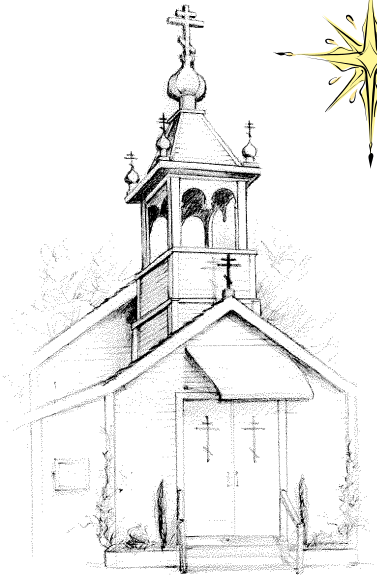
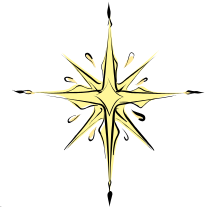


ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015



• TROPARION OF THE ANCESTORS, TONETWO:

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 THE FOREFEAST, TONE FOUR:

Mary once, with aged Joseph, went to be taxed in Bethlehem for they were of the lineage of David, and she bore in her womb the fruit that had not been sown. The time of the birth was at hand and there was no room at the inn; But the cave proved a fair palace for the Queen. Christ is born, that He may raise up again the image that before was fallen.

• KONTAKION OF THE THREE YOUTHS IN BABYLON, TONETWO:

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.

KONTAKION OF THE FOREFEAST, Special Melody: *On this day the Virgin:*

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child, Who before the ages is God.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Dec. 19: 10 AM, Baptism (Sonyana Slyana Tesfaimichael)
3:30 PM, Catechism: *On the Holy Spirit*
5 PM, Great Vespers & Confessions
- Sunday, Dec. 20: 8:45 AM, Matins & Confessions (until 10 AM)
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Noon, **Agape Potluck Lunch**
4 PM, Vespers of the Forefeast of Nativity
4:45 PM, Potluck and Children's Play
- Monday, Dec. 21: 4 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Vespers for the Forefeast
- Tuesday, Dec. 22: 4 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Vespers for the Forefeast
- Wednesday, Dec. 23: Noon, Confessions (Please call to confirm)
6 PM, Royal Hours (3rd & 9th) for Nativity

- Thursday, Dec. 24: 11:30 AM, Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil (strict fast before the Liturgy)
6 PM, Matins for Christmas (about 1-1/2 hour in length)
Nomadic Shelter to follow
- Friday, Dec. 25 CHRISTMAS DAY: 9:30 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy, *The Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ*

- SAINT NICHOLAS PARTY ~ SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20:

You are invited to attend a parish celebration for our children in honor of St. Nicholas of Myra on Sunday, December 20. At 4 PM we will sing the Vespers of the Prefeast in St. Seraphim; then a potluck dinner, some caroling, and a Nativity Play, *The Holy Family*, written and directed by Carmen Anderson.

- THE GENEALOGY OF THE LORD:

The progression of the lineage of the promised Savior, the Messiah, the Christ passed through the generations. On the Sunday before Nativity we read the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. He began his account by tracing the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham: “Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah, etc.” Though there were more, Matthew chooses to list fourteen generations from Abraham to David, another fourteen from David to the Babylonian captivity, and another fourteen from then to the Christ; *three groups of fourteen* signifying to the Jewish mind perfect completion and fulfillment of God’s original promise. It so happens also that in Hebrew the Prophet David’s name is composed of three consonants: D-W-D, which also have in Hebrew a numerical value, 4-6-4. So, St. David’s name is also the number fourteen. (*adapted*)

- CHRISTMAS HOSPITALITY:

If you or someone you know does not have a place to spend Christmas Day, please let one of the clergy know.

- SERVICES OF CHRISTMAS:

There are numerous Vespers of the “Forefeast” scheduled this week, starting Sunday at 4 PM. The hymns direct our attention to the “one thing needful” (that “thing” can easily get lost in the Christmas rush) which is what one of the hymns describes thusly: “Glorify Him whose will it was to be made manifest a young Child the pre-eternal God.” Our focus, being Orthodox Christians, is to glorify Him Who humbled Himself to become a human, to lift us up to become by grace Godlike! Make the time to come to at least one of these Vespers, perhaps scheduling a confession before the service.

