

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY, December 24, 2023
Christmas Eve



- RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION, Tone Four:

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of the Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse, and elatedly told the Apostles: death is overthrown, Christ God is risen, granting the world great mercy.

- TROPARION OF THE FORE-FEAST, 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.

- TROPARION OF THE ANCESTORS, 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 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, Tone Three, Melody of "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. 23: 5 PM, Great Vespers with the Prefeast Canon
- Sunday, Dec. 24: 10 AM, Festal Divine Liturgy
✧ **6 PM, Festal Matins for Christmas** ✧
- Monday, Dec. 25: ✧ **9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for Christmas** ✧
- Tuesday, Dec. 26: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the *Synaxis of the Theotokos*

- Wednesday, Dec. 27: Ironing gold icon stand covers (speak with Barbara Owens to help)
In San Anselmo at St. Nicholas Church—9:30 AM Divine Liturgy for St. Stephen Day
- Friday, Dec. 29: *No Confessions today*

On behalf of my family, I offer each one of you the joyous greeting: *Christ is born. Glorify Him!* There are so many reasons to thank our Lord and Savior for His kindness in blessing me with the inexpressibly precious gift of serving this holy community. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a blessed new year. —*Fr Lawrence and Matushka Ann and family*

Troparion of Nativity: 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 Nativity: 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.

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*

The Holy Spirit guides people to the Orthodox Faith in all kinds of ways. Many of our recent and beloved catechumens have come to the Orthodox Faith and St. Seraphim Church through their reading and study, many via the internet—this is *Passive evangelism*, and we thank God for it. However, if we are interested in more intentionally offering the Good News to others, the simplest, most successful approach to Church growth is personal and simple: 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. Most people want to know that something is worthwhile before giving it a try. Polls show that [47% of Americans](#) are open to being invited to church by a friend. Walking in to the sacred space of an Orthodox Church for the first time can be eye-opening, wonderful, but maybe awkward and 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 2024 at the Candle Desk.

UPCOMING

- Mon., Jan. 1: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ and St. Basil the Great
5 PM, Vespers for the Feast of St. Seraphim with the Akathist
- Tues., Jan., 2: 9:30 AM, Hierarchical Liturgy with His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin
- Thurs., Jan. 4: 5 PM. We host the *Angels Unawares*. 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—See the January calendar. Please note that we are hoping to do the *Outdoor Blessing of Water* on Theophany Jan. 6, after Liturgy. Location TBD
- 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 will be posted in the Narthex. This List will show “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](#)
- January 13: The Miracle Working Icon of St. Anna will be brought to St. Seraphim Cathedral on Saturday, Jan. 13 at 6 PM (at the conclusion of Vespers) by Archimandrite Sergius of St. Tikhon Monastery in PA. An Akathist will be served
- January 20: [Walk for Life](#) in San Francisco. Transportation to the *Walk* is being arranged now. Plans are to car-pool to the OCA Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF for a 9 AM Divine Liturgy and from there go to the Civic Center for the *Walk*
- March 2: Mark your calendars for a two-part workshop here: *Death and Dying—Being Prepared*. Part #1 will be a presentation by Paul Miller, Esq. and Jacquelynne Ocaña, *Fiduciary* on estate planning, power of attorney, hospice, trusts, healthcare management during incapacity. Part #2 will be talks by Archpriest Matthew Tate, from Holy Annunciation (OCA) in Milwaukie, OR, Archpriest Lawrence and Daphne Russell. They will speak about Orthodox funeral practices, planning ahead, burial arrangements, completing forms and informing family about your plans

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world (John 16:28)

The only-begotten Son of God, brethren, begotten in eternity of the Father without a mother, was born in time of a mother without a father. That first begetting is an unfathomable mystery of the Holy Trinity in eternity, and the second is the unfathomable mystery of God’s power and love for mankind in time. The greatest mystery in time corresponds to the greatest mystery in eternity. Without entering into this greatest mystery with the small taper of our understanding, let us be content, brethren, with the knowledge that our salvation had its origin not from man or from earth, but from the greatest heights of the divine invisible world. So great is God’s mercy, and so great is the dignity of man, that the Son of God Himself came down from eternity into time, from heaven to earth, from the throne of glory to the shepherd’s cave, solely to save mankind, to cleanse men from sin and to return them to Paradise. *I came forth from the Father, where I had everything, and am come into the world, which cannot give Me anything.* The Lord was born in a cave to show that the whole world is one dark cave, which He alone can illumine. The Lord was born in Bethlehem—and Bethlehem means “the House of Bread”—to show that He is the only Bread of Life worthy of true men. O Lord Jesus, the Pre-eternal Son of the Living God and the Son of the Virgin Mary, enlighten us and nourish us with Thyself. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen. — *St. Nikolai (Velimirovic) of Zhicha and South Canaan*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JANUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
December 31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:40 AM, Reception of Catechumens • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Potluck Agape Meal • 5 PM, Vespers for the Feasts of St. Basil/Circumcision 	1 – New Year/St. Basil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy and prayers for the New Year • 5 PM, Vespers for St. Seraphim Day 	2 – St. Seraphim Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Greet Archbishop Benjamin, Hierarchical Liturgy and Festal Lunch 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Pre-Feast Vespers 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Angels Unawares Guests arrive • 6 PM, Royal Hours for Theophany 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 AM, Vesperal Liturgy/Water Blessing • 6 PM, Festal Matins 	6 – THEOPHANY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, outdoor water blessing, location TBD • 5 PM, Great Vespers
7 – St. John the Baptist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	8	9	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Bible study with Fr James 	12 <p>No Confessions</p> <p><i>Fr Lawrence out of town until Monday</i></p>	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, Visit of the Icon of St. Anna with Abbot Sergius of St. Tikhon's
14 – St. Nino, Equal to the Apostles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • Spiritual Lesson 	15	16	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Bible study with Fr James 	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers and Confessions
21 – St. Maximos the Confessor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • Mentorship 	22	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Parish Council 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	25 – St. Gregory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 7 PM, Bible study with Fr James 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers and Confessions
28 – New Martyrs of Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • Spiritual Lesson 	29	30	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 PM, “MOM” Diaper Bank Distribution • 6 PM, Vespers 	February 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, <i>Angels Unawares</i> • 6 PM, Vigil for the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord 	2 – Meeting of the Lord <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy for the Feast, Protection Church 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers and Confessions