

preparation for receiving the Incarnation with joy and understanding are drawing to a close. We may come to church on the feast, but if we have not prepared our hearts, we will miss the fullness of the spiritual experience. Everything of value in life is worthy of preparation, and there is no greater event than the birth of the Son. Attend services, pray, read, be charitable, love your neighbor, and give gifts of love and devotion. —In joyful anticipation, *Father Thaddeus Hardennbrook*

• SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA:

On December 13 the Church celebrates the memory of our Venerable Father Herman of Alaska, who lived from 1756–1836. As a monk of Valaam, in northern Russia, he learned the hesychastic tradition of the Jesus Prayer from Elder Nazarius. Along with ten other monks, he arrived in Alaska in 1794 as part of the Russian Mission. Despite the harsh conditions, and the rampant abuse of the locals by the immoral Russian hunters and merchants against the natives and the monks, St. Herman and the others managed to baptize over 7,000 people in the Kodiak region, and set about building a church and monastery. In 1807 St Herman, the last of the ten original missionaries, moved to a hermitage on Spruce Island—continuing to care for his beloved flock. Many miracles were worked by St. Herman, to the glory of God and for the good of his people.

• PREPARING FOR NATIVITY ~ CONFESSION:

In preparation for receiving Holy Communion on the Feast of Nativity (December 24 and 25) please make your confession in the weeks or days prior. Confessions are heard on the weekend, as usual, weekdays by appointment, and on the three days before Nativity (before and after Vespers on December 21–23). In general, ***those who commune each week should be making a confession at least once a month.*** As your priest I don't regulate the frequency of your confession and communion, or check whether you're prepared for Holy Communion. It's on the "honor system" and must be that way. There's freedom in Christ, and I respect the freedom of each person. However, I am responsible for teaching and assisting in your preparation, and ultimately, answerable to God as I offer the Chalice to you. Without a doubt, I am confident that all of you are profoundly grateful to God, that in His great mercy He has given us these Holy Mysteries for the healing and salvation of our souls, and for union with Him, Who is the "head of the body, the church..." (Col. 1:18) and for union with each other.

—Fr. Lawrence

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday ~ December 13, 2015

• TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Three:

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; for the Lord hath shown strength with His arm; He hath trampled down death by death; He hath become the first-born of the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of hades, and hath granted the world great mercy.

• TROPARION OF THE ANCESTORS, TONE TWO:

By faith, Thou hast justified the ancient forefathers; through them Thou hast betrothed to Thyself the Church of the Gentiles. Let the Saints, therefore, exult in glory, for from their seed is the noble fruit: she who without seed gave birth to Thee. Through their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us.

• TROPARION OF SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA, Tone Four:

Blessed dweller of the northern wilds, and gracious intercessor for the whole world, teacher of the Orthodox faith, good and most wondrous enlightener, adornment of Alaska, and joy of all America: blessed Father Herman, pray to Christ the King of Glory, that He save our souls.

• KONTAKION OF SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA, Tone Eight:

Monk of Valaam, who through ascetic labors didst become an emulator of the desert dwelling saints of old, O beloved of the Mother of God and Virgin, having taken prayer as sword and shield, thou wast revealed as the scourge of pagan darkness and the demons' hosts. Hence we cry to thee: O Saint Herman, pray that we be saved.

• KONTAKION, TONE TWO

A hand-wrought image ye would not worship, O thrice-blessed ones; but armed with the indescribable Essence, ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire. Standing in the midst of the irresistible flame, ye called upon God: Speed Thou, O Compassionate One, and hasten, as Thou art merciful, to come unto our aid. For Thou art able to do what Thou wilt.

