Shortfall: **-\$1470.00**

Greeting Cards

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

SCHEDULE OF SERVICE FOR THE FEAST OF NATIVITY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24 - *VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY*

10:00 AM - Royal Hours

10:00 PM - *З Нами Бог!*” Велике Повечір’я “God is with us” Great Complines
followed by Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25 – *THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST*

9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For all parishioners

The Challenge of Atheism

Fr. Stephen Freeman - glory2godforallthings.com

I will quickly confess that I am not a philosopher. I am not trained in the subject and always struggled in the few doctoral classes that were in the area of “Philosophical Theology.” Thus, this will not be a philosophical response that settles matters for believers viz. atheism, or settles matters viz. Orthodox Christianity for atheists. It is just some observations.

That the world would be better off if everyone were an atheist is to me, a silly thought. We have too much evidence to the contrary. Atheist states have been the most efficient killing machines in all of history. Dostoevsky is quoted as saying, “If there is no God, everything is permitted.” It is questionable that he ever wrote it in that succinct fashion, but it certainly reflects a number of statements that occur in his writings. And it is true.

Though there are some very strange things happening in our culture as the result of religion, they hardly hold a candle to the strange things taking place among those who are committed to hedonism and other forms of modern atheism.

The greatest challenge from Atheism is what Orthodoxy would term the “problem of the human heart.” Orthodoxy (and many other Christians) understand very clearly that human beings have a “dark” side and that religious

“delusion” is a constant issue for believers. Properly taught and nurtured, Orthodox Christians should be more sensitive to questions of religious delusion than non-believers.

The problem of the human heart (this deep, spiritual center of man) is that it very easily becomes hard. And that in its hardness it is capable of almost anything. The amount of atrocities carried out by professed believers is ample testimony to the dangers of the heart, even for Christians.

What would an atheist propose for the treatment of the heart? It cannot be that less religion means a healthier human heart. Indeed, the modern nation state is what threatens to take the place of religion. And the modern nation state has not shown itself to be a repository of kindness, gentleness and altruism with regard to its clients.

If anything, the spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church is particularly directed towards our distortions of reality and our denial of the True God in an acceptance of a false god. The proper practice of Orthodoxy is ruthlessly self-honest and self-critical and believes that true belief in God can only be measured by the love we have for our enemy. Anything less than this is not the fullness of the Orthodox faith.

Our conversation with Atheism is not about the stars and the planets, or about how our planet came to be and how long ago. Our conversation with Atheism is not about the literal character of stories in the Old Testament. Christians who focus on such things in their discussions with Atheism are largely agreeing that these are the essential questions for humanity – and they are not.

The central question for humanity is the God revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ. If that God is the true God, then our religion can only be measured by the love we have for our enemy.

By the same token, we can ask of anyone, Atheist included, “Do you love your enemies?” If they do not, then we can say with confidence, “Your heart is in trouble.” And if anyone’s heart is in trouble (most are) then the world is indeed a very dangerous place (it is).

We believe that the world is so dangerous that even God Himself is not safe within it (cf. crucifixion). We also believe that our mission as Christians is to follow the example of the God/man Jesus Christ and yield ourselves up for crucifixion on behalf of our enemies. Anything less than that is not Orthodox Christianity in its fullness.

St. Paul noted: “One will hardly die for a righteous man — though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8). While this is undeniably true for Christ – it is also meant to become true for all who follow Him. Anything less is not the fullness of the Orthodox faith.

The challenge of Atheism is the challenge of despair. For Atheism cannot claim that human beings are improving. If anything, technology only makes us capable of far worse than the past. The marvels of this internet now mean that

evil men have easy access to vulnerable children and are manifesting that evil in epic proportions. The Atheist can only (if he is honest) look at history and despair. We are heading towards a certain destruction on our present trajectory. If there is no one who can intervene and heal the human heart then our fate is indeed a sad one.

Orthodox Christianity does not believe that all religion is good. Indeed, we might very well argue that most religion is not good because it embraces the delusion that clouds the human heart. Most religion does not measure itself by its love of its enemies. In that sense, much of religion among men is just a peculiar manifestation of politics and nothing more.

But I believe that Christ is truly God in the flesh and that God so loves us that He emptied Himself and endured death on the cross in order to rescue us even from the relative non-existence we had brought on ourselves (in Hades). I believe that we can judge ourselves only by the standard of the love of God on the Cross. Either we are denying ourselves and extending our hearts towards others, especially our enemies, or we are not following Christ. Anything less than that is not the fullness of the Orthodox faith.

There is a path to salvation but it only goes through the cross (not just the Cross of Christ but through the cross He has set before each of us). It is the only means of curing the sickness of our heart. Such religion endangers no one. Such religion would see the Atheist not as our largest problem, but simply one of many examples of the heart of man in need of healing. Indeed, many Atheists may be closer to that healing than many deluded Christians. We can and must pray for all mankind and for the triumph of the Cross in their heart. The sooner the better. And let it begin with me.



