



The Trophy Bearer

December 2019

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St. George Orthodox Church

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This newsletter is published monthly in the interest of the parishioners and friends of St. George Orthodox Church in Buffalo, a parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and The Orthodox Church in America.

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THE CELEBRATION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

The celebration of the feast of the **Nativity of Christ** in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord's Resurrection. A fast of forty days precedes the feast, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Saviour. Thus, on St Andrew's Day (November 30) and St Nicholas Day (December 6) songs are sung to announce the coming birthday of the Lord:

Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger. O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing Christ in her womb (Vespers Hymn of St Nicholas Day)

On the eve of Christmas, the **Royal Hours** are read and the **Divine Liturgy of St. Basil** is served with **Vespers**. At these services the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's birth are chanted, emphasizing the prophecy of **Micah** which foretells Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Saviour, and the prophecies of **Isaiah** about the appearance and character of the Messiah:

The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which translated is, God with us (Is 7:14-15).

God is with us, understand all ye nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us (Is 8:9).

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end (Is 9:6-7).

The **Vigil of Christmas** begins with **Great Compline**, highlighted once again by the solemn chanting of *God is with us* and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah. At Compline there is also the singing of the Troparion and Kontakion of the feast along with the special hymns glorifying the Saviour's birth. There are also the special long litanies of intercession and the solemn blessing of the **five loaves** of bread together with the **wheat** and the **wine** of which the faithful partake and the **oil** with which they are anointed. This part of the festal vigil, which is done on all great feasts, is called the **litya** (in Greek, the *artoklasia* or the **breaking of the bread**)

At the beginning of the **Christmas Matins**, which together with Compline form the Christmas Vigil, the six matinal psalms begin as usual with the words; Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men (*Lk 2:14*).

At the Christmas services these words of the angelic song are normally sung with great solemnity rather than being chanted as at the daily service. The Christmas Matins proceed as usual. The gospel reading from Matthew (*1:18-25*) tells of the birth of Christ, and all of the hymns and verses glorify his appearance on earth:

Christ is born, glorify him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet him. Christ is an earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For he is glorified. (First Ode of the Christmas Canon)

The **Christmas Liturgy** begins with psalms of glorification and praise. The troparion and kontakion mark the entrance with the Book of the Gospels. The baptismal line from **Galatians 3:27** once again replaces the Thrice-Holy. The Epistle reading is from **Galatians**:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a 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 through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir (Gal 4:4-7).

The Gospel reading is the familiar Christmas story from **Matthew (2:1-12)**, and the liturgy continues in the normal fashion. A specific two-day celebration follows, dedicated to **Mary the Theotokos** and **St Stephen, the First Martyr**. The period of Christmas rejoicing extends to Epiphany during which time the Christmas songs are sung and fasting and kneeling in prayer are not called for by the Church.

The feast of Christmas is formally entitled the **Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ**. At Christmas we celebrate the birth as a man of the Son of God, the one who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is truly God from all eternity. Thus, we sing in the Church.

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the Eternal God is born as a little child (Kontakion).

The feast of Christmas was not a separate Church feast for the first four centuries of Christian history. It was celebrated with **Epiphany** in the one great feast of God's appearance on earth in the form of the human Messiah of Israel. The Nativity began to be celebrated as such on the twenty-fifth of December in order to offset the pagan festival of the Invincible Sun which occurred on that day. It was established by the Church quite consciously as an attempt to defeat the false religion of the heathens. Thus, we discover the troparion of the feast making a polemic against the worship of the sun and the stars and calling for the adoration of Christ, the **True Sun of Righteousness** (*Mal 4:2*), who is himself worshiped by all of the elements of nature.

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshiped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness and to know Thee, the Orient from on high (Lk 1:78, translated as Dawn or Day spring). O Lord, glory to Thee! (Troparion).

Thus, the feast of Christmas is the celebration of the world's salvation through the Son of God who became man for our sake that, through him, we might ourselves become divine, sons of God the Father by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit in us.

THE STORY and LIFE OF ST. NICHOLAS - December 6

Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia is famed as a great saint pleasing unto God. He was born in the city of Patara in the region of Lycia (on the south coast of the Asia Minor peninsula), and was the only son of pious parents Theophanes and Nonna, who had vowed to dedicate him to God.

