

PARISH LIFE THIS MONTH

OUR PARISH COMMUNITY will be busy this January. If we look ahead on the calendar towards Great Lent, Pascha, the summer, etc., let us hope that, with God's help, we will be using our talent, time and resources for the good of the Church not only during January but also for the entire year.

Before giving you an overview of our January activities, let me offer a few words on "being busy." Busyness, as we all know, is not good in and of itself.

While it is true that we are to labor for our salvation, deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Jesus, let's also remember that our Savior says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). As we offer our talents and time at Church, let's be mindful that self-sacrifice and sacrificial-giving should be preceded by considerable prayer and the reading of Holy Scripture. We have to know when to retreat and recharge. And as we work for the glorification of God and the good of our neighbor we want to avoid temptations to consider the motives of others. That's just spiritually and morally exhausting.

When we are in vibrant relationship with God and our brothers and sisters in liturgical worship and fellowship (we need both), when we forgive the faults of others, when we seek repentance and receive His Divine Grace in Confession and Communion, we are less likely to push the boundaries God has set for us or to work ourselves beyond what He would ask. We are more apt to recognize what God is calling us to do and what He is not calling us to do. God equips us for what He calls us to (Hebrews 13:20-21; Ephesians 2:10). Relying on Jesus Christ for strength, wisdom, guidance through prayer in our Parish activities is essential.

Some may find it difficult to get involved in parish events, or perhaps find it difficult to meet others in the parish. There are three things to consider. First, at our parish, relationships and fellowship between parishioners develop for the most part during the Sunday lunches and the various volunteer activities (gardening, cleaning, Glendi, Sisterhood, charitable work, cooking, choir, etc.). Praying, eating and working together: these give us the

opportunity to know, love, forgive and help one another. Secondly, we set aside our expectations of how we think others ought to be. This is called being *gracious with others*. Thirdly, we pray for one another. This implies that we know the name of the other person.

Now on to our activities. By the time you read this, we will have celebrated the *Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord Jesus Christ* and *St. Basil Day* on January 1. Our celebration includes Vespers and Divine Liturgy.

We will have also celebrated the day of the repose of our patron, Saint Seraphim of Sarov (July 19, 1754-January 2, 1833). Vladyka Benjamin and area clergy will have joined us to serve the Divine Liturgy for this glorious feast (9:30 AM, Jan. 2). We thank Serge Anderson for preparing the meal, and the Sisterhood for setting up the Hall.

On January 5 at 6 PM we will celebrate the *Feast of Theophany* (Baptism of Christ) with Vespers and the Blessing of Water; and on Tuesday, January 6 at 9 AM, we will serve the Liturgy and the second Blessing of Water. One of the Theophany hymns tells us that Christmas is glorious, yet Theophany is greater still, since it enlightens us to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity. Water will be blessed at both services (please bring containers). We also bless homes starting on Theophany so that the newly blessed water of the feast will sanctify our homes. Please contact me to arrange that. Many parishioners have not had their homes blessed in years. Indeed, many have never had their homes blessed, which is disquieting for a pastor. I hope this year we all reconsider our relationship to Theophany.

On Wednesday evening, January 7, we host the ***Nomadic Shelter*** (see info on page 3).

On Sunday, January 11, a lovely couple from the Dormition Church on Rose Ave will be united in holy matrimony in our church, at 3 PM.

On Wednesday of that week (Jan. 14) we host the *Redwood Empire Food Bank*, another one of our efforts at charity and outreach. That evening, after Vespers, we have a potluck meal with a talk by Father John on the Theophany of Christ.

The following day, January 15, we will have our Senior Lunch Fellowship. Lunch will be prepared by Petar Griovski. That evening the Parish Council will meet, and finalize the 2015 budget and prepare for the **Parish An-**

INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
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Our Parish Secretary—Bobbi Griovski—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. He is available Tuesday–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

Parish Contacts

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Fr. John Schettig, Second Priest	318-1559
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
David Winterton, Treasurer	331-9085
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nual Meeting on Sunday, February 1. Please do mark your calendars for this all-parish meeting, which will begin right after the Divine Liturgy. People sometimes remark that our meeting inconveniently takes place on “Super Bowl Sunday.” The co-occurrence is actually very convenient, in that because of it we tend to take care of our parish business rather briskly.

