

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, December 25, 2022

The Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ

- TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY, 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 NATIVITY, Tone Four:

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: 11:30 AM, Vespers for Christmas
5 PM, Matins for Christmas, followed by Christmas Caroling (about 1.5 hours)
- Sunday, Dec. 25: 10 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy
- Monday, Dec. 26: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the *Synaxis of the Theotokos*
- Tuesday, Dec. 27: *In San Anselmo at St. Nicholas Church—9:30 AM Divine Liturgy for St. Stephen Day*
- Wednesday, Dec. 28: Scaffold comes down, smaller scaffold will be erected
6 PM, Vespers
- Thursday, Dec. 29: Plastering west wall of the North Transept
- Friday, Dec. 30: *No Confessions today.* Church clean up in the afternoon, Time TBA
- Saturday, Dec. 31: 5 PM, Great Vespers for the *Feasts of the Circumcision of Christ and St. Basil the Great*
- Sunday, Jan. 1: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great / Vasilopita blessing
5 PM, Great Vespers for the Feast of the Repose of St. Seraphim
- Monday, Jan. 2: 9:30 AM, Greeting of Archbishop Benjamin, Divine Liturgy for the Feast

- GREETINGS IN THE LORD:

On behalf of my family, I offer each one of you the joyous greeting: *Christ is born. Glorify Him!* I want to express my profound gratitude to God for His kindness in blessing me with the inexpressibly precious gift of serving this holy community of the Protection of the Holy Virgin and St. Seraphim Cathedral. I wish you a Merry Christmas and a blessed new year. —*Fr Lawrence and Matushka Ann and family*

- CHANGING OUR PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTMAS:

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. 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*

- GROWING PARISHES:

Although many of the “churchless” [those with no church affiliation] hold positive views of Christianity, a substantial number also have no idea what Christians have accomplished in the nation, either for the better or for the worse. A [Barna Group](#) survey tells us that when the unchurched were asked to describe what they believe are the positive and negative contributions of Christianity in America, almost half (49%) could not identify a single favorable impact of the Christian community, while nearly two-fifths (37%) were unable to identify a negative impact. Of those who could identify one way Christians contribute to the common good, the unchurched appreciate their influence when it comes to serving the poor and disadvantaged (22%), bolstering morals and values (10%) and helping people believe in God (8%). Obviously, Orthodox Christianity is almost invisible to the vast majority—we have very, very few schools (alas), very few “social safety-net” organizations and no hospitals or clinics for the needy. We are almost always *under the radar*, or worse, seen in a bad light because of international situations. In any case, while we are not invisible to those around us, including those in our Mountain View Ave neighborhood, we might seem irrelevant. I don't believe we are irrelevant. We could examine the reasons why we are not well known (I could list those reasons for you) but my interest at the moment is answering the questions of **how the parish will grow?**

Most of our recent and beloved converts have come to St Seraphim through their reading and study about faith, and some via the internet. The Lord guides people to the faith in all kinds of way. Regarding the Glendi Festival—which I loved—it brought thousands of people here to enjoy our hospitality and to experience something of our church life—much good will toward our parish came from it. How a church is perceived by the greater Sonoma County community is an important thing, and by all accounts, people of all kinds enjoyed being here. Did it result in many conversions? Some, yes, and in the long term, who knows? Only the Lord can answer that question. Many seeds were planted.

The simplest, most successful approach to parish growth is the personal approach, one based on authentic experience: Invite others. The *Barna Group* survey quote above tells us that the best way to increase church attendance, all things considered, is for our Church members to invite people to services (maybe not the *Canon of St. Andrew* during the first week of lent, but who knows). It's no secret that personal recommendations are the most effective means to encourage people to do anything. We all want to know that something is worthwhile before we give it a try, and [47% of Americans](#) are open to being invited to church by a friend. Walking in to the sacred space of an Orthodox Church can be very intimidating. One is unsure where to go, there being no pews. Newcomers will feel more comfortable walking into a new church if they already know someone who attends. Take a chance—invite a friend. —*Father Lawrence*

- PROSPHORA/COMMEMORATION BOOKLETS:

Please update and renew your commemoration booklets for 2023 at the Candle Desk.