As the fruit of the prayer of his childless parents, the infant Nicholas from the very day of his birth revealed to people the light of his future glory as a wonderworker. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth was immediately healed from illness. The newborn infant, while still in the baptismal font, stood on his feet three hours, without support from anyone, thereby honoring the Most Holy Trinity. St Nicholas from his infancy began a life of fasting, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he would not accept milk from his mother until after his parents had finished their evening prayers.

From his childhood Nicholas thrived on the study of Divine Scripture; by day he would not leave 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 the flock.

In serving the Lord the youth was fervent of spirit, and in his proficiency with questions of faith he was like an Elder, who aroused the wonder and deep respect of believers. Constantly at work and vivacious, in unceasing prayer, the priest Nicholas displayed great kind-heartedness towards the flock, and towards the afflicted who came to him for help, and he distributed all his inheritance to the poor.

There was a certain formerly rich inhabitant of Patara, whom St 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 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. St Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, St Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds.

The Bishop of Patara decided to go on pilgrimage to the holy places at Jerusalem, and entrusted the guidance of his flock to St Nicholas, who fulfilled this obedience carefully and with love. When the bishop returned, Nicholas asked his blessing for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Along the way the saint predicted a storm would arise and threaten the ship. St Nicholas saw the devil get on the ship, intending to sink it and kill all the passengers. At the entreaty of the despairing pilgrims, he calmed the waves of the sea by his prayers. Through his prayer a certain sailor of the ship, who had fallen from the mast and was mortally injured was also restored to health.

When he reached the ancient city of Jerusalem and came to Golgotha, St Nicholas gave thanks to the Savior. He went to all the holy places, worshiping at each one. One night on Mount Sion, the closed doors of the church opened by themselves for the great pilgrim. Going round the holy places connected with the earthly service of the Son of God, St Nicholas decided to withdraw into the desert, but he was stopped by a divine voice urging him to return to his native country. He returned to Lycia, and yearning for a life of quietude, the saint entered into the brotherhood of a monastery named Holy Sion, which had been founded by his uncle. But the Lord again indicated another path for him, "Nicholas, this is not the vineyard where you shall bear fruit for Me. Return to the world, and glorify My Name there." So he left Patara and went to Myra in Lycia.

Upon the death of Archbishop John, Nicholas was chosen as Bishop of Myra after one of the bishops of the Council said that a new archbishop should be revealed by God, not chosen by men. One of the elder bishops had a vision of a radiant Man, Who told him that the one who came to the church that night and was first to enter should be made archbishop. He would be named Nicholas. The bishop went to the church at night to await Nicholas. The saint, always the first to arrive at church, was stopped by the bishop. "What is your name, child?" he asked. God's chosen one replied, "My name is Nicholas, Master, and I am your servant."

After his consecration as archbishop, St Nicholas remained a great ascetic, appearing to his flock as an image of gentleness, kindness and love for people. This was particularly precious for the Lycian Church during the persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Bishop Nicholas, locked up in prison together with other Christians for refusing to worship idols, sustained them and exhorted them to endure the fetters, punishment and torture. The Lord preserved him unharmed. Upon the accession of St Constantine (May 21) as emperor, St Nicholas was restored to his flock, which joyfully received their guide and intercessor.

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, St Nicholas was a zealous and ardent warrior of the Church of Christ. Fighting evil spirits, the saint made the rounds of the pagan temples and shrines in the city of Myra and its surroundings, shattering the idols and turning the temples to dust.

In the year 325 St Nicholas was a participant in the First Ecumenical Council. This Council proclaimed the Nicene Symbol of Faith, and he stood up against the heretic Arius with the likes of Sts Sylvester the Bishop of Rome (January 2), Alexander of Alexandria (May 29), Spyridon of Trimythontos (December 12) and other Fathers of the Council.

St Nicholas, fired with zeal for the Lord, assailed the heretic Arius with his words, and also struck him upon the face. For this reason, he was deprived of the emblems of his episcopal rank and placed under guard. But several of the holy Fathers had the same vision, seeing the Lord Himself and the Mother of God returning to him the Gospel and omophorion. The Fathers of the Council agreed that the audacity of the saint was pleasing to God, and restored the saint to the office of bishop.