Piroshki Prep: Bobbi Griovski is organizing the making of piroshki Jan. 14–17. This effort is very profitable for the parish, and so, please consider getting involved. See the note on page 3.

On Wednesday, January we will have Vespers, another potluck, and a talk by Vincent Rossi on the saints who labored in America.

Then, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, events of great importance concerning our parish will occur. I’m referring to the election of Archimandrite Daniel (Brum) to the episcopacy—on Friday, January 23 at 6 PM in San Francisco at Holy Trinity; the consecration of Fr. Daniel the next day as *Bishop of Santa Rosa* at the Divine Liturgy in San Francisco; and his arrival here at our Church on Sunday, January 25 at 9:30 AM. Giving proper solemnity to the event will be the presence of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Benjamin, Archbishop Melchizedek of Pittsburgh, and probably additional bishops and many visiting priests. Only the new Bishop will serve, while the others stand and pray. Following the Liturgy, during which the Episcopal Staff will be given to him (gifted by our parish and the diocese), there will be a festive lunch for all.

I don’t want to lose sight of the *Walk For Life* in San Francisco taking place on the day of the bishop’s consecration. It is hoped that

after the Liturgy at Holy Trinity, many of you will head over to the SF Civic Center for the 1 PM start of the *Walk*. Deacon Jeremiah is organizing transport for this.

A few other events will take place during the last week of the month—hopefully rest being one of them—however, you can see those for yourself on the January Calendar. May the Lord bless and strengthen each of you as we enter this new year. With great love and respect —*Father Lawrence*

HOLY THEOPHANY

IF CHRISTMAS IS THAT MOMENT when the Creator of the universe arrives on the scene to reclaim the territory stolen from Him by Satan, then Theophany is the first all-out assault on the powers of darkness. So why isn’t Theophany a much bigger blip on the radar of Christians today?

In a 2009 survey by the *Barna Group*, who do research on faith and culture, it was found that 59% of American Christians agreed with the statement “Satan is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.” Most Christians in America do not believe that Satan is a real, personal being. Perhaps even more shockingly, almost the same number (58%) believe that the Holy Spirit is “a symbol of God’s power or presence” but “not a living entity.” These attitudes may partially explain why Theophany isn’t a big deal to many American Christians. The voice of the Father speaks from the Heavens, the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove on the Son of God being baptized. The Holy Trinity is trampling down the influence of Satan and his demons in a public, powerful way. But if you don’t really believe in the Holy Spirit and you don’t really believe in Satan, then, well... so what? We just had Christmas, right? What’s the big deal about Jesus getting baptized? To understand this remarkable feast, a feast which by liturgical standards is second only to Pascha and outranks Christmas, and to understand why it seems to make so little impact on so many, we have to take a look inside what’s really going on here. We have to ask some big questions about creation and redemption, about what happened to the creation and what

it's being redeemed from and how Theophany accomplishes that...

Creation's first moments are elemental and primal, the very beginning of everything we know and experience. And what is present there at that first beginning, the beginning of all beginnings? Earth, water, light and darkness. It is the most basic, most foundational stuff of the physical universe, and it is God Who brings them into being. Later revelation would illuminate mankind that the Holy Trinity's creation of this world was in and through the Son of God, Who would become incarnate of the Virgin Mary in the fullness of time. So in the Son of God, we have to see not only the heroic Savior Who comes to rescue mankind but also the *sovereign Creator*, through Whom and by Whom and for Whom the creation was made. This place is His. He made it. And so when it came time for the Holy Trinity to express the ultimate in divine love for the creation, it is the Son of God Who becomes incarnate—that is, He becomes created while yet remaining uncreated. He takes on “createdness” into His uncreated Person.

...Mankind was designed to be creation's priest, mediating between the creation and the Creator to keep the creation in harmony with the Creator. But when Adam and Eve subject themselves to Satan's design rather than God's, their intimacy with creation also subjects the whole of creation to this new design—and it is not the design of freedom and beauty and creativity and holiness that God gave it, but of the slavery and ugliness and selfishness and mindless tediousness of Satan.

