



SS. PETER & PAUL UKRAINIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH

21 Evergreen Road
Lyndora, PA 16045-1314



УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА
ЦЕРКВА СВ. ПЕТРА І ПАВЛА

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Today we have arrived at the Eve of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we pray that each and every member of our parish community and our families will have a blessed and joyous celebration of Christmas and a blessed and happy New Year! As we gather together with friends and family this Christmas let us all give thanks that truly God is with us and has blessed us all with many blessings and especially the Nativity of our Lord and Savior!

As we celebrate this festal season let us all join together as a parish community in the liturgical celebrations of this joyous season. Let us join together as we celebrate this time in prayer and worship with the various services given to us by our Holy Church as a useful and beneficial celebration of God having come down and dwelt among His people.

CONTACT

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Parish Board President:

Maria Corbin

Choir Director:

Lydia Rudolf

DECEMBER 15TH 2024

Sunday, December 15 FOREFATHERS

Holy Martyr Eleutherius

Epistle Reading: Col 3:4-11

Gospel Reading: Luke 18:18-27

Divine Liturgy – 9:30

Sunday, December 22 Sunday before Nativity

Epistle Reading: Heb 11:9-10, 17-23.32-40

Gospel Reading: Matt 1:1-25

Divine Liturgy – 9:30

Saturday, December 24, 2021

Holly Supper

Great Compline (Nativity)

7:00 pm

Sunday, December 25, 2021 The Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

Epistle Reading: Gal 4:4-7; Gospel

Reading: Matt 2:1-12

Divine Liturgy – 9:30

Sunday, December 29 Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Epistle Reading: Col 2:8-12;

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52

Divine Liturgy – 9:30

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX PARISH

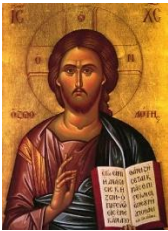
GOSPEL AND EPISTLE READING

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 4:4-7



BRETHREN, when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir of God through Christ.

The Gospel According to Matthew 2:1-12



When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'"

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

All the citizens and residents of Ukraine, Orycia, Stanley, pani Lilia, Jean Markiw, Debbie, Wesly, Cindy, Christine, Denny Zymboly, Ruth Dally, Philip, Eric, Carl, Kayden, Rose, Dorothy Cygan, Helen, Fr. Vasyl, Mary-Ann, Payton, Anthony, Tina, Mykola, Stella, Maksymko, Fr. Yuri, Maria, Fr. Jakiw, Fr. George, Volodymyr, Alexandr, Vincent, John, Frank, Rowena, Carol.

PARISH NEWS AND UPDATES

December 15th –*Coffee hour*, organized by Karen and Steven Sheptak.

Thank you!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to our Semi-Annual Bake Sale! Whether you joined us in baking, helped with sales, or supported the event in any way, your efforts made a meaningful difference. It was wonderful to see our parish come together for this special tradition. Through your hard work and generosity, we not only raised funds for our parish but also shared our faith and fellowship with the community. May God bless each of you for your dedication and love for our church. Thank you for being part of this success!

This morning we offer a word of thanks to **Lydia Rudolf and Adriane Hassler** with their families for the wonderful and enjoyable Saint Nicholas Day Program we all enjoyed this time of the year. Thank you also everyone who helped with the set up for the delicious Potluck luncheon and to Saint Nicholas for his wonderful visit.

Today we wish to announce that the Parish calendars for the coming new year of 2025, are available on back pew of the Church. We offer a word of appreciation and thanks to Geibels Funeral Home for their continued and generous sponsorship and donation of our calendars!

As we draw closer to the celebration of Christmas, we have an opportunity to make special donation to sponsor the **Poinsettias** that will soon decorate our Church. These donations can be made in honor or in memory of a family member or friend. We encourage everyone to please participate in this and make your donations by Sunday, December 22nd by using your offering envelope and marking other as "Christmas Flower Donation".

