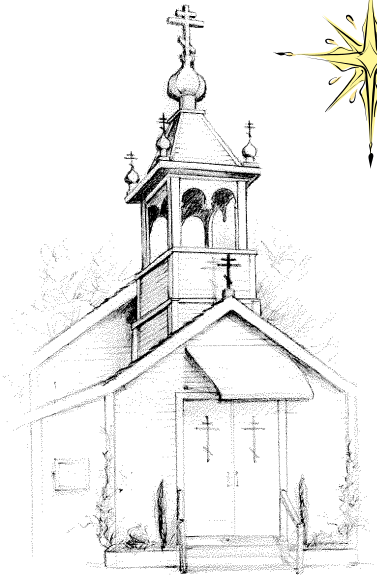
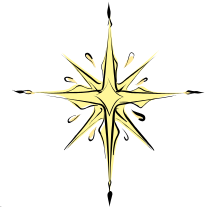


ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 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.

• 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 ANCESTORS, 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.

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. 20: 4:30 PM, Akathist to St. Nicholas
5 PM, Great Vespers
6 PM, St. Nicholas Potluck and Children's Play
- Sunday, Dec. 21: 9-10 AM, Confessions
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Noon, Agape Lunch
1:15 PM, Vespers of the Prefeast of Nativity
- Monday, Dec. 22: 8 AM, Matins for the Prefeast
CONFESSIONS ALL DAY, please call ahead
6 PM, Vespers for the Prefeast
- Tuesday, Dec. 23: 8 AM, Matins for the Prefeast
CONFESSIONS ALL DAY, please call ahead
1 PM, Floral decoration for Nativity (help needed)
6 PM, Royal Hours for Nativity

- Wednesday, 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)
- Thursday, Dec. 25 CHRISTMAS DAY: The Nativity of our Lord, and God, and Savior Jesus Christ
9:30 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy
- Saturday, Dec. 27: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy *in San Anselmo* for St. Stephen the First Martyr

- 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, *The Song of Simeon*, directed by Carmen Anderson.

- 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.

- 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, or even better, make an invitation to your home.

- CELEBRATING THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS (Nativity, December 25–Theophany, January 6):

Author Matthew Gallatin has said that we in America have traditionally celebrated the Christmas season in backwards fashion. “Just as the guest of honor walks through the door, it’s all over,” he notes. This year, may we embrace the Orthodox vision of holy preparation, so that when December 25th dawns, we will be ready to receive Christ in the feast, the “Winter Pascha” of Nativity!

- CELEBRATE THE FEAST—Fr. Steven Kostoff:

As we approach the festal date of December 25, I hope that our attention and our hearts can focus on the mystery of the Incarnation. If we plan appropriately, we can be sure that before all else we are committed to be in church in order to worship Christ, the Son of God who entered the world “when the time had fully come.” The forty-day Advent Fast culminates in the Feast of the Lord’s advent into the world in the flesh. As Israel was prepared by God to receive its Messiah, we have been prepared within the Church to again actualize this Mystery hidden before the

ages but now revealed to us within the Church. The festal Liturgy on the morning of December 25 needs to take precedence over all our other family traditions, good and wholesome though they may be. How can we properly celebrate Christmas *without first* being in church to worship the newborn Christ and receive the Eucharist? I certainly anticipate a church filled with joyful worshippers. For those who will be out-of-town with family, I further hope that you were able to find an Orthodox church close enough so that you too may worship Christ away from home. Our humble witness to the world is that we place Christ at the very heart of our lives—as families and as a parish family.

- SPIRITUAL REBIRTH

The child Jesus born within us advances by different ways in those who receive Him in wisdom, in age, and in grace. He is not the same in every person, but is present according to the measure of the person receiving Him. He comes either as an infant, or a child advancing in age, or as one fully grown after the example of the cluster. Christ is never seen with the same form upon the vine, but He changes His form with time—now budding, now blossoming, now mature, now ripe and finally as wine. Thus the vine holds out a promise with its fruit. It is not yet ripe for wine, but it awaits maturity. Meanwhile it does not lack any delight, for it gladdens our sense of smell instead of our taste with its expectation of the future; by its fragrance of hope it sweetens the soul's senses. A faith firm in a grace we hope for becomes a delight for us who wait in patience. — *St. Gregory of Nyssa*

- 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 a unique day, 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.

