

Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church



American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

903 Ann Street

Homestead, PA 15120

Rectory Office Phone: (412) 461-3264

Church Office & Auditorium: (412) 461-9437

Web Site: www.stnichomestead.org

E-mail Address: stnic@stnichomestead.org

E-mail Address: frmzak@gmail.com

Pastor – Very Rev. R. Michael Zak, Cell phone:(412)-804-8865

Deacons: Fr. Deacons Artemius Stienstra & Dr. Marc Wisnosky

Sub- Deacon: Andrew Halapin, Jr.

Cantor/Choir Director: Danielle Bartko

Assistant Cantors – Donald Bodnar Jr. & Michele Tomko

Parish Council President: Tom Pingor

Vol. 6; No. 1

Sunday, January 7, 2018

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Divine Liturgy: 9:00 A.M.

Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Tropar & Kondak: Blue Book: 132-135 / Red Book: 149-154

Nativity Candle offered in memory of +Edward & +Dolores Pingor, and +Wendy Pingor, offered by the Family.

Altar Candles' Sponsor: In memory of +Ann Timko, and +Harris Family, offered by the Family.

Birthday prayers intoned for Elizabeth Fucsko, who is 2 yrs. old today, offered by the Family.

Begin Fast Free Period – Nativity Social in the parish hall after the Liturgy. Carolers of St. Nicholas Church will visit the homes of the faithful today, upon request.

MONDAY, JAN. 8... 9:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy on the Synaxis of the Most Holy Mother of God.

TUESDAY, JAN. 9... 9:30 A.M. Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Proto-martyr and Archdeacon Stephen.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 10... 9:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy for the repose of the soul of God's departed servant, +Michael Sukaly, offered by +George Sukal and +Mildred.

THURSDAY, JAN. 11... 9:00 A.M. Divine Liturgy for the repose of the souls of God's departed servants, +Frank & +Mary Kolesar.

SATURDAY, JAN. 13... 7:00 P.M. Great Vespers on the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord and Holy Day of St. Basil the Great, with the Blessing of Bread, Wheat, Wine & Oil.

Sunday, January 14, 2018

SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY AND FEASTDAYS OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD AND ST. BASIL THE GREAT

Service of the 3rd Hour: 8:20 A.M.

Liturgy of St. Basil the Great: 9:00 A.M.

Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12 (Feast) Resurrection Tone: 7 Gospel: Luke 2:20-21; 40-52 (Feast)
2 Timothy: 4:5-8 (Sunday before) Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday before)

Tropar & Kondak: Blue Book: 99, 140-142 / Red Book: 114, 160-162

Matthew 2:1-12

2:1 – Herod ruled Judea from 37-4 BC. He was a great builder but a cruel leader. St. Luke mentions Herod to pinpoint the historical date of the birth of Jesus Christ. An ancient prophecy of Jacob indicated the Messiah would come when a king ruled who was not from the tribe of

Judah (Gen. 49:10). As Herod was a non-Jew calling himself **the king of Judea**, the coming of Christ was surely at hand. In preparation for Christ's coming, God had silenced the prophets for many years, and also permitted an illegitimate usurper to occupy the position of king of Judea.

2:2 – The **star** proclaims the extraordinary birth of Christ. To ancient pagans, a star signified a god, a deified king. Christ being born under this star fulfills the prophecy in Psalm 109:3 and shows all of creation participating in the Incarnation.

2:4 – Herod had to summon the Jewish leaders because he knew little about the Jewish Messiah and he feared losing his throne to this newborn King. The **chief priests** were the political and religious leaders of the Jews, and the **scribes** were high cabinet officers. They knew where the Messiah was to be born, but in spite of all the signs being in place, they had no idea that He had come.

2:11 – **Into the house:** Whereas the Jewish shepherds worshiped the Savior in the cave on the day He was born (Luke 2:8-20), the Gentile magi came to worship Him some time later. By then, Joseph and Mary had found a house in which to dwell. This indicates that Christ first came to the Jews and then afterward was worshiped by the Gentiles. The significance of the Magi's **gifts** is revealed in hymns sung at Compline of the Nativity: "**Gold** is for the King of ages. **Frankincense** is for the God of all. **Myrrh** is offered to the Immortal One, who shall be three days dead."

