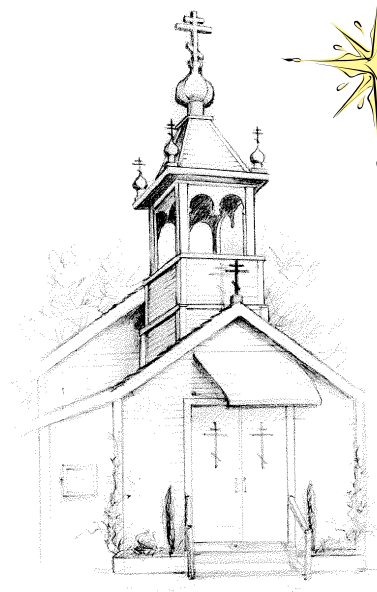
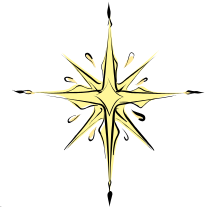


# ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2012



• 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. 22: 5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Dec. 23: 9–10 AM, Confessions  
10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
Noon, Agape Lunch  
5 PM, Service of the Royal Hours for Nativity (about one hour long)
- Monday, Dec. 24: 11 AM, Vespertine Liturgy of St. Basil (strict fast before the Liturgy)  
6 PM, VIGIL for Christmas (about 1-1/2 hour in length)
- Tuesday, Dec. 25: CHRISTMAS DAY: The Nativity of our Lord, and God, and Savior Jesus Christ  
9:30 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy
- Wednesday, Dec. 26: Feast of the *Synaxis of the Theotokos*, 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
- Thursday, Dec. 27: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy in *San Anselmo* for St. Stephen the First Martyr  
9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy at *Kazan Skete*

Saturday, Dec. 29:           10 AM, Baptism of children of Tirhas Kidane  
                                  5 PM, Great Vespers  
                                  6 PM, Concert of Renaissance Christmas hymns by *Sotto Il Doumo*

• 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 precedent 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.

• 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.



THE DAY OF OUR PATRON SAINT:

**On Wednesday, January 2,** we will greet His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin at **9:30 AM**, and begin the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Repose 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 the 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 we do 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.

• 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.

• THANK YOU, SENIORS

Seniors, thank you and congratulations on our very successful, first ever, “Giving Tree” project! All gifts were collected and delivered last Tuesday. Thank you for participating! You’ve brought much joy to many lives.

**Save the date:** Our next luncheon will be on January 10<sup>th</sup>. It will be a casual “Pizza Party.” Hope to see you there!

• BIBLE READING PLAN—A CHECK UP AND SOME HELP:

*A check-up:* Those who are reading the Scriptures according to the year-long plan have at this point read: the book

of Genesis and up to Exodus chapter 13; all the Psalms up to 24; up to Proverbs 4, and chapter 15 of the Gospel of St. Matthew. This reading program requires twenty minutes a day for some, longer for others, much longer for others. The investment of time in scriptures will return to you great blessings. We all take time in the morning—habitually—to get ready for the day (showers, brushing teeth, dressing, etc.). Our scripture reading can become a good habit, but it takes time to establish it. *Some help:* Write down your scripture questions. In a few weeks we will gather our clergy together at the lunch, giving them the questions you've jotted down, and hopefully, they will be able to provide satisfactory answers. More info to follow.

- BLESSING AND TONSURE OF BELL RINGERS:

On St. Spiridon Day, December 12, at St. Spiridon Cathedral in Seattle, His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin blessed Mr. John R. Cox, as a Church Bellringer. The Russian Church recently approved a service for the setting apart of bell ringers. It is believed that was the first time the newly restored order of Church Bellringer has been served in North America. Mr. Cox and several others have taken bell ringing quite seriously—spending a great deal of time practicing to learn technique, new patterns and the proper times to ring the bells. His Eminence was happy to do this blessing, not only because Mr. Cox has become a competent ringer, but also as a means of encouraging this long-neglected art. In a few weeks Father Lawrence will begin taking names of those who are interested in being ringers. Practice times and, eventually, a schedule of ringers for each Divine Service will be created, and a request that His Eminence bless our ringers.

