

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday before Nativity

December 18, 2011

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Two:

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life-Immortal, Thou didst slay hades with the splendor of Thy Godhead; and when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to Thee.

TROPARION OF THE FOREBEARS, Tone Two:

Great are the achievements of faith: in the fountain of flames as in refreshing water, the three holy Children rejoiced; and the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.

• KONTAKION OF THE FOREBEARS, 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, Tone Three, 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. 17: 8 AM, installation of sod on lawn and clean up of porches
4:30 PM, Memorial prayers for Fr. Vladimir Anderson (one year since repose)
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Dec. 18: 9:15–10 AM, Confessions
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:30, Church School.
Thanksgiving Prayers for 50th Anniversary of Vladimir and Nona Baer
12:45 PM, Choir Rehearsal
3 PM, St. Nicholas Party—at home of Ray and Vicky Basch, see below
- Tues., Dec. 20: 6 PM, Vespers for the Pre-feast
- Wed., Dec. 21: 8 AM, Matins, Confessions to follow
6 PM, Vespers for the Pre-feast, Confessions to follow
7 PM, at Holy Dormition Parish: final lecture *On the Incarnation*

- Thurs., Dec. 22: 8 AM, Matins, Confessions to follow
6 PM, Vespers for the Pre-feast, Confessions to follow
- Friday, Dec. 23: 9 AM, **Royal Hours** (Prophecies, Epistles, Gospels and Hymns on the Incarnation)
- Saturday, Dec. 24: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for Christmas Eve
5 PM, Vigil for Nativity (about 1-1/2 hour in length)
- Sunday, Dec. 25: **9:30 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy of St Basil** ***** *please note the earlier starting time.*
- Monday, Dec. 26: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the **Synaxis of the Theotokos**

- SAINT NICHOLAS PARTY—4 PM, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18:

The Annual St. Nicholas Party will take place Sunday, Dec. 18, at the home of Ray and Vicky Basch, 86 Leighann Place, Windsor, CA., Phone: 838-4109. Come one and all, no age limit. Crafts time for kids will begin at 3 PM, followed by a brief prayer service to St. Nicholas at about 5 PM, then a potluck meal and Christmas caroling. For more information please contact Gloria at 849-6135 or at gypsybootsie@att.net or Vicky at 838-4109. RSVP.

- PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH: [home work reading]

The prophets wrote that the Messiah would have two natures: a human (Gen. 3:15, Is. 7:14, Gen. 22:18, Ps. 41:7, Dan. 7:13) and a Godly (Ps. 2; Ps., 45; Ps, 110; Is. 9:6; Jer. 23:5; Bar. 3:36-38; Mic. 5:2; Mal. 3:1), that He would be the greatest prophet (Deut. 18:18); king (Gen. 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chron. 17:12-13; Ps. 2, Ps. 132:11, Ez. 37:24; Dan. 7:13) and High Priest (Ps. 110; Zach. 6:12), anointed by God (the Father) for these duties (Ps. 2, Ps. 45; Is. 42; Is. 61:1-4; Dan. 9:24-27), and will be a kind Shepherd (Ez. 34:23-24, 37:24; Mic. 5:3).

The prophecies also witness that the main role of the Messiah will be to defeat the devil and his powers (Gen. 3:15; Num. 24:17), to redeem people from sin and to heal their physical and spiritual illnesses (Ps. 40; Is. 35:5-7, 42:1-12, 50:4 and the 53rd chapter and 61:1-3; Zach. 3:8-9) and to reconcile them with God (Gen. 49:10; Jer. 23:5 and 31:34; Ez. 36:24-27; Dan. 9:24-27; Zach. 13:1); that He will sanctify the faithful (Zach. 6:12), will establish a New Covenant in place of the old (Is. 42:2, 55:3 and 59:20-21; Dan. 9:24-27), and that this covenant will be for eternity (Jer. 31:31; Is. 55:3).

The prophets predicted the calling of the Gentiles to the Kingdom of the Messiah (Ps. 72:10; Is. 11:1-11, 43:16-28, 49:6 and 65:1-3), the spreading of faith, beginning with Jerusalem (Is. 2:2), that His spiritual blessings will extend to all humanity (Gen. 22:18, Ps. 132:11; Is. 11:1, 42:1-12 and 54:1-5; Ez. 34:23 and 37:24; Amos 9:11-12; Ag. 2:6-7; Zeph. 3:9, Zach. 9:9-11), and the spiritual bliss of the faithful (Is. 12:3).