- 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, only a few blocks away on Van Ness Avenue. The Liturgy will end in time to get to the rally at 12:30. The *Walk* begins at 1:30 PM. The

- CHRISTMAS POEM 1, GEORGE HERBERT (1593–1633):

...O Thou, whose glorious yet contracted light,
 Wrapped in night's mantle, stole into a manger,

Since my dark soul and brutish is Thy right,
 To man of all beasts be Thou not a stranger:

Furnish and deck my soul, that Thou mayst have
 A better lodging than a rack, or grave.

- CHRISTMAS POEM 2, GEORGE HERBERT:

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.

seriousness, the necessity and the importance of the *Walk for Life* cannot be overemphasized. Let us recall Deacon Jeremiah's account of the 2013 *Walk for Life* in which he and I, and a number of parishioners from St. Seraphim participated. Deacon Jeremiah wrote:

THE STATISTICS ARE APPALLING; over 52,000,000 legal abortions have been performed in the United States since legalization forty years ago, currently 4,000 per day. How does one make sense of such numbers? I have often pondered the meaning of the harsh and cynical statement of a 20th century political leader; "The death of one person is a tragedy; the death of millions is an abstraction." I began asking, "How can I prevent myself from reducing this inescapable reality to an abstraction?" So last weekend I set aside a day and traveled to San Francisco with six other people from St. Seraphim's. We stood in the sun together for hours, listened to dozens of speakers and marched in a rally with tens of thousands of people of widely varied political persuasion. I hadn't participated in an act of mass public protest since I had been a student at Berkeley in the late 1960s. Back then somehow, perhaps naively, we had all seemed to be of one mind on issues that were so much more clear. I was hoping to gain some degree of clarity on this extremely divisive and rancorous issue by attending the rally and march.

Ultimately the words of the women themselves were the antidote for abstraction. We listened to very compelling stories of confusion, fear, isolation, abandonment, recklessness, shame, overwhelming loss, and finally the acceptance of the forgiveness of God. At the end of each story the speaker repeated her name and the phrase, "...and I will be silent no more." It was an extraordinarily powerful moment, and I admired the courage of each those women, marveled at their willingness to very publicly share their experiences of nearly inexpressible sorrow with thousands of onlookers. It suddenly seemed essential to be there, encourage these women to speak out about the trajectory of their post-abortion lives, to help break the deadly syndrome of shame and silence, to walk with tens of thousands of others in the streets, to be engaged. While the legality of abortion is being challenged in our country I find my own ideas on the issue evolving. As an American I believe that the inalienable rights of all "the people" must be defended. As an Orthodox Christian I believe that God's will must be done on earth as it is in heaven. I believe a woman must not be coerced into bearing a child she neither wants nor can provide for, while the words of one of the speakers continue to echo in my ears. She said, "I would never have gotten the abortion if it had not been legal. Somehow, the fact that it was legal made it okay." Clearly the viable alternatives to abortion need to be better articulated and promoted, and, most importantly, financial support in both the public and private sectors of the country must be provided. The overarching impression of the rally/march was that this immense national and yet very personal tragedy would not ultimately be decided in the courts but rather in the hearts of the many individual women caught in this complex and cruel dilemma. I have no great optimism that *Roe v. Wade* will soon be overturned. But during the last four decades the opposition movement has not gone away and is in fact certainly gaining momentum. Whether it will grow to the point of critical mass and provide a legal reversal is yet to be determined. **I encourage each member of our parish to consider going to the rally and march next year and help provide a more complete Christian witness and Orthodox presence in this great national debate.** — Deacon Jeremiah

To facilitate participation in both the Consecration on January 24 (from 9:30 AM–Noon) at Holy Trinity, and the *Walk for Life* at the Civic Center, Deacon Jeremiah will be arranging transport there and back. — Fr. L

• 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 David Winterton.

• FROM THE BOOKSTORE:

A supply of Orthodox Pocket Planners for 2015 is now in stock as are several copies of *The Mystery of Art*, by actor Jonathan Jackson, a book recommended by Mat. Esther, and *Every Time I Do My Cross*, a charming and enlightening book for children.