



THE PROPHET

A Monthly Publication of

St. John The Baptist Orthodox Church

1240 Broadbridge Avenue, Stratford, CT 06615

Vol. 1. No. 3 - December 2011

**CHRIST
IS IN
OUR
MIDST !**



**HE IS
AND
EVER
SHALL BE!**

**Feast of The Entrance of the Theotokos Into The Temple
November 21/December 4**

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The Prophet

The Official Monthly Publication of
The Orthodox Greek Catholic Church
of Saint John the Baptist

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Divine Services

Vespers: Sat 5:00 pm Eve of Feasts: 7:00 pm
Divine Liturgy Sunday & Week Day 9:00 am
Services of Intercession as Announced
Coffee Hour Fellowship Sundays 10:30 am
Church School Sundays: 10:45 am

Parish Ministries Coordinators

Church School Coordinator: Pani Carol Paproski

Junior ACRY Youth Group: Timothy Paproski

Outreach Coordinators

Community & Soup Kitchen	Mary Householder/ Eve Nucifora
Bereavement	Jean Lomme
Young Families	Michelle Mihaly
The Sick /Shut-ins	M Allis/E. Nucifora

Financial Investment	William Bilcheck William Booth, Jr. Thomas Decerbo Matthew Mihaly Orestes Mihaly
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Property Maintenance/ Improvements	Thomas Decerbo Frank Meyernick
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Scholarship	Eve Nucifora Helen Guman
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Database Coordinator:	Christine Le Clerc
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Webmaster:	Michael Decerbo
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Father Peter's Message



'Make ready, O Bethlehem:
let the manger be prepared,
let the cave show its
welcome. The truth has
come, the shadow has
passed away...'
(Royal Hours of Christmas)

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

With the dawning of the month of December, we begin our preparation for the most significant event in the history of the Universe, the Nativity in the Flesh of Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The world around us encourages us to prepare by increasing our activity. The Church has a different plan for us, to find true joy and peace, by practicing moderation in eating, talking, and needless activity.

The Church asks us during this time to take time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas, on what our Lord Jesus Christ truly means to us. We are called to lift our eyes up towards heaven in increased prayer and meditation, and at the same time become more aware of the needs of those around us.

The Church encourages us to avoid the excesses that so many find themselves involved in during this time, endless preparations for the merriest little Christmas, the purchasing of far too many gifts, and the excesses of the over the top office Christmas Party. When we follow the teachings of the Church and fast from excess, and give of our hearts to the less fortunate, the sick, the lonely and the troubled we find true joy and peace.

As your spiritual father, I encourage you to dare to be different and enjoy a peaceful month, which is the true message of the new born Savior the Prince of Peace.

With Love in Christ,

Very Rev Peter Paproski

Life Passages

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Event</u>
Dec 2	Sue Harrison	Birthday
Dec 3	Mary Nichols	Birthday
Dec 7	Brendan Bilcheck	Birthday
Dec 9	John Mihaly	Birthday
Dec 12	Ryan Pierce	Birthday
Dec 13	Louis Gregory	Birthday
Dec 14	Amy Booth	Birthday
Dec 15	Hailey Meyernick, Ken Lomme, Jr.	Birthday
Dec 21	Nicole Sutyak	Birthday
Dec 23	William Booth, Sr.	Birthday
Dec 25	Maribel Best	Birthday
Dec 27	Faith Stirna	Birthday
Dec 29	Bryan Papillo	Birthday
Dec 30	Jeff Stokely	Birthday

St John's Stewards: Doing the Work of the Church

COFFEE HOUR

<u>Date</u>	<u>Host</u>
12/4	Ivers
12/11	Lomme/Mihaly
12/18	OK Mihaly
12/25	Pierce
1/01	Porter
1/08	Ryan/Lotufu

CHURCH READING

<u>Date</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Epistle</u>
12/4	Daniel	Cantors
12/11	Pani Carol	Bill Bilcheck
12/18	Brendan	Cantors
12/25	Brett	Daniel
1/01	Daniel	Cantors
1/08	Pani Carol	Bill Bilcheck

CHURCH CLEANING

<u>Date</u>	<u>Cleaner</u>
11/28-12/10	Harrison
12/12-12/24	Pierce
12/26-1/7	Harrison
1/9-1/21	Harrison
1/23-2/4	Bilcheck
2/6-2/18	Harrison

SPONSOR A CLEANING OF THE CHURCH

Realizing that many parishioners either are not physically able or do not have the time to help clean the Church, the parish council has found someone who is willing to perform a routine cleaning of the Church for \$25.00. We are now soliciting sponsorships from our parishioners who wish to assist with the cleaning of the Church, but are not able to join the cleaning roster. You may offer a single cleaning sponsorship of \$25.00 or multiple cleaning sponsorships. At the present time, our current volunteers are assigned to 4 cleaning sessions per year. With your sponsoring of one or more cleaning sessions, you will lighten the load of the few parishioners who are left on the church cleaning list. If you are interested in doing so, please place your donation in a donation envelope clearly marked with your name and the amount, indicating it is a Cleaning Sponsorship and place it in the metal collection box. You may also mail it to the Church. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

CHRISTMAS PASTRY ROLL SALE

Workshops

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Sat Dec 3	9:00 am
Sat Dec 10 th	8:00 am
Wed Dec 14 th	9:00 am

BAKERS NEEDED FOR PASTRY SALE

Bakers are needed to assist making nut, poppy, prune and apricot filled rolls for our Christmas Pastry Roll Sale. Please see Pani Carol if you can help. Thank You!