Pirohi Sale Announcement

A heartfelt thank you to all who helped with our last Pirohi Sale! Your hard work and dedication made it a great success, and we couldn't have done it without the effort from our volunteers. ***We are excited to announce that our next Pirohi sale will be on Friday, December 20th.*** We look forward to seeing everyone back in the kitchen as we continue this beloved tradition!

On Sunday, December 22nd, after Divine Liturgy, Fr. Yurii are going to bless Prosphoras baked by him to be used on Holly Supper before the Nativity feast day! Please, leave a small gift for this purpose!

Q&A with the Priest

Starting in November, we are introducing a new opportunity during coffee hour called Q&A with the Priest. This is your chance to ask Father any questions you may have about the Orthodox faith, spiritual life, or anything else you've been curious about. It's a casual, open conversation where no question is too big or small. Come join us, ask questions, and deepen your understanding in a relaxed and welcoming environment!

Since the establishment of our new Ss Peter and Paul Christian fellowship, we have achieved much together. From organizing events to aiding those in need, and simply coming together as one family, our efforts have been a testament to our commitment to serving others and glorifying God. We extend a warm invitation to all to become involved in our organization and contribute to our shared mission of serving our neighbors for the greater glory of God.

PARISH CELEBRATION

From the bottom of Ss. Peter and Paul parish family heart we wish **Ethan Bobko (December 8), Stephen Sheptak (December 25), Debbie Diakiw Roach (December 28)** Happy Birthday! May God's awesome blessings be upon you this day and for the Future years ahead for many happy and blessed years!

The Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ



The incomprehensible and inexplicable Nativity of Christ came to pass when Herod the Great was reigning in Judea; the latter was an Ascalonite on his father's side and an Idumean on his mother's. He was in every way foreign to the royal line of David; rather, he had received his authority from the Roman emperors, and had ruled tyrannically over the Jewish people for some thirty-three years. The tribe of Judah, which had reigned of old, was deprived of its rights and stripped of all rule and authority. Such was the condition of the Jews when the awaited Messiah was born, and truly thus was fulfilled the prophecy which the Patriarch Jacob had spoken 1,807 years before: "A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him; and he is the expectation of the nations" (Gen.49:10).

Thus, our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, a city of Judea, whither Joseph had come from Nazareth of Galilee, taking Mary his betrothed, who was great with child, that, according to the decree issued in those days by the Emperor Augustus, they might be registered in the census of those subject to Rome. Therefore, when the time came for the Virgin to give birth, and since because of the great multitude there was no place in the inn, the Virgin's circumstance constrained them to enter a cave which was near Bethlehem. Having as shelter a stable of irrational beasts, she gave birth there, and swaddled the Infant and laid Him in the manger (Luke 2:1-7). From this, the tradition has come down to us that when Christ was born He lay between two animals, an ox and an ass, that the words of the Prophets might be fulfilled: "Between two living creatures shalt Thou be known" (Abbacum 3:2), and "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib" (Esaia 1: 3).

But while the earth gave the new-born Saviour such a humble reception, Heaven on high celebrated majestically His world-saving coming. A wondrous star, shining with uncommon brightness and following a strange course, led Magi from the East to Bethlehem to worship the new-born King. Certain shepherds who were in the area of Bethlehem, who kept watch while tending their sheep, were suddenly surrounded by an extraordinary light, and they saw before them an Angel who proclaimed to them the good tidings of the Lord's joyous Nativity. And straightway, together with this Angel, they beheld and heard a whole host of the Heavenly Powers praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:8-14).

