

brother heard a woman on a bus say, as the bus passed a church with a Crib outside it: ‘Oh Lord, they bring religion into everything. Look—they’re dragging it even into Christmas now.’” —December 29, 1958

• MAY THE LORD GIVE REST AND CONSOLATION:

*The tragic killing of school children in Connecticut has once again brought to our attention—a day after shootings in Oregon—that we live in a fallen and often insane world. We are daily reminded that evil is senseless, since sin itself makes no sense: the violence of shootings in our schools, movie theaters, shopping malls, and even churches (Egypt at the moment); the malnutrition that contributes to five million deaths of children under five each year in developing countries (UNICEF, 2006), political and human oppression throughout the world, abuse of others and oneself, and the horrors of war, all witness to this senseless evil. In this world, an answer to the question “why” will be monstrous, for there is no “good reason” for all of it. For us Christians, however, it is Jesus Christ and the Cross that clearly reveal that this life and this world are permeated with destruction. It, we, need to be saved. And He came to save the world which He made and loves. And whatever we may think about gun control, there’s no doubt, that there are very deep problems which education and politics are not going to solve. Apropos this, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, has sent us the following: “I therefore call on the clergy and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America to offer fervent prayers for the souls of those whose lives have been so brutally cut short and for the consolation of all those whose existence has been shattered by this unfathomable event. I also ask that those who are physically able to offer their services to the grieving and the broken-hearted, both in the Newtown community and throughout this land. It is at times like this that we must put our faith into action and offer our Christian support and love, to make our prayers concrete through action. Many have been affected, and many more will be overcome by grief, despair and isolation. We must ensure that we do all we can to provide a sense of true community to all those in need and to bear their burdens as the Lord asks us to. Together with my brother bishops on the Holy Synod, I offer my condolences to all the grieving families, and I pray that they will find hope in the abundant grace of God. May they be given strength at this most painful moment and find comfort along the difficult path that lies ahead. Let no one among us have any fear, but let us remember that our Lord Jesus Christ has overcome fear, has trampled down death, and has granted us eternal life and great mercy.”*—*excerpted*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ December 16, 2012

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• 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.

### ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Dec. 15: 3 PM, St. Nicholas Party (Crafts/decoration)  
3:30 PM, Catechism  
5 PM, Great Vespers & Confessions  
6 PM, St. Nicholas Party Potluck & Caroling
- Sunday, Dec. 16: **9:30 AM, Reception of Catechumens (Lahana, Ryan, Meghan and Honor)**  
10 AM, Divine Liturgy / Memorial Prayers for the children slain in Connecticut  
1:30 AM, Church School  
Noon, Agape Meal
- Tuesday, Dec. 18: Rohnert Park Study Group, on *Isaiah*
- Wednesday, Dec. 19: 6 PM, Prefeast Vespers
- Thursday, Dec. 20: 7:30 AM, Liturgy at Kazan Skete  
6 PM, Prefeast Vespers / Talk on the Incarnation by Vincent Rossi
- Friday, Dec. 21: 3:30 PM, Clean up of Church, Altar, and polishing of the lampada (*help needed*)  
6 PM, Prefeast Vespers

• SAINT NICHOLAS PARTY—3 PM, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15:

You are invited to attend a parish celebration for our children, in honor of St. Nicholas of Myra (having had his feast only last week) on Saturday. Crafts and decoration of the Christmas tree take place at 3 PM in the Parish Hall. Vespers at 5 PM, then a potluck and caroling at 6 PM. Come, all ages are welcome.

• A TALK ON THE INCARNATION:

Vincent Rossi will give a talk on the incarnation of the Son of God, on Thursday, December 20, following the Vespers of the Prefeast. •

• CHRISTMAS SERVICES:

During the week prior to Christmas, Vespers of the Prefeast will be served at 6 PM each evening (see the calendar). Of course, on Christmas Eve and Day divine Services will be served. As a pastor, I realize that the demands of work, holiday preparations, morning and evening routines will prevent many from attending ALL of these Services, but surely, **attending SOME, or even one, is possible.** Do remember that these Church Services are served for your benefit as well as mine. On Saturday, December 24—Christmas Eve, late morning—we will have the Vesperal Liturgy served at 11 AM. We fast strictly before the Vesperal Liturgy, as always. On December 25, Christmas Day, the Festal Divine Liturgy begins with the Hours at 9:10 AM, and the **Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM, rather than the usual 10 AM Sunday time.** Liturgy will be served on second day of Christmas for the feast of the Synaxis of the Theotokos. —*Fr. Lawrence*

• 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 without a recent Confession.* Our bishops teach that if we receive Holy Communion frequently, as in each week, we should be confessing no less than once a month. We should all make our Confession prior to Christmas Day, so that we may receive Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve and Day. Please do not delay. Any person, age 7 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 to

make a confession soon, and regularly, and so bring up their children in the love, holiness and reverence of God, teaching them to respect and honor both others and themselves.

• TODAY'S EPISTLE AND PARABLE

St Paul advises us to be ready. He wrote: “When Christ, who is our life appears then we too shall appear with Him in glory.” Is He indeed ***our life***, the totality, the fulness, the joy and inner content of our life, or is that inner life taken up by thoughts, anxieties, plans, fears, etc? When He appears in glory, if He is in fact the content of your life, you will also appear with Him in glory. So prepare: certain things have to be put away now if we are going to live later. Top of the list given by St Paul in today’s reading: fornication, passion, evil desires, and coveting, envying, which he says is idolatry, worship of a false God. Put it away—they have no value, and very enticingly lead one astray. The present day, dear friends in Christ, presents us with our hope and with our salvation. Don’t say, I will prepare later, I will change my life soon, I will put away this or that evil passion or compulsion of thought, body or whatever; don’t say, I will make confession and communion on New Years Day, for Lent, for Holy Week, or whatever. “But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken into. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” Today, you’ll hear the deacon call you: “With the fear of God, with faith and love draw near.” You either can or cannot. We are called to this wedding feast not to observe the wedding of others, but to anticipate and ourselves enter into the intimate union and communion with God in Jesus Christ and with those already at the wedding feast of the Kingdom. Hearing this parable today, two weeks before Christmas, we prayerfully examine our own lives, we have to look at what we do—our relationships, and lack of them, our jobs, our vacations, our diversions, and all the various little time-consuming tasks that we take upon ourselves. If any or all of these things divert us from serving God, then put it away, because at worst it is immoral or idolatry, or may even be a good thing, a blessing, that right now gets in the way of God. Seek first (not second or third) the kingdom of God, all the other things He will give as we need. —*borrowed*

• CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS REMEMBRANCE:

“Just a hurried line...to tell a story which puts the contrast between ‘our’ feast of the Nativity and all this ghastly *XMAS* racket at it’s lowest. My