Parish Council Updates

- ❖ Zoning Application for Church Parking Lot was submitted to Planning and Zoning. Went to public hearing on November 22, 2011
- ❖ Exterior of Church was power washed. You never realize how dirty things are until you see how it looks “after” the cleaning.
- ❖ New Church Sign: With the help of our good neighbor and friend Rocky Delorenzo, Geoff Kochiss repaired and repainted the sign frame and installed the new sign. He also created a beautiful new cross to replace the other weathered cross on the sign.
- ❖ The leaves were raked and removed from the grounds the weekend following Thanksgiving.
- ❖ Charitable Outreach for Christmas: we will be helping families that we have personal knowledge of that are in need rather than going through the local social services agency. Details of the families needs will be made available to the parishioners in the near future.

Church School Updates

The 2011-2012 Church School Year continues with diligent efforts of Church School Teachers Amy Booth (Kindergarten-First Grade), Eve Nucifora (Grades 2-4), Pani Carol (Grades 5-8) and Fr. Peter (Teens/Senior High School).

With Thanksgiving upon us, Amy Booth's Class has been learning about gratitude and sharing the blessings that God has given us, as demonstrated in the story of the boy who shared his 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish to feed an entire crowd. They continue to practice how to make the sign of the cross and learn the appropriate seasonal greetings in Church.

The students in Eve Nucifora's class have continued their study of the Holy Mysteries of the Church and in particular Holy Chrismation. They are learning about the significance of names and are doing research on their patron saints. They are also learning the Symbol of Faith, or the Creed, which states all that we believe as Orthodox Christians. Eve reports her students are a pleasure to teach.

Pani Carol's students has been learning about how we are all called to be good stewards of the time, talents and treasures of God, and that rather than giving the leftovers to the Church we are called to give the first and best. They continued their study of Church history and in particular the time of persecution in the early Church where the Apostles were arrested for proclaiming the Gospel. They learned about the growth in the early Christian community, the selection of deacons to assist the bishops and the persecution of St. Stephen the first martyr. They also learned about the miraculous conversion of Saul the persecutor of Christians into St. Paul the Apostle.

Parents are kindly asked to reinforce at home what their children have learned in class and go over any lessons they may have missed due to illness or other absences. This way, our teachers will be able to cover the material that is dictated by our diocesan church school curriculum. If parents would like to purchase an additional copy of their child's textbook to keep at home, to facilitate the completion of any missed work, please contact Pani Carol.

As a reminder, those children who have already made their first Confession should confess their sins on a regular basis. To this end, we are encouraging them to do so on the First Sunday of the Month. Those who are able to come to Confession the evening before at the conclusion of Vespers are encouraged to do so. Confessions will always be available before or after any Sunday/Weekday Liturgy or Vespers Service or at any other time by mutual arrangement

Youth Updates

The Stratford Chapter of the Jr. ACRY met on Sunday November 20th to make pies and cookies for the Thanksgiving Eve Lord's Kitchen meal in Stratford. Over 14 dozen cookies and 16 pies were made by the group of 15 youth from our church and St. John's on Silver Lane. The chapter would like to thank all who helped out, and especially Pani Carol for organizing the baking session. In December, the Jr. ACRY plans to hold an activity following the annual Deanery Winter bowling event, and form a singing group to sing Christmas carols for the residents at a local nursing home. More details will be forthcoming.

The Jr. ACRY is the official youth group of our Diocese, and is a way to get involved in our church and community, and have fun with other youth from our area and around the Diocese. All youth ages 8-18 are invited and encouraged to join the Jr. ACRY in the new year. For more information on joining the Jr. ACRY, please contact Tim Paproski .

Pizza Youth nights will begin on Sat Dec 3. This is open to all Middle and High School Students. We will meet at a local restaurant and have an informal discussion on contemporary moral issues and items of general interest regarding the Orthodox Faith. Watch the weekly bulletin for more details.

News From Across The Diocese

- ❖ An Online Weekly Orthodox Scripture Class is offered on www.acrod.org on Saturday evenings at 5:00 pm. It is be taught by Fr. Ken Bachofsky, Professor of Scripture at Christ the Saviour Seminary. It will be on the Gospel of St. Matthew. You may view archived lectures on line, in high definition, by clicking on the bible study pictorial link on the home page of www.acrod.org.
- ❖ Work continues on the the addition to the Camp Director's residence at Camp Nazareth. The foundation is complete and the framing has begun. To view photos of construction progress go to www.acrod.org and click on the photo gallery icon on the home page.
- ❖ Very Rev. Protopresbyter Frank P. Miloro, Diocesan Chancellor represented our Diocese at a retirement reception held in honor of His Eminence, Metropolitan Maximos of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh on Saturday November 5, 2011. The reception took place at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Pittsburgh.
- ❖ Eternal Memory: + Helen Rogel, mother of Pani Kathy Buczak, reposed in the Lord on Nov 14.
- ❖ The Diocesan Stewardship Commission met at the Chancery on Wed Nov 9th. They discussed the educational programming conducted in the diocese over the past year and providing more specific information to Diocesan Parishes regarding how the stewardship model of proportional giving might be implemented on the parish level.
- ❖ During the week of November 14, 2011, Fr. Peter travelled to the Diocesan Cathedral in Johnstown, PA to oversee the upgrading of the present live service broadcast system with a new high definition video camera and recording system. The purpose of the upgrade is two-fold, to increase the quality of live broadcast s and enable the production of high quality video DVDs to be distributed to shut-ins and homebound as well as chronicle import events in diocesan life taking place at the Cathedral. The entire cost of this project was donated by the Biles-Rowland Family in memory of +Helen Rowland.

The Month In Review



On November 6 Samantha Booth participated in Salko Farm and Stable's 2011 Fall Schooling show in Southport, CT. She placed first in Children's Equitation Over Cross Rails and second in Children's Equitation Flat.

Congratulations Samantha!



The Annual Slavic Food Fest on Sat Nov 5 was a huge success. Many thanks to all who made it possible to feed our hungry patrons.



Ryan LeClerc recently finished the Fall Pop Warner football season. He was a member of the Stratford Redskins Jr. Midget Team. The Redskins finished the season with 4-4 record



The Stratford Junior ACRY made over 12 dozen cookies and 16 pies on Sunday Nov 20 to be served at the Thanksgiving Community Supper. What a great example these young folks are!



