

Please update and renew your commemoration booklets for 2025 at the Candle Desk.

Do we carry the glad tidings of the Nativity of Christ to our homes, to our children, relatives, brothers and sisters? May each of us become a herald of the miracle in Bethlehem. Return to your homes. Bring the joy of salvation wherever it has not been able to penetrate. Guard it in the houses of the poor. Interpret it at the tables of the needy. Repeat it at the bedsteads of the sick. Enter those places where we cannot enter. Knock at the hearts of those who have quarreled. Make peace between the separated, comfort the sorrowing, strengthen the doubting, warm the indifferent; ignite the lukewarm, bring the lost to Christ. Open today the doors of the hospitals, step across the doorways of the impoverished, listen to the singing of orphans, and bring to all the glad tidings with a little help from the abundance of your love, and tell all that today the Lord was born into the world. Amen.

—[*Archimandrite Iachint Unciuleac*](#)

CONFESSION BEFORE CHRISTMAS

The Holy Mystery of Confession is a gift from God, and as essential to our lives, as is Holy Communion. Confession is not an obligation, but an encounter with the Living God, Who stands before us in that Holy Mystery. Let all of us—priests and people together—make a Confession in these two weeks preceding Nativity in order to be prepared to receive Holy Communion on the feast itself. In general, it is not appropriate for anyone over the age of seven to receive Holy Communion without a recent Confession (at least once a month is a good benchmark). We operate on the “honor system,” which means I trust you, and I will not ask you if you have confessed and are prepared for the Great Feast of Christmas. I will be available before Christmas—please look at the schedule above. See this edifying [*Encyclical on Confession and Communion*](#) from the Holy Synod. —*Fr. Lawrence*

ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



December 22, 2024

Sunday before Nativity



- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone One:
When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ; glory to Thy kingdom; glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.
- TROPARION OF THE HOLY 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.
- TROPARION OF THE PRE-FEAST, Tone Four:
Make ready, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, for the tree of life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the divine fruit: If we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

- KONTAKION OF THE FOREFEAST, Tone Three – *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

- Friday, Dec. 20: 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM, Confessions
5 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Prefeast Vespers
- Saturday, Dec. 21: 3:30 PM, Catechism—*On the Church*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Dec. 22: 9 AM, Baptism of Ina DeCarlo
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
No Church School
11:45 AM, Agape Meal
12:45 PM, Prefeast Vespers
- Monday, Dec. 23: 8 AM, Matins
5 PM, Confessions
6 PM, Royal Hours for Christmas
- Tuesday, Dec. 24: 11:30 AM, Vespereal Liturgy
6 PM, Festal Matins for Christmas
- Wednesday, Dec. 25: 9:30 AM, Christmas Day Festal Liturgy
- Thursday, Dec. 26: 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for the *Feast of the Synaxis of the Theotokos*, Protection Church

Epistle ~ [Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40](#)

Gospel ~ [Matthew 1:1-25](#)

Congratulations and Many Years to Catie and Dan on the baptism of their daughter Ina this Sunday at 9 AM (named after the 5th century St. Ina of Wales) All are welcome to attend and pray. We also congratulate Ina's sponsors Andrew Mikrikov and Larisa Basch.

Once again, this Sunday, there will be another opportunity for you to make an offering for the flowers, wreaths and poinsettias which we purchase

to beautify our church during this festal season. Please consider staying after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday to help begin the process of decorating the Church with the seasonal greens and poinsettias. We will hang wreaths and garlands, plants will be put into brass pots with moss, mini-lights will go on the small Christmas trees, ribbons and bows attached. Work will begin immediately after the Liturgy. Thank you all for your support, both financial and physical.—*Denise Anna Pellizzer*

Be prepared to be amazed: Anton and his assistant Andrei are busy painting the arches and the pendentives under the dome and moving along quickly. The scaffolding is involved and takes up a significant amount of space, so, also be prepared for our normal “flow” to be disrupted, temporarily. You might feel a bit discombobulated during the next four weeks, I know I do. However, it's also thrilling to see a major piece of church art—two of the last four of the large icons—being completed in our beautiful cathedral. Anton is planning to paint two of the four evangelists during his time here, God willing, as his assistant Andrei paints the decorative patterns on the arches.

Our annual Christmas Play, directed by Carmen Anderson this year, took place on Sunday, December 15. We began with the *Kontakion of St. Romanos* (the *Kontakion* tells the Christmas story in a 24 stanza poem/hymn, composed in the 6th century). Dinner was served for all (about 100 people came), and then the children performed a marvelous Christmas Play. Congrats to all who participated, and thank you!

As we approach the Feast of the Nativity of Christ—Christmas Day—the Church invites us to participate in the three Prefestal Vespers, Monday's 8 AM Matins and 6 PM Royal Hours, the Vespereal-Liturgy on Christmas Eve morning, the Festal and jubilant Matins on Christmas Eve and the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day. The Scripture readings and the profoundly beautiful and theologically rich hymns appointed for these services impart to the faithful who are present a great treasure of understanding of what Christmas is all about. We become participants, joining with the angels, the shepherds and the magi. Come, and be illumined.

*Let us celebrate, O ye people, the forefeast of the Nativity of Christ,
let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlehem
and with our spiritual eyes let us see the Virgin on her journey to the cave,
there to give birth to our God, the Lord of all.*