

remove everything in the Scene except the Christ Child? For those who are Orthodox it's still a Nativity scene. For the non-Christian, it's nothing at all. The "world" has more or less kept the various characters in the display as decorations, a faint reminder of what has been. Yet we know that shepherds, the angels, and all the other things that make up a Nativity scene are only there in order to worship the Christ Child. They've come looking or have been called. Perhaps He's somewhat hidden. Surely, one has to be looking for the Humble God-Man to see Him; one can pass by a Nativity scene and never notice Jesus. Rather than talk about putting "Christ back into Christmas" let's focus on putting Christmas back in Jesus Christ. So, to answer the question above: the reason why we have so many Services—it's a Winter Holy Week, in fact—is so that we find Jesus. The Services serve as a Christmas Star leading us to the Lord, to the Light that shines in darkness.

—Fr. Lawrence

• FROM THE BOOKSTORE:

Are you new to our Parish? Do you have a friend or Godchild who is a newcomer? An ideal gift for anyone new to St. Seraphim would be a copy of *MISSION AND SACRIFICE*, the parish history published in 2011 on our 75th anniversary. Knowing what went before to create St. Seraphim Church and to make this parish so special can only help to inspire new members to strive toward making it even more so. The soft cover book has 100 pages of history and images that tell and show what was done to give Orthodoxy a home at 90 Mountain View Avenue.

• GIFT FOR BISHOP DANIEL:

Our parish will be presenting two gifts on January 25, 2015, to the newly consecrated Bishop Daniel of Santa Rosa (see the November bulletin about the consecration): a Bishop's staff and an icon of the Righteous Prince Daniel of Moscow (his namesake) which will stay here in our Church for veneration. If you are interested in participating in covering the costs of these gifts, please see Juliana Veenis about the staff, and David Winterton about the icon.

• PARISH PHOTO DIRECTORY:

The photo directory of parishioners (with phone, email and address) is being revised, and will be available soon. Normally we send the directory out by email on the SSPF parish mailing list. If you would like hardcopy, please leave a message with Bobbi in the office—584-9491.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ December 14, 2014

• 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.

• 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 willest.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Dec. 13: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for St. Herman of Alaska
10:30 AM, Parish Work Party
3:30 PM, Catechism (on *Holy Unction*)
5 PM, Great Vespers
7 PM, *A Christmas Carol*
- Sunday, Dec. 14: 9:30 AM, *Akathist to the Theotokos "Nurturer of Children"*
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
12:45 PM, Church School
Noon, Agape Meal
7 PM, *A Christmas Carol*

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- Wednesday, Dec. 17: 6 PM, Vespers
- Thursday, Dec. 18: 6 PM, Akathist
7 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Friday, Dec. 19: Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship
7 PM, Master Planning Meeting (make up)

- CONFESSION BEFORE CHRISTMAS:

Please prepare yourself in every spiritual way for the Feast of the Birth of Christ. It is appropriate and proper for us—priests and people together—to make a Confession prior to receiving Holy Communion on all feast days, but **especially before the feast of Christmas**. It is not appropriate for anyone over seven years of age to receive Holy Communion on Nativity without a recent Confession. Our bishops teach that if we receive Holy Communion frequently, weekly, we should be confessing no less than once a month. We should all make our Confession prior to Christmas Day, so that we may all, the entire parish, receive Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve and Day. Any person, age seven and up, who wishes to receive Holy Communion on Nativity Eve or Nativity, should make a confession in these days before Christmas (times below). I especially appeal to the parents of our children.

- TIMES FOR CONFESSION:

This week: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons—call to set a time; before Vespers on Saturday, Dec. 20; any time on December 22 and 23. Please call or email to set a time. —*Fr. Lawrence*

“For as often as you eat the Bread and drink the Cup, you proclaim the Lord’s Death until He comes again. Therefore whoever eats this Bread or drinks this Cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the Bread and drink of the Cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body. (I Cor. 12:26–29).” Our frequent confession and preparation for reception of Holy Communion (“let a person examine himself”) is not a “custom,” it is a scriptural command given so that we might receive as much joy, holiness and union with Him and each other as the Lord may give in the Eucharist. And, St. Paul doesn’t expect that we are going to make ourselves worthy of the Eucharist! No, it is by living the life of the Gospel with thanksgiving—

morally, ethically, spiritually and liturgically—that the gift of God’s cleansing grace, which makes us worthy, is given to the one who desires it.

- A CHRISTMAS CAROL:

Charles Dickens’ beloved tale, *A Christmas Carol*, will be presented by the St. Porphyrios Players, here in our parish hall on Saturday, December 13 at 7 PM and on Sunday, December 14 at 7 PM.

- SENIOR LUNCH FELLOWSHIP—FRIDAY:

Since last week’s Senior Lunch was called on account of rain, we are rescheduling the lunch for Friday, December 19. All seniors and retired folk are invited to lunch in the Parish hall at noon.

- SAINT NICHOLAS PARTY ~ 6 PM, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20:

You are invited to attend a parish celebration for our children, in honor of St. Nicholas of Myra on Saturday, December 20. Following the usual 5 PM Great Vespers, there will be a potluck dinner, some caroling, and a Nativity Play, directed by Carmen Anderson.

- CHRISTMAS SERVICES:

We begin the Christmas Pre-feast with 6 PM Vespers on Thursday, December 19. There will be Divine Services each evening, and some mornings, until Christmas. As a pastor, I realize that the demands of work, holiday preparations, morning and evening routines will prevent many from attending ALL of these Prefeast Services, but surely, attending SOME, or even one, is possible for all of us. On Monday, December 22 and Tuesday, December 23, we will have **Matins at 8 AM**, church cleaning at 1 PM. On Tuesday the **Royal Hours will be served at 6 PM**. On Christmas Eve—late morning—we will have the **Vespertal Liturgy at 11:30 AM** (as always, we fast strictly before the Vespertal Liturgy). In the evening we will celebrate the Festal **Matins at 6 PM** (about 1-1/2 hour in length). On December 25, Christmas Day, the **Festal Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM**.

Why so many services? Isn’t this too much? In a recent sermon, one pastor asked the congregation to imagine a Nativity scene on the lawn, with the shepherds, the manger, the animals, the Virgin, the Righteous Joseph, the Wise Men, and so on. What’s the main item in that Nativity scene? Of course, it’s the Christ Child, and everything is there because of that. What happens if you remove the Wise Men, or the Shepherds, or something else, from the Scene? You still have a Nativity manger scene. What happens if you