

• A CHRISTMAS CAROL:

Charles Dickens' beloved tale, *A Christmas Carol* will be presented by the St. Porphyrios Players, at Nativity of Christ Orthodox Church in Novato, Sunday, December 22 at 7 PM.

• 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. He comes today today. You will hear the deacon call you: "With the fear of God, with faith and love draw near." You either can, or cannot draw near. We are invited to this wedding feast (referring to the Gospel Parable) so we may 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—to neglect this invitation is spiritual death, which may be slow, or quick, it depends. Hearing this parable today, two weeks before Christmas, hearing the names of the Ancestors of the Lord in the Services, we are prayerfully led to examine our own lives. We have to look at what we do—our relationships, and lack of them, our jobs, our vacations, our use of money, our diversions, and time. If any or all of these things divert us from serving God, then put it or them away. Even things given to us for a material blessing—maybe especially such things—may be misused and take us away from God. Seek first (not second or third) the kingdom of God, all the other things He will give as we need. —*borrowed*

• NEEDS AROUND THE PARISH:

Gutters on Hall and Protection Church need cleaning. Vineyard needs mowing. Lampadas in St. Seraphim need to be polished. Offerings of olive oil for the church lamps are appreciated. ~~The closet in St. Seraphim needs rearranging.~~ (thank you for the excellent clean up in the closet!). Frescos of Prophets NOT yet commissioned: Malachai, Habbakuk, Moses, Jonah, Jeremiah, Joel and Zephaniah.

• 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ December 15, 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.

• 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 wilt.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Dec. 14: 3:30 PM, Catechism (on Church Services)
5 PM, Great Vespers & Confessions
- Sunday, Dec. 15: **9:30 AM, Akathist to the Theotokos**
"Nurturer of Children"
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
12:45 PM, Church School
Noon, Agape Meal
12:45, Sisterhood Meeting
- Tuesday, Dec. 17: *Rohnert Park Study Group, at Veenis home*
- Wednesday, Dec. 18: 6 PM, Vespers

Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church • 90 Mountain View Ave • Santa Rosa
707-584-9491 • LMargitich@sbcglobal.net • saintseraphim.com

- Thursday, Dec. 19: 6 PM, Prefeast Vespers
7 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Friday, Dec. 20: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
6 PM, Prefeast Vespers

• SAINT NICHOLAS PARTY ~ 6 PM, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21:
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, December 21. Following the usual 5 PM Great Vespers, there will be a potluck dinner, some caroling, and a Nativity Play put on by the children.

• CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS ~ A 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 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*

• 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 Services, but surely, **attending SOME, or even one, is possible for all of us.**

On Monday, December 23, we will have **Matins at 8 AM**, church cleaning at 1 PM, and the **Royal Hours at 6 PM**. On Christmas Eve—late morning—we will have the **Vespertal Liturgy served at 11 AM**. We fast strictly before the Vespertal Liturgy, as always. 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 with the Hours at 9:10 AM, and the **Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM**. Liturgy will be served the second day of Christmas for the feast of the **Synaxis of the Theotokos at 9 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 tableau. What happens if you 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 all the various characters in the tableau 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 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*

• 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 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.

• TIMES FOR CONFESSION:
For times during the day, call to set a time. Confessions will be heard before and after Vespers on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. If possible, please make your confession at a time other than Sunday morning, which we should leave for our seniors, and for those who come distances.