With the assistance of our neighbor Rocky Delorenzo, Geoff Kochiss installed our new parish sign last weekend. Great work gentlemen!

Parish Outreach & Community Service

COMMUNITY FEEDING PROGRAM UPDATE

We are responsible for providing supper once a month on Wednesday Evening at Christ Episcopal Church from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm and quarterly on Mondays at St. George Episcopal Church, Bpt

If you are able to work at a supper, or if you are able to make a salad or desert for a scheduled meal. please see Mary Householder or Eve Nucifora. Arrangements can be made to pick up your donation item if you would be unable to drop it off at the supper. If you would like to Sponsor a meal, a donation of \$100.00 would cover an entire meal.

SCHEDULE

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Location</u>
12/28	Christ Church, Stratford

FOOD FOR NEEDY

Our Food Drive for Sterling House is ongoing and their needs are especially crucial in this difficult economy. Child-friendly food items are needed. Among the items needed are hot and cold cereals, juices, pancake and waffle mixes, frozen breakfast foods, peanut butter, jelly, tuna fish, instant puddings, crackers, snack foods, canned soups and fruits, powdered drink mixes, boxed and canned potatoes and macaroni and cheese, as well as microwavable and single-serving meals. Now refrigerated items such as milk and eggs are also accepted.

Also: We need some basic items for a needy, mentally disabled person whom we directly help to tide him over until the beginning of each month. Here are items our friend can use:

Creamy Peanut Butter and Crackers, Vanilla Wafer cookies, 2 Liter Bottle of Regular Pepsi, Paper Towels, Shampoo, large bottle any brand, Folgers coffee. **NO MORE RAVIOLI'S PLEASE** Also gift cards from Stop and Shop would be helpful so that we may purchase perishable food items such as bread, milk, meat and other foods items that are needed.. If you can contribute any of these specific items, please leave these items in Father Peter's Office, not in the general food collection basket. Cash donations/gift cards should be put in an envelope marked clearly for needy food purchase and placed in the collection box on the candle desk. Thank You! *"For I was Hungry and You Fed Me"*

Christmas Outreach Initiative

This year we will be assisting two families that have been recommended to us by parishioners. We will be collecting gift cards for a family that lost all the contents of their home in a fire during the Nor'easter. A second family is in need of greater assistance, and due to confidentiality needs, Father Peter will be speaking directly to parishioners regarding their needs. Please give as generously as possible and know that in both cases you will be helping good people to get back on their feet after unfortunate life situations.

Visitation of Wonderworking Kursk Root Icon



On Wednesday Dec 14, 2011 the miraculous, wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God from Kursk, Russia will be present for veneration at the annual Pan-Orthodox Unction Service at St. George Albanian Orthodox Church in Trumbull at 7:00 pm. Please mark your calendar and plan on attending. It will be a once in a life-time opportunity.

St Nicholas Supper



Our Annual St. Nicholas Festal Celebration will take place on Saturday Dec 17, 2011.

Our celebration will begin with the Service of Great Vespers and Litya for the Feast at 4:00 pm.

A catered supper will begin following Vespers and will include a visit from St. Nicholas. All parents are kindly asked to bring a wrapped present to be distributed by St. Nicholas.

The cost of the dinner is \$10.00 per adult; children 5 and up: \$4.00; children under 5 free. There will be a reservation/donation sign-up sheet in the Church Hall. Reservations must be made by Dec 11, 2011.

Christmas Eve Holy Supper

On Fri January 6, 2012 at 6:00 pm, we will have our annual Christmas Eve Holy Supper in our Church Hall. All are welcome to attend and there is no cost. All participants are asked to bring a food item from the menu that will be posted in the Church Hall. Please mark your calendar, plan on attending and watch for more details! Christmas Eve Compline Service will follow the Holy Supper at 8:00 pm. The Matins Service of Christmas will be held as usual at 12 Midnight.

Choir Rehearsals For Christmas

To properly prepare for Christmas Liturgy choir rehearsals will be held after Church on Sunday Dec 18 and Jan 1. Additionally, it is the plan to have the choir sing the responses to liturgy as many Sundays during the month of December as possible. The goal would be to begin singing chorally from the Trisagion (Holy God) forward. This will require that all choir members arrive in Church at the beginning of Divine Liturgy to warm up by singing the Plain chant responses during the first part of Liturgy. Thank you for your attention to this matter and willingness to further develop the power and beauty of our choir.

News From The Women's Council Of Orthodox Churches

The Annual Pajama Drive is now taking place. Over the past five years, the council has donated 1000 pairs to the Bridgeport Board of Education for distribution to needy children. This year there has been a great shortage of donations. If you can help please bring a new pair of pajamas, in a plastic bag, with the size and "boy" or "girl" denoted to church and give to Eve Nucifora. They will be collecting them through March of 2012.

Coming Events

Sat Dec 3	Christmas Fair and Halushki Sale – St. John's Silver Lane
Sun Dec 11	Christmas Dinner Bingo – St. John's Silver Lane
Sat Dec 17	Pre-order Only Nut Roll and Raisin Bread Sale.
Sat Dec 17	St. Nicholas Supper
Thurs Dec 29	Deanery Youth Bowling - Nutmeg Lanes, Fairfield
Fri Jan 6 -	Christmas Eve Holy Supper

Looking for something fun to do during Christmas break from school?

**Come join the New England Deanery parishes for
Bowling and Pizza**



On:

Thursday, December 29th, 2011

At:

. Nutmeg Bowling Lanes in Fairfield, CT
Pizza Luncheon and Youth Activity to Follow
at St. John's Church, 600 Silver Lane, Stratford, CT

From:

10:00 a.m. to 2pm.