Tropar of Holy Nativity. Fourth Tone

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; for thereby they that worshipped the stars were instructed by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Kontakion of Holy Nativity, Third Tone

Today, the Virgin bears Him who is transcendent, and the earth presents the cave to Him who is beyond reach. Angels, along with shepherds glorify Him. The Magi make their way to Him by a star. For a new child has been born for us, the God before all ages

Origin of the Feast of Christmas

By Antony Bassoline

The celebration of the birth of Christ has become the most obvious religious-based public festival of American life. Its arrival in December is prepared for months in advance. It is the one event which generates the most anticipation and to which the most tradition and custom have attached themselves. Individual homes and whole cities dress up for Christmas. In popular sentiment it has eclipsed the greater feast of the Resurrection, and has completely dwarfed its twin festival, the Epiphany.

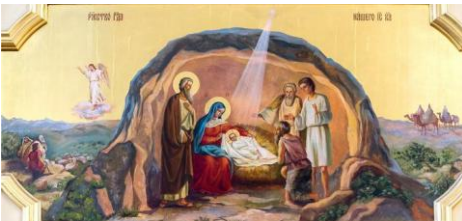
But how did we get a feast of Christmas? What was its original purpose? How does it actually fit into the life of the Orthodox Christian Church?

The Christian Church in the first three centuries of its existence knew of only one great festival, Pentecost (by Pentecost is here meant the complete celebration of the Christian Passover from the cross and resurrection to the 50th day commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit). Every Sunday was considered a feast in that it was a gathering to proclaim the mighty redemption brought by the death and resurrection of Christ. This festival of redemption was realized weekly by the Holy Eucharist, the presence of the victorious Risen Christ in the midst of the assembly. It was realized yearly in the great Paschal Feast in the administration of baptism. We see that in this ancient period the interest and emphasis was not at all on the historical facts concerning what happened to Jesus, but rather how what happened to Jesus now happens to those who join His Church; how the new believer dies and rises to new life in Christ through baptism and how in the Eucharist the believer participates directly in the sacrifice of Christ.

In time the celebration of martyrs' days, that is, the yearly anniversary of a martyr's death, came to be celebrated. But these festivals were local and usually conducted at the martyr's tomb.

It is not until the Fourth Century that the idea of celebrating occasions in the earthly life of our Lord started to become popular. Much of this is due to the Church of Jerusalem. Special celebrations which were devised on the actual or supposed sites of the events of the life of Christ lent themselves particularly well to the celebration of historical remembrances. Thus interest developed in where Jesus was born, where He grew up, where He performed His miracles, etc.

It is to the Church of Rome, however, that we must give the credit for the origins of the feast of the birth of Christ. But on what was this feast based and why was December 25th chosen as the day for its celebration?



The actual historical facts surrounding the birth of Christ are clouded in mystery. No one really knows when Jesus was born. Only certain facts can be deduced from the biblical account and from history. For one thing, Jesus was definitely born in B.C. (Before Christ!). This is known because Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., and Herod figures in the account of the Nativity given by St. Matthew. Jesus was definitely not born in winter. St. Luke mentions that the shepherds were staying out in the pasture land with their flocks, an event that does not take place in winter. We must look elsewhere for the origin of the late December celebration of the Nativity.

We find the origin of the winter feast of the Nativity not in the historical facts available concerning the birth of Christ, but in a curious astronomical phenomenon. In late December we reach the shortest day of the year with more hours of darkness than daylight. From this point the hours of daylight become gradually longer. This observable phenomenon was given a religious significance in the pagan Roman world. It became the feast of Sol Invictus (the Unconquerable Sun). It was popularly celebrated in Rome during the last two weeks of December as Saturnalia. What better time for the Christians to celebrate the coming of the true unconquered “Sun”? Thus the feast of Christmas was born; the celebration of the dawning on the world of the Sun of Righteousness.

