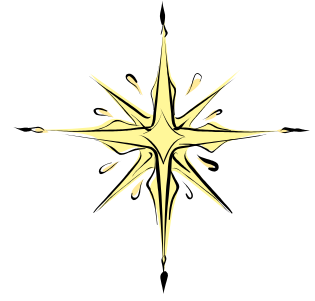


ANNOUNCEMENTS

December 25 – The Nativity in the flesh of our Lord, and God, and Savior Jesus Christ



CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

• TROPARION OF THE FEAST:

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:

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.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Dec. 24: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for Nativity Eve
5 PM, Festal Matins for Nativity
- Sunday, Dec. 25: 9:30 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil
- Monday, Dec. 26: 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the feast of the Synaxis of the Theotokos
- *Tuesday, Dec. 27:* 10 AM, *Funeral for German Larsky (see below on pg. 4)*
- Saturday, Dec. 31: 9 AM, Work Party in preparation for St. Seraphim Day (see below)
5 PM, Great Vespers and prayers for the New Year
- Sunday, Jan. 1: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy for Feast of the Circumcision of Christ and St. Basil Day
5 PM, Great Vespers and Akathist for the Feast of St. Seraphim
- Monday, Jan. 2: **9:30 AM, Greeting of Bishop Benjamin and Divine Liturgy for the Feast**
Festal luncheon to follow

• CHANGING OUR PERSPECTIVE:

We will not escape the secularization of this feast. We will not change the marketing of goods, the office parties and the exchange of gifts. We will not avoid the need to spend money we may not have, eat too much or party ourselves silly. (Well, we might work on this.) But with a little work to understand God's revealed truth, we can transcend and baptize the now secular images to bring us deeper meaning. I offer the following examples of what I mean:...Let every sale in every department store remind us of how God loves us more than the world can understand. The retailers draw us in with sales so that we will come and shop with them. How much more does Christ draw us close? Christ took on flesh to call us home to Him. He suffered at the hands of his own creation, humiliated and murdered. This is the epitome of love. Every retailer, every jingle, every commercial can remind us of God's own love for us. Let every seasonal party remind us of the Joy of Salvation. To save us, Jesus voluntarily

came to take on flesh and suffer in his body. His sacrifice and his gift are reasons to celebrate. When we celebrate, we can remember all that God accomplished for us. We can remember His nature of love and mercy. —Fr. John Abdalah

• THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS:

The Twelve Days of Christmas are a part of the church year often misunderstood among Christians who are not part of an actively liturgical tradition. Contrary to much popular belief, these are not the twelve days before Christmas, but the twelve days from Christmas until Theophany. By starting with the Nativity of Christ and ending with His Baptism, we participate in the reality that by Jesus' birth, His Incarnation in the flesh, and the doorway to union with God is opened: "The Son of God became man that man might become God" (St. Athanasius). Our membership in Him, that is our acceptance of His invitation to partake of the divine, is actualized by baptism in the Church, His Body. In keeping the celebration of Christmas for the twelve days between Nativity and Theophany, we also remind ourselves that our salvation is a process, for we proceed from His invitation (Nativity) to our acceptance (Theophany/baptism on January 5 and 6) and beyond. We also have the feasts of St. Stephen the First Martyr (celebrated in San Anselmo at 9:30 AM on Dec. 27), as well as the feast of the Repose of St. Seraphim of Sarov on Jan. 1 and 2 to help us keep the festive spirit.

As for bringing the Twelve Days of Christmas home, there are many ways, some simple, others elaborate. We can draw out the season as a time for festivity and the nurturing of a Christ-centered life for our children, our friends, and ourselves. In simpler times, the theme of this season was unrestrained hospitality. Sit down with friends or family each evening and write a few (or additional) Christmas cards. Exchange a small gift or good deed each day until Theophany. Or make an effort to open your home for hospitality in the spirit of receiving the Christ-child. There are countless ways to celebrate. The main thing is: keep the feast.

THE SONG

The popular song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is usually seen as simply a nonsense song for children. However, it began as a song of Christian instruction with hidden references to the basic teachings of the Faith. It is a memorization device to teach basic catechism to youngsters. The "true love" mentioned in the song is not an earthly suitor, but God Himself. The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person who is part of the Christian Faith. Each of the "days" represents some aspect of the Christian Faith that was important for children to learn.

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me . . . A Partridge in a Pear Tree: The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, whose birthday we celebrate on December 25, the first day of Christmas. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge that feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, recalling the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but you would not have it so..." (Luke 13:34).

Two Turtledoves: The Old and New Testaments, which together bear witness to God's self-revelation in history and the creation of a people to tell the Story of God to the world.

Three French Hens: The three theological virtues: (1) Faith, (2) Hope, and (3) Love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Four Calling Birds: The Four Gospels: (1) Matthew, (2) Mark, (3) Luke, and (4) John, which proclaim the Good News of God's reconciliation of the world to Himself in Jesus Christ.

Five Gold Rings: The first five Books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch: (1) Genesis, (2) Exodus, (3) Leviticus, (4) Numbers, and (5) Deuteronomy, which give the history of humanity's sinful failure and God's response of grace in the creation of a people to be a light to the world.

Six Geese a-Laying: The six days of creation that confess God as Creator and Sustainer of the world (Gen. 1).