Having returned to his own diocese, the saint brought it peace and blessings, sowing the word of Truth, uprooting heresy, nourishing his flock with sound doctrine, and also providing food for their bodies.

Even during his life the saint worked many miracles. One of the greatest was the deliverance from death of three men unjustly condemned by the Governor, who had been bribed. The saint boldly went up to the executioner and took his sword, already suspended over the heads of the condemned. The Governor, denounced by St Nicholas for his wrong doing, repented and begged for forgiveness.

Witnessing this remarkable event were three military officers, who were sent to Phrygia by the emperor Constantine to put down a rebellion. They did not suspect that soon they would also be compelled to seek the intercession of St Nicholas. Evil men slandered them before the emperor, and the officers were sentenced to death. Appearing to St Constantine in a dream, St Nicholas called on him to overturn the unjust sentence of the military officers.

He worked many other miracles, and struggled many long years at his labor. Through the prayers of the saint, the city of Myra was rescued from a terrible famine. He appeared to a certain Italian merchant and left him three gold pieces as a pledge of payment. He requested him to sail to Myra and deliver grain there. More than once, the saint saved those drowning in the sea, and provided release from captivity and imprisonment.

Having reached old age, St Nicholas peacefully fell asleep in the Lord. His venerable relics were preserved incorrupt in the local cathedral church and flowed with curative myrrh, from which many received healing. In the year 1087, his relics were transferred to the Italian city of Bari, where they rest even now (See May 9).

The Repose of St. Herman of Alaska

Commemorated on December 13

SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA is often referred to as the first American saint. Born in Russia, he entered the monastic life when he was only sixteen. He would eventually take up abode in the Valaam Monastery on Lake Ladoga. When a mission of monks was organized in 1793 to travel to North America, St. Herman was part of that effort. Russian merchants had discovered the Aleutian Islands and, in addition to their trading endeavors they found a great need to bring the Gospel of Christ to the native inhabitants. St. Herman would settle on Spruce Island, calling his home "New

Valaam." The rugged island was heavily forested, but the pious monk enjoyed the solitude it brought him. Earthly pleasures meant nothing to him. He dug a cave with his own hands where he lived for more than 40 years. He humbly wore the same clothing every day; he used two bricks for a pillow and he covered himself at night with a board rather than a blanket.

Although only a simple monk and not an ordained priest, St. Herman soon gained a reputation for being a great spiritual teacher. He established a school and enjoyed teaching the native children about Christ. He particularly loved to teach them the prayers and hymns of the Church. Young and old alike would listen spell-bound for hours to his sermons.

St. Herman also became known for his wondrous works and miracles as well. A great flood once threatened Spruce Island, and the inhabitants came to their blessed Elder in great fear. He took an icon of the Theotokos, placed it on a sandy bank and began to pray. Amazingly, the progress of the waters was impeded immediately! A forest fire broke out once on Spruce Island. St. Herman dug a simple trench and proclaimed: "The fire will not pass this line." It did not!

St. Herman of Alaska died in the same cave in which he had lived for all those years on Spruce Island. His final words were a statement of his entire philosophy of life: "GLORY TO THEE, O LORD."

A Message From Fr. Jason

THE GREAT FEAST OF

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Make glad, O righteous! Greatly rejoice, O heavens! O mountains, dance for joy! Christ is born, and like the cherubim the Virgin makes a throne, carrying at her bosom the Word made flesh! Shepherds glorify the new-born Child! Magi offer the Master gifts! Angels sing praises, saying: "O Lord, beyond all understanding, glory to Thee!"

– Nativity Matins –

As we celebrate this Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, I greet all of you with these words of praise from the Festal Matins on the Eve of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord.

The beautiful liturgical hymns we sing in celebration of the Nativity of Our Savior resound with a single theme: **joy**. They proclaim the joy all creation shares as its Creator takes on the human flesh. They invite us to rejoice with the angelic hosts in praising the Word made flesh, dwelling amongst us. And they challenge us to look beyond the cares and concerns of this world in anticipation of the new life the Savior offers us – a life that, while beyond all understanding, is already revealed to us and experienced by us in the life of His Body, the Church.