That is why when the Son of God arrives in creation as part of creation by becoming a man, that moment is nothing less than the arrival of conqueror Who has come to take back what is His own, with all the fierce love and desire that only come when a man defends his homeland and his family from a domineering invader. We are not only His family—His children, His brothers and sisters and friends, but this Earth is also His own land, His own place that He created and saw both beautiful and good from the beginning. ...in the great feast of Theophany, we see the Incarnate God begin His reclamation of the very universe itself. He comes to be baptized today not to fulfill a Jewish ritual or to draw attention to John the Baptist, but to bring His holiness in contact with the elemental, primal stuff of creation—earth and water, swirling about in that muddy Jordan River—and to imbue them with His own presence, with His own divine energy, His own holiness.

And it is from the blessing of that water that the blessing now goes out. Its primary purpose is to begin the re-creation of mankind, to baptize humanity so that we might also put on Christ. Christ is baptized to begin Christian baptism. He enters into the water to put into it what we now receive when we enter into it. And how does He accomplish this? It is done because of Who He is, but it is also with the voice of the Father and the descent of the Holy Spirit. This is why this feast is called *Theophany*, a word meaning “the appearance of God,” because here for the first time in the history of time itself are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit made plain to the creation. ...Christ entered into the water so that water could again become what it was destined to be from the beginning—the means of communicating God's presence to this world.

And so from today this water will go out. This water will go out to baptize the nations. This water will go out to bless your homes. This water will go out to heal the sick. This water will go out to bring blessing and sanctification to every corner of creation, carried there by those who have become the very extension of the Incarnation of the Son of God—you and me, brothers and sisters! It is we who carry this holy water throughout the creation to reclaim it from Satan, to rip it away from bondage to our enemy, to renew it all again in the energy and power and life of the Holy Spirit, by the Word of the Father, the Word of God Who has become flesh and dwelt among us. This is the meaning of Theophany.

If at Christ's Nativity we are introduced to the great Captain of our holy hosts of people who bear within them the Resurrection, then it is at Theophany that He leads us into that great cosmic battle. And it is a battle. We cannot afford to take this lightly. We cannot afford to try to tame this and domesticate this and “fit” it somewhere “into” our lives. This *is* our life. This is our only hope. We fight this battle for our eternal souls. We fight this battle for our wives and husbands and parents and children and brothers and sisters and friends. We fight this battle for the whole of the universe, for the whole cosmic order, to bring everything—not just this one place, this one room—but everything, every little thing, every great thing and everything in between back into harmony with the One Who created us and loved us from the beginning.

This is Theophany. This is the beginning. As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. You have *put on Christ*. You know what to do. To Him therefore be all glory, honor, power and worship, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. —*Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **HOUSE BLESSINGS:** The Tradition of the Church is for us to have our homes blessed each year, sanctifying them with the Water of the Feast of Theophany. A sign up list is posted in the Narthex.
- **OUR SECOND NOMADIC SHELTER** evening will take place on Wednesday evening, January 7th. What an evening we had last time, and this second evening comes with no doubts that it will be equally wonderful. Come, and be a part of simply dining with our guests. If you plan on helping in the kitchen or with setup, please let me know by email (ryanwinlow@gmail.com) or phone: 707.490.4700. Those who helped last time and can't make it for this second evening, are asked to let me know immediately, so I can plan accordingly. I trust God will bring what is needed for the evening. The most important thing is just to come, help where you can, welcome our guests, and have a wonderful dinner and evening with them. We'll be having a special treat for the musical entertainment of the evening. A home-grown St. Seraphim band! I look forward to seeing you there. —Ambrose Inlow, coordinator
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** distribution (to low income and needy families) is set for Wednesday, January 14 from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM. Volunteers, please arrive just before 5 PM to set up. See Denise Pellizzer if you would like to volunteer to help with this outreach.
- **YOUR HELP IS NEEDED** with our January Piroshki sale. Order blanks are in the hall and at the candle stand. Orders are due Sunday, January 11th. Workers are needed for preparation and production: eggs will be hardboiled Monday or Tuesday (the 12th or 13th); herbs, onions and eggs will be chopped on Wednesday, Jan. 14 (This is the same day as the Redwood Empire food distribution in the early evening, fyi). The mushroom filling will be prep'ed on Thursday, Jan. 15 in the morning, and the meat filling in the afternoon or evening. Dough prep will happen Friday, late afternoon or early evening. Volunteers are needed. Final work and frying will take place on Saturday. We hope to have at least half a dozen workers ready by 8:30 AM to start pinching meat piroshki. If you don't want to work with meat filling, plan to arrive at 11 or later. Please email bgriovsk@sbcglobal.net or call at 707-477-8418 (cell). Thanks for your help. —Bobbi Griovski
- **OUR SENIOR LUNCH** this month is scheduled for Thursday, January 15 at noon. Petar Griovski will be preparing the meal.
- **WALK FOR LIFE, SAN FRANCISCO:** The "Annual Walk for Life Rally" at Civic Center in San Francisco will be on Saturday, January 24. It is the same day as the Consecration of Bishop Daniel at Holy Trinity. The Liturgy will end in time to get to the rally at 12:30. The Walk begins at 1:30 PM. The seriousness, the necessity and the importance of the "Walk for Life" cannot be overemphasized. I invite all our parishioners to consider participating in the "Walk." Deacon Jeremiah will be organizing transport.
- **DRESS CODE:** Men, Church services are not times for informal (not to say "grunge") wear. Standards are slipping here and there with regard to clothing.
- **OUR PARISH ANNUAL MEETING** will take place on Sunday, February 1, 2015. At the meeting the parish membership reviews reports on Glendi, fresco painting, income and expenses, the Sisterhood, Church School, etc., approves the 2015 budget, and elects officers to the Parish Council. All parishioners are asked to participate in the Meeting.
- **GREAT LENT COMES** early this year. Forgiveness Sunday is February 22.
- **THE YALE RUSSIAN CHORUS**, conducted by Mark Bailey will appear in concert here at St. Seraphim on Sunday, March 8 at 5 PM. More info to follow

