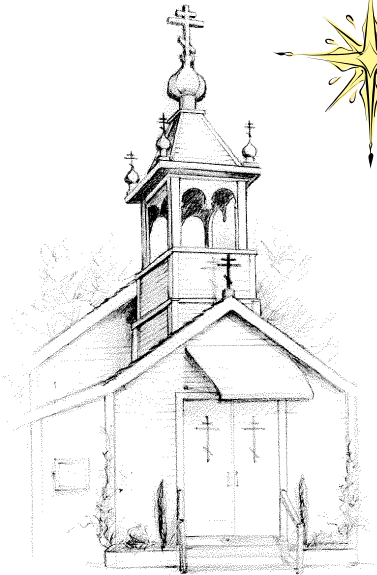
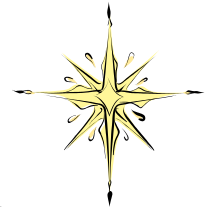


ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2013



• 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. 21: 10 AM, Baptism (infant, Senira Rainey)
 5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
 6 PM, St. Nicholas Potluck and Children's Play
- Sunday, Dec. 22: 9-10 AM, Confessions
 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
 Noon, Agape Lunch
 1:30 PM, Vespers of the Prefeast of Nativity
- Monday, Dec. 23: 8 AM, Matins for the Prefeast
 1 PM, Church Work Party: cleaning, floral decoration and polishing
 6 PM, Royal Hours for Nativity
- Tuesday, Dec. 24: 11 AM, Vespers of St. Basil (strict fast before the Liturgy)
 6 PM, VIGIL for Christmas (about 1-1/2 hour in length)
- Wednesday, Dec. 25: CHRISTMAS DAY: The Nativity of our Lord, and God, and Savior Jesus Christ
 9:30 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy

- Thursday, Dec. 26: Feast of the *Synaxis of the Theotokos*, 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
- Friday, Dec. 27: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy *in San Anselmo* for St. Stephen the First Martyr

- FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER:

Perhaps you are not aware that our parish is sponsoring a private room at Family Support Center of Catholic Charities, on Morgan Street in Downtown Santa Rosa. The Parish committed to five years of support at \$100 per month (this was the result of a very good presentation that Catholic Charities did for us a few weeks ago). Denise Pellizzer agreed to be the liaison for this project. Fr. Lawrence named the room at the Center in honor of St. Philaret the Merciful (a sermon was preached on his day recently, as you recall). The occupants of the room consist of a mom and two boys, a one year old and an eight year old. Denise has purchased or been given a number of items for making the room more comfortable (sheets, towels, wash cloths, desk lamp, new dresser, rug, etc.). We would like to provide a gift basket with socks, body soap, shampoo, lotion, granola bars, \$10 gift cards, and a Christmas basket as well. For those who would like to donate funds, we have a Donation Box in the Narthex on left side of Narthex which is marked for this specific ministry. For those who would like to donate items, call Denise Pellizzer at 707-548-1504.

- BARRELS FOR REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION:

In addition to our work with Catholic Charities and the Family Support Center, we also have barrels in the Narthex (and in the Hall) designated for the Redwood Gospel Mission. Needed items: bags of rice, beans, pasta; oil, ketchup, mustard, mayo, pancake mix, syrup and oatmeal. The Gospel Mission will be picking up these barrels on Monday, December 23. Right now the barrels are mostly empty—so, please bring in your offerings for the needy and fill up those barrels.

- CHRISTMAS HOSPITALITY:

If you or someone you know does not have a place to spend Christmas Day, please let one of the clergy know. We have several people who would like to open their homes so everyone has a place to spend the holiday.

- MONDAY WORK PARTY:

On Monday, December 23 at 1 PM, there will be a work-party to clean the church, decorate and arrange flowers, polish the “lampadas” and candle stands, and prepare St Seraphim for the Feast.

- 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 of our other warm family traditions that are meant to further fill our homes with the radiant presence of Christ. 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.

THE HOLY SUPPER OF CHRISTMAS EVE

AMONG THE ORTHODOX PEOPLE of Carpatho-Russia there is a wonderful tradition of having a “Holy Supper” on Christmas Eve, just before going to Church for the Vigil. While the menu and details of the meal may be different from family to family and region to region, the general idea is as follows:

On Christmas Eve, the late morning Vespers Liturgy is celebrated (we serve it at 11 AM). We keep a strict fast (no food or liquids) before this service and until Holy Communion. After the Liturgy we go home to prepare the meal. Back in the “old country,” twelve dishes are prepared, in honor of the Holy Apostles. The foods, prepared with oil, but without dairy products due to the fast, usually include fish, soup, stuffed cabbage, stewed plums, mashed potatoes, honey, garlic, etc. The dining table is covered with a white linen cloth in memory of the swaddling clothes of Christ Child, and an extra place is set to receive a stranger, remembering that the Holy Family found no lodging in Bethlehem’s Inn.