The prophets also revealed many particulars regarding the coming of the Messiah, specifically: that He will be descended from Abraham (Gen. 22:18), from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9), from the line of king David (2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chron. 17:12-13), will be born of a Virgin (Is. 7:14) in the city of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), will spread spiritual light (Is. 9:1-2), will heal the infirm (Is. 35:5-6), will suffer, be pierced, die, be buried in a new grave, then will rise from the dead (Gen. 49:9-11; Ps. 41:7-10; Is. 50:5-7 and the 53rd chapter; Zach. 12:10; Ps. 16:9-11), will lead souls from hades (Zach. 9:11); they even predicted that not everyone will recognize Him as the Messiah (Is. 6:9), but that some would even feud with Him, though unsuccessfully (Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:18; Ps. 2; Ps. 95:6-8; Ps. 110:1-4; Is. 50:8-9 and 65:1-3).

- THE GENEALOGY OF THE LORD:

The progression of the lineage of the promised Savior, the Messiah, the Christ passed through the generations. St. Matthew began his Gospel tracing the genealogy 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. 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*)

- LANDSCAPE WORK:

During the last two weeks, but especially in the last few days, there has been significant work done on the grounds between the Hall and the Church. The ground was graded for proper drainage, irrigation lines were laid, new topsoil was laid, plants and trees were purchased and planted, sod was delivered on Saturday (Dec. 17) and laid right away. This is only a partial list of the countless number of things accomplished just on the grounds, not to mention concrete, electrical, and construction work completed. We are extremely grateful to Serge Anderson who was able to hire professionals to manage and install the new lawn at a significantly lower cost than previously expected. We are also grateful to Matushka Ann, who spent many days during the last month, planning, calling, drawing out, discussing and working out the details of the new lawn. One more exciting note is that the Parish Council purchased a children's play structure, which will be installed after Nativity. As the final work goes forward on the Hall, lawns and kitchen, please keep the workers and the council members in your prayers, asking that all the work proceeds with the blessing of the Lord, with your enthusiasm and support, and without any obstacle.

- PARISH FEAST DAY: REPOSE OF SAINT SERAPHIM OF SAROV—JANUARY 2, 2012:

Once again we are preparing, as a parish, to celebrate one of the two St. Seraphim Days in the Church year. We are expecting His Grace, Bishop Benjamin, to join us for Liturgy on Monday, January 2, 2012. The day before, Sunday, January 1, is the feast of The *Circumcision of Christ* as well as the repose of Saint Basil the Great. So the Liturgy of St. Basil will be served, and there will be a special emphasis on this very intriguing feastday of the Lord and St. Basil. At 5 PM, on January 1, we will have Vespers and the Akathist for St. Seraphim. Dear Parish Members: most of you have the day off on Monday, Jan. 2, so I am appealing to you to make that last "holiday push," as a gift to yourself, to honor our Parish patron Saint and come to the Divine Liturgy. There will be a festal meal prepared for this feast. See below. —*Fr. Lawrence*

- SPEAKING OF THE HOLIDAY PUSH—another Work Party?? December 31, 9 AM:

Our Parish Hall is very close to being ready to occupy. There are numerous details to deal with before the county inspector will come to give us the OK to move in to use the building. However, since His Grace, Bishop Benjamin is coming on January 2 for the Feast of St. Seraphim, we want him to bless the new hall and the new storage building, and enjoy our Festal meal in the Hall. For those things to happen, we—meaning able bodied *Parish Members*—need to do the following: clean the floors of the new hall; clean our tables and chairs; attach feet protectors on the table legs to prevent scratching the new floors; clean the new kitchen. While we cannot occupy the new hall, we can move our tables and chairs and food into it for the feast, bless the Hall, and move out after the feast. So, the Parish Council is calling for all able-bodied members to come on **Saturday, December 31, New Year's Eve day (sorry about that), at 9 AM** and get the work done. Thank you for honoring this important request.