Cost:

\$10.00 per bowler

\$2.00 per adult who would like pizza for lunch

To sign up or for more information please contact one of the following people:

Holy Trinity Danbury - Fr. Luke Mihaly

St. John's Bridgeport - Christina Adzima

St. John's (Broadbridge Ave) Stratford - Fr. Peter Paproski

St. John's (Silver Lane) Stratford - Fr. Michael Macura

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NEW ENGLAND DEANERY BOWLING

I would like my child(ren) to participate in the New England Deanery bowling event at Nutmeg Bowling Lanes on Thursday, December 29th beginning at 10:00 a.m. Enclosed with this form is \$10.00 per child to cover the cost of bowling and pizza for lunch.

Children Names (and Ages):

Please note that children under 12 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian

*Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
presents*

Music on the Mount

*December 18, 2011
at Three o'clock pm
Wine & Cheese Reception to follow*



Norman Carcy, Piano • Ronald Gorevic, Viola • Eric Lewis, Violin • Roy Lewis, Violin • Stephen Stalker, Cello

The program planned for the afternoon will feature:
Slavic Orthodox Christmas Chorales transcribed for String Ensemble
String Quartet no. 5 by D. Shostakovich
String Quartet Op. 59, no. 3 (The Hero Quartet) for Count Rasoumowsky by Beethoven

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, 74 Joe's Hill Road, Danbury, CT 06811
for tickets please call (203) 797-8326 or visit our website www.holytrinitydanbury.org • General Admission Seating \$45

COMING EVENTS AT ST. JOHN'S SILVER LANE

HALUSHKI and CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE

**Saturday, December 3rd
10:00 am - 1:00 pm**

**St. John's Church Hall
600 Silver Lane, Stratford**

**Come visit us to pick up some delicious homemade
goodies and our famous halushki for the holidays!**

**St. John's Orthodox Church
600 Silver Lane - Stratford**

Annual Christmas Dinner and Bingo

Sunday, December 11th

**Roast Beef Dinner begins at 4:00 p.m.
Bingo follows at approximately 5:15 p.m.**



Admission for Dinner:

Adults - \$8.00 Children (under 12) - \$5.00

Admission for Bingo: \$1.00

**Please make reservations with
Carole Krochta (203.375.2621)
before December 4th**

Growing in the Orthodox Faith – Food For the Soul

The Nativity Fast: A Time of Preparation

Make ready, O Bethlehem: let the manger be prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The truth has come, the shadow has passed away...¹

The herald of the pending miracle begins. It is the Eve of the Nativity as these words are sung. The transformation of the world, the birth of God, is but hours away, and it is through such words that the faithful are called into attentiveness and anticipation. ***'Make ready, O Bethlehem!*** We can see the radiant lights of the feast just beyond the horizon, we can taste the sweetness of the miracle that took place beneath a star; and through the words sung around and within us in the Church, the great eve of the birth of God is made a reality in our present experience. We make ready, and we wait.

But this is not the first moment of preparation for the Feast. For 'forty days', with the usual adjustments to that length for Sabbaths and Sundays causing it to begin on 15 November,² the Church has been setting herself in readiness, drawing her attention to the mystery to come, waiting in expectation. She has made use of the great joy that will arrive on Christmas day as occasion to take up the task considered by so many as opposite to joy: fasting, with all its rigour, its harshness, its discomfort. These are the steps which, for Orthodox Christians throughout the world, lead to the radiant wonder of the Nativity of Christ.

Whence the spirit of this fast, which each year 'stands in the way' of our arrival at Christmas rejoicing? The question itself helps guide the way to an answer: the fast seems awkward because so often we see Christmas as joy alone and do not appreciate fully the deep and profound mystery that is at the heart of our rejoicing. 'Hark, the herald angels sing!' we are eager to recall, but quietly we forget the universal significance of the event that is the cause of their singing. It is not just that a babe is born: He who is without birth is born. He who created all is made a created child. He who holds the universe in the palm of His hand, is held in the hands of a tender mother.

Before Thy birth, O Lord, the angelic hosts looked with trembling on this mystery and were struck with wonder: for Thou who hast adorned the vault of heaven with stars hast been well pleased to be born as a babe; and Thou who holdest all the ends of the earth in the hollow of Thy hand art laid in a manger of dumb beasts. For by such a dispensation has Thy compassion been made known, O Christ, and Thy great mercy: glory to Thee.

(Sticheron of the Third Hour, Eve of the Nativity)

We do not tremble when we think of Christmas, we are not always struck with the wonder of the Nativity. Instead, we buy gifts and plan parties, catching a glimpse of the joy of the Feast, but without a heart immersed in its wonder. Thus the fast becomes that which we must 'get through' in order to reach that joyful day. When we arrive there, however, if this has been our attitude, we are caught askance by the hymns the Church feeds into our hearts. We find ourselves joined to a celebration of triumphal release from bondage, but we little understand what that bondage means. We sing songs of joy for deliverance, but we do not truly comprehend how we are enslaved. We find ourselves suddenly transported to the mountaintop, but without having climbed there from the valley far below, the scene we see is only another beautiful picture casually set before our eyes, and not the vision for which we have worked and struggled and longed with all our being. We may feel joy, perhaps even Christmas joy; but we will know, deep inside, that our joy is not like that which is exalted in the hymn:

(Continued on Page 13)

The Nativity Fast – A Time For Preparation – Continued From Page 12

Make glad, O ye righteous! Greatly rejoice, O ye heavens! Ye mountains, dance for joy! Christ is born; and like the cherubim the Virgin makes a throne, carrying at her bosom God the Word made flesh. Shepherds, glorify the newborn Child! Magi, offer the Master gifts! Angels, sing praises, saying: 'O Lord past understanding, glory to Thee!'(First sticheron of the Praises, Nativity Matins)

A Time of Preparation

The Fast of the Nativity is the Church's wise solace and aid to human infirmity. We are a forgetful people, but our forgetfulness is not unknown to God; and our hearts with all their misconceptions and weakened understandings are not unfamiliar to the Holy Spirit who guides and sustains this Church. We who fall far from God through the magnitude of our sin, are called nonetheless to be close to Him. We who run afar off are called to return. Through the fast that precedes the great Feast of the Incarnation -- which itself is the heart and substance of our calling -- the Church helps draw us into the full mystery of what that call entails.