Indeed, the birth of Our Savior is filled with great mystery. The virgin gives birth, yet she remains a virgin. God takes on our human nature, yet He remains that which He is from all eternity. The King of All reigns from a cave, rather than a sumptuous palace. The manger becomes His throne; simple shepherds, His court. The angels serve as His messengers; the powerful of the world, His enemies. The Messiah comes unto His own; despite centuries of anticipation, they fail to recognize Him as the Living Word the written word joyously reveals.

The choir of angels joyously proclaim this great mystery by proclaiming "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men" (Luke 2:14). Today we draw near and adore the One who is our Peace.

Entering into the Feast of our Lord's Nativity, let us be generous in extending the joyous news of eternal life to all people. Celebrating God's descent to earth and our ascent to heaven, let us also remain vigilant. For through watchfulness the gift of the incarnation - the gift of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection - will never cease to be embraced as life-giving and life-transfiguring.

So, let us join together as a family, as brothers and sisters in Christ in making a commitment to bring Christ to the World! Let us come to together and proclaim the joyous message of our Lord's Glorious Nativity by proclaiming the words of praise: "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!"

In the spirit of this Holy and Joyous Nativity Season, please take a moment to reflect upon what God has given you, and to discern how you might be able to return to God a portion of the blessings you have received.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us embrace each other with love. Let us embrace each other with joy. Let us come together to proclaim and live this Joyous Message to all.

Please be assured of my continued love and prayers for you and your families, and our entire parish family. May you and your families and our entire parish family have a blessed and Glorious Feast of The Nativity of Our Lord, a Blessed Nativity Season and a blessed and Joyous New Year.

May GOD continue to bless and guide you, your families, and our entire parish family!

God Bless You!

With Love in the New-Born Christ,

Fr. Jason

Q&A with Fr. Jay

In this section, we will answer questions that have been given to Fr. Jason on various topics pertaining to our life as Orthodox Christians. If there are any questions that we may have about The Orthodox Faith and Her Teachings, please feel free to leave our question(s) in the box located at the candle desk in church (Questions for Father) or email it to Fr. Jason and he will be able to provide the answers for us. All questions are anonymous and are here for the benefit of everyone to help each of us grow closer in our relationship with Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ in understanding our Holy Orthodox Faith and Her Teachings.

Why do you open and close the Royal doors during Liturgy?

There is a tradition, especially among the Great Russians, where the Royal Doors are left closed throughout the Liturgy. When there is need—for example, for the Little and Great Entrances, reading of the Gospel, distribution of the Holy Gifts, etc.—the doors are opened. At all other times—specifically when there is no liturgical action which would require opened doors—they are closed. At certain points, such as during the Litany which follows the Cherubic Hymn or during the Communion of the clergy, the curtain is also drawn shut.

Rubrics for the opening and closing of the Royal Doors is no where more complex, I believe, than in the celebration of the Vigil—Vespers and Matins—where it is quite clear that the doors are opened when there is a need for someone to exit the altar while they remain closed when no obvious reason exists.

Further, within the Russian tradition, the possibility of celebrating the Liturgy with the Royal Doors opened, either for greater portions of the Divine Liturgy or for the majority of the Liturgy, is often granted to clergy as a mark of distinction for outstanding service or in recognition of an individual priest's ministry.

What I have described is not necessarily common among Orthodox Christians of other traditions, such as among the Greeks or Antiochians. In some cases, in place of the Royal Doors as we know them, a large panel, often with an icon of Christ portrayed as the "Hierarch of Hierarchs," stands in their place. In such cases the icon, which generally completely covers the entire opening of the doorway, is placed on a track by which it might be slid to the side during services. I have even visited churches in the Middle East, some of which are hundreds of years old, in which one finds an iconostasis but no doors whatsoever, even though there are openings.

What is unusual, at least in my uneducated opinion on Byzantine Catholicism, is that a practice which is common among Russians, but surely not common among Byzantine Catholics—many of whose ancestors come from the Carpathian mountains which span what is presently southeastern Poland, far western Ukraine, eastern Slovakia, and portions of Hungary—would be introduced among people who traditionally had not known the custom. In fact, in many Byzantine Catholic churches in these regions, the iconostasis as we know it does not exist. Many Byzantine churches in the US did not even have iconostases until recent times, and especially after Vatican II urged the Eastern Rites to rediscover and preserve their heritage in its fullness rather than to continue on a course of latinization.

