

## HOSPITALITY

Ever burdened with our American consumerism and capitalistic orientation to life (“How much will it cost?” “What’s my time worth?” “How will it affect my finances?”), it seems we often equate our ability to give hospitality with however much we’ve calculated we can spare. When we sense we can spare some change, some time or energy, then we feel able to bear being hospitable. But a quick browse through Scripture and the teaching of the saints confronts that self-absorbed interpretation of hospitality very quickly; for authentic love is not absent of hospitality. “And above all things have fervent love for one another . . . be hospitable to one another” (1 Peter 4:8).

St Theodoros the Great (*Philokalia*, Vol. 2, pg. 32) instructs us in being hospitable: “When we receive visits from our neighbors, we should not consider this an irksome interruption, lest we cut ourselves off from the law of love. Nor should we receive them as if we were doing them a favor, but rather as if it is we ourselves who are receiving a favor; therefore, being indebted to them, we should beg them cheerfully to enjoy our hospitality. This is why the Apostle John says: ‘My children, let us love not in word or tongue, but in action and truth. And by this we know that we belong to the truth’” (1 John 3:18).

The mystery of hospitality lies in the unknown good fruit it will bear. The seeds planted by having someone to breakfast, drinking a beer together, or simply sharing time together over good conversation may bear spiritual blessings in ways we will never know. How many of us have been given hope, been encouraged, lifted up from despair,

kindled with the love of Christ, inspired, and blessed in so many other ways by a simple act of kindness from another person? Let us remember the words of Christ, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Mt. 25:40). As Elder Anthimos of St. Anne’s Skete reminds us, “Do not forget hospitality. You don’t know what this hospitality might render. By hospitality, Abraham hosted the Holy Trinity, and Lot entertained angels.”

Let’s make practicing hospitality between Thanksgiving and Nativity a priority this year. We can host a gathering, or meal, or just coffee and dessert. We can share our lunch at school or work, or simply ask someone how they’re doing and open our ears with compassion. Buy a pack of gum and share it with the first person you encounter. Let’s turn off the ‘me’ for the Nativity fast and turn on the ‘we.’ In doing so, we become enlightened to true truth and real reality. Our neighbor then is no longer an inconvenience, an expense, a waste of time, or a drain on our energy or productivity. They are our path to salvation! And every encounter of hospitality becomes an opportunity to experience Christ. “And while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence” (Lk. 24:41). Whatever we’ve got, let’s share it!  
— *Father Thaddeus Hardenbrook, St. Lawrence Orthodox Church, Felton, CA.*

### Annual Saint Nicholas Party

Saturday, December 21

The annual St. Nicholas Party will take place on Saturday, December 21, starting at 3 PM. There will be crafts and the decorating of the church hall Christmas tree. Great Vespers begins, as usual at 5 PM. Following Vespers there will be a potluck, a Nativity Play and the singing of Christmas carols, with a visit from St. Nicholas! Needs: It would be great if teenagers and adults came to help with the children’s crafts and clean up when we are done. We need adults without small children to help with these tasks, so that parents that do have small children can take them to Vespers. For any questions or volunteering please contact Gloria Collins at 849-6135 or email her at [gypsybootsie@att.net](mailto:gypsybootsie@att.net). You may also speak with Lara Anderson at 569-0175. We are all eagerly anticipating the celebration of the Blessed Nativity!

## INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov  
Church

90 Mountain View Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95407

Parish office phone: 707-584-9491 / fax: 585-9445

website: [www.saintseraphim.com](http://www.saintseraphim.com)

Our Parish Secretary—Fr. John Ramos—may be reached at the Church office Mon., Tues. and Wed., 9 AM to Noon, at 584-9491. Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at [Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net). He is available Tuesday–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

### Parish Contacts

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Assistant Pastor	318-1559
Fr. John Ramos, Attached	570-9849
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
Petar Griovski, Treasurer	762-4742
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary	778-8528
Lisa Moroz, Sisterhood President	360-5119
Shenina, Scrip Manager	321-7417
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106
Debbie Buse, Hall Event Manager	696-4986

## PREPARATION

The Fast is an ascetic time, designed by the Church to strip away common stumbling blocks into sin, to provide us with the means of self-perception that we lack in our typical indulgence, and to begin to grow the seeds of virtue. All these are necessary if we are ever to know even partially, or appreciate even menially, the “depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Romans 11:33). We must take up the task of our own purification, gifted by God and achieved only through His grace, that we might approach Him on Christmas Day as did the Magi and the shepherds in Bethlehem:

*Come, O ye faithful, inspired by God let us arise and behold the divine condescension from on high that is made manifest to us in Bethlehem. Cleansing our minds, let us offer through our lives virtues instead of myrrh, preparing with faith our entry into the feast of the Nativity, storing up treasure in our souls and crying: Glory in the highest to God in Trinity, whose good pleasure is now revealed to men, that in His love for mankind He may set Adam free from the ancestral curse. (hymn of the Sixth Hour, Christmas Eve). —Archimandrite Irenei (Steenburg)*

## NATIVITY GREETINGS

I congratulate you with the feast of Christ’s Nativity and also with the coming of the New Year. May He Who was incarnate and born from the Virgin give you and us what He came down to earth and was incarnate for—for the sake of His unutterable love for man. He became incarnate so that He will renew our nature the decayed with sin. He became incarnate that He may free us from the tyranny of the devil.