In the center of the table is a large round loaf of bread, which symbolized Jesus as the Bread of Life. A tall candle is placed in the bread, as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem. Straw is laid down on the floor and some of it also placed on the table or under the white tablecloth, symbolizing the fact that Jesus lay in a manger. The father greets everyone with the exclamation: “Christ is born!” And just as in Church, all answer “Glorify Him!” Wine is poured by the father, or the eldest, for a toast, recalling the act of our Lord Jesus at the Last Supper, and offered these words: “Grant, O God, that we may live to an even better Holy Night next year. May the Lord give good health to you, my dear wife, and to our children, to my good and bad neighbors, to my friends and enemies. May God bless all Christians here and abroad, and may He grant eternal memory and heaven to the departed. And above all, my Sweetest Jesus, born this day, bring peace, health and happiness!” All reply with the prayer: “Grant this, O Lord!” The mother sprinkles all the family members with Holy Water so that their minds and hearts would open to the meaning of the Birth of Christ. The father also takes Holy Water, sprinkling his livestock and household animals, and treating them to sugar or salt and plenty of feed. Many people wistfully feel that perhaps the animals speak at midnight on Christmas Eve. One would be fearful that they might complain to God if mistreated! Beware, those with livestock and pets.

After dipping her forefinger into honey in a bowl, the mother makes a sign of the cross on the foreheads of all present, including herself. The use of honey symbolizes her prayer that the lives of all present would be sweet without bitterness. After the Holy Supper, all then go to the Church for the evening Nativity Vigil, to hear the Psalms, the Troparion “Thy Nativity, O Christ our God...” the Kontakion “On this day the Virgin beareth...” the prophecy from Isaiah “God is with us” many other hymns, and of course, the Gospel of the birth of the Lord. Afterwards Carols are sung as all return home to prepare themselves for the Divine Liturgy on Christmas morning. *Menu options:* The traditional Holy Supper consists of twelve dishes in honor of the number of apostles. This is a fast day, so all dishes should be selected and prepared without meat, cheese, eggs or dairy products. In addition, small portions should be served in keeping with the character of fasting, this is not a feast. Feel free to build your own menu with additional appropriate dishes from your own family collection.

- HYMNS OF NATIVITY:

Those who will be doing the Holy Supper on Christmas Eve will want to sing the *Troparion* and *Kontakion* of Christmas. These are the main, and oft-repeated, hymns of the Feast sung by the choir dozens of times.

Troparion of the Feast, Tone Four: Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, / hath shone to the world the light of wisdom; / for by it those who worshipped the stars, / were taught by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, / and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. / O Lord, glory to Thee.

Kontakion of the feast, Tone Three: On this day the Virgin beareth the Transcendent in essence; to the Unapproachable, the earth doth offer a small cave; Angels join in choir with shepherds in giving glory; with a star the Magi travel upon their journey; for our sakes is born a young Child, He that existed before the ages as God.



THE DAY OF OUR PATRON SAINT:

On Thursday, 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*. At the end of the Liturgy the newly painted icon (no, we don’t say “written”) of the Protection of the Holy Virgin (it’s quite large too) will be blessed by Archbishop Benjamin in preparation of mounting it above the door of the Hall at the porch. Following the blessing, a festal meal will be served. Each week we celebrate 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.

- NEEDS AROUND THE PARISH:

Vineyard needs mowing. ~~Gutters on Hall and Protection Church need cleaning~~ (done). Offerings of olive oil for the church lamps are appreciated. Frescos of Prophets NOT yet commissioned: Malachai, Habbakuk, Jonah, Jeremiah, Joel and Zephaniah (Prophet Moses just commissioned!) Help with maintaining garden drip system lines. Help in cleaning both Churches on a regular basis. Call Fr. Lawrence if you can help.

- UPCOMING BAPTISMS:

December 21, 10 AM, Baptism of baby Senira, daughter of Lula Andi and Brian Rainey. *December 29, 9 AM* (before Liturgy), Baptism of baby Elias, son of Marina and Evan Glanville.

- PASTORAL LETTER OF HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP BENJAMIN:

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”.... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:9-11, 13-14 NKJV).

To the Reverend Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of the West. Dearly Beloved: Christ is Born! Glorify Him! We live in very difficult times. Our own culture is daily attacking ancient, basic, fundamental beliefs about morality, marriage and the family. People are jobless and hungry in the wealthiest society the world has ever known. The Middle East — the cradle of Christian faith and the Church — is literally in flames. Martyrs are being added to the ranks of the Saints every single day. The celebration of the coming of Christ is marked with gross consumerism. Our minds tell us that it has always been so. Our hearts are not so easily convinced. But the glad tidings spoken by the angel of the Lord to those shepherds so long ago should give us great comfort. When the violence of the world seems to overwhelm us, we are reminded of the reality that happens when we let Christ into our hearts, our minds, and our souls. The King of Peace has come and overthrown all forms of darkness. He has put all tyranny to flight. He has calmed the turbulence of this world. If we let Him. The Peace that He is has brought the Kingdom of Heaven into our midst. The angel said, “there is born to you this day...” So as we gather to celebrate this glorious feast, as we approach the humble little Infant in a manger placed in a cave, let us embrace the “humble glory” that has come into the world through Him. As the Kanon of the feast says, “Christ is Born, glorify Him. Christ is on earth, receive Him.” I wish all of you the most blessed and glorious celebration of our Lord’s coming and pray that the Light of the new-born Christ fill every darkness and take away every fear! *In the new-born Christ †Benjamin*

- 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!

- 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*