Like Great Lent, the fast of the Nativity is a journey. *'Come, O ye faithful, and let us behold where Christ is born. Let us join the Magi, kings from the east, and follow the guiding star'*³ Let us 'join the Magi', let us 'follow' and 'behold'. On the fifteenth of November, the Church joins together in a journey toward that salvation first promised to Adam in God's curse laid upon the serpent (Gen 3.14-15). The One who will crush the head of the serpent, of sin and the devil and all that is counter to the life God offers, is Him to whom the star leads us. The fast of the Nativity is our journey into the new and marvellous life of the Holy Trinity, which is offered by God but which we must approach of our own volition. In this act, we are joined to the story of our fathers. The gift of a new land and great blessings was freely given by God to Abraham, but in order to obtain it, *'Abram went, as the Lord had told him'*(Gen 12.4).

A journey is, by its nature, naturally ascetic. Unless my life is already very humble, I cannot take the whole of my possessions on a journey. I cannot transport social and political ties along a journey's path. I can never be too reliant on the plans I have made for my journey: a control lying beyond the self must be admitted and accepted. This is the spirit to which the fast calls us.

A journey is, by its nature, an act of movement, of transportation, of growth. What is old is left behind, newness is perceived and embraced, growth of understanding takes place. And even if the journey comes to a close in the same physical location from which it began, that place is transformed *for us* by the journey through which we have re-approached it. The aid shelter on a street corner in London is no different after a journey to the Middle East; but after witnessing there first-hand the struggles and torments of poverty, of suffering, of sorrow, the meaning and importance of that small shelter is indeed different *for me*.

Here the importance of the fast. As the Nativity approaches, that great feast of cosmic significance and eternal, abounding joy for which heaven and earth together rejoice, the fast calls me to consider: do *I* rejoice? *Why* do I rejoice? The hymnography of the Church makes it clear that this is a feast for all the world, for all creation; and the fast calls me to take my place in that creation, to realise that, despite all my infinite unworthiness, Christmas is a miracle for my soul too.

Make ready, O Bethlehem: let the manger be prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The truth has come, the shadow has passed away; born of a Virgin, God has appeared to men, formed as we are and making godlike the garment He has put on. Therefore Adam is renewed with Eve, and they call out: 'Thy good pleasure has appeared on earth to save our kind.' (Continued on Page 14)

The Nativity Fast – A Time For Preparation – Continued From Page 13

Adam and Eve, all of humankind, are renewed and made alive in the Incarnation of God in Christ, who 'appeared on earth to save our kind'. Fallen flesh, so long bound to death, so long yearning in for growth and maturation into the fullness of life, is sewn into the garment of Christ and at last made fully alive. There is a pleasing old saying, with perhaps more than a touch of truth to it, that humankind drew its first full breath at the infant Christ's first cry.

We are called, then, to approach this great mystery as God's condescension into our own lives, personally and collectively. The Canon of Matins for the Nativity lays it out clearly: '*He establishes a path for us, whereby we may mount up to heaven.*'⁴ The Nativity is not only about God's coming down to us, but about our rising up to Him, just as sinful humanity was lifted up into the person of Christ in the Incarnation itself.

We are called to arise, then, during the fast that is the journey into this Feast. '*O blessed Lord who seest all, raise us up far above sin, and establish Thy singers firm and unshaken upon the foundation of the faith!*'⁵ The faithful take up this call through the abandonment of those things which bind, rather than free, in order that a focus on God as 'all in all' might become ever more real and central to daily life.

Meals are lessened and regimented, that a constant, lingering hunger may remind us of the great need we each have for spiritual food that goes beyond our daily bread. The number of Church services is gradually increased, that we might know whence comes that true food. Sweets and drink are set aside, that we might never feel content with the trivial and temporal joys of this world. Parties and social engagements are reduced, that we might realise that all is not so well with us as we often take it to be. Anything which holds the slightest power over us, whether cigarettes or television, travel or recreation, is minimized or -- better -- cast wholly aside, that we might bring ourselves to be possessed and governed only by God.

The fast is an ascetic time, designed by the Church to strip away common stumbling blocks into sin, to provide us with the means of self-perception that we lack in our typical indulgence, and to begin to grow the seeds of virtue. All these are necessary if we are ever to know even partially, or appreciate even menially, the 'depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God'.⁶ We must take up the task of our own purification, gifted by God and achieved only through His grace, that we might approach Him on Christmas Day as did the Magi and the shepherds in Bethlehem:

Come, O ye faithful, inspired by God let us arise and behold the divine condescension from on high that is made manifest to us in Bethlehem. Cleansing our minds, let us offer through our lives virtues instead of myrrh, preparing with faith our entry into the feast of the Nativity, storing up treasure in our souls and crying: Glory in the highest to God in Trinity, whose good pleasure is now revealed to men, that in His love for mankind He may set Adam free from the ancestral curse.

(Sticheron of the Sixth Hour, Christmas Eve)

True Joy in the Mystery of the Nativity

The Church journeys toward the birth of Christ God, steered by the ship that is the Nativity fast. She does so with the knowledge that unless she struggles up the mountain that is desperately too steep for her to climb, she will never know the breadth of the gift that is the mountain's levelling by the hand of God. Resurrection unto life is the ultimate gift of the Incarnation, but unless a man understands that he is dead, he will never know the meaning of resurrection.