RECTORY OFFICE HOURS are 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Monday thru Friday.

EMERGENCY SICK CALLS can be made anytime. Please notify your Pastor when someone is taken to the hospital; Sacred Scriptures remind us to call the presbyter to anoint the sick.

MARRIAGES are celebrated on Saturdays and Sundays. Consult the Pastor at least 6 months in advance and before wedding reception plans have been made. Marriages cannot be celebrated during Lent or Advent, or on Fridays.

BAPTISMS are scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays at 11 A.M. Two God-parents are required; at least one of whom must be an Orthodox Christian by Faith, and the other a practicing Christian. An infant's first or middle name must be a saint's name.

CHURCH FUNERALS are provided for parishioners who are current in their spiritual and financial obligations to the Parish. Otherwise, burial is from the funeral home. The Church does not permit cremation.

FOLLOW OUR DIOCESE ON-LINE! Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org> Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acroddioocese> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acrodnews> You Tube: <https://youtube.com/acroddioocese>

THE CHRISTMAS KONTAKION

The services of the Orthodox Church are an inexhaustible source of delight for those who come to them with attention. The deeper we delve into them, the more they fill us with joy by their beauty. The highest theology, the deepest mysteries of our faith are set before us in a feast of poetic imagery. Often we find that in one verse of a few lines a mystery is revealed which we could explore for page after page without ever coming to the end of it. This is especially true of the services for Christmas – a great many of the verses for this feast contain, in a few words, the entire divine plan for our salvation. The Kontakion, "Today the Virgin..." is one such verse, brief but full of meaning

Today

The Kontakion begins, as do so many of the verses for this and other Great Feasts, in the present moment, with the word "Today." On the worldly, "rational" level, this is absurd. But this precisely what the Kontakion is telling us: we are not merely remembering and commemorating an event which took place at a particular moment in time and then was finished. Rather, we are allowing ourselves to be touched by something that occurred in history but transcends history, breaking the bonds of time and space to affect all creation, from the beginning of time to its end, from end to end of the universe. Today the Virgin gives birth – and her Child is present with us today, this hour, this very minute, to impart Himself to us. Today the Virgin gives birth – and the One born of her desires also to be born in our hearts, today.

the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,

"The Virgin gives birth..." We are so used to referring to the virgin birth that we can easily lose sight of what a wonder it is. Truly, a new thing is being accomplished in this birth from a virgin, for this birth brings about the renewal of the human race. The renewal of our human race, that is, and not the beginning of some other race: our affirmation that Christ is born of a virgin is at the same time an affirmation that He is born of a human mother, from whom He takes upon Himself our human nature. It is our human nature which was fallen, and so, it is our nature which He takes to Himself, to heal it and raise it up. Thus, we see that it is important for us not to be too carnal in our understanding of the virginity of Mary: she was not merely a virgin in fleshly terms, but, more importantly, she was a virgin inwardly – her whole purity and her total self-abandonment to God is "let it be to me according

to Your word" (Luke 2:38); she was united to Him to such an extent that she was able to give her humanity to Him.

That a virgin should give birth is a mystery; yet more of a mystery is the One to Whom she gives birth. The mind cannot grasp the extent of the humility and love of Jesus Christ, "Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7). This is not to be discussed or analyzed, but to be adorned in silence.

and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One!

It is not humankind alone, however, which suffers from the Fall, but the "whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now," for "the creation was subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:22). It is fitting, therefore, for the earth itself to offer a cave to welcome the One by Whom "the creation itself will be set free from the bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:21). And not only to offer a part of itself, but to rejoice together with the human race at the coming of its Liberator: "The whole creation leaps with joy, for the Savior and Lord is born in Bethlehem" (Litiya, Nativity Vigil).

