

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Crown Them with Glory and Honor!



Josephine Sarah Carrier & Cameron Andrew Johnson were crowned on November 6th at Holy Trinity. Many Years!

St. Gregory of Nyssa: The Nativity of Christ

The glad tidings of the Angels exhort us to bring our discourse [...] to Bethlehem and to behold the mysteries in the cave. What is this? A Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; and she who remains a Virgin after giving birth, the incorrupt Mother, cares for her offspring. Let us, the shepherds, utter the cry of the Prophet: “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.” Surely these things that are related about Christ did not happen fortuitously or accidentally, and surely there is some reason behind this story. What does it mean for the Master that He dwells in a cave and lies in a manger? That He became involved with our life at the time of the whole world was being registered for taxation? Is it not clear that, just as He delivers us from the curse of the Law, becoming a curse for our sake, and

transfers our stripes to Himself, so that by His stripes we might be healed, so also He submits to taxation in order to free us from the evil fetters of the tax which death has been exacting from humanity? When you see the cave in which the Master is born, understand the lightless and subterranean life of mankind, into which He enters, appearing to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. He is bound in swaddling clothes Who wraps Himself in the bands of our sins. The manger is the abode of irrational animals, in which the Word is born, that the ox may know his Owner and the ass his Master’s crib; the ox stands for him who is subject to the Law, while the ass, that beast of burden, stands for him who is weighed down with the sin of idolatry. But whereas the food and sustenance suitable for irrational animals is grass— “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,”

(continued, see ST. GREGORY, next page)

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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
December 4	C. Swisher & S. Hunter*	J. Houser & D. Swisher	M. Fedkin & C. Johnson
December 11	A. Ashmore & C. Pellock*	A. Stickle & J. Houser	G. Cattell & H. Torbic
December 18	Russian Ladies*	J. Johnson & K. Oleynik	K. Cattell & M. Fiori
December 25	Potluck/HTOC donuts	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	M. Fedkin & H. Torbic
January 1	New Year - Potluck	J. Houser & A. Stickle	G. Cattell & C. Johnson
January 8	A. Stickle & M. Leathers	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	G. Cattell & M. Stickle

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

St. Gregory (con't)

as the Prophet says—the rational animal is nourished with bread. For this reason, therefore, the Bread of Life, which descended from Heaven, is set forth in the manger, which is the dwelling place of irrational animals, so that those irrational animals might partake of rational food and become rational. Thus, the Lord of both mediates, in the manger, between the ox and the ass, in order that, having “broken down the middle wall of partition,” He might “make in Himself of twain one new man,” both removing the heavy yoke of the Law from the former and relieving the latter of the burden of idolatry. But let us now gaze upon the celestial wonders. For behold, not only do Prophets and Angels announce the glad tidings of this joy to us; the heavens, too, proclaim the glory of the Gospel through their own marvels. Christ “sprang out of Judah” for us, as the Apostle says, but the Jews are not illumined by Him Who thus sprang forth. The Magi were strangers to the promise of the Covenants and without a share in the blessing of the Fathers; yet they surpass the people of Israel in knowledge, for they recognized the heavenly luminary and were not ignorant of the King in the cave. The Magi bring Him gifts, but the Jews plot against Him. The former worship Him, but the latter persecute Him. The former rejoice at finding Him Whom they were seeking. The latter are perturbed at the birth of Him Who was announced. For, when the Magi “saw the star” over the place where the Child was,” “they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. “When Herod...had heard” the report, “he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” The Magi offer frankincense to Him as God, honor His regal dignity with gold, and through myrrh, by prophetic Grace, allude to the Economy of His suffering. The Jews, however, condemn the entire infant population to slaughter, which, it seems to me, convicts them not only of cruelty, but also of the utmost folly. For what did they intend by this act of infanticide? And to what end did the murderers dare to perpetrate such a heinous crime? A certain new and marvelous celestial sign, it says, indicated to the Magi the appearance of the King.