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The Nativity Fast – A Time For Preparation – Continued From Page 14

The fast is a holy and blessed tool that brings us closer to such self awareness. It reveals to us who we are, perhaps more importantly who we are not, and makes us more consciously aware of that for which we stand in need. Then and only then, with eyes opened -- even only partially -- by the ascetic endeavour, we will truly know the life-giving light of the Nativity of Christ. We will hear with awe the proclamation of the hymn at vespers, taking the mystery presented therein as united directly to us:

Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord as we tell of this present mystery. The middle wall of partition has been destroyed; the flaming sword turns back, the cherubim withdraw from the tree of life, and I partake of the delight of Paradise from which I was cast out through disobedience. For the express Image of the Father, the Imprint of His eternity, takes the form of a servant, and without undergoing change He comes forth from a Mother who knew not wedlock. For what He was, He has remained, true God: and what He was not, He has taken upon himself, becoming man through love for mankind. Unto Him let us cry aloud: God born of a Virgin, have mercy upon us!

(Sticheron of Vespers of the Nativity)

We will never fully comprehend this ineffable mystery; some knowledge is properly God's alone. But by His grace through the ascetic effort, we will come to understand -- perhaps, most of us, only to the slightest degree -- how this mystery is our own mystery, how His life is our own life, and how the salvation of Christmas Day is, indeed, our own salvation. And with this realisation, joy: joy far greater than a mere entrance into the temple on Christmas Day could ever bring us. This is the joy of the age-old journey of man, our own journey, come to its fulfilment in the awe-inspiring mystery of God Himself become a man. With this joy in our hearts, we shall embrace the hymnographer's words as our own:

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word. Hearing this, be of good cheer, O inhabited earth, and with the angels and the shepherds glorify Him whose will it was to be made manifest a young Child, the pre-eternal God.

(Kontakion of the Forefeast)

1. Sticheron at the Royal Hours, by St Sophronius of Jerusalem.
2. According to the Church Calendar; 28th November on the civil calendar.
3. Sessional Hymn of the Nativity Matins.
4. Irmos of Canticle Two, from the Iambic (second) Canon of the Nativity Matins.
5. Irmos of Canticle Three, Iambic Canon of Nativity Matins.
6. Cf. Romans 11.33; found in the sticheron in tone four from the Sixth Hour of Christmas Eve.

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS THAT SUPPORT OUR PARISH AND DIOCESE

1. Shopping on line at Amazon.com. The Church receives 4% of all your purchases on Amazon.com if you enter from the following page on our parish website:
<http://www.stjohnthebaptist.stratford.ct.us/churchshopping.html> The Church receives 6% on any Amazon.com gift card. You can earn the Church 10% if you purchase a gift card and then use it to make your purchase.
2. Lots of Luck Calendars - \$25.00. You receive a three digit number and whenever that number comes up in the PA Daily Lottery drawing, you win the amount listed on the lots of luck Calendar for that particular day. We have had numerous winners in the parish. It benefits the diocesan mission parish fund. See Father Peter to purchase.

The Orthodox Church Teachings On Contemporary Moral Issues

Questions on Sexual Issues

The teaching of the Orthodox Church on sexual questions is strongly determined by the Church's attitude toward marriage and the family. A representative Orthodox statement which shows the centrality and importance of the family in Orthodox thinking is found in an encyclical letter by former Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, issued on the occasion of National Family Week in 1972. He stated: "Home and family life is the bedrock of our Orthodox life-style. The spirit that binds us together as a people finds its deepest roots in the home where the tenderest values of human existence, love, compassion, forbearance and mutual helpfulness thrive in abundance."

Over the centuries and throughout most cultures and civilizations the family has been proven to be the unifying unit of society. Today we find the family under attack both from within and from without. Outside forces would have us believe that the family as we have come to know and cherish it is no longer necessary. From within, the erosion of spiritual values and emphasis upon materialism has created for many families confusion and uncertainty where commitment and dedication once reigned. Marriage is holy. The home is sacred. Birth is a miracle. In these we find the very meaning of life itself.

One aspect of the "commitment and dedication" of the holy state of marriage and family is cast in terms of sexual behavior. Most moral questions relating to sex are generally best understood in the light of this high regard for marriage and the family. Some of the questions on sexual issues addressed by the Orthodox Church are the following:

1. The Orthodox Church remains faithful to the biblical and traditional norms regarding premarital sexual relations between men and women. The only appropriate and morally fitting place for the exercise of sexual relations, according to the teachings of the Church, is marriage. The moral teaching of the Church on this matter has been unchanging since its foundation. In sum, the sanctity of marriage is the cornerstone of sexual morality. The whole range of sexual activity outside marriage - fornication, adultery and homosexuality - are thus seen as not fitting and appropriate to the Christian way of life. Like the teaching on fornication, the teachings of the Church on these and similar issues have remained constant. Expressed in Scripture, the continuing Tradition of the Church, the writings of the Church Fathers, the Ecumenical Councils and the canons, these views have been restated by theologians, hierarchs and local Orthodox churches in our own day. For example, the Decalogue prohibits adultery. In the tradition of the Church, the second-century Epistle of Barnabas commands "Thou shalt not be an adulterer, nor a corrupter, nor be like to them that are such." The fourth-century Church Father St. Basil wrote against the practice (Canons 35 and 77); and the Quinisext Council (A.D. 691) repeated the same condemnation in its eighty-seventh canon. All major Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States have had occasion to repeat the condemnation of adultery.