METROPOLITAN ARCHEPARCHY OF PHILADELPHIA

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No. 804/2013 O

This Number Should be Prefixed to Your Reply

Office of the Metropolitan

PASTORAL MESSAGE OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY OF THE U.S.A. TO OUR CLERGY, HIEROMONKS AND BROTHERS, RELIGIOUS SISTERS, SEMINARIANS AND BELOVED FAITHFUL

CHRIST IS BORN!

This year we Ukrainians conclude the Jubilee Year Commemorating the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of our ancestors in the River Dnipro by the Grand Prince, St. Volodymyr the Great, the Equal-to-the-Apostles. Because of this dramatic and blessed event, our people were illuminated by the light of Jesus Christ and His Word penetrated their hearts.

Pope Francis states in his Encyclical Letter, *Lumen Fidei*: “The light of Faith: this is how the Church’s tradition speaks of the great gift brought by Jesus.” The Holy Father continues by quoting St. John’s Gospel where Christ says of Himself: “I have come as Light into the world, that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness” (Jn. 12:46).

That darkness was shattered by the appearance of a bright star followed by the Wise Men from the East. We are able to celebrate anew the great mystery of our faith – the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ – because we inherited this faith from our ancestors. And what a mysterious and magnificent faith this is. The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, took on flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus became man so that all of us can become children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, partakers of His glory.

All of this is beyond our ability to comprehend. It is astonishing that Almighty God became an infant for our salvation. The Word of God went through the whole process of conception and birth for us (“...by the power of the Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man” – Nicene Creed).

This “good news” was announced to the shepherds. Together with them we are filled with wonder as the heavenly angelic host praises God and sings, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those who enjoy His favor rests” (Lk. 2:14). The Gospel passage continues, “the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, in accord with what had been told them” (Lk. 2:20). In one of our Christmas carols we sing: “O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining, this is the night of the dear Savior’s birth.” As with our ancestors, now we are not alone. “God is with us.” Entering into our world, Jesus, the Messiah, affects our every movement, our every action, our every aspiration, in fact our very life and destiny. The Incarnation, God-becoming-man, is not an illusion. It makes sense. “Through Him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through Him. All that came to be had life in Him...” (Jn. 1:3-4).

Christmas is such an obvious opportunity for renewal. This past “Year of Faith” urged us to rediscover and renew our relationships with Christ that was given to us in Baptism. By virtue of our Baptism we are all called to share the “good news” with others, to evangelize, whether it is in our home in the example of prayer and witness we give, or perhaps at work, or in different organizations, both religious and secular. In some ways we are all given situations in which God is calling us to witness our faith.

1025 years ago, our ancestors were enlightened by Christ and His “good news.” This blessed gift they passed on to us. Now, let us pass it on to others. Let us rejoice on this great feast of the Nativity of our Lord and let us be grateful to Jesus for being born for our salvation. Christ is born – let us glorify Him!

We wish all of you a truly grace-filled Christmas and a very blessed and prosperous New Year.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

ПАСТИРСЬКЕ ПОСЛАННЯ ЄПИСКОПІВ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ КАТОЛИЦЬКОЇ ЦЕРКВИ В СПОЛУЧЕНИХ ШТАТАХ АМЕРИКИ ВСЕЧЕСНИМ ОТЦЯМ, ПРЕПОДОБНИМ ЧЕНЦЯМ І ЧЕРНИЦЯМ, СЕМІНАРИСТАМ ТА ДОРОГИМ ВІРНИМ

ХРИСТОС РАЖДАЄТЬСЯ!

Цього року українці завершили ювілейні відзначення 1025-річчя Хрещення наших предків в річці Дніпро, яке здійснив рівноапостольний Великий Князь Володимир Великий. Через цей грандіозний і благословенний акт наш народ був осяяний світлом Ісуса Христа і Його Слово проникло в їхні серця.

Папа Франциск у своїй Енцикліці «Світло віри» (“Lumen Fidei”) зазначив: «Світло віри: це те, як традиція церкви говорить про великий дар, даний Ісусом». Святіший Отець звертається до Євангелія від Іоана, в якому Христос сказав: «Я – світло, на світ прийшов, щоб кожен, хто в мене вірує, не перебував у темряві» (Іо. 12, 46).

Ця темнота розсіялася від появи яскравої зорі, що вела Мудреців зі Сходу. Ми знову й знову можемо святкувати велике таїнство нашої віри – Різдво нашого Господа Ісуса Христа – бо ми успадкували цю віру від наших предків. І що це за таємнича й прекрасна віра! Син Божий, наш Господь Ісус Христос, взяв на себе тіло і поселився серед нас. Ісус стався Чоловіком, щоб всі ми могли стати дітьми Божими, спадкоємцями Царства Божого, причасниками Його слави.