...But let us...direct our minds to themes more cheerful and more suitable for the Feast, even though Rachel, in accordance with the prophecy, bewails the slaughter of the children with loud cries. For on a day of celebration, as the wise Solomon says, it is fitting to forget evils. What could be more auspicious for us than this Feast, whereon the Sun of Righteousness, having scattered the evil darkness of the Devil, shines upon creation through this our nature, whereon that which was fallen is raised up, that which had become hostile is brought to reconciliation, that which had been outlawed is recalled, that which had fallen away from life returns to life, that which had become enslaved to captivity is restored to the dignity of the Kingdom, and that which had been bound by the fetters of death and runs back, liberated, to the land of the living? Now, according to the prophecy, the brazen gates of death are crushed and the iron bars are shattered, whereby the human race was formerly confined in the dungeon of death. Now, as David says, the gate of righteousness is opened. Now the sound of those who keep festival is heard in unanimity throughout the inhabited earth. Through man came death, and through man salvation. The first man fell into sin, but the second raised up him who was fallen. A woman came to the defense of a woman: the former afforded an entrance to sin; the latter ministered to the entrance of righteousness. The former accepted the counsel of the serpent; the latter brought forth the Destroyer of the serpent and gave birth to the Author of light. The former introduced sin through a tree; through a tree the latter introduced good in its place. By “tree” I mean the Cross; the fruit of this tree is evergreen and amaranthine life for those who taste thereof. And let no one suppose that such thanksgiving belongs only to the mystery of Pascha. Let him reflect that Pascha is the end of the Divine Economy. How could the end come about if the beginning had not preceded it? Which is prior to the other? The Nativity of Christ, of course, is prior to the Economy of His Passion. ■

■ NEWS & NOTES

Calling All Cookie Bakers

Do you like to bake Christmas cookies? Add a little Christmas cheer to those in need this Christmas! We are looking for 13-14 bakers to make 30 homemade Christmas cookies to add to the CommonFood December food distribution. For more information, please contact Leoni Georgiou at leomcfar@comcast.net or at (814) 280-7599. If volunteering to bake, please let Leoni know by Friday 12/09. Cookies will need to be baked & handed off to Leoni for packing by Thursday December 15th.

Share the Good News

All families and parishioners are invited to sing Christmas carols around town on Friday, December 9th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. A light meal will be served prior to caroling along with hot chocolate to end the evening. Please join us and bring a friend as we share the coming Nativity of our Lord. Don't forget to dress warmly and bring your bells.

Icons on Sunday of the Forefathers

This year, the Sunday of the Forefathers falls on December 11th. As is our parish's custom, if your patron saint is one of the Righteous Ones from the Old Testament, please remember to bring an icon with you to Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning.

Adult Education

Reader Alexander Koropsak, a member of Holy Apostles Orthodox Church in Mechanicsburg, will present the adult education for December. He will be speaking on the Theotokos as the Ark of the New Covenant immediately following vespers on Saturday, December 10.

Memory Eternal: Eleanor Dancho

On November 14th, our sister in Christ Eleanor Dancho fell asleep in the Lord. Her funeral and burial were on November 19th at Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church in Osceola Mills, PA. May her memory be eternal!

Holy Supper

Holy Supper is a traditional Lenten meal on Christmas Eve, the last meal of the Nativity Fast. We will continue this annual parish family tradition by bringing a favorite Lenten food and sharing it with all that are present. The supper will begin at 4:30 PM. If you have any questions, including food ideas, contact Pdn. Mark or Matushka Kelly.

St. Nicholas Tree: Strawberry Fields

Our Saint Nicholas Tree drive enables the disadvantaged in our community to receive gifts through the Matthew 25 Ministry's partnership with Strawberry Fields. This year we will be providing gifts to 39 people (14 adults and 25 children) who would not otherwise have any presents to open on Christmas. Each tag on the tree has the recipient's age, gender, and wish. To participate, take a tag and bring the wrapped gift(s) back with the tag securely fastened. The deadline for dropping off gifts at church is Sunday, December 18. Thank you!