2. Generally stated, fornication, adultery, abortion, homosexuality and any form of abusive sexual behavior are considered immoral and inappropriate forms of behavior in and of themselves, and also because they attack the institution of marriage and the family. Two representative statements, one on abortion and another on homosexuality, from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America follow. They are from the Twenty-Third Clergy-Laity Congress held in Philadelphia in 1976. The Orthodox Church has a definite, formal and intended attitude toward abortion. It condemns all procedures purporting to abort the embryo or fetus, whether by surgical or chemical means. The Orthodox Church brands abortion as murder; that is, as a premeditated termination of the life of a human being. The only time the Orthodox Church will reluctantly acquiesce to abortion is when the preponderance of medical opinion determines that unless the embryo or fetus

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The Orthodox Church's Teachings on Contemporary Moral Issues (Continued from Page 16)

is aborted, the mother will die. Decisions of the Supreme Court and State legislatures by which abortion, with or without restrictions, is allowed should be viewed by practicing Christians as an affront to their beliefs in the sanctity of life. The position of the Orthodox Church toward homosexuality has been expressed by synodicals, canons and patristic pronouncements beginning with the very first centuries of Orthodox ecclesiastical life. Thus, the Orthodox Church condemns unreservedly all expressions of personal sexual experience which prove contrary to the definite and unalterable function ascribed to sex by God's ordinance and expressed in man's experience as a law of nature. The Orthodox Church believes that homosexuality should be treated by religion as a sinful failure. In both cases, correction is called for. Homosexuals should be accorded the confidential medical and psychiatric facilities by which they can be helped to restore themselves to a self-respecting sexual identity that belongs to them by God's ordinance. In full confidentiality the Orthodox Church cares and provides pastorally for homosexuals in the belief that no sinner who has failed himself and God should be allowed to deteriorate morally and spiritually. Psychiatric reconciliation is bound to prove short-lived. Marriage is only conducted and recognized in the Orthodox Church as taking place between a man and a woman. Same-sex marriages are a contradiction in terms. The Orthodox Church does not allow for same-sex marriages.

The possible exception to the above affirmation of continuity of teaching is the view of the Orthodox Church on the issue of contraception. Because of the lack of a full understanding of the implications of the biology of reproduction, earlier writers tended to identify abortion with contraception. However, of late a new view has taken hold among Orthodox writers and thinkers on this topic, which permits the use of certain contraceptive practices within marriage for the purpose of spacing children, enhancing the expression of marital love, and protecting health.

AIDS Victims

The recent spread of the AIDS virus has provoked much concern throughout the world and for Orthodox Christians, as well. The Orthodox address this question on several levels. First, the Church always looks upon those who are ill with compassion, and prays for healing. We encourage the medical profession to continue seeking for the appropriate medications to heal this disease. But at the same time, we note that the major causes for the spread of this disease are behaviors which the Church has always taught are immoral and ought not to be practiced: homosexual behavior, promiscuity, and narcotic drugs (the use of contaminated needles). Love and caring for all persons provokes the Church to re-affirm its teaching. The best prevention against the AIDS virus is virtue. Some have raised the question of possible contamination through the Communion Spoon and the possible change of the method for administering Holy Communion. There have been other methods for the administration of the Sacrament in the Church, in the past. In principle, therefore, the method could change again. Nevertheless, several strong reasons would argue against it. Theologically, the Orthodox Church cannot accept that the Sacrament would be a source of illness, since it teaches that it is a "medicine of immortality." Further, not one single case of the transmission of any illness has been shown empirically as coming from participation in the Sacrament. In addition, scientific evidence points to another reason for this as well: it appears that saliva inhibits the transmission of all kinds of microbes, including the AIDS virus (Journal of the American Dental Association, May, 1988). Should the Church change its method of administering the sacrament, it should do so for its own reasons and not those provoked by unreasonable fear. This vast epidemic in our very midst is reason for alarm and pity for faithful believers. While Orthodoxy does condemn the activity of so many who are so afflicted, it does excite its faithful believers to pity and soulful concern for the victims. We must bear in mind that while we abhor the sin, we continue to love the sinner. In those circumstances where it is obvious, reconciliation with Christ must take place in the Sacraments only when remorse and repentance are present. In such cases, Christian burial is permitted.

Prayer Corner - Daily Scripture Readings

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 28, 2011

M.	2 Thes 1:1-10;	Luke 12:13-15,22-31;	Holy Martyr Gurias
T.	2 Thes 1:10-2:2	Luke 12:42-48;	Holy Apostle Matthew
W.	2 Thes 2:1-12 ;	Luke 12:48-59;	St. Gregory the Wonderworker
Th	2 Thes 2:13-3:5;	Luke 13:1-9;	Holy Martyrs Platon & Romanus
F.	2 Thes 3:6-18;	Luke 13:31-35;	Holy Prophet Obadiah
St	Galatians 1:3-10;	Luke 9:37-43 ;	St.. Gregory Decapolitis
S.	Ephesians 4:1-6; Heb 9:1-7;	Luke 10:25-37-42;11:27-28	Entrance of the Theotokos

WEEK OF DECEMBER 5, 2011

M.	1 Tim 1:107	Luke 14:12-15	Holy Apostle Philemon of the 70
T.	I Tim: 1:8-14;	Luke 14:25-35;	St. Amphilochius
W.	I Tim 1:18-20,2:8-15;	Luke 15:1-10;	Great Martyr Catherine
Th	I Tim 3:1-13;	Luke 16:1-9;	Hieromartyr Clement
F.	Tim 4:4-8,16;	Luke 16:15-18;17:1-4;	St. Alypius the Stylite
S.	Galatians 3:8-12;	Luke 9:57-62;	Great Martyr James of Persia
S	Ephesians. 5:9-19;	Luke 12:16-21;	St. Stephen the New

WEEK OF DECEMBER 12, 2011

M.	1Tim 5:1-10;	Luke17:20-25	Holy Martyr Paramon
T.	1Cor 4:9-16;	John1:35-51	Apostle Andrew the First-called
W.	1 Tim 5:22-6:11	Luke 18:15-17; 26-30	Holy Prophet Nahum
Th	1Tim 6:17-21;	Luke18:31-34	Holy Prophet Habakkuk
F	2Tim1:1-2,8-18,	Luke19:12-28	Holy Prophet Sophronias
S	Gal 3:23-29;	Mark5:24-34	Great Martyr Barbara
S.	Ephesians 6:10-17	Luke 13:10-17	St Sabbas the Sanctified