Усе це перевершує наше розуміння. Це дивина, що Всевишній Бог став дитятком задля нашого спасіння. Слово Боже задля нас перейшло весь шлях від зачаття до народження («...силою Святого Духа Він народився від Непорочної Марії, і стався Чоловіком», - Нікейський Символ Віри).

Добра новина була оголошена пастухам. Разом з ними ми наповнюємося здивуванням і як небесний ангельський хор прославляємо Бога піснями: «Слава на висотах Богу й на землі мир, людям його вподобання». Євангеліє продовжує: «А пастухи повернулися, прославляючи й хвалячи Бога за все, що чули й бачили, так, як їм було сказано» (Лк. 2, 20). В одній з наших Різдвяних коляд ми співаємо: «Тиха ніч, дивна ніч... Дивне дитятко у яслах лежить – людям Спаситель родивсь». Як і наші предки, ми не самотні, «З нами Бог!» Ввійшовши в наш світ, Ісус Месія вплинув на кожну нашу дію, на кожен наш порух, на кожне наше прагнення, вдійсності, на все наше життя й призначення. Втілення, Бог, що стався чоловіком, не є ілюзією. Це має сенс. «Ним постало все, і ніщо, що постало, не постало без нього» (Іо. 1, 3-4).

Різдво є прекрасним часом для оновлення. Минулий «Рік віри» заохотив нас до нового відкриття та оновлення наших взаємин з Христом, які були дані нам у Хрещенні. Через чесноту нашого Хрещення ми всі покликані ділитися «Доброю новиною» з іншими, євангелізувати, чи то в наших домівках через приклад молитви і свідчення, чи, можливо, в праці, чи в різних організаціях, релігійних, чи мирянських. Певним чином ми всі опиняємося в ситуації, коли Бог кличе нас засвідчити свою віру.

1025 років тому наші предки були просвічені Христом і Його «Доброю новиною». Це той благословенний дар, який вони передали нам. Тепер, передаваймо його іншим. Радіймо у це велике свято Різдва нашого Господа, і дякуймо Ісусові за те, що народився нам на спасіння. Христос Раждається – Славимо Його!

Ми зичимо всім вам Різдва, сповненого правдивою благодаттю, і благословенного та успішного Нового Року.

Благодать нашого Господа Ісуса Христа, любов Бога Отця, і причастя Святого Духа нехай буде з усіма вами.

ХРИСТОС РАЖДАЄТЬСЯ! СЛАВІМО ЙОГО!

+Високопреосвященний Стефан (Сорока)
Митрополит Української Католицької Церкви у США
Архієпископ Філадельфійський для українців

+ Stefan (Soroka)
Archbishop of Philadelphia for Ukrainians
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

+Преосвященний Річард (Семінак)
Єпископ Чиказької єпархії святого Миколая

+Richard (Seminack)
Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago

+Преосвященний Павло (Хомницький), ЧСВВ
Єпископ Стемфордської єпархії

+Paul (Chomnycky), OSBM
Eparch of Stamford

+Преосвященний Іван (Бура) (автор)
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+John (Bura) (author)
Apostolic Administrator
of St. Josaphat in Parma

Дано на Різдво Христове 2013 року

Christmas, 2013

WHO IS ST. NICHOLAS?

From The St. Nicholas Center, 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.



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
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Come, Lord Jesus

When Daniel the Prophet exercised his ministry in the Exile, his three young friends were also brought to the attention of the King. Upon refusing to comply with the ruler's ungodly orders, they were thrown into a furnace. The king, sitting nearby to witness the execution, saw a strange figure in the furnace with the three youths, and this figure was "like a son of man." The Fathers of the Church were of the opinion that this figure in the furnace was the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word of God, who would be incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth.

What lessons are there for us on this second Sunday before Christmas? We open the Christmas cycle with a look at longing and expectation - with a look at patience and hope. As Christians, we expect a future. We remember the words of the Son of Man - the long-awaited Savior - that on a day yet to come He will re-

turn to earth. "You will see the Son of Man," said Jesus, "coming on the clouds of heaven." We likewise refresh our belief that our Savior is as truly Man as He is God. He is - as the Son of Man - the very epitome of all that is noble, fine and good in a human being.

We also begin this Christmas cycle with a reminder that true love looks to the future, to provide something for the coming generation, for just as we stand on the shoulders of faith of our ancestors, the coming generation will stand on the platform of faith we construct. We are like a layer of bricks resting on previous layers, and upon which future layers will be cemented, until we constitute the walls of a temple in which God will dwell. The cornerstone of this grand design is Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the anniversary of whose birth we are shortly to celebrate.