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ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, December 12: 10 AM, Baptism of Blaise Inlow
3:30 PM, Catechism, *On Repentance*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, December 13: 8:45 AM, Matins
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:45 AM, Church School
Agape Meal / Remarks by Fr. Innocent
- Tuesday, December 15: 7 PM, Study of Epistle to the Hebrews,
McPherson home
- Wed., December 16: 7 AM, Divine Liturgy
6 PM, Vespers
- Thurs., December 17: 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting

• WELCOME:

We cordially welcome Hieromonk Innocent, from the Monastery of St. John in Manton, CA. Fr. Innocent will preach at the Divine Liturgy, and also give a talk in the Parish Hall during the Agape Meal—I encourage all of you to stay for this. Of course, we will not let him leave here emptied-handed, but will make an offering for the Monastery. —*Fr. Lawrence*

• CHRISTMAS PLAY ~ SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20:

The Church School children and staff are very excited to be presenting a Christmas play, **THE HOLY FAMILY**, written and directed by Carmen Anderson, on Sunday, December 20. The schedule for the evening includes a short Vespers for the Prefeast of Nativity, served at 4 PM, followed by a potluck meal, a visit from St. Nicholas and the play. For more information call Gloria Collins at 849-6135 or email her at gypsybootsie@att.net.

• CHARITABLE GIFTS POTLUCK WRAPPING PARTY

Our thanks to Daphne Russell, who once again organized the Sisterhood's annual "Christmas Shoebox" project. 100 backpacks have been made to give to each of our guests at the Nomadic Shelter evenings (on Thanksgiving and Christmas eve). Backpacks contain items such as socks, toothbrushes and toothpaste, as well as home baked cookies and St Seraphim prayer cards! We hope you can help us in completing the final touches of gift wrapping 50 backpacks for the Christmas Eve Nomadic Shelter, on **Monday, Dec 14 at**

6 PM, Parish Hall. Please bring a dish (lenten food) to share. RSVP to Kira or Daphne. We thank all those who contributed so generously to this special Christmas gift for those in our community in need.

Kira Staykow: kirastaykow@gmail.com 415-279-0353.

Daphne Russell: russfam05@sbcglobal.net, 707-523-1332

• YOUNG ADULT GROUP INVITES YOU:

On **Saturday December 19**, after Vespers (about 6 PM or so), we will welcome Mr. Taylor Hostetter from Atlanta, who will speak on two subjects: first, "Living and Sharing the Fulness of the Gospel as Orthodox." The second talk will introduce us to a mission trip to Serbia, called "Cooperative Training Mission to Serbia with The Navigators" (blessed by the Serbian Orthodox Church and our Diocese of the West). The first talk will focus on evangelism and mission, in general; the second talk, on the Serbia trip. Mr. Hostetter is coming not to raise funds for this mission trip but rather to share with us thoughts about Orthodox evangelism, and to find interested people to join the trip. Please join our Parish Young Adult Group and friends on **Saturday, December 19 at 6 PM**, for what promises to be a very engaging evening.

• TODAY'S FEAST:

Blessed be God who has given us every spiritual blessing in heaven through Christ, foreordaining us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself (the Father). (Eph. 1:3) By baptism, we are adopted into God's family. At Great Vespers on Saturday, we praise the glorious men from before and during the Old Covenant law—members of our family tree. We honor Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Samson, Barak, Jephthah, Nathan, Eleazar, Josiah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha and all the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel "and all the rest," especially Daniel and the three holy youths, Zachariah, John the Baptist, and all those who proclaimed Christ. Likewise we sing praises to the holy women who were made "strong in the days of old by the might of Your Strength, O Lord: Hannah, Judith, Deborah, Huldah, Jael, Esther, Sarah, Miriam, Rachel, Rebecca, and Ruth." Orthodox Christians faithfully preserve the awareness of whence we came. We not only remember that we are from the dust of the earth, but we also remember those who have preceded us, and are joined to us, in holiness, and in faith, and in the spiritual struggle. History is chronological, but the Kingdom of God is ever-present, and we commune with all the righteous who were before us and await us. As brothers and sisters in Christ, they are our forefathers too! The days of