Memory Eternal: Mary Allen

On November 9th, our sister in Christ Mary Allen fell asleep in the Lord at the age of 93. Her funeral and burial were on November 16th at St. Michael Russian Orthodox Church in Portage, PA. May her memory be eternal.

For the Record

Josephine Sarah Carrier and Cameron Andrew Johnson were joined in Holy Matrimony by Fr. Ignatius Hunter on November 6th at Holy Trinity Church. Their godparents were Subdeacon Michael and Anna Stickles. Many years!

The Real Christmas Story

Once again, the children of our Sunday school will present the story of the birth of Christ through scripture and song following the Divine Liturgy on December 18th. A rehearsal will be held on December 17th at 4:45 pm. Plan to stay and join our children!

■ ADULT EDUCATION

Nativity Icon (con't)

upon us, but then He seems to withdraw a little bit, allowing difficulties to test and deepen our faith. We may wonder why things happen the way they do. But if we persevere, then things will gradually become clear.

TOP & MIDDLE: At the very top is a blue shape sometimes called a *mandorla*. It signifies the presence and the glory of God. It beams from the heavens, pointing to the Christ child, which shows His descent from heaven to the earth.

On the left, the three kings (magi) are traveling from afar, following the star in the sky. Angels appear in the heavens above and tell the good news to the shepherds (on the right) in the field so that they can see this divine child born in the little town of Bethlehem. I sometimes wonder if the shepherds and angelic chorus appeared after Jesus' birth more for Joseph's sake than anything else. These divine interventions affirmed the dream that God granted Joseph, and helped Him to trust God. Our Church's hymns mention this struggle and Joseph's victory over doubt:

Joseph, when he beheld the greatness of this wonder, thought that he saw a mortal wrapped as a babe in swaddling clothes; but from all that came to pass he understood that it was the true God, who grants the world great mercy.

(Vespers of the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ)

May we be comforted in the fact that our Savior has come into this world to heal every messy, doubting, sinful part of us. There is nothing a repentant heart has done that will permanently push God away from it. And there is nothing that you have done that he has not already helped someone else through, someone else who is considered a saint.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The women at the bottom right are midwives who display that the Son of God was truly born as a human, and did not merely appear to be human as some early heretics claimed. There is a fountain that they are about to wash the Christ child in because He had, in some sense, an ordinary, messy birth. ■

Another “Liturgical Christmas List”

Thank you to all of those who donated towards the items on Fr. Ignatius' "liturgical Christmas List" last year. With your help, we were able to acquire everything on the list, save an English language Circumcision icon (due to inability to find a supplier).

This year, Fr. Ignatius is looking to acquire the following liturgical items to beautify our life of corporate worship. Please consider sponsoring one:

- "Bookmarks" for the gospel in all seven liturgical colors (\$40 per bookmark; \$280 for the set)
- Hand-cross "napkins" or "coasters" for the altar table in all seven liturgical colors (\$40 per napkin; \$280 for the set)

- Regilding or replacement of our main Eucharistic chalice
- a new white brocade table cover for baptisms, weddings, lityas, etc. (\$225)

In addition to these things, our altar servers have their own request this year, noting the aged and mismatched condition of their lenten vestments:

- Purple altar server robes (estimated cost - \$3300)

If you would like to become the donor of any of these items, please speak with Fr. Ignatius or Subdeacon Michael Stickles. ■

■ ADULT EDUCATION

The Nativity Icon

The following was written by Fr. Jeremy McKemy, an OCA priest in Texas. It is edited for space and clarity.

The image [to the right] is the nativity icon of the Orthodox Church, which is full of beautiful symbolism. In this article, I will explain the meaning of the icon. Several features from it can be found in the extra-biblical book called the *Protoevangelium of James*, which I highly recommend. The *Protoevangelium* is a second century document (written in the 100s) that contains some of the oldest verbal tradition that was passed down in the first two or three generations of the Church.

Something to bear in mind is that icons are images of reality – they show us how the world exists through symbol. They are not still life portraits. While they depict historical events, they frequently emphasize theology over literalness, which will become apparent as you read on.