The earth offers a cave, just as we, the human race, offer a Virgin Mother (verse of "Lord, I Call", Vigil for the Nativity). And yet, in each case, the humble offering of the creature is far surpassed by the boundless love and humility of the Creator. For just as the Creator and Master of time, consents to be born, grow and live under the dictates of time, so the Unapproachable One, the One who cannot be touched, grasped or contained, consents to dwell in the womb of the Virgin, to take up His abode in the narrow cave and to be laid to rest in the poverty of the manger.

Angels with shepherds glorify Him!

"Today God has come upon earth, and man gone up to heaven" (Litiya, Vigil for the Nativity). Truly, the birth of God has raised humankind up to heaven and united us in one choir with the angels. As the shepherds, who were among the lowest of their society, were privileged to join with the angels glorifying God, so we, rich or poor, esteemed or despised, can begin to live the heavenly life here and now. For "the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21), as Jesus said, and no outward circumstance can prevent us from turning to God in our hearts. If we open our hearts to the love of God and our neighbor, then as our ability to love grows, we will begin to taste the heavenly Kingdom in this life. But if we do not take our first steps in love here, we will not be able to experience love in the life to come, and hell will begin for us on earth.

The wise men journey with the star,

The wise men were almost certainly Persians, and, therefore, Zoroastrians, "those who worshipped the stars" (Troparion of the Nativity). But God, in His love for those who dwelt in spiritual darkness, drew them to Himself by means of a sign which they could understand – a star: "Those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee the Sun of Righteousness (Tropar of the Nativity). The creation, especially that which they saw as the holiest and best in creation, became for them a herald of the Creator. Likewise, for us, that which is beautiful and desirable to us should point beyond itself to the One Who is the Source of all beauty and the True Object of all our desire.

since for our sake the eternal God is born as a little Child!

This last line sums up the meaning of the entire Kondak. For our sake, the Son of God, Who is God in very truth, emptied Himself and became, not just a human being, but a newborn infant. He grew to adulthood, He knew all our struggles, all our suffering, and took it all upon Himself. Out of love for us, He took to Himself our fallen human nature, lifting it up like a lost and broken sheep which He place upon His shoulders and carried back to the Father. For our sake, God poured Himself out in love for us; let us open our hearts to His superabundant love that we also may be filled to overflowing with love.

WE ARE BLESSED BY YOUR PRESENCE! Our joy at the celebration of Christ's Nativity is further enhanced by the presence of visitors, guests and friends of St. Nicholas Church. We pray that your participation in the Divine Liturgy has embellished your spirituality, cognizant of the tremendous love that God has for all humanity. Please join us downstairs after services for a Nativity social and greet all worshipers with the Nativity announcement: **CHRIST IS BORN!** And the reply: **GLORIFY HIM!**

THERE IS NO FASTING IN THE LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH, THRU JAN. 17! Because of the happiness that the birth of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ instills within us, we do not abstain from eating any food that God has provided for us. Dine in moderation, however, giving glory to God in the highest for this "Inexpressible Gift of Salvation."

THANKS TO ALL PARISHIONERS FOR THEIR PLEASING STEWARDSHIP TO THE CHURCH AT CHRISTMAS! Offering our Time, Talents and Treasures to the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas is a priority for every member of the "Body of Christ." Gregory the Theologian writes, "You will never overcome God's generosity, even if you give away all that you have... And however much you bring to Him, always more remains. Nor will you give anything that is your own; for all things flow from God."

SIGN YOUR NAME TO THE "SECOND HOLY NIGHT SUPPER" LISTING IN THE AUDITORIUM! We encourage all members of St. Nicholas to gather as a church family for the strict fast meal on the Eve of Theophany (Jan. 18) at 5:00 P.M. in the parish hall. Decide what Lenten dish of food or beverage that you'll be offering for this "Holy Night Supper," prior to the Vigil of Theophany service, when the Great Blessing of Waters shall take place and the Sanctification of the entire interior of the church proper. Please

write your name and the Lenten food dish or beverage that you will be sharing with the "Body of Christ" (parishioners of St. Nicholas of Homestead, PA).

[Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church](#)