Perhaps in earlier times, before the Unions of Brest-Litovsk and Uzhorod, every church in the Carpathian region did in fact have an iconostasis and did in fact follow the Russian practice of closed doors, but this would be very difficult to confirm for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that since this period is at least 400 years in the past, no one personally remembers it. So, with regard to the specific scenario you describe, it is correct, on the one hand, to say that celebrating the Liturgy with the doors closed for a greater portion of the service is indeed "a tradition," but it is not necessarily accurate to imply that it is a tradition which is indigenous to the regions in which Byzantine Rite Catholicism was introduced. The real question, then, revolves around why this is being introduced: as a return to full Byzantine Rite tradition [as opposed to the Byzantine Rite tradition of the Russian Typikon]? as a restoration of the full Byzantine Rite as observed in Ruthenia [where many churches did not have iconostases and did not have to contemplate whether or not doors would remain opened or closed]? or as a matter of taste and preference on the part of the pastor? With regard to seeing what the priest does, I do not mean to be glib, but as a priest I would have to say that there is very little to see. Most of the time the priest stands at the altar in simple prayer. Of course, there are certain actions, such as the waving of the aer over the Gifts during the Creed, the making of the Sign of the Cross over the Gifts during the Epiklesis, the elevation and fractioning of the Lamb, etc., which one may not be able to see when the doors are closed, but in general even when the doors are opened there is little to see. We might be reminded of the words of Saint John Chrysostom who said "Christ will not appear until the priest disappears." The goal of our liturgical worship is to look beyond the priest, beyond his individual physical or psychological characteristics, and beyond his unique personality, and to come face to face with the Living God. If we do not encounter Him in our worship, even the celebration of the Liturgy facing the people, as in the contemporary Roman Rite, would only serve to enlighten us as to the priest's actions, and nothing more. Watching the priest's every action can, in fact, become an end in itself and an obstacle to "keeping watch" to the Lord's every action. (Archpriest John Matusiak - Q&A Section on The OCA Website)

Parish Activities

PARISH COUNCIL

The next meeting will be held on December 14 at 5:00 PM

The "City of Good Neighbors Night" Parish Fundraiser that was held on Nov. 8 resulted in a profit of over \$2000 and has been designated towards The Capital Improvement Fund. We express our most sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone for their hard work, help, and assistance in making this our first of which will become an annual fundraiser a huge success.

ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

Sunday December 22, 2019

December 22, following Divine Liturgy and during brief coffee hour, we will be holding our Annual Budget Meeting in the Parish Fellowship Hall to review and discuss and approve the proposed 2020 Budget for our beloved parish of St. George along with the proposed amendment to the Parish By-Laws (Allowable amount for Parish Council to spend). As is our custom, the proposed 2020 Budget and the proposed amendment to the Parish By-Laws will be emailed out and mailed out one week prior to our meeting to give everyone the opportunity to read it over and review it. We ask everyone to make every effort to read the Proposed Budget and come to the meeting with our thoughts, ideas, questions. So that together, as a parish family, with one voice, one heart, and one mind, we may come together for the building up of The Body of Christ here at our beloved parish of St. George. Looking forward to coming together as a parish family on December 22 to review and discuss the life and mission of our beloved parish of St. George. If anyone has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to see or contact Fr. Jason, Amil, or any member of the parish council.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Sunday December 1

Youth Sunday

Church School Q&A with Fr. Jay (The Acts of the Holy Apostles)

Church School Nativity Outreach Project

Friday December 6

The Feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

Divine Liturgy - 9:30 AM

Parish Family Night

Rehearsal for Church School St. Nicholas/Nativity Program - 6:00 to 9:00 PM

Sunday December 8

Annual Church School St. Nicholas/Nativity Program

New Pajamas Collection for Roswell Park - due December 15

Christmas Gifts for Our Lady of Victory Children - due December 15

ADULT EDUCATION/BIBLE STUDY

We will be having a Bible Study class two Wednesdays each month (1st and 3rd Wednesdays) from 10 am beginning on Wednesday December 4. There will also be evening classes beginning the same day, December 4, after Compline (6 pm) and class at 6:30 pm. The topic will be The Holy Gospels. Come engage with the Holy Fathers and their commentaries as we learn and come to understand The Holy Gospels by reading, discussing, and reviewing The Holy Gospels!

