
NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAINTS PETER and PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

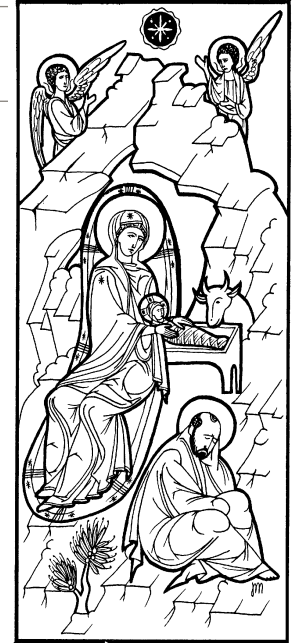
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DECEMBER 2024



SERVICE SCHEDULE *(but always check our calendar of events)*

- VESPERS — Saturday, 6:00pm
- DIVINE LITURGY — every Sunday, 10:00am
- GENERAL CONFESSION SERVICE — 1st Sunday of every month, 9:25am

WELCOME VISITORS

We hope you find your time here with us to be a true blessing from God—who knows you by name; who knows your heart; who knows your mind; and who wants to be in a spiritual relationship with you. We challenge ourselves and the world to love like Christ our Savior, as we pray joyfully, serve compassionately, and grow spiritually. If you are seriously considering a new place of worship or a relocation to our area, we would love to have you as a part of our church family. Get in touch with Father John with any questions you may have. Welcome to Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church—we look forward to seeing you again.

CONGRATULATIONS to TROY NEKTARIOS ROBERT BROWN, who was chrismated into the Orthodox Church on November 17, 2024. His sponsor is Caleb Henry. May his spiritual journey to Christ be fruitful as he embraces the Orthodox Faith. May God grant you many years and welcome to Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church!

NATIVITY FASTING PERIOD continues through and including December 24th. What does STRICT FAST mean in the Orthodox Church? No meat, no dairy products; but it also means bettering ourselves with our words and actions. What good is it to be that sincerest “strict faster,” if we continue to gossip about our neighbor, not care about giving to the poor, or not be kinder to all?

SMALL COMPLINE SERVICES will be held at 6:00pm EVERY WEDNESDAY throughout the Advent season. It’s a beautiful, prayerful service. Come and see!

ST. NICHOLAS will visit our church during Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, December 8th**. Thanks to a kind soul in our parish, all our parish children will receive gifts from St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. Bring your children and grandchildren to church. Bring your children and grandchildren to church EVERY SUNDAY!

NATIVITY PLAY — Sunday, December 8th

Our children will be putting on a short Christmas-themed play on December 8th right following lunch—first time in many years! We hope everyone will stay for our coffee hour luncheon and the play to show appreciation to our children for their eagerness in honoring Christ’s birth.

THANK YOU to those who came to help decorate our church and parish hall so beautifully for Christmas: Nadia Ryan, Matushka Nancy Hutnyan, Destin Balabasz, Heidi Bender, Antonio Jean, Aubriella Rodriguez. Great job!

A SINCERE THANK YOU to the following crew who volunteered their time for installing new LED lights and replacing the ceiling tiles in our parish hall, and for finishing up our “Brick Prayer Garden”. By them pitching in and helping with these projects, they saved the church a lot of money: Victor Gadzik, Wesley Mills, David DeVantier, Tim Harper, Troy Brown, Antonio Jean, Gavin Faulkner.

WE HAVE AN AMERICAN FLAG donated to our parish and we are seeking a donor/donors to help purchase the flag pole and base. Please see Father John if interested. We are the Orthodox Church in America, and it would be appropriate to have an American flag in our church.

FOR SALE in our Parish Hall:

Bracelets, necklaces, bookmarkers — made by our parishioner, Aubriella Rodriguez

Scarves, dish towels, scrub pads — made by Heidi Bender’s mother, Mrs. Irene Veronin

We thank Aubriella and Mrs. Veronin for their talents and generosity in helping our church. All proceeds go to our church for building repairs.

NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING—Sunday, December 22nd in the parish hall

INVITE SOMEONE TO CHURCH: Remind your relatives of the importance of attending services faithfully. Invite a neighbor or friend! It is always nice to bring someone along with you to Liturgy to see what our beautiful Orthodox Faith is about.

