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NATIVITY FAST [SAINT PHILIP'S FAST-PILIPKIVA]

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Anastasia [Metropolitan Yuriy's mom], Metropolitan Theodosius [OCA], Archbishop Jovan, Bishop Robert, Father George & Pani Lillian Hnatko, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father Nestor Kowal, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Protopresbyter William Diakiw, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Adam Yonitch, Pani-Dobrodijka Sonia Diakiw, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynech, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Stella Peanoske, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, George Rocknage, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—21-year-old with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik,

Michael Pryhodzenko, Sonia Luciw, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Mary Pelino, Yvonne Christy, Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Loretta, Nancy, Carol, & Michael Sheliga, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed, Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Mikaela Kapeluck, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Helen Bozo, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Donald Griffey, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Stroz [child with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Richard Dunst, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Howard Simpson, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Jerry Quinn, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Barbara McDougall, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Virginia Catherine Pynch, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Nancy Heinbaugh, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Manny "Lazarus" Lopez, Glenn & Lucas Burlack, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Michael Pawlyshyn, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Stella McKeag, Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaugenhaupt, Louis & Teresa Bercelli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Sarah Dorning, Evelyn Burlack, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's

niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Denis Strittmatter, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Bishop Athanasius Akunda of Western Kenya, and Susan Pulcini—Father Ted Pulcini’s mom. ARNOLD: Homer Paul Kline. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

The more days of fasting there are, the better the healing is; the longer the period of abstinence, the more abundant the gain of salvation is. *Blessed Augustine*

FATHER BOB WILL BE OUT OF TOWN THIS WEEKEND. If you need the services of an Orthodox priest, please contact President Andy Torick for a list of local clergy. Please be safe and God Bless! Fr. Bob

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS: All Christians and the others in the Middle East who are suffering during this time of great tragedy and unrest. May God watch over and keep them safe! Lord have mercy!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16 READER SERVICE DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM
29TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; PROPHET ZEPHANIAH; VENERABLE
THEODULUS-EPARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE; VENERABLE JOHN THE SILENT OF**

SAINT SABBAS MONASTERY; HIEROMARTYR THEODORE-ARCHBISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA

Tone 4

Timothy 1:15-17

Luke 18:18-27

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23 OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM
30TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; MARTYRS MENAS, HERMOGENES, &
EUGRAPHUS; MARTYR GERNELLUS OF PAPHLAGONIA; VENERABLE THOMAS OF
BITHYNIA**

Tone 5

Colossians 3:12-16

Luke 17:12-19

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30 OBEDNITZA DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CHURCH HALL 10:30 AM
31ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS;
HOLY PROPHET DANIEL; THE THREE HOLY YOUTHS: ANANIAS, AZARIAS, &
MISAEEL; SAINT DANIEL THE CONFESSOR—IN SCHEMA STEPHEN**

Tone 6

Colossians 3:4-11; Hebrews 11:33-12:2

Luke 14:16-24; Luke 11:47-12:1

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 16 DECEMBER 2018

READER SERVICE IN CHURCH HALL—BASEMENT

**29TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; PROPHET ZEPHANIAH;
VENERABLE THEODULUS-EPARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE;
VENERABLE JOHN THE SILENT OF SAINT SABBAS MONASTERY;
HIEROMARTYR THEODORE-ARCHBISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA**

TROPARION—TONE 4

When the women disciples of the Lord
Learned from the angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection;
They cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles:
Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen,
Granting the world great mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 4

My Savior and Redeemer,
As God rose from the tomb

And delivered the earthborn from their chains.
He has shattered the gates of Hell,
And as Master, He has risen on the third day!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 4

READER: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

PEOPLE: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

READER: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great!

PEOPLE: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

READER: O Lord, how manifold are thy works!

PEOPLE: In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 4

Go forth and prosper and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness.

You love righteousness and hate iniquity.

THE VIRTUES OF ST NICHOLAS

Fr Luke Veronis

Sinter Klaas, the Dutch name that we Americans transliterated into Santa Claus, obviously refers to Saint Nicholas, one of the most beloved of all saints throughout the world, and whose memory we celebrate this week, on December 6. Travel across Europe and you can literally find thousands of churches named in honor of St. Nicholas. Greece and Russia look upon St. Nicholas as the patron of their country. In fact, in almost every port throughout Greece you will find a St. Nicholas Chapel, signifying him as the patron of sailors. And not only sailors, but orphans and children turn to St. Nicholas as their patron and protector.