SISTERHOOD OF ST. GEORGE

We will be collecting Christmas Cookies to donate to Hearts for the Homeless. Please bring your cookies to church on December 15.

Up-Coming Events

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD

A new parish tradition will begin this year with the sending of a Parish Christmas Card. The cost is only \$10 per family. The idea of sending a parish Christmas Card is to extend the greetings and prayerful best wishes of The Nativity of Our Lord to our families, friends, and neighbors.

If we would like to have our name in the Christmas Card, please fill out the form with how we would like our name to appear in the card and hand it in to Amil no later December 8 along with your payment of \$10.00. Besides our names, we will also have a Nativity Message and Greeting from our parish family.

Thank you for your continued generosity and support.

Looking forward to seeing our Parish Christmas Card bring the joy, love, and peace of The Nativity of Our Lord to everyone!

May God continue to bless and guide all of you and your family.

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH SEMINARIAN SPONSORSHIP

Sbdn. Maximos, Michelle, and their daughter Madeline

1st Year Seminarian at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary

I am 36 years old, happily married to my wife Michelle of 14 years. We have one daughter, Madeline, who is 11 years old. Madeline is homeschooled, and Michelle is her primary teacher. Madeline also takes liberal arts and Greek courses through Saint Raphael Orthodox School online.

I have a Bachelor Degree in English with a minor in Philosophy from the University of North Texas, where I was a jazz guitar major before switching to English. Before coming to seminary, I worked for the Social Security Administration for 14 years, most recently serving as District Manager in the local office in Denton, TX. Our home parish is St. Maximus the Confessor Orthodox Church, Denton, TX in the Diocese of the South, OCA. Our home pastor is Fr. Justin Frederick. We are grateful to have had him as a spiritual father these past several years.

We were received into the Church through Holy Baptism on Lazarus Saturday, 2012, at St. Maximus. I grew up more or less Baptist, and my wife came from an Assembly of God and Baptist background. Before converting to Orthodoxy, we were very involved for about 7 years at a Reformed Baptist megachurch in the Dallas metroplex, serving in various leadership roles in homegroups, worship ministries, helping plant a church in Denton, and other capacities. We had an overall good experience at this church and had many good relationships there. It was with much heartache that we left, but we had become convinced of the truth of Orthodoxy and knew that we could not turn away from it. Christ and the saints were there, with the promise of true healing. We knew that the path to salvation had been shown to us, and we could only be obedient to follow it into the Orthodox Church. I was tonsured as a Reader in 2016, then ordained as a Subdeacon in 2019. With the encouragement and blessing of our parish priest, along with others close to us, we are now at St. Tikhon's in obedience to a call to pursue formation for the priesthood, Lord willing. Beginning with fiscal year 2020-2021 (January to December), we will be sponsoring Sbdn. Maximos, Michelle and Madeline: \$1,000.00/year. In order to begin the process of supporting them, in response to the Annual Parish Meeting held on Sunday November 24, we are asking for donation of Gift Cards to Target, Wegmans, Visa Gift Card to send to The Gibsons as our Parish Christmas Gift to them. We will also be holding a special coffee hour in December to establish funds so that we can send raised funds this year along with Christmas Gifts for Sbdn. Maximos, Michelle, and Madeline. If anyone would like to contribute to our "Adopt a Seminarian Fund", please see or contact Fr. Jason or Barbara Kuvshinoff.

PARISH SHUT-INS

As we say our daily prayers, let us also take time out to remember our loved ones who are homebound, who are in hospitals and who are in nursing homes. Let us remember them that GOD will continue to watch over them and protect them. Also, during the Year, let us take to either send them a card, give them a call, or visit them to let them know how much we love them, how much we remember them, and how much we pray for them.

If anyone has any questions or would like to add someone to our List of Parish Shut-Ins, please see or contact Fr. Jason.

