

last day in which the night grows longer. On the twenty-first of the month the day begins to grow longer. The nights and noetic darknesses leave while light and days increase. Let us ask God to take away from us the darkness of our hearts now that the days are growing and they become completely illumined, now that the time of the year is changing. The Church announces this to us with the rising of the true light, the Sun of our souls.

—Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra

- ST HERMAN DAY, December 13:

Please note that the Feast of St. Herman of Alaska will be celebrated with Vespers on December 12 at 6 PM, and the Divine Liturgy at 9 AM, December 13 (the online calendar now has this feast included).

- WE BEGAN THE NATIVITY FAST ON NOVEMBER 15:

We are just over half way through the Fast leading to the celebration of the Nativity of Christ. I encourage all of us to stay faithful to keeping the Fast no matter what lapses may occur. Fasting builds our sense of expectation, not for Christmas presents, which are wonderful, especially for children, but for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, and the healing and restoration of creation. Very soon during Services we will hear the Gospel of the Great Supper (Luke 17), that of the Genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1) and the Old Testament prophecies read at the Service of the Royal Hours (Dec. 22 at 9 AM). These all remind us of the long history of God's providential care for His chosen people, as well as the apostasy and betrayal on the part of Israel—a history embracing Israel's victories against its surrounding enemies, but also its subjugation and humiliation at the hands of other enemies. Our own lives follow the same trajectory in so many ways. Fr. Steven Kostoff wrote that "...if we can appreciate this sense of waiting and longing, we can understand better how we...are re-living or actualizing the experience of Israel as we await the advent of our Lord in a specially designated period known as the Nativity/Advent Fast. Waiting implies expectation, perhaps even a certain sense of excitement. (Ask your children about that!)." The Fast restores the sense of longing, desire for God, hope in Him, fear of our failure to stay faithful to Him which is expressed in those scriptural passages. The Fast, being far more than abstinence of this or that food or activity, is actually about nurturing a holy expectation that God's love, His plan, His "dispensation" as we say in the prayers, includes each one of us. The Fast is utterly practical—being about food, time, charity—in its challenge to us. Stay faithful and reap the benefits. —Fr. Lawrence

# ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

## PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



**December 3, 2017**

**St. Barbara the Great Martyr & St. John of Damascus**



- TROPARION OF ST. BARBARA, Tone Eight (moved from Dec. 4):  
Let us honor the holy Barbara, for the most honored one broke the snares of the enemy and was delivered from them like a bird, with the help and aid of the Cross.
- TROPARION OF ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, Tone Eight:  
O instructor of Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and purity, beacon for the whole world, O John most wise: by thy doctrines thou hast illumined all. O harp of the Spirit, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

### ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Dec. 2: 3:30 PM, Catechism *On Repentance*  
4 PM Children's Choir Rehearsal  
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confession

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Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church • 90 Mountain View Ave • Santa Rosa  
707-584-9491 • LMargitich@sbcglobal.net • saintseraphim.com

- Sunday, Dec. 3: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
11:45 AM, Church School  
Noon, Agape Meal
- Wednesday, Dec. 6: 6 PM, Vespers
- Thursday, Dec. 7: Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship  
5 PM, Prep for *Angels Unawares* Guests

- DECEMBER 6 IS ST. NICHOLAS DAY:

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in San Anselmo will celebrate its Altar Feast, on December 6, Saint Nicholas Day. Vigil will be served on Tuesday, Dec. 5 at 7 PM. The next morning, Wednesday, Dec. 6, Archbishop Benjamin will preside at the Divine Liturgy, which begins at 9:30 AM. A festal lunch will be served. We encourage and support our sister parish when we participate in this feast, yet there is another benefit: when we hear the joyful hymns about the coming birth of Jesus and those about Saint Nicholas at the Vigil and Liturgy we deepen our own preparations for Christmas. This feast calls us to prepare for Christmas day and helps us in that effort.

- ANGELS UNAWARES:

Our guests arrive about 6 PM on Thursday, December 7. Volunteers are asked to come about 5 PM to assist with setting up the Hall for dinner. Any questions call Rachel (799-4117) or Michael Dovey (618-6585).

- RETREAT AT HOLY TRINITY IN SF:

Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF will host a retreat led by Fr. John Takahashi, who will present an account—using Cathedral archives and the diaries of St. Nicholas (Kassatkin) of Japan—of the founding of Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF and the establishment of the Orthodox Church in Japan, which occurred within ten years of each other. The retreat will take place on Saturday, December 9 from 9:30 AM–2:30 PM. Call 415-673-8565 for more information.

- CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PLAY:

The children of St Seraphim Cathedral will offer their annual Nativity Play—written and directed by Carmen Anderson—on December 17th. The *Nativity Kontakion* of St. Romanos the Melodist will be chanted at 4:30 PM in the Protection Church, followed by dinner and the Play. Please bring a dessert to share.

- THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST ~ A MEDITATION:

...The greatest mystery of the Incarnation is that, having happened once in history, it recurs in every person that comes to Christ. In the deep silence of the night the Word of God became incarnate on earth: this is how the Word becomes incarnate in the silent depths of our soul, where our mind lapses into silence, where words run out, where our spirit stands before God. Christ was born on earth unknown and unrecognized, for only the Magi and the shepherds went out to meet him. In the same way, quietly and unrecognizably to others, Christ is born in a human soul, and it comes out to meet him, because a star has been born in it, leading to the light. We mysteriously recognize Christ in us during prayer, when we discover that our prayer has been accepted and heard, that God ‘came and abode in us’ and filled us with his life-bearing presence. We encounter Christ in the Eucharist, when, having received his body and blood, we feel that our own body is penetrated by his divine energy, and the blood of God runs through our veins. We encounter Christ in other sacraments of the Church, when through union with him we are renewed and revived unto eternal life. We encounter Christ in our neighbors, when we gain sight of his innermost depth where the image of God shines. We encounter Christ in our everyday life, when amidst its noise we hear his beckoning voice or when we see his manifest intrusion into the course of history. Precisely so—unexpectedly and suddenly—God intruded into the life of humanity twenty centuries ago, when by his birth he turned the course of history. Precisely so is he born again and again in the souls of thousands of people, changing, transforming and transfiguring their lives, making believers out of non-believers, saints out of sinners, saved out of dying. When, around two thousand years ago, the Divine Infant was born, the angels sang: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men’ (Lk 2:14). In our days the world yearns for peace and good will. In the very place where Christ was born there is war, and Bethlehem itself is under siege. The Christian Church prays for peace in the Holy Land and in other countries for the forces of good to triumph over the forces of evil. May the Divine Child born in Bethlehem grant peace to the entire world, and good will to all its people. —*Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Volokolamsk*

- CHRISTMAS IS COMING.

Do you know that the Pre-Festal Hymns begin on the twentieth of December? [Vespers served on Dec. 19] The Church has also wisely set the