Although our American secular society has tried to turn this greatest of saints into a jolly, fat man who wears a funny red outfit and brings a good spirit and lots of gifts to children on Christmas day, we Orthodox Christians never want to lose sight of Nicholas the saint, the 4th century Bishop of Myra, whose real life has inspired so many people throughout the world that they have created countless legends and stories lauding his Christ-like spirit.

Since childhood, many of us have heard stories of Nicholas' generosity, like when the saint helped the poor man with three daughters by tossing bags of gold into his house. Although certain stories or legends may seem far-fetched, we must take care not to lose their underlying meaning, which lift up one of the many Christ-like virtues which St. Nicholas so beautifully exemplified in his life, and which we also are called to cultivate in our own lives.

What were some of these characteristics? First of all, St. Nicholas, like all saints, stood up for the truth of God. Nicholas lived through the persecutions of Diocletian, one of the last Roman emperors who persecuted Christians in the 4th century. Under the threat of imprisonment and even possible death, Nicholas continued to preach the love of God and proclaim His truth. And he suffered for it. The Romans imprisoned him and threatened his life, yet he wouldn't deny the truth, nor waver in his strict stance for the standards of the Gospel. This same zeal for the truth came out during the First Ecumenical Council, when Nicholas the bishop defended the fullness of our faith—that Jesus was fully God and one with the Father—against various false teachings that were very popular during his day.

His courage and boldness to live out a Christ-like life, and incarnate the truth, even when the surrounding society ridiculed and even threatened such a lifestyle, is something with which we contemporary Christians must learn. Christianity, as an authentic way of life, is not for the fainthearted. Christianity was never meant to be a 'status-quo,' comfortable, easy religion of the masses. Christ called his followers to a life of divine love, which automatically implies a life of sacrifice and humble service to others. This is why Jesus reminded us that few people will have the courage and commitment to walk that narrow path!

And here lies a second quality that stands out from the life of St. Nicholas. Not only as a bishop and a good shepherd of the Church, but simply as a Christian, Nicholas needed to fight against the temptation of self-centeredness—an illness of our fallen nature that plagues each of us—and he did this by constantly looking for ways to reach out to others, especially helping the oppressed, defenseless, and marginalized people of society. Bishop Nicholas was not a leader who reveled in power and authority, but he understood himself as a disciple of the One who washed His disciples' feet and who constantly cared for the poor. Being a Christian is all about serving others, thus Christian leadership must be servant leadership—always placing the needs of others before ourselves!

We have many stories of Nicholas reaching out in compassion and kindness to the orphaned, to the estranged, to the prisoners, and especially to the defenseless. As I try to repeat in many of my sermons, sincere Christianity points to “the other,” to those outside of ourselves. Love of God means love of our neighbor, and love of the other. We as Christians, and the Church as the Body of Christ, must always have our central attention on charity, outreach and mission—bringing God’s love to others!

The world outside can be an isolated, lonely, often harsh, and an even mean place to live. How bright our light will shine if we radiate Christ’s unconditional compassion, kindness, love, and charity, as St. Nicholas did throughout his lifetime.

A third virtue we must live up from St. Nicholas’ life is his generosity. Bishop Nicholas suffered the life of an orphan, having lost both his parents in his teenage years. Yet from the moment that Nicholas received a rich inheritance, he understood good Christian Stewardship, and generously distributed his wealth to those in need. He did not seek to use his wealth for his own well-being and comfort, but realized that his wealth represented a test and temptation, and thus used it to enrich others!

When Christ’s Spirit fills the heart of a disciple, we joyously want to imitate our Lord’s example by giving all that we have to help others. True joy comes through giving. True meaning in life comes from helping and serving others. And the generosity of our giving reflects the maturity of our faith!

A final aspect that St. Nicholas so beautifully exemplified in his giving was the spirit of anonymity. He gave generously, but never for fame or for praise. He simply gave because he understood how generous God was to him first. Everything he had was God’s, and he didn’t want to take credit for anything he gave away. How much can we all learn from that, in this day and age—to give in a secret manner, all for the glory of God!

