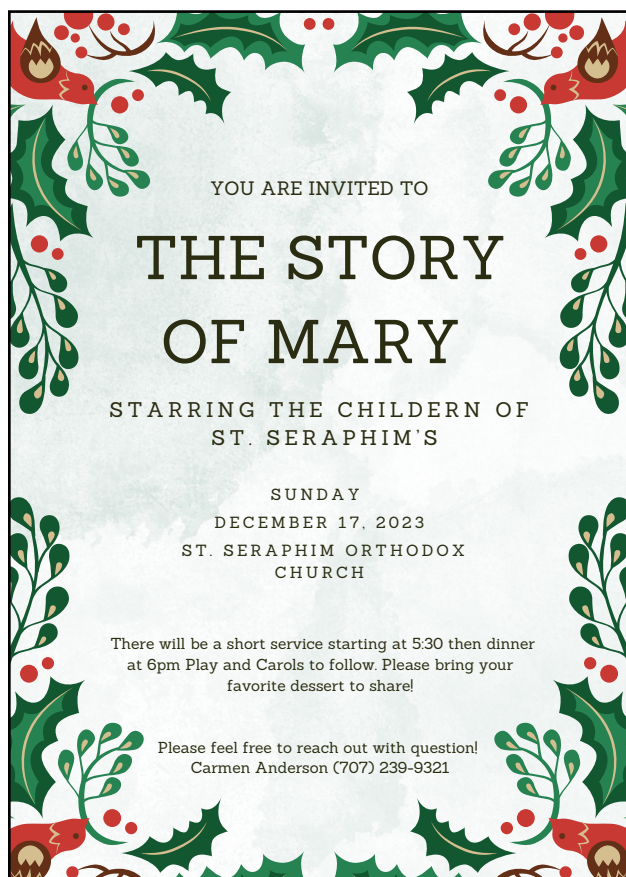


**I once read a newspaper** account of an engineer testing the jet engine of a plane who carelessly stepped into the air stream which caught and lifted him high off the ground. Seeing what had happened, his assistant quickly switched off the engine. The mechanic fell to the ground, dead. Something similar happens to the man of prayer: after being caught up into another sphere he returns to earth 'dead' to much that is of this world. A new life full of light has manifested itself in him, and now the infantile pastimes which occupy the vast majority cease to hold any interest or attraction for him.

—*St Sophrony*

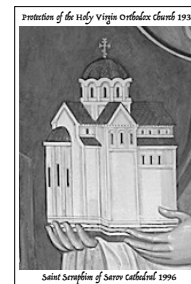
**On January 20, 2024** we have an opportunity to participate in the *Walk for Life in San Francisco* with other Orthodox Christians. The plan is to caravan to

SF together—and begin the day with the Divine Liturgy at 8:30 AM at our OCA Holy Trinity Cathedral on Van Ness and Green St. We then will meet at the Civic Center Plaza for the Walk. Please visit [oclife.org/walk](http://oclife.org/walk) for more information and to see how we can become more involved with other Orthodox communities in this beautiful and inspiring show of support for life. More info re: car pool will be posted in due time.



# ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

## PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



**December 17, 2023**

**Sunday of the Holy Ancestors of Christ**



• TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Three:

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; for the Lord hath shown strength with His arm; He hath trampled down death by death; He hath become the first-born of the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of hell, and hath granted the world great mercy.

• 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 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 PRE-FEAST, Tone Three:

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. 16: 3:30 PM, Catechism: *On the Theotokos*  
5 PM, Vespers of the Resurrection and commemoration of the Ancestors of Christ
- Sunday, Dec. 17: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
Noon, Agape Meal / Mentorship  
5:30 PM, Christmas Play (see below)
- Tuesday, Dec. 19: 6 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Wednesday, Dec. 20: 8 AM, Prefestal Matins/Confessions  
6 PM, Prefestal Vespers/Confessions
- Thursday, Dec. 21: 8 AM, Prefestal Matins/Confessions  
6 PM, Prefestal Vespers/Confessions  
7 PM, *Online Study of the Messianic psalms*
- Friday, Dec. 22: 8 AM, Prefestal Matins  
11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions  
6 PM, Royal Hours for Christmas
- Saturday, Dec. 23: **3 PM, Church Decoration** / 4 PM, Confessions  
5 PM, Great Vespers / Prefestal Canon
- Sunday, Dec. 24: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
Noon, Coffee Hour (not a lunch)  
6 PM, Festal Matins of Christmas

**The demands of work**, family, holiday preparations along with morning and evening routines the week before Christmas present many challenges, perhaps more than ever. Nevertheless, I invite you to make your pre-Christmas Confession to prepare for Holy Communion, and to set aside a little

time to participate in the Pre-Feast Services Dec. 20–24. The profound hymnography is enlightening and consoling, calming and inspiring. Those wonderful hymns teach us that we have something to do with the story of the birth: are we like the shepherds (shepherds, not intellectual Pharisees!) who hear the glad tidings of great joy and come to worship; or like the Magi, who bring gifts to Jesus, and learn that whatever knowledge we have, it is only a foreshadowing of the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Perhaps we are like Joseph, blessed with mystical visions of the will of God; maybe we are like an animate Bethlehem, where Christ is born in the heart, or, sad to say, maybe like the Inn Keeper, having no room in the heart for the Lord; or God forbid, like Herod, struggling with fear and violence, because the New Born King is Lord of lord and King of kings, Light from Light: “God is with us” in Christ. May God grant us the experience of the calming and cleansing silence found in the approach to the spiritual Cave in Bethlehem during this **Winter Holy Week**. —*Fr Lawrence*

**The Sunday that falls** between December 11–17 is known as the *Sunday of the Holy Forebears*. These are the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, who lived before the Law and under the Law, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God said, “In thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3, 22:18). On this Sunday the Epistle reading comes from St. Paul’s letter to the [Colossians \(3:4–11\)](#) which begins with the incredible sentence: *When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* We look toward the Glorious Appearing of the Lord with all our heart!. St. Paul told the Colossians to prepare to encounter Christ by putting their sins to death, for they are all forms of idolatry that exclude us from the holy joy of the Kingdom. The Gospel reading for this Sunday is always from [Luke 14:16–24](#), the Parable of the “Great Supper” which tells of those who are invited refusing to come, *so the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled...’* All are invited, but many are distracted, if not by duties (in the Parable there are the excuses of marriage, oxen and property) then by the things that St Paul lists in Colossians. Christmas, of course, is a banquet, a great feast; a celebration of our salvation in the God-Man Jesus Christ, Who in Himself united humanity with divinity, Who brings us from mortality to immortality. Here is a wake-up call for faith—a warning to not let anything come between us and the invitation to be with Christ. —*Fr Lawrence*