On Wednesday evening we will serve “Royal Hours,” so-called because in times past this service was done in the presence of the emperor, with the prayer *Many Years* added at the end. Royal Hours itself is important, not because of an emperor—which we obviously no longer have—but because it is a recounting of the Christmas story with readings of Old Testament Prophecies, Epistles and Gospels, and hymns that help us to understand those readings. Expect this service to be about one hour in length.

On Thursday morning we will serve the Vespereal Liturgy at 11:30 AM. This service is similar to the Holy Saturday Vespereal Liturgy in that it has a number of Old Testament readings (only eight, not fifteen!). These wonderful prophecies teach us that God has been preparing for the birth of His Son since the creation itself. We fast strictly before this service, since the Eucharist will be given.

On Thursday evening at 6 PM, Christmas Eve, we sing the bright and joyful Matins of Nativity, with the hymns “Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the light of wisdom...” and “God is with us” and the beautiful “Christ is born, glorify Him, Christ comes from heaven meet Him.” Certainly, those Carols that focus on the birth of the Savior, His humility and glory, will be sung at the conclusion of Matins. Expect Matins to be about one and a half hours in length.

On Christmas morning, at 9:30 AM, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy. How essential it is to realize that Christmas—***for us Orthodox Christian***—is centered around the services of the Church, cleansing of the soul

and body by prayer and repentance, so that Christ is renewed within us! Yes, family, festive foods and drink (not BEFORE Christmas, but on and after, please) are important aspects of Christmas—but **only** because of the joy that comes from the birth of the Word of God in the world (“God became flesh!), and our rebirth as children of the Most High in baptism. We celebrate for a reason; the world celebrates the “holidays” as a distraction from life which turns out to be not a celebration about anything in particular. That is not our way. Keep the center and focus spiritual in nature, and you will have a true Christmas. I encourage you to attend whatever of the Forefeast Vespers you can. **However, I absolutely expect all of you to be present in Church for Christmas Eve and Day services to enjoy the banquet of faith.** —Fr. Lawrence

• “POLUCK” AGAPE MEAL THIS SUNDAY:

Please bring something to share with 8–10 people (no meat or dairy please). Most of you probably do not know that Matushka Xenia Schettig has been coordinating (i.e. setting up) the Potlucks by herself for quite some time. She would like at least three more people to step in and help, so that would mean whoever volunteers would only have to do the coordinating once every four months. Please email her at schettig@inbox.com, speak with her on Sunday.

• PARISH LIBRARY: GRAND RE-OPENING:

We welcome you to celebrate the Grand Re-opening of our parish library on Sunday, December 20, 2015 at 12:45 PM, after our parish lunch. We have a collection of about 950 Orthodox books that have been donated over time, covering topics such as theology, church history, monasticism, lives of the saints, iconography, family life, contemporary issues, Bible references and commentaries, children’s books and cookbooks. We also have back issues of *The Handmaiden*, *The Veil* and *Orthodox Word*. Our inventory includes older, as well as newer books. All books have been added to Saint Seraphim Library on www.librarything.com. Our books can be searched online by title or topic. Book reviews can also be written on the site. Celebrate the grand re-opening at 12:45 PM, pick up a flier on how to use our library site, see a demonstration on how to use it, peruse the books, and enjoy the snacks and other treats.

• 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.

• CHRISTMAS HYMN, MATINS:

A strange and most wonderful mystery do I see: the cave is heaven; the Virgin the throne of the cherubim; the manger a room, in which Christ, the God whom nothing can contain, is laid. Him do we praise and magnify.

• CHRISTMAS POEM , GEORGE HERBERT (1593–1633):

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?

My God, no hymn for Thee?

My soul’s a shepherd too; a flock it feeds

Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.

The pasture is Thy word: the streams, Thy grace
Enriching all the place.

Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Out sing the daylight hours.

Then will we chide the sun for letting night
Take up his place and right:

We sing one common Lord; wherefore he should
Himself the candle hold.

I will go searching, till I find a sun
Shall stay, till we have done;

A willing shiner, that shall shine as gladly,
As frost-nipped suns look sadly.

Then will we sing, and shine all our own day,
And one another pay:

His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine,
Till ev’n His beams sing, and my music shine.

- NOMADIC SHELTER:

The Christmas Eve Nomadic Shelter night is soon approaching. Christmas Carols, Holy Supper; guests who have no place to go...now having a place to go...what's not to like and may it be pleasing to God. Our guests will arrive between 6–6:30 PM or so. Of course, we have Matins for Nativity at 6 PM as well. If you are able to come on Christmas eve to help greet and serve our guests, please do. Servers and clean up volunteers are needed for the Holy Supper that Deanna has been coordinating. —*Ambrose Inlow and Fr. Lawrence*

- THE DAY OF OUR PATRON SAINT:

On Friday, January 2, we will greet His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin at **9:30 AM**, and begin the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the *Rest of Saint Seraphim of Sarov*. Each week we celebrate the Sunday Divine Liturgy in Saint Seraphim Church, built to the glory of the Holy Trinity, and in active, living and loving honor of Saint Seraphim. His feast day is unique—a day in which, as at Nativity, Pascha, and feasts of the Lord and Theotokos, parishioners set aside all other activities and come to thank God for His saint who has so faithfully sent up intercessions in our behalf.

- PREPARATIONS FOR THE PARISH FEAST:

Calling all able-bodied Parish Men! We are in need of your support to set up for our St Seraphim Feastday luncheon that will be on Saturday, January 2 after the Divine Liturgy. Specifically, we are looking for 3–4 men to assist on Thursday, Dec. 31 at 1 PM (moving tables, etc.). Call Kira Staykow at (415) 279-0353.

- PIROSHKI SALE:

We will be taking orders for our January 2016 piroshki sale beginning this weekend. Order forms will be available at the candle desk and in the hall at the cashier's table. We will produce meat, mushroom and cabbage piroshki. Since we do not make mushroom piroshki for Glendi, these sales are your only opportunity to purchase them. Orders are due Sunday, January 10, 2016. The piroshki will be produced Saturday, January 16th and can be picked up that afternoon/evening or the following day. Piroshki sales are one of the main fund raisers for our Sisterhood. We will need people to work both on Saturday Jan. 16, and also during the week beginning on Wednesday Jan. 13. Please look at your calendars and consider helping with this worthwhile project. I will be posting a schedule of preparation activities in the next few weeks. If you can help or have any questions please contact Bobbi Griovski at bgriovski@sbcglobal.net or call 707-477-8418.

- A HOMILY OF ST. NIKOLAI (VELIMIROVIC):

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world (John 16:28).

The only-begotten Son of God, brethren, begotten in eternity of the Father without a mother, was born in time of a mother without a father. That first begetting is an unfathomable mystery of the Holy Trinity in eternity, and the second is the unfathomable mystery of God's power and love for mankind in time. The greatest mystery in time corresponds to the greatest mystery in eternity. Without entering into this greatest mystery with the small taper of our understanding, let us be content, brethren, with the knowledge that our salvation had its origin not from man or from earth, but from the greatest heights of the divine invisible world. So great is God's mercy, and so great is the dignity of man, that the Son of God Himself came down from eternity into time, from heaven to earth, from the throne of glory to the shepherd's cave, solely to save mankind, to cleanse men from sin and to return them to Paradise. *I came forth from the Father, where I had everything, and am come into the world, which cannot give Me anything* The Lord was born in a cave to show that the whole world is one dark cave, which He alone can illumine. The Lord was born in Bethlehem—and Bethlehem means “the House of Bread” — to show that He is the only Bread of Life worthy of true men. O Lord Jesus, the Pre-eternal Son of the Living God and the Son of the Virgin Mary, enlighten us and nourish us with Thyself. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.