A courageous and bold defender of the truth, a compassionate and loving helper of the defenseless and needy, and a generous and humble steward of God’s gifts—these represent some of the many virtues of the true Santa Claus, St. Nicholas.

Throughout this Advent season of Christmas, when we see and hear many references to a fat, jolly old man in the red suit, and even as we read books or tell stories to our children and grandchildren about Santa Claus, let us never lose sight of the true Santa Claus—Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra. And let us try to live out and then teach our children and

grandchildren about the Christ-like virtues that made Nicholas one of the world's most beloved patrons and saints!

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and Archbishop of Myra in Lycia **[Troparion & Kontakion](#)**

"O Who Loves Nicholas the Saintly" --

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pIxL80wh80>

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. Saint 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 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 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 also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving

the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, Saint 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 Saint 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. Saint 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, Saint Nicholas gave thanks to the Savior. He went to all the holy places, worshipping 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, Saint 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, Saint 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 Saint Constantine (May 21) as emperor, Saint Nicholas was restored to his flock, which joyfully received their guide and intercessor.

Despite his great gentleness of spirit and purity of heart, Saint 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 Saint 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 Saints Sylvester the Bishop of Rome (January 2), Alexander of Alexandria (May 29), Spyridon of Trimythontos (December 12) and other Fathers of the Council.

Saint 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 Saint 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 Saint Nicholas. Evil men slandered them before the emperor, and the officers were sentenced to death. Appearing to Saint Constantine in a dream, Saint 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, Saint 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 name of the great saint of God, the hierarch and wonderworker Nicholas, a speedy helper and suppliant for all hastening to him, is famed in every corner of the earth, in many lands and among many peoples. In Russia there are a multitude of cathedrals, monasteries and churches consecrated in his name. There is, perhaps, not a single city without a church dedicated to him.

The first Russian Christian prince Askold (+ 882) was baptized in 866 by Patriarch Photius (February 6) with the name Nicholas. Over the grave of Askold, Saint Olga (July 11) built the first temple of Saint Nicholas in the Russian Church at Kiev. Primary cathedrals were dedicated to Saint Nicholas at Izborsk, Ostrov, Mozhaisk, and Zaraisk. At Novgorod the Great, one of the main churches of the city, the Nikolo-Dvorischensk church, later became a cathedral.

Famed and venerable churches and monasteries dedicated to Saint Nicholas are found at Kiev, Smolensk, Pskov, Toropetsa, Galich, Archangelsk, Great Ustiug, Tobolsk. Moscow had dozens of churches named for the saint, and also three monasteries in the Moscow diocese: the Nikolo-Greek (Staryi) in the Chinese-quarter, the Nikolo-Perervinsk and the Nikolo-Ugreshsk. One of the chief towers of the Kremlin was named the Nikolsk.

Many of the churches devoted to the saint were those established at market squares by Russian merchants, sea-farers and those who traveled by land, venerating the wonderworker Nicholas as a protector of all those journeying on dry land and sea. They sometimes received the name among the people of "Nicholas soaked."

Many village churches in Russia were dedicated to the wonderworker Nicholas, venerated by peasants as a merciful intercessor before the Lord for all the people in their work. And in the Russian land Saint Nicholas did not cease his intercession. Ancient Kiev preserves the memory about the miraculous rescue of a drowning infant by the saint. The great wonderworker, hearing the grief-filled prayers of the parents for the loss of their only child, took the infant from the waters, revived him and placed

him in the choir-loft of the church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) before his wonderworking icon. In the morning the infant was found safe by his thrilled parents, praising Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Many wonderworking icons of Saint Nicholas appeared in Russia and came also from other lands. There is the ancient Byzantine embordered image of the saint, brought to Moscow from Novgorod, and the large icon painted in the thirteenth century by a Novgorod master.

Two depictions of the wonderworker are especially numerous in the Russian Church: Saint Nicholas of Zaraisk, portrayed in full-length, with his right hand raised in blessing and with a Gospel (this image was brought to Ryazan in 1225 by the future wife of Prince Theodore, the Byzantine Princess Eupraxia, who perished in 1237 with her husband and infant son during the incursion of Batu); and Saint Nicholas of Mozhaisk, also in full stature, with a sword in his right hand and a city in his left. This recalls the miraculous rescue of the city of Mozhaisk from an invasion of enemies, through the prayers of the saint. It is impossible to list all the grace-filled icons of Saint Nicholas, or to enumerate all his miracles.