Mr. Albert Fadell
317.376.2562

Mr. Miro Gergoff
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Mrs. Mary Massey
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Mrs. Diane Salvamoser
147 West Hazeltine Avenue
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Reader Victor Shanchuk
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Mrs. Catherine Tony
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Tonawanda, NY 14150
716.695.3068

ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHURCH BOOKSTORE

When you are in the Parish Fellowship Hall for coffee hour, don't forget to check out our Bookstore. We have some new items that just arrived. These items include icon ornaments, jewelry, icons, prayer books, prayer ropes, and much more. If you need a gift, come check out the bookstore.... you may find something you like!! We are also offering gift certificates for our bookstore. Please speak with Dave or Andrea for more details/information. We thank David and Andrea who are managing our bookstore for us. If you have any questions or if you would like to order something that you do not see, please see or contact Dave or Andrea and they will be able to assist you. You may also email them at bookstore@stgeorgebuffalo.com. May God continue to bless and guide all of you.

Our Parish Outreach Missions:

Hearts for the Homeless

There are over 400 red bins located throughout the area. The organization collects items to sell in the thrift store as well as items that can be recycled. With the money earned, they provide meals for the homeless of Buffalo from their mobile soup kitchen as well as a food pantry open to local families. They also are in need of donations of food for the soup kitchen and food pantry. The website is <http://heartsforthehomeless.org>

Homespace

The mission of Homespace is to provide not only transitional housing, but also provide support programs to help families in need break away from dependency and begin a new life of personal growth and economic independence. Homespace provides affordable housing for young (ages 16 - 21), homeless, single parent families.

To see what kind of donations they need, see their website which is <http://www.homespacecorp.org>

Buffalo City Mission:

This organization provides meals, shelter, and services to the homeless. They are looking for donations of canned goods and other non-perishable food. The website is www.buffalocitymission.org

Mats for Mission:

This organization collects grocery store bags which they cut into strips and after looping the strips together, crochet mats for the homeless. The homeless put the mats on the ground under their blankets. The mats provide a dry warm base for sleeping on. There is a bin in the social hall to place your grocery bags in. We meet monthly on the second Tuesday of the month to sort and cut bags. Dinner is provided. Come and join us.

Please bring these items to church and place them in the collection bins located in the Parish Fellowship Hall. Once a month, we will take these items down to the Hearts for Homeless, HomeSpace, and Buffalo City Mission.

Kevin Guest House

Once a month we provide dinner, conversation, and prayer for the residents of the Kevin Guest House. The residents are patients and their caregivers who are under treatment at local hospitals. If you would like to get involved, dinner is served the second Tuesday of the month. Bring something to share (see Fr. Jason) or just come to share in the conversation and prayer.

Diocesan Ministries

AN INVITATION TO SUPPORT THE STEWARDS OF THE OCA

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) set the direction for expanding our apostolic work in North America at the 18th All-American Council. The foundation for this work is Jesus Christ, Whom we encounter in our spiritual lives, stewardship, evangelism and outreach, and relations with others as we engage the world. Being a steward of the OCA goes beyond the financial gifts which support the work of our church. Being a steward is about caring for and knowing the history of the mission of the Orthodox Church here in North America and finding your place in that history. Having received this great gift of our Orthodox Faith, we bear the responsibility to continue the legacy of Saint Herman and Saint Tikhon; Saint Innocent and Saint Alexis and all the other saints known and unknown who have worked to build up and expand Christ's Church here in North America. Please consider being a part of that mission today by giving to the Stewards of the OCA. For more information, please visit The OCA Website: <https://oca.org/become-a-steward>

AN INVITATION TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF THE DDB

In order to fund necessary ministries and fulfill the work of the Church in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors** generously contribute financial support. To learn more about the DDB, please go to the following link: <http://vimeo.com/71021182> and watch a 60 second video inviting you to join the ever-growing list of Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors of The Diocese of New York and New Jersey who joyfully support the on-going work of our diocese. Their support allows us to provide assistance to new mission parishes, scholarships to seminarians, support the departments of The Diocese, and much-needed encouragement to older struggling parishes. How about you? Our parish is a member of the DDB. If anyone would like to join, please see Fr. Jason as well as take a pamphlet from the table in the back of the church. May God continue to bless and guide you for your continued support.