The feast was not originally called Christmas or Nativity, but Epiphany or “Manifestation.” It celebrated the idea of Christ’s coming and manifesting Himself through several events of the New Testament and its timing was based on the feast of the Unconquered Sun. In the East this feast of “coming” was generally kept on January 6th and in the West on December 25th. It did not originally concentrate exclusively on the birth of our Lord, but celebrated several aspects of His manifestation: the birth in the cave, the adoration of the Magi, the baptism in the Jordan, and the first miracle at Cana in Galilee. All of these themes came in one way or another to be associated with the feast of the Epiphany. The East celebrated all of this on January 6th and knew of no feast on December 25th. (The Armenian Church to this day still celebrates the nativity and the baptism together on January 6th with no celebration whatsoever on December 25th.) Egeria, a nun from Spain, traveling in Palestine at the end of the 4th century mentions a great celebration of our Lord’s coming. Thus it was only later that the East and the West came to share both December 25th and January 6th. The East separated the Nativity from the Baptism, leaving the January date as the feast of the Baptism of Christ and accepting the December date as the feast of the Nativity. The West in turn added January 6th to its “Manifestation” celebration as the commemoration of the Adoration of the Magi.

Once this double feast, Christmas-Epiphany, entered the life of the Church it became, like Easter-Pentecost, an occasion for the celebration of baptism. The feast of Christ’s coming was seen to be appropriate for the administration of the sacrament by which Christ would come to the new believer. Several relics in our present liturgical practice hint at the baptismal connections of Christmas and Epiphany, as the long list of readings of the vigil of both days (meant to cover the time of actual baptizing), and the singing of the baptismal verse “As many as have been baptized into Christ” in place of the Trisagion. The strange notation in the liturgical books: “Nativity of our Lord . . . Three days Passover” and “Epiphany of our Lord . . . Three days Passover” can only be explained in connection with the sacrament of baptism.

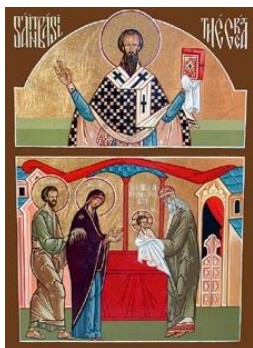
The hymns of both Christmas and Epiphany reveal the origin of these days in the old winter festival of the Unconquered Sun. Note how many astronomical references we find in the Nativity Troparion: Christ is described as the “Sun” of Righteousness, who illumines those who worshipped stars (of which the physical sun is one). Jesus has come as the dawning from the East (as the sun does).

The Matins exapostilarion hymn speaks of: A newly risen day. Our Savior is the Dayspring from the East. Those who were in darkness and shadow found the Light.

Epiphany is still known as “ton Foton” (feast of Lights). Its hymns also concentrate on astronomical themes. In Vespers Christ is described as “Bestower of light,” who desires to give light to those in darkness. In the Matins of the feast we find: “With Thy light that never sets, shine forth, O Christ.”

Unfortunately most of society has reverted to celebrating the pagan winter holiday under the excuse of celebrating the birth of Christ. The Romans had their Saturnalia, but modern man has his Santa, reindeer, drinking parties and materialism to highlight his feast. In spite of all of this Christians are still called to celebrate joyfully in the Spirit, the coming of the Messiah. As the Christians of old celebrated under the guise of Saturnalia, so the modern Christian must still celebrate the true feast as the rest of our society keeps its pagan winter holiday. The Church at one time conquered and transformed that pagan holiday into the sublime celebration of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness. She still is challenged to transform and transfigure and to proclaim that coming and to lead men beyond tinsel and cheap lights to the true meaning of this holiday: the glorification of the true Gladsome Light of the Holy Glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ.

The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ



On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God’s Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants [Genesis 17:10-14, Leviticus 12:3].

After this ritual, the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos [Luke 1:31-33, 2:21]. The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics had taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured [Colossians 2:11-12]. Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by Saint Stephen of the Saint Savva Monastery.

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God’s Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus [Savior] on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world [Matthew 1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Philippians 2:9-10]. These two events -- the Lord’s Circumcision and Naming -- remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and “are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” [Colossians 2:11]. The very name “Christian” is a sign of mankind’s entrance into a New Covenant with God.