Saint Nicholas is the patron of travelers, and we pray to him for deliverance from floods, poverty, or any misfortunes. He has promised to help those who remember his parents, Theophanes and Nonna.

Saint Nicholas is also commemorated on May 9 (The transfer of his relics) and on July 29 (his nativity).

Shamelessly stolen from Father Ted Pulcini's e-mails to his parish!

The Twenty Eighth Sunday after Pentecost Luke 18:35-43

And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

In the current Gospel reading, the blind man cried to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy. In the Divine services of the Church, pleas for the Lord's mercy are abundant. The Lord is attentive to pleas for mercy.

The Church never ceases to turn to the Lord for mercy. The Divine services are filled with petitions for mercy. Church litanies are comprehensive in seeking the Lord's mercy.

The blind man's desire for mercy reflected his faith. The man's faith was fervent. He was not deterred when rebuked and told to hold his peace. The man persisted in appealing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The internal desire for healing was strong. Hope emanated from within this man. He sensed healing was possible in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ healed the man. He received his sight.

The Lord Jesus Christ changed this believer's life dramatically. Jesus Christ continues to change lives. The Epistle to the Hebrews states: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."(Heb.13:8)

Faith's importance is recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel : "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."(Mt.17:20)

Having doubts in Christ has no place in the Christian life. The saints and martyrs of the Church witness to the value of firm faith. The blind man had firm faith. He came to know joy in Christ.

Within the depth of the blind man's being, knowledge existed of the power of Christ. Hope existed in the man. The man did not give in to despair or despondency. He was not content with his condition.

Individuals suffering from difficult conditions today benefit from turning to Christ. Believers in Christ will find the way to address personal illnesses and afflictions.

Firm believers find strength, support and compassion in Christ. Life's meaning for each person becomes apparent as believers look deeply at themselves and their relationship with Christ.

When he received his sight, the blind man became a magnificent witness for the glory of God and the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ. He experienced immeasurable and lasting joy in Christ.

The healed man's world view changed. Christ changed the man's life immeasurably. Christ changes every firm believer's life. The healing of the blind man gives new vision to attentive believers.

The Holy Gospel opens the eyes of all looking to Christ in faith. The Holy Gospel establishes a world view that reaches beyond finite daily life. The

Holy Gospel enables believers to look to the eternal.

Christ verified the importance of the man's faith. God's Holy Church values the healing of the blind man. The Church has kept this miracle as part of the Holy Gospel and proclaims it year after year.

The Church wants and expects attentive listeners to learn from this Gospel reading. The healing of the blind man establishes hope in Christ for believers with various afflictions.

Christ's verification of the man's faith is a lesson for believers of every age.

The man's life became completely new. He was thoroughly appreciative and gave glory to God.

Giving thanks to God has a place in every Christian life. Christians pray to God constantly. God answers prayers at all times. Not every Christian takes time to thank God.

Not every Christian increases the commitment to God in thanksgiving for prayers answered. Gratitude to God for prayers answered is shown by an increase in faithfulness to God.

The best way to thank God is to abide by God's teachings and standards. In the Gospel of St. Luke we find the words: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."(Lk.11:28)

The Church wants believers to always learn from the Holy Gospel. Christians are not to remain stagnant in their relationship with Christ. Growth is intended during all the days of life.

The Holy Apostle Paul told the Romans: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom.12:2)

The Twenty Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. Venerable Father Alypius the Stylite.
November 26/December 9, 2018. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