MONTHLY PUBLICATIONS

The Diocese of New York and New Jersey has two monthly newsletters: **"First Fruits"** and **"Beyond the Plateau."** The goal, as expressed by Archbishop Michael, is to increase communication and grow the communal spirit of diocesan fellowship in the building-up and strengthening of our parish communities. To learn more about these monthly diocesan publications, please refer to the diocesan website: <http://www.nynjoca.org/newsletters.html>.

"LESSONS IN OUR FAITH" VIDEO PRESENTED BY HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

His Eminence Archbishop Michael presents a series of talks on matters of faith, belief, and the teachings of the Church. These instructional videos are concise and to the point, offering Orthodox Christians much-needed information, helpful advice for their spiritual journey, and assistance in answering questions that may come from non-Orthodox friends or acquaintances. The goal is that we might better know and better live our faith. These instructional videos can be found at the Diocesan Website: <http://www.nynjoca.org>! **There are 14 videos! Be sure to check them out.**

St. George Orthodox Church December Calendar

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|----------|--|---|--|---|--|
| 1 9:40 am Hours 10 am Divine Liturgy followed by Q&A with Fr. Jay & Coffee Hour Fellowship | 2 | 3 9 am Matins | 4 6:00 pm Paraklesis Service 6:30 pm Bible Study | 5 Eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker 9 am Akathist Service 6 pm Great Vespers with Litiya | 6 Feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker 9:30 am Divine Liturgy Parish Family Night (Rehearsal for Church School Nativity/St. Nicholas Program) 6-9 pm | 7 4 pm Great Vespers |
| 8 9 am Matins 10 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Special Coffee Hour Fellowship Annual Church School Nativity/St. Nicholas Program | 9 | 10 9 am Matins 6:30 pm Mats for Missions | 11 5:30 -7:30 pm Monthly Dinner at Kevin Guest House | 12 9 am Akathist Service | 13 Feast fo the Repost of St. Herman 9:00 am Moleben Service | 14 4 pm Great Vespers Parish Council Meeting 5:00 PM |

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|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| <p>15</p> <p>9:40 am Hours 10 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Church School and Coffee Hour Fellowship</p> <p>Pajamas for Roswell, Cookies for Hearts for Homeless, and Christmas gifts due today</p> | <p>16</p> <p>6:00 pm Little Compline Service</p> | <p>17</p> <p>9 am Matins 6:00 pm Little Compline Service</p> | <p>18</p> <p>10 am Bible Study 6 pm Little Compline Service 6:30-8pm Bible Study</p> | <p>19</p> <p>9 am Akathist 6:00 pm Little Compline Service</p> | <p>20</p> <p>6:00 pm Little Compline Service</p> | <p>21</p> <p>4 pm Great Vespers</p> |
| <p>22</p> <p>9:30 am Service of General Confession 10 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Church School & Coffee Hour Fellowship</p> <p>Annual Budget Meeting during Coffee Hour</p> | <p>23</p> <p>9:30 AM Royal Hours</p> | <p>24</p> <p>Eve of the Feast of Our Lord and Savior According to the Flesh 9 am Vespers with Liturgy of St. Basil 4:30 Festal Vigil Service</p> | <p>25</p> <p>Nativity of Our Lord and Savior According to the Flesh 9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy Parish Nativity Brunch in Parish Fellowship Hall following Liturgy</p> | <p>26</p> <p>Synaxis of The Theotokos 9:30 am Festal Divine Liturgy</p> | <p>27</p> <p>Feast of St. Stephen 9:00 am Moleben Service in Honor of The Nativity of Our Lord 6:30 pm Church School outing to Our Lady of Fatima Shrine for the Festival of Lights</p> | <p>28</p> <p>4 pm Great Vespers</p> |
| <p>29</p> <p>10 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Nativity Luncheon 1:00 pm Visitations to Parish Shut-ins</p> | <p>30</p> | <p>31</p> <p>Eve of the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord/ St. Basil's Feast Day/ New Year's Eve 4pm Great Vespers with Litiya</p> | <p>1</p> <p>Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord/ St. Basil's Feast Day/ New Year's Day 9:30 am Divine Liturgy followed by Moleben for the New Year and Blessing of St. Basil Bread Brunch at the Rectory</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>4</p> <p>9:00 am Royal Hours 4pm Great Vespers</p> |