UPCOMING

- Sun., Jan. 1: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ and St. Basil the Great. The Blessing of the [Vasilopita](#) will follow.
5 PM, Vespers for the Feast of St. Seraphim with the Akathist
- Mon., Jan., 2: 9:30 AM, Hierarchical Liturgy with His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin
- Thurs., Jan. 5: 5 PM. We host the *Angels Unawares* formerly called *Nomadic Shelter*. Come and help serve your brothers and sisters a meal and offer some hospitality. See Michael Dovey for more information
- Jan. 5 & 6: Theophany Services—Please note that we are planing to do the Outdoor Blessing of Water on Theophany Jan. 6, after Liturgy at Steelhead Beach (weather permitting) near Guerneville
- Sun., Jan. 8: God willing, we will have the joy of receiving by Holy Baptism Stefan Perez and Paulina Zeni, at 9 AM, before the Divine Liturgy.
- House blessings: The Tradition of the Church is for us to have our homes blessed each year, sanctifying them, dispelling the “residue of sin” built up over the last year with the Water of the Feast of Theophany. A sign up list is posted in the Narthex. A List showing “who and when” I will be visiting for house blessings will be posted in the Narthex this coming week. Here’s a [What To Expect](#)
- Going-Away Party: The Candelarios depart for Seminary on Jan. 10. The date/time for the party TBA
- January 19: A Senior Brunch will follow the Divine Liturgy on Thursday, Jan. 19. All seniors and retired folk welcome to attend. Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM, ends about 11 AM.
- January 21: [Walk for Life](#) in San Francisco. Transportation to the *Walk* being arranged now. We are expecting Fr Josiah Trenham and about 50 youth from St. Andrew’s Orthodox Church in Riverside to come up on Friday, Jan. 20, to sleep in the Hall, the Sunday School rooms and the Rectory. We will caravan with them to Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF for a 9 AM Divine Liturgy and from there go to the Civic Center for the *Walk*. After the *Walk* we return here for Vespers and a BBQ on Saturday evening

- GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW CHURCH MEMBERS:

Some may find it difficult to get involved in parish events, or perhaps find it difficult to meet others in the parish. Please consider the following three things. First, at our parish, relationships and fellowship between parishioners develop for the most part during the Sunday lunches and the various volunteer activities (gardening, cleaning, charitable activities, cooking, choir, candle desk, decorating, etc.). Praying, eating and working together: these give us the opportunity to know, love, forgive and help one another. Secondly, before we put the burden on someone else to initiate friendly conversation, we set aside our expectations of how we think others ought to be. This is called being gracious with others. Instead express interest in other people, reach out—and having met someone and learned a little bit about that person, add that name to your prayer list. —*Borrowed*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JANUARY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 – St. Basil/Circumcision of XC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 5 PM, Vespers and Akathist for Feast of St. Seraphim 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Feast of St. Seraphim, <i>Archbishop Benjamin to preside</i> 	3	4 – Prefeast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Royal Hours 	5 – Strict Fast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Liturgy with the Great Blessing of Water • 5 PM, Angels Unawares • 6 PM, Matins for the Feast 	6 – Holy Theophany <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (<i>Great Blessing of Water at Steelhead Beach near Gueneville</i>) 	7 – St. John the Baptist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers/Confessions
8 – Sun after Theophany <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Baptisms • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	9	10	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	12 – Martyr Tatiana <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • 7 PM, Online Bible Study with Fr James 	13 <i>No Confessions due to House Blessings</i>	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers/Confessions
15 – St. Paul of Thebes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	16	17	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Book Club 	19 – St. Mark of Ephesus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy/Senior Brunch • 7 PM, Online Bible Study with Fr James 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions 	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon: Walk for Life in San Francisco • 5 PM, Great Vespers/Confessions
22 – New Martyrs of Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:30 PM, Parish Council • 5 PM, <i>Sacred Arts Talk: Russian Sacred Music</i> 	23	24	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	26 – St. Xenophon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • 7 PM, Online Bible Study with Fr James 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions 	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 AM, Baptism • 5 PM, Great Vespers/Confessions
29 – Zacchaeus Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1 PM, Vespers for the Three Holy Hierarchs 	30	31	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vigil for the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord 	2 – Feast of the Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy and blessing of candles • 7 PM, Online Bible Study with Fr James 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers/Confessions