- THE POVERTY OF LONELINESS, MONK SILOUAN

One of my favorite stories about Mother Teresa is when an American reporter asked her which is the poorest country she had ever been to. Answering in a very Mother Teresa like manner, she said, "Yes, yes, yes. I have been to many countries and seen much poverty and suffering. Everywhere I go people tell me of their hardships and struggles, and ask for help, and I give what I can. But of all the countries I have been to, the poorest one I have been to is America." Somewhat shocked, the reporter informed Mother Teresa that America was one of the richest countries and questioned how it could be the poorest. "Because," she replied, "America suffers most from the poverty of loneliness." One of the most obvious signs of our broken world is the feeling of isolation among individuals. We can be in a sports stadium with 100,000 other people, feeling a sense of solidarity because we are rooting for the home team, but when we get in the car to go home, loneliness hits us. Our internet culture does not allow for the human interaction needed to break through our lonesomeness. How does one find even one authentic relationship in our world? The fact is everyone is looking for relationship. We look for that because, whether we know it or not, or accept it or not, we are created in God's image. Being a person automatically

implies that we need the *other* to fulfill the purpose of our existence. And in coming into true relationship with another, we realize that there is no individual existence that we possess, but that life is a phenomenon which we simply participate in, a life which we are bold enough to call Christ. When one feels that call to authentic personhood, to living a life free from ego identifications, neurotic attachments and destructive passions, there wells up a saying contrary to everything we have been taught since our youth: “We cannot do this alone.” There is no simply putting one’s mind to it, and with enough self-will and effort, we can find ourselves with the clear light of God’s love. There has to be a context where we can empty ourselves out for the sake of the other. People often contrast and compare monastic life with the married life. As a monk, never having been married, I can only speak from the monastic point of view. Yet this coming into personhood is not a monastic or married question. In monastic life, we simplify our lives to an interior nakedness where we can let God fill us up with His fullness, so His life can become ours. In married life (so it seems to me) there needs to be a self-sacrificing on both sides in order to realize that the life they share is one. In this love God is revealed. Yet it is easy to look at the end, our *theosis* (deification), with rose-colored glasses and forget all the crosses one has to carry in life. One thing, if not the first thing, that needs to be discarded in the process of entering a monastery or marriage covenant is any romantic notions of the monastery (and those within the monastery) and the potential spouse. In the spiritual life, we easily discount thoughts as simply thoughts, those ephemeral non-realities that blow through our head at an amazing rate. Emotions are in this same category. If a monastery or another person “makes us feel good” or gives us a mushy-gushy feeling inside, that is no indication of the potential for relationship. If we look at the situation and ask, “is this monastery/person is a safe place/person where we can both be patient as we struggle through our brokenness together?” That is much more realistic. Living on the level of emotions and feelings is very shallow water which has the ability to drown. So when we look at how monasticism and marriage may be related, we need to behold the bigger picture and not just incidentals. The approach to both must be grounded in sobriety and discernment. Will my entering a monastery/marriage help me shed the old man or only add another layer of ego which I falsely try to live up to? What am I naturally disposed to? Will this relationship open up to me the meaning of Person? When one discerns the nature of each relationship, whether it is one of self-giving or ego-based attachment, I think it will not take too much time to see what lies at the end of each path.

- UPCOMING - PARISH ANNUAL MEETING:

The Annual Meeting for 2012 will convene on Sunday, February 5, following the Liturgy. According to our Parish By-Laws, the Annual Meeting is to take place on the first Sunday of February. All parish members are asked to attend the meeting. What constitutes Parish Membership? What are the requirements for eligibility to vote at this meeting? Very simply, four things: A formal member of the parish is one who 1) is a baptized Orthodox Christian, 2) is at least 18 years of age, 3) regularly confesses and communes in this parish, 4) financially supports the parish (you are encouraged to give a proportional amount from what God has blessed you, in accordance with the Biblical standard). If you have questions about any of these requirements, please see any Parish Council Member, or speak with Father Lawrence.

- CALISTOGA SISTERS COMING FOR ST. SERAPHIM DAY:

Mother Melania and the Sisters from Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga will be joining us for the Feast of St. Seraphim, on January 2. We have invited them to bring their bookstore. Please take a moment to shop, and if you can, pay a little extra for what you purchase.