He became incarnate that He might save us and not only save, but

that He may make us His sons and daughters and heirs of His kingdom. And for this He demands nothing except our goodwill to seek out this unutterable inheritance of God. Then He will help us Himself by strengthening our good actions as Says the Apostle: (Phi 2:13) “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13) On our part the entire strength and importance of the deed is our goodwill, that is—in good will to please the Lord. Then He Himself will act and help us in the deed of our salvation as it is said: “without Me you can do nothing.” From all the above, we see that the deed of our salvation depends on our goodwill and upon God’s help and assistance. But this latter one will not come, unless the first precedes it. Peace be to all! And to your spirit! — *Saint Ambrose of Optina, letter to nuns*

## MASTER PLANNING

The Parish Council has set the date of Thursday, January 9, 2014, to begin looking at the Parish Master Plan. The Master Plan includes buildings, gardens, walkways, the parking lots, Parish programs and events. If you would like to discuss and work with others on multi-level planning for our Parish, please join us on January 9 at 7 PM for a one and a half hour discussion. Sean Esbjorn-Hargens, who leads discussions of this sort at the professional level, will be our moderator. We hope to have some initial ideas to present to the Parish Annual Meeting, on Sunday, February 2, 2014.

## NEEDS AROUND THE PARISH

Gutters on Hall and Protection Church need cleaning. Vineyard needs mowing. Lampadas in St. Seraphim need to be polished. Offerings of olive oil for the church lamps are appreciated. The closet in St. Seraphim needs rearranging. Please remember that our Parish has pledged to support a private room at the Catholic Charities Family Shelter (Nov. 17 presentation). There is a dedicated offering box in the Narthex. Frescos in the dome for the following Prophets have NOT yet been commissioned: Malachai, Habbakuk, Moses, Jonah, Jeremiah, Joel, Zephaniah, and Isaiah. \$4,000 each.

# EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **ROHNERT PARK STUDY GROUP:** Sessions continue on Tuesday evenings, 7 PM, December 3, 10 and 17. The group meets at 6063 Elsa Ave., Rohnert Park. Contact Deacon Nicholas and Deacon Jeremiah for further information on topics and content.
- **SAINT SERAPHIM DAY, JAN. 2:** We celebrate the second of our Annual Parish Feast Days on January 2, the repose of St. Seraphim. Services: Vespers and Akathist, January 1 at 5 PM; Liturgy with His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, Jan. 2, at 9:30 AM followed by a festal meal.
- **REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION BARRELS IN PARISH HALL AND NARTHEX:** Please bring canned goods and coats/jackets in excellent condition which will be delivered to the Redwood Gospel Mission downtown for Christmas.
- **ALL SENIORS OF THE PARISH,** don't forget our next luncheon on December 12th at 12 Noon. It will be a lenten potluck so be sure and bring your special holiday dish to share—we usually have between 25–30 seniors. We are hoping to have some special holiday entertainment, so you won't want to miss the fun (bring your cameras). Last month we agreed to help other seniors in the area celebrate Christmas. Santa Rosa Convalescent Hospital has provided us with the names of eight ladies (without family) and their wish lists for the holiday—simple, wonderful items like slippers, sweat pants, sweaters, hair accessories, etc. If everyone would bring a donation of maybe \$10 (or whatever you wish to donate), we could probably meet their wishes. A group of us can do the shopping (will be looking for volunteers), and hopefully we'll be able to deliver the gifts for their Christmas Party on December 19th. This will be our last luncheon this year, so you don't want to miss it!
- **FATHER LAWRENCE** will be giving the Advent Retreat at Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF on Saturday, December 7th. Registration at 9 AM, first lecture and discussion at 10 AM. Lunch provided. Second lecture and discussion at 1 PM. Closing Prayer at 2:30. To register, call Holy Trinity Cathedral at 415-673-8565.
- **WE WELCOME** Matthew Morrison, from Sonoma, who joins the Catechumens Kathie and Leonard. Matthew was received as a Catechumen on Sunday, November 24.

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## A St. Nicholas Day Tradition

*More Than a Bag of Chocolates*

Anyone who knows our family knows that we love family traditions. As December 6th, the Feast of St. Nicholas, is almost upon us, I thought I'd share with you another of our family traditions that worked well when the boys were little.