WE CHRISTIANS NOW must be missionaries to people who are better than the nihilism they do not know they profess. The old, sturdy Christian virtues remain in the wisps of etiquette, detached from one another and from the grace and example of Christ. An echo, a fragrance, a half-forgotten memory remain, and make it harder for us to persuade our well-fed and much-distracted fellows of the real moral vacuity. We do not dwell in the City of God. We do not even dwell in the City of Man. We dwell in the Suburb of Man, beside and beneath civilization. We have neither the purity of the saint nor the gritty material squalor of London in the time of Dickens. We have hygiene and proper diet. We follow something cleaner and sillier than superstitions. We follow the news. So the evangelist has his work cut out for him.

—Anthony Esolen in *Touchstone Magazine*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JANUARY 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	29	30	31 • 5 PM, Vespers for St Basil and the Circumcision of Christ	1 - St. Basil /New Year • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Vespers and Akathist for St. Seraphim of Sarov	2 - St. Seraphim • 9:30 AM, Greeting of Archbishop Benjamin and Divine Liturgy • Festal Meal	3 • 5 PM, Great Vespers, Prefeast of Theophany
4 - Sunday before Theophany • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	5 - Fast Day • 6 PM, Vespers and Great Blessing of Water	6 - Theophany • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy. <i>Procession to Protection Church for Water Blessing</i>	7 - St. John the Baptist • 6 PM, Vespers • 6 PM, <i>Nomadic Shelter in Hall</i>	8	9	10 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
11 - St. Theodosius the Great • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 3 PM, <i>Wedding, Rose Ave Parishioners</i>	12	13	14 - Piroshki Prep • 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i> • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck /Talk on Theophany (Fr. John)	15 - Piroshki Prep • Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	16 - Piroshki Prep	17 <i>(Piroshki Prep all day)</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
18 - St. Athanasius the Great • 9:30 AM, Akathist • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	19	20	21 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on American Saints (Vincent Rossi)	22	23 • <i>in SF: 6 PM, Vespers & Canonical Election of Archimandrite Daniel</i>	24 • <i>in SF, 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy & Consecration of Archim. Daniel</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
25 - Zacchaeus Sunday • 9:30 AM, <i>Greeting of Bishop Daniel / Divine Liturgy, Reception</i>	26	27- St. John Chrysostom • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	28 • 11 AM, Catechism Revisited • 6 PM, Vespers	29	30	31 • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers

• On Sunday, January 25, the Parish will welcome the newly-consecrated Rt. Reverend Daniel, Bishop of Santa Rosa, Archbishop Benjamin and visiting hierarchs and clergy from other dioceses at 9:30 AM. After the Liturgy all are invited to a festal meal and reception in the parish hall.