BURIAL PLOTS AVAILABLE TO BUY—Saints Peter and Paul Church owns burial plots in Riverdale Cemetery, Lewiston, New York. Cost is \$400 per plot. If interested in buying any, please contact Father John.

A DONATION BUTTON is on our church website peterandpauloca.org. Your donation can be made electronically via our website using either PayPal or a credit card/bank card.

FEASTS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH...

The Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos — December 9th

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, since St. Anna, the Ancestor of God, was barren, she and her husband Joachim remained without children until old age. Therefore, sorrowing over their childlessness, they besought God with a promise that, if He were to grant them the fruit of the womb, they would offer their offspring to Him as a gift. And God, hearkening to their supplication, informed them through an angel concerning the birth of the Virgin. And thus, through God’s promise, Anna conceived according to the laws of nature, and was deemed worthy to become the mother of the Mother of our Lord.

Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska and First Saint of America — December 13

Saint Herman (his name is a variant of Germanus) was born near Moscow in 1756. In his youth he became a monk, first at the St. Sergius Hermitage near St. Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland; while he dwelt there, the most holy Mother of God appeared to him, healing him of a grave sickness. Afterwards he entered Valaam Monastery on Valiant Island in Lake Ladoga; he often withdrew into the wilderness to pray for days at a time. In 1794, answering a call for missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Aleuts, he came to the New World with the first Orthodox mission to Alaska. He settled on Spruce Island, which he called New Valaam, and here he persevered, even in the face of many grievous afflictions mostly at the hands of his own countrymen in the loving service of God and of his neighbor. Besides his many toils for the sake of the Aleuts, he subdued his flesh with great asceticism, wearing chains, sleeping little, fasting and praying much. He brought many people to Christ by the example of his life, his teaching, and his kindness and sanctity, and was granted the grace of working miracles and of prophetic insight. Since he was not a priest, angels descended at Theophany to bless the waters in the bay; St. Herman used this holy water to heal the sick. Because of his unwearying missionary labors, which were crowned by God with the salvation of countless souls, he is called the Enlightener of the Aleuts, and has likewise been renowned as a wonderworker since his repose in 1837.

Sunday before the Nativity of Christ — December 22nd

On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eighteenth of this month, we celebrate all those who from ages past have been well-pleasing to God, beginning from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as the Evangelist Luke has recorded historically (Luke 3:23-38); we also commemorate the Prophets and Prophetesses, and especially the Prophet Daniel and the Holy Three Children.

Eve of the Nativity of Christ — December 24

As the fruit of David's seed, Mary was registered of old with the Elder Joseph in the little town of Bethlehem, when she conceived with a seedless and pure conception. Behold, the time was come that she should bear her Child, but no place was found within the inn for them; yet the cave proved a delightful palace for the pure Lady and Queen of all. For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforesaid.

Holy Night Supper _____

Orthodox Christians fast from meat and dairy for the forty days leading up to Christmas, which includes Christmas Eve. This is called the Nativity Fast, or Advent Fast. On the last day of the fast (Christmas Eve) a very special meal is prepared, called Holy Night Supper (Svyata Vecherya). Not all Orthodox had this traditional Christmas Eve meal, but most Slavic countries did. The meal typically has 12 meatless dishes, symbolizing the apostles. Some countries prepare 13 dishes, with the extra dish representing Christ.

The day of Christmas Eve is a strict fast day, with people who are able to do so, only drinking water throughout the day until the evening meal. Others do their best to avoid meat and dairy products. The strict fast helps us to remember the suffering and hardships of Mary as she travelled to Bethlehem.

Typically, the foods served include bread, honey, garlic, meatless cabbage rolls, mashed potatoes, cooked prunes, bobalki (baked dough balls) with poppyseed, mushrooms, pierogi, pea soup, borscht, and fish. But this varies by different countries' customs and traditions.

Come pray with us at Christmas Eve Complines/Matins at 5:00pm and join us for Holy Night Supper in our parish hall. Bring a side dish if you desire to—must be strict fast.