Seven Swans a-Swimming: The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: (1) prophecy, (2) ministry, (3) teaching,

(4) exhortation, (5) giving, (6) leading, and (7) compassion (Romans 12:6–8; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8–11).

Eight Maids a-Milking: The eight Beatitudes: Blessed are (1) the poor in spirit, (2) those who mourn, (3) the meek, (4) those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, (5) the merciful, (6) the pure in heart, (7) the peacemakers, (8) those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. (Matthew 5:3–10)

Nine Ladies Dancing: The nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: (1) love, (2) joy, (3) peace, (4) patience, (5) kindness, (6) generosity, (7) faithfulness, (8) gentleness, and (9) self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

Ten Lords a-Leaping: The ten commandments: (1) You shall have no other gods before me; (2) Do not make an idol; (3) Do not take God's name in vain; (4) Remember the Sabbath Day; (5) Honor your father and mother; (6) Do not murder; (7) Do not commit adultery; (8) Do not steal; (9) Do not bear false witness; (10) Do not covet. (Exodus 20:1–17)

Eleven Pipers Piping: The eleven faithful Apostles: (1) Simon Peter, (2) Andrew, (3) James, (4) John, (5) Philip, (6) Bartholomew, (7) Matthew, (8) Thomas, (9) James bar Alphaeus, (10) Simon the Zealot, (11) Judas bar James. (Luke 6:14–16)

Twelve Drummers Drumming: The twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed: (1) I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. (2) I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. (3) He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. (4) He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell [the grave]. (5) On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. (6) He will come again to judge the living and the dead. (7) I believe in the Holy Spirit, (8) the holy catholic Church, (9) the communion of saints, (10) the forgiveness of sins, (11) the resurrection of the body, and (12) life everlasting.

• THE SECOND DAY OF THE FEAST, The Synaxis [gathering together of the faithful] for the Theotokos: Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes the following: “Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity—concretely and historically—is the humanity He received from Mary. His Body is, first of all, her body; His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.” The Feast of the Synaxis is celebrated with 9 AM Liturgy, December 26.

• 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, 9:30 AM**. The evening before, Sunday, January 1, we will have Vespers and the Akathist for St. Seraphim at 5 PM. Dear Parish Members: most of you have the day off on Monday, Jan. 2, so I encourage you to make that last “holiday push,” as a gift to yourself, to honor our Parish patron Saint and come to the Divine Liturgy, prepare for and receive Holy Communion, greet the Bishop, and enjoy fellowship with each other. There will be a festal meal prepared for this feast. See below. —Fr. Lawrence

• FEAST OF THEOPHANY:
Once Christmas is over, the Church starts to prepare us for the feast of Theophany / Epiphany / Baptism of Christ. At one time in history, the feasts of Christmas and the Baptism of the Lord were combined into one great feast day, celebrated on January 6. We can see how important this feast is in the life of the Church by the number of liturgical services that we have been given. *Royal Hours* on Wednesday, January 4, at 6 PM. The *Vesperal Liturgy* on Thursday, January 5 at 11:30 AM (we fast strictly before this service to prepare for receiving Holy Communion). Holy Water will be blessed at the conclusion of the Vesperal Liturgy. *Matins for Theophany* will be celebrated on Thursday as well, at 6 PM. The *Divine Liturgy of the Feast*, and another blessing of water, will be celebrated on Friday, January 6, beginning at 9 AM. Quite a few of our parishioners were baptized on this feast day, and we rejoice with them, asking that the Lord grant many years of fruitful service to the Church.

• WORK TO BE DONE IN PREPARATION FOR ST. SERAPHIM DAY:

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. You are all invited to offer a bit of your time to do some chores. You can come anytime between now and January 1 to do them:

- Clean the hall tables and chairs—both are in the storage building. Just bring some Formula 409, a bucket, some soap and rags.
- Attach “feet protectors” on the table legs to prevent scratching the new floors. Someone will need to go to Friedman Bros. and purchase the “feet protectors” (really, they are floor protectors). There are twelve four-legged tables.
- Carry the tables and chairs into the Hall and set up.
- Flower decorations
- The bathrooms will need a clean-up, toilet paper and hand soap.
- Those interested in helping with food prep on January 2 for St. Seraphim Feast Day, please talk to Serge Anderson about which kitchen items to clean and bring into the kitchen.
- At the conclusion of our January 2 meal, we will need to completely empty the Hall of all tables, chairs, and kitchen cooking utensils and supplies. All this must be done in preparation for the final inspection.

• 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 and their delicious honey. Please take a moment to shop, and if you can, pay a little extra for what you purchase.

• MARRIAGES:

There are two weddings planned for January: on Sunday afternoon, January 8, Brendan (son of Fr. John and Xenia Schettig) and Irini will be united in the Mystery of Holy Matrimony. On Sunday, January 15, a young couple from our sister parish, Holy Dormition, will be married here by His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph of the Bulgarian Diocese of America. We rejoice with both couples and their families.

• MEMORY ETERNAL:

We offer our prayers to the Lord for the repose of His faithful servant, German Larsky, who died Friday morning after some years of illness and a serious stroke last Saturday. Our concern now is for German's salvation, the forgiveness of his sins, and also for his wife, Svetlana, now a widow, and as such of special concern to the Church. The funeral service will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 27, St. Stephen's Day, here at the church, at 10 AM. burial in Healdsburg. We thank those anonymous donors who provided both the coffin and the gravesite.