First things first. They need to know the story of the real St. Nicholas, so tell it to them! Read it to them! Point out his icons in church! He cared for the poor, the needy, and the children. He threw a bag of coins into a house so that a daughter did not have to be sold into slavery. On St. Nicholas Eve, the faithful in some countries put out their shoes (or stockings) waiting for a blessing from St. Nicholas. We leave out our shoes, too. What do we find in the morning? Chocolate coins wrapped in gold foil, reminiscent of the story of the girl that St. Nicholas saved. We also gave the boys a Christmas ornament (or something small and Christmassy,) a real gold dollar coin, and a dollar or so in quarters, which gave them something of their own to put in the offering plate at church.

But, there is more! We also left something out to help St. Nicholas! Since St. Nicholas cares for the poor, the needy, and children, we would go through our toys and clothes, and leave a big bag of items on our door step for St. Nicholas to share with other children. I remember when we were living in Pennsylvania, one of my kids was only four or five. He ran to the door first to see if the bag was gone, before he checked to see what treats were left in his shoe.

To us, the Feast of St. Nicholas kicks off the season of Christmas giving. This tradition of giving St. Nicholas a bag of things to share with the poor, not only helps the children learn a practical way of giving, but it helps clear out unused toys, and clothes that they have grown out of. One more word of advice: Be sure to add some items of your own to the bag. Everyone needs to participate when it is a family tradition! — *Diakonissa Esther Carr*

The **Vigil for Saint Nicholas** will be joyfully celebrated at the St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, in San Anselmo (102 Ross Ave) on Thursday, December 5, at 7 PM. The **Divine Liturgy of the Feast** will be celebrated on December 6 at 9:30 AM. All are welcome to a festive luncheon following the Divine Liturgy.

# PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## DECEMBER 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1 - Prophet Nahum</b> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy <i>Ushers: Tom S. &amp; Alex S.</i> • 11:45, Church School • Noon: Agape Meal	2	3 • 7 PM, Study Group at McPherson home	4 • 6 PM, Vespers	5 • 7 PM, Vigil for St. Nicholas in San Anselmo	<b>6 - St. Nicholas Day</b> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas in San Anselmo	7 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>Church as Spiritual Hospital</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
<b>8 - Martyr Anthusa</b> • 10 AM, Liturgy <i>Ushers: Joe A. &amp; Tom S.</i> • 11:45, Church School • Noon: Agape Meal	9	10 • 7 PM, Study Group at McPherson home	11 <i>[Fr. Lawrence in SF all day at Diocesan Council Meeting]</i> • 6 PM, Vespers	12 • Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship (potluck) • 6 :15 PM, Great Vespers for St. Herman of Alaska	13 • 8:30 AM, Matins and Liturgy for St. Herman of Alaska	14 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On Prayer</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
<b>15 - Holy Ancestors</b> • 10 AM, Liturgy <i>Ushers: George B. &amp; Esther S.</i> • 11:45, Church School • Noon: Agape Meal	16	17 • 7 PM, Study Group at McPherson home	18 • 6 PM, Vespers	19 • 6 PM, Prefeast Vespers • <b>7 PM, Parish Council Meeting</b>	20 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy ( <i>Prefeast, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. John of Kronstadt</i> ) • 6 PM, Prefeast Vespers	21 • 10 AM, Baptism • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On the Church Services</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, <i>St. Nicholas Party (Potluck/ Children's Play)</i>
<b>22 - Sunday before Nativity</b> • 10 AM, Liturgy <i>Ushers: Joe A. &amp; Sam C.</i> • Noon: Agape Meal • 1:30 PM, Prefeast Vespers	23 • 8 AM, Matins • 1 PM, Church Cleaning/polishing • 6 PM, Royal Hours of Nativity	<b>24 - CHRISTMAS EVE</b> • 11 AM, Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil • 6 PM, Matins of Nativity	<b>25 - NATIVITY</b> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy	<b>26 - Synaxis</b> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Synaxis of the Theotokos	27 • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for St. Stephen in San Anselmo	28 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
<b>29 - Holy Innocents</b> • 9 AM, Baptism of Baby Evan Glanville • 10 AM, Liturgy <i>Ushers: Tom S. &amp; Alex S.</i> • Noon: Agape Meal	30	31 • 5 PM, Great Vespers	<b>1 - St. Basil Day</b> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy for New Year's • <b>5 PM, Great Vespers for St. Seraphim</b>	<b>2 - ST. SERAPHIM DAY</b> • <b>9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for St. Seraphim of Sarov, festal luncheon</b>	3 • 9 AM, Royal Hours for Theophany	4 • 5 PM, Great Vespers, <i>prefeast of Theophany</i>

• **Sunday, January 5:** Vigil for Theophany, beginning at 5 PM.

• **Monday, January 6,** we will have the Festal Divine Liturgy at 9 AM. House blessings will take place after this. Call Fr. Lawrence to arrange.