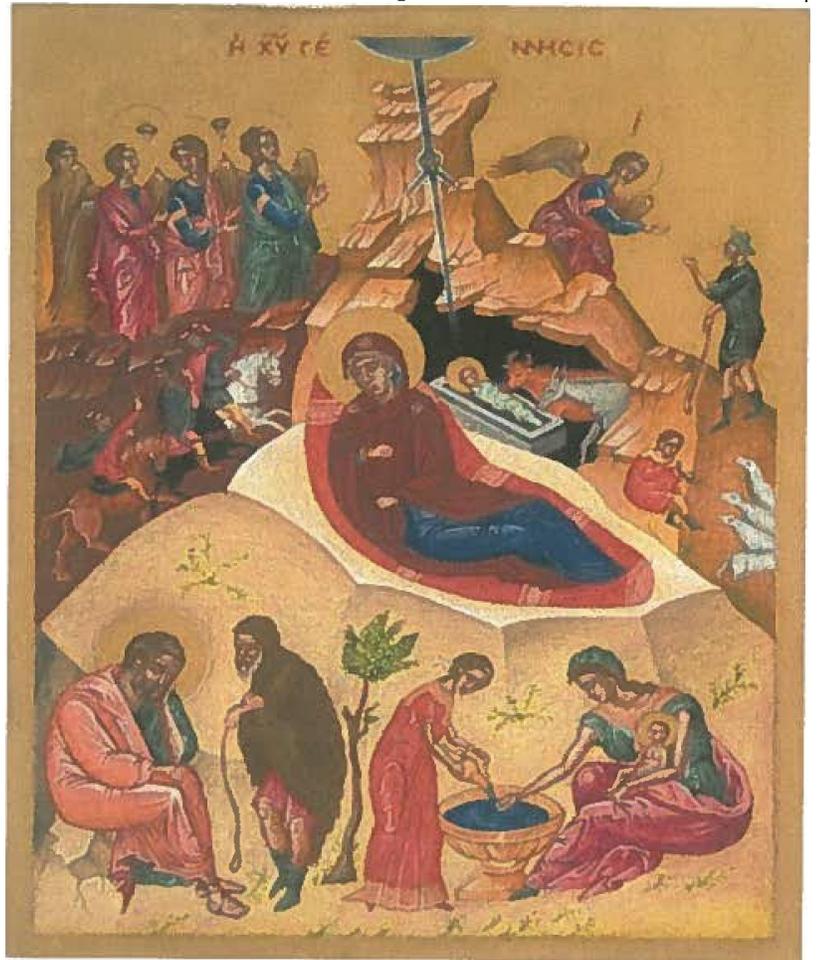
Father Rodney Torbic

Preparing for Our Lord's Nativity

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For the first four centuries of Christian history the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord was not a separate Church feast. It was celebrated with Epiphany in one great feast of God's appearance on earth in the form of the human Messiah of Israel. The celebration of the Nativity began to be celebrated on December 25 to offset the pagan festival of the "Invincible Sun" that occurred on that specific day. The Church consciously established it in an attempt to defeat the false religion of the heathens.

The Troparion of the Feast calls us to adore Christ, "the True Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2), who is Himself worshipped by all elements of nature, rather than worshipping the sun and stars. The three Wise Men or Magi (i.e. Sages) were astronomers, people who studied the stars. Even the Pagan World had a prophecy of the birth of a great king. Saints Gaspar, Melchoir and Balthazar followed the unusual star and became the first non-Jewish people to believe in Christ.



Troparion/Apolytikion

4th Tone

Your nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world. For therein the worshippers of the stars were by a star instructed to worship You, the very Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord.

Kontakion

3rd Tone by St Romanos the Melodist

On this day, the Virgin gives birth unto the Super-essential. To the Unapproachable, earth is providing the grotto. Angels sing and with the shepherds offer up glory. Following a star the Magi are still proceeding. He

was born for our salvation, a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God.

Translation by Hieromonk Seraphim Dedes

Things To Do as a Family

Place an Icon of the Nativity of Christ in a special place in your home. Use it with your children to talk about the Nativity Story and each individual or important item in the icon. Set up a Nativity scene with your children to keep in their room or the family room. Have a family member tell the Nativity story as the Scene is assembled.

Use the Troparion and Kontakion as part of your family's mealtime and bedtime prayers on Christmas Day, and for the eight days following the feast (the Afterfeast).

Read the Nativity Gospel: Luke 2:1-20. Very young children may enjoy a children's version of the Nativity story from a Bible Storybook. With younger children, it is best to read the story several times during the week. Consider using the Nativity scene figures to retell the story.

Attend the Vesper-Liturgy on Christmas Eve or the Liturgy on Christmas Day. This will keep the focus of this Holy Day on Christ's birth and its importance in our life and salvation. Be proactive when making choices.

Visit a shut-in parishioner or friend. Plan ahead so you can bring Antidoron, the Blessed Bread from the Christmas Liturgy and a Church Bulletin, plus a homemade gift to share along with your Christmas greeting:

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!