- NATIVITY AND THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S CREATION:

When Jesus became man, by the will of the Father and the holy Virgin Mary, He sanctified human nature. Since human nature is one, His incarnation (taking of flesh!) gives us also the potential to be sanctified not just in our souls but in our bodies as well. We have been incorporated into the Body of the Risen Lord by baptism, and our very bodies become mystical extensions of *His own body*, and are strengthened at the Mystical supper. St. Paul assumes that his Corinthians know this already when he wrote: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have from God, and you are not your own? So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:20). That's not some esoteric truth, but an elementary catechism. So as we celebrate Christmas, we must also remember that in the society at large, as in the time of St Paul, we are in the midst of a life and death moral crisis. We see all around us, and even in ourselves, the tragic loss of the deep connection between the body and holiness; the confusion between gender and sexuality; the ignorance of the beauty and value of virginity; the confusion of about sex, chastity and love; the juvenile glorification of “freedom” as the highest value; and the giving up of a struggle to be holy. The results of this moral crisis can be seen in the report below. I sincerely hope that you are not offended by this sort of report here in the Church announcements. If you are, please remember that we believe that there is a fundamentally different worldview between Orthodox Christianity and most everything else. If we don't teach about this abyss of misunderstanding, then we will surely be can be unawares caught up in the destructive forces of the Evil One, who hates the human body and soul. Before we can be “spiritually minded” (that is, inspired by the Holy Spirit) we must learn how our bodies are to also become spiritual (that is, filled with the Holy Spirit)? — *Fr. Lawrence*

- NEWYORK CITY: Highest Level of “Sex Ed,” Condom Distribution and Highest Level of STDs (from the Family Research Council [www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org)):

The only thing higher than the Empire State Building may be New York City's sexually transmitted disease rate! According to a new report from the Department of Health, the spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis is through the roof in almost every one of the city's neighborhoods. Researchers tracked 181 zip codes and found that a third of them were in the top 20 percent for, not just one, but multiple STDs. Of all the regions, the Bronx fared the worst. A whopping 68 percent of its neighborhoods were in the highest percentiles for two or more diseases. From Brooklyn to Manhattan and every borough in between, sexual disease is ravaging the local population. “Only Staten Island had no high-morbidity zip codes,” the AP reports.

Everywhere else, residents seem to be reaping the consequences of the city's emphasis on carefree sex. As local leaders will tell you, New York City distributes more condoms, performs more abortions, and engages in

more explicit sex education than almost any region in the country. Earlier this year, the city even launched a test program called CATCH, Connecting Adolescents to Comprehensive Healthcare, which gives high school students the option of getting regular birth control injections, the morning-after pill, and condoms at their schools without ever calling parents.

And what has the city gotten for its trouble? Thousands more sexually-related diseases — most of them incurable, and all of them expensive. According to the CDC, a single case of HIV costs \$400,000 to treat over a lifetime. But instead of discouraging promiscuity, the U.S. is pouring millions of dollars into STD treatments — all because the government doesn't want to confront people about the dangers of premarital sex.

In this age of “sexual freedom,” our culture — and now our tax dollars — are promoting sexual activity with anyone at any time with complete disregard for the physical toll. It's as if sex were the new constitutional right. But empowering people to pursue sexual satisfaction at any cost is leaving America in a position of vulnerability from which it might never recover. Every year, countless hearts and bodies are broken by STDs — and as many as 30,000 people lose their lives. How many more will have to die before Americans wake up and start advocating a little self-restraint?

• 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), 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). Isaiah wrote about the meekness of the Messiah (42:1-12).

The fruits of His redemption will be spiritual renewal of the faithful and the outpouring of the grace of the Holy Spirit on them (Is. 44:3 and 59:20-21; Zach. 12:10; Joel 2:28; Eze. 36:25). They also spoke of the necessity of faith (Is. 28:16; Hab. 3:11).

The Prophets call the Messiah Lion, David, Angel of the Covenant, Branch, God the Mighty, Emmanuel, Counselor, Leader of the world, Everlasting Father, Conciliator, Star, Seed of a Woman, Prophet, Son of God, King, Anointed One (Messiah), Redeemer, Deliverer, God, Lord, Servant (of God), Righteous, Son of Man, Holy of Holies. Prophecies about the Messianic Kingdom are: cleansing from sin (Is. 59:20-21, Jer. 31:31-34, Eze. 36:24-27, Dan. 9:24-27, Zach. 6:12, 13:1), the abolishment of evil, suffering (Num. 24:17, Is. 11:1-10), the affirmation of joy (Is. 42:1-12, 54:12-14, 60:1-5, 61:1-4), resurrection of the flesh (Job 19:26).