WEEK OF DECEMBER 19, 2011

M	Heb13:17-21	Luke 6:17-23;	Saint Nicholas
T.	2 Tim 3:16-4:4	Luke 19:45-48	St. Ambrose of Milan
W.	2 Timothy 4:9-22;	Luke 20:1-8;	Ven. Patapius of Thebes
Th	Titus 1:5-15;	Luke 20:9-18;	Conception of the Mother of God
F.	Titus 1:15-2:10;	Luke 20:19-26;	Holy Martyr Menas
St.	Ephesians 1:16-23;	Luke 12:32-40;	St Daniel the Stylite
S.	Colossians 3:4-11;	Luke14:16-24;	Sunday of the Holy Forefathers

WEEK OF DECEMBER 26, 2011

M.	Hebrews 3: 5-11, 17-19;	Luke 20:27-44;	St. Eustratius
T.	Hebrews 4:1-13;	Luke 21:12-19;	Holy Martyr Thyrsus
W.	Hebrews 5;11-6:8;	Luke 21:5-7,10-11,20-24;	Priest-Martyr Eleutherius
Th	Hebrews 7:1-6;	Luke 21:28-33;	Holy Prophet Haggai
F.	Hebrews 7:18-25	Luke 21:37-22:8	Holy Prophet Daniel
St.	Ephesians 2:11-13	Luke 13:18-29	Holy Martyr Sebastian
S.	Hebrews 11:9-40	Matthew 1:1-25;	Sunday Before the Nativity

Prayer Corner

Prayer List

Living Members of Parish Family And Friends

Protopresbyter Luke	Ronald (Vojtek)	Shirley Sedlock
Fr. John (Duranko)	Pani Patricia (Duranko)	Florence (Gachi)
Garry & Barbara (Nichols)	Richard (Kaschak)	Pearl (Nucifora)
Nicholas (Gachi)	Veronica (Kaschak)	Charles (Householder)
Audrey (Fatse)	Richard (Kaschak Jr)	Jayne (Kuchma)
Serge (Mihaly)	Lou (Gregory)	Marge (Gregory)
Serge Sr (Mihaly)	Michael (Banik)	Denise (Eve's Daughter)
Mary (Nichols)	Nina (Kuchma)	Esther (Johnson)
Joshua (Habansky)	Geoffrey	Roger (Vanhouten)
Priest Theodore	Ishmael	Child Diana
Sarah (Otwell)	Karl (Devan)	Protopresbyter Demetrios
Elsi (Lotufo)	Penny (Elsi's daughter)	Richard
Yuko (Friend of Eve)	Kennedy Family	Karen (Ivers)
Thomas (Ivers)	Rachel (friend of Karen)	John (Cybul)
Gregory (Cybul)	Infant Gia (Litzie)	Marge (Allis)
Protodeacon John(Youhas)	Joseph (Loposky)	Randy & Janice
Laura	Priest Robert (Teklinsky)	Greg & Kim
Priest James (Gleason)		

Departed Members Of Our Parish Family And Friends

Helen Rowland	+Metropolitan Nicholas	Helen Rogel
Shirley Meyernick	Ann Habansky	Pauline Patrick
Ignat & Elizabeth Gabany	John & Catherine Mesaros	Elsie Witiak
Donald Lotufo	Helen Sedlar	Michael Gadala
Elizabeth Straborny		

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant (name). Through the prayers of the Mother of God, deliver (him, her) from sickness and bitter pain. Heal (him, her) so that (he, she) may sing to You and always praise You for You alone love us.

A PRAYER FOR THE DEPARTED

O God of spirits and of all flesh, Who has conquered death and destroyed Satan, and Who has granted life to Your world; O Lord, rest the soul(s) of Your departed servant(s) [Name] in a serene, luxuriant and peaceful place where all pain and sorrow and lamentation are absent; as a gracious God Who loves mankind, forgive all transgressions committed by (him, her, them) by word or deed or thought, for there is no one who lives and does not sin; You alone are without sin, Your truth is truth in eternity and Your Word is Truth. For You, O Christ our God, are the resurrection, life and repose of Your departed servant(s) [Name], who (has, have) fallen asleep, and we give glory to You and Your eternal Father, and Your Most-Holy, Gracious and Life-Giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

LITURGICAL SERVICES & EVENTS

DECEMBER 2011

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				1	2	3 9:00 am Nut Roll Workshop 5 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm Teen Night
4 Entry of the Virgin Mary 9:00 am Liturgy Panach S Meyernick /P. Patrick/Ch School Ivers Coffee Hr.	5	6	7	8	9 10 am Liturgy Cambridge Manor Repose of J&C Mesaros	10 8:00 am Nut Roll Workshop 4pm Volpe/Decerbo Wedding
11 9:00am Liturgy Panachida M. Petrik Michael Gadala Church School/ Lomme Coffee Hour	12 Pierce Church Cleaning Begins	13 7:00 pm – Moleben to St. Nectarios 7:30 pm Parish Council Meeting	14 9:00 am Nut Roll Workshop 7:00 pm Pan- Orthodox Uncion Service St George Trumbull	15 9:00 am Liturgy Repose I & E Gabany	16	17 8:30 am Liturgy Rep H Sedlar 4 pm Vespers 5pm St. Nicholas Supper
18 9 am Liturgy Panachida Rep D. Lotufo/ OK Mihaly Coffee Hour Choir Rehearsal	19 St. Nicholas 9:00 am Liturgy	20	21 7:00 pm Moleben to the Theotokos Nurturer of Children	22 9:00 am Liturgy Repose John & Anna Mihaly	23	24
25 9:00 am Liturgy Ch School Panachida. C&C Boychew Pierce Coffee Hour	26 Harrison Church Cleaning Begins	27	28	29 10:00 am Deanery Bowling Outing/	30	31 5:00 pm Great Vespers With Prayers For The New Year