CENTER: In the center is the infant Christ lying in a manger. The Virgin Mary (Theotokos) is beside Him, and an ox and an ass are behind Him. Christ being born in a cave is not in the Bible, but it is an ancient tradition, dating back to the first and second centuries. He is dressed in burial clothes to foreshadow His death. His location in a cave also foreshadows the grave in which He would be buried and where He would resurrect.

When Adam and Even were first created, they were clothed in the glory of God. That was their natural state. But when they fell into sin, they lost this clothing of glory and became aware of their nakedness. Clothed in animals skins (which represent death), they went into exile outside of the Garden. Christ likewise condescended from His state of glory to become one of us, which in some sense meant He was exiling Himself from heaven. He wrapped Himself in the mortal flesh's sin and death, as Scripture states, *God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ* (2 Cor. 5:21).



BOTTOM LEFT: Unlike most icons that feature both Christ and the Virgin Mary, she is not looking at Him. Instead, she is looking at her betrothed, Joseph, interceding for him. The *Protoevangelium* tells us that after the birth of Jesus, he walked out of the cave, battling doubts. The old man next to him is supposed to be the devil who is, of course, filling his mind with all sorts of doubts and angry thoughts.






























We may sing “*What Child is This?*” but Joseph’s question was “*Whose child is this?!*” since he knew he was certainly not the father. Yet Joseph has a halo, which indicates his sanctity.

Sometimes when God shows up in our lives, it raises questions and doubts. God bestows His grace

(continued, see NATIVITY ICON, next page)

Holy Trinity Calendar

LIVE Please note that at this time, all services at Holy Trinity are being live-streamed. To watch them online, please visit holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 27 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	 28	 29	 30 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 December 1	 2	 3 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
 4 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	 5 Great Vespers, 6pm	 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Divine Liturgy, 8am	 7 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 8 By-Law Committee Meeting, 7pm	 9 Sunday School Christmas Caroling, 9am	 10 Great Vespers, 6pm Adult Ed, "OT Images of the Theotokos", 7pm
 11 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	 12	 13	 14 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	 15	 16	 17 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Christmas Play Practice, 4:45pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
 18 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Sunday School Christmas Play, 12 noon	 19 Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 St. Ignatius of Antioch Divine Liturgy, 8am Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 21 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 22 Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 23 Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 Eve of Nativity Divine Liturgy, 9am Holy Supper, 4:30pm Nativity Vigil, 6pm
Nativity of our Lord and God and Savior Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	25	26	27	28	29	30
January 1, 2023 Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	2	3	4	 Theophany Eve Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil, 9am Vigil of Theophany, 6pm	5	6
			Vespers, 6pm	Theophany Divine Liturgy, 9am Great Blessing of Water, following		7 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following

Chapel Calendar

All events take place at 145 North Kern Street in Beavertown, unless where noted.

- 12/3/22 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 12/4/22 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 12/5/22 6:00 p.m. St. Nicholas Great Vespers with Litya
- 12/6/22 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 12/10/22 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 12/11/22 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 12/13/22 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 12/17/22 10:00 a.m. Nativity Spruce Up
- 12/17/22 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 12/18/22 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 12/18/22 6:00 p.m. Christmas Caroling (*from the rectory*)
- 12/20/22 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 12/24/22 10:00 a.m. Mystery of Holy Baptism (*Catechumen Derek*)
- 12/24/22 6:00 p.m. Nativity Vigil with Litya
+ CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM! +
- 12/25/22 10:00 a.m. Nativity Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; coffee/bagels available afterwards
- 12/26/22 6:30 p.m. Knitting/crocheting "Hats and Blankets for Babies"
- 12/27/22 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 12/31/22 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers with Litya followed by Moleben for the New Year
+ A BLESSED AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR! +
- 1/1/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; coffee/bagels available afterwards

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, unless where noted.

Events listed at **Trinity House** take place at 123 South Sparks Street, in State College.

December 2022