Who really was Saint Nicholas?? _____



Saint Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, of Greek descent, is well known as a great saint, pleasing to God. He is the patron saint of children, the poor and those in need of help. He was born in the city of Patara around 280 A.D. and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had vowed to dedicate him to God.

From his childhood Nicholas thrived on the study of Divine Scripture; by day he would not leave the church, and by night he prayed and read books, making himself a worthy dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Bishop Nicholas of Patara rejoiced at the spiritual success and deep piety of his nephew. He ordained him a reader, and then elevated Nicholas to the priesthood, making him his assistant and entrusting him to instruct his flock.

Constantly at work and vivacious in unceasing prayer, the priest Nicholas displayed great kind-heartedness towards the people and to the afflicted who came to him for help, and he distributed all his inheritance to the poor.

There was once a certain rich inhabitant of Patara, whom Saint Nicholas saved from great sin. The man had three grown daughters, and in desperation he planned to sell their bodies so they would have money for food. The saint, learning of the man's poverty and of his sad, wicked intention, secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money, the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. Saint Nicholas gave them enough gold for the other daughters, saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In his charitable works Saint Nicholas always strove to do this work secretly to conceal his good deeds.

How does Santa Claus fit into the picture?

Many stories have circled around on this subject. Basically, the creation of Santa Claus came about as a representation of Saint Nicholas of Myra. Waves of European immigrants brought Saint Nicholas' holiday tradition to America. By the end of the 18th century, Saint Nicholas was recognized by American culture. In December of 1773, it was reported that groups of Dutch families in New York City gathered to honor the anniversary of Nicholas' death. The name Santa Claus, was stated to evolve from Nicholas' Dutch nickname, *Sinter Klaas*, a shortened form of *Sint Nikolaas*, which is translated as the Dutch name for Saint Nicholas. Gift giving, a custom passed down from Saint Nicholas' generosity in helping others, has been a part of the Christmas tradition since the early 19th century.

In 1823 the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (also known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas") was first published, which influenced the image of Santa Claus. In 1863, cartoonist Thomas Nast began drawing annual cartoons for Harper's Weekly based on the poem. Nast's Santa was the basis for many Santa images to follow.



UPCOMING SERVICES & EVENTS at Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Saturday, December 7 6:00pm: VESPERS

Sunday, December 8 *Honoring St. Nicholas the Wonderworker*

9:30am: Reading of 3rd & 6th Hours

10:00am: DIVINE LITURGY of St. John Chrysostom

ST. NICHOLAS visits the children; NATIVITY PLAY after lunch in parish hall

2:00pm: Baptism of Anais Meza

Wednesday, December 11 6:00pm: SMALL COMPLINE SERVICE for Advent

Saturday, December 14 5:00pm: COMBINED ORTHODOX CHURCH VESPERS at St. George Church (Nottingham Terrace, Buffalo)

Sunday, December 15 *Sunday of the Forefathers*

9:15am: Chrismation of Wesley Mills

9:30am: Reading of 3rd & 6th Hours

10:00am: Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Memorial—Steve Connell by nephew, Gavin Faulkner

Wednesday, December 18 6:00pm: SMALL COMPLINE SERVICE for Advent

Saturday, December 21 6:00pm: VESPERS

Sunday, December 22 *Sunday before the Nativity of our Lord*

9:30am: Reading of 3rd & 6th Hours

10:00am: Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, December 24 5:00pm: Nativity of our Lord Complines/Matins Service
HOLY NIGHT SUPPER AFTERWARDS (Strict Fast Potluck)

Wednesday, December 25 *Nativity of our Lord*
10:00am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
(FAST FREE DAYS for 2 WEEKS in celebration of the Birth of Christ)

Thursday, December 26 *Synaxis of the Theotokos* (NO Divine Liturgy)

Friday, December 27 *Feast of St. Stephen the First Martyr* (NO Divine Liturgy)

Saturday, December 28 NO VESPERS

Sunday, December 29 *Sunday after the Nativity of our Lord*

9:30am: Reading of 3rd & 6th Hours

10:00am: Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Wednesday, January 1 *Feasts of St. Basil/Circumcision of our Lord* (NO Divine Liturgy)

Saturday, January 4 6:00pm VESPERS