



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM! CHRISTOS RAZDIETSIA! SLAVITE YEHO!

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Archbishop Jovan, Metropolitan Savas, Father Paul & Pani Judy Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smoly nec, Father Lawrence Daniels, Father Joe & Protinica Linda Cervo, Igumen Patrick, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Father Vasyl Sendeha, Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Father Angelo Artemas, Father John Haluszczak, Father Christopher Bender, Dr. Christina Nellis, Father Joshua [Anna], Father Justin (Todd) Mokhiber, Pani Cathy Danczak, Monk Andrew, Father Dan & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Pani Debbie Harvey, Pastor Terry & Lisa Polen, Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, 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, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop 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, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, 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, Gene Blair [Pani Gina's dad], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey

Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Strozh [young lady with cerebral palsy], Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, 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, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Margie Sekelsky, Fran Fulton, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaugenhaupt, Louis Berceli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Darcy, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat & Jan Jennings, Mike Ruzzi, Mary Kay Ludovicy, George Dilendorf, Sharon Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Theresa Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Jeff & Buschra Kerr, Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Rita & Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik, Eleanor Kitt, Maria Warholak, Christy, Mariruth, Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Tim—surgery, Olivia—girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko, John, Kris, & Kait, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Amy Forbeck, David Salazar, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Alexandra Roberts, Candace, Dave, Jared, & Beth Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr.,

Elizabeth, Susan & Greg Heinen & Jenette Wittik, Paul Simpson [Father Bob's cousin], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Adam Snow, the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, the Rodrigues family, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, Samantha & Lisa Houser, Sarah Stepanovich Clark, Julia Baloga, Brett Crosby, Randy Lapuh, Henry Tkacik, Diane & Arthur Chaklis, Denny Mader, Zoe Oswalt—Fr. Bob's cousin, Barbetta [cancer] & Scott, Kristin [cancer], Erm Hartmann, Barbara Bookser, Bob Mazzuca, Marko, Taylor, Terri Crosby-Vega, Christine Mohamed & family, Tammy Marsico, Terry & David Hartnett, Jamie Ball, Kay Williams, Hannah Stewart, Jim Wyko—Alex's friend, Dan Losego, Lisa Bruce, Yvette, Barry Bender, Andrew Zelleznick, Byron & Cecilia Scott, Vespina, Michelle Russo, Julie Tripodi, Debbie—HTUCC, Barbara Morvay, David Salsar, N&O, Randy & Adrienne Kuny, Vince Berardinelli, Mason Martin [Karns City HS QB] & family, Martin Mrvos, Jeff McCoy, Lauren & Sloane Valentina Persico, Alexis & Colton Rosati, Jessica Shirley, Mark [kidney cancer], Steve Milcic, Wilbert Wagner, Bob Wojciechowski, Ashley, Beth, Sharon Svitek, Laura, Christopher, & Jane Dickson, Luke D, Diane Murphy, Kristin Vaughn [Harry's daughter], George Petronsky, Doug & Darcie Burkholder, Michael, Jeane, and Katie Byerly, McGrath, Samantha Lopez, Bob [cancer], Syble Elliott, Maria Ancevski, Krystyna, John, & Jeffrey, Dottie & family, Bonny Diver & Ashley Smock, Steve, Jill Morocco, Mike Pelino, Maddie Stewart, Hutchinson Family, David Urban, Vicky Moore, Casi [cancer], Ashley & Andy, Marion Mamula, Dominic [cancer], Diane Hughes, Jenny Case, Mary & Carl Stepanovich, Susie Fierst, Edward Poturich, Jeff, Chris, & Mills family, Kate Rapina & Mother Oksana, Sarah's son, Rachel, Alex, & little Charlie, Steve & Vonnie Gerson, Eva, Pamela & Doug, Nora, Mike & Jane, Mary Ann [Stage 4 cancer] & Lisa, Barbara Gardner & Mark Egleton, Donna Karas & Ross Rawe, Susan [cancer], Rose Marie, Tim Pruss, Donna & Laura Kloock, Tom Katona, Chris & Elisa Astorino, Dale & Nancy Burns, Cathy Metrick [Fr. Bob's cousin], Brianna [cancer] & Amanda, Gretchen, and Lauren, Dan, & Daphne Iona... We pray that God will grant them all a complete and speedy recovery.

As you sail across the sea of the intellect, put your trust in Jesus, for secretly in your heart He says: 'Fear not, my child Jacob, the least of Israel; fear not, you worm Israel, I will protect you' (cf. Isa. 41:13-14). If God is for us, what evil one is against us (cf. Rom. 8:31)? St. Hesychius the Theologian of Jerusalem, disciple of St. Gregory the Theologian, Philokalia, Vol. 1 p. 188

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is **NOTHING** to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters, police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be **SAFE!!!** God Bless!

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and ALL 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] 956-6626.**

SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE

SUNDAY, January 18, 2026 *******NO SERVICE IN SLICKVILLE*******
32ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY; THEOPHANY EVE; MARTYRS THEOPEMPTUS-BISHOP OF NICOMEDIA; VENERABLE SYNCLETICA OF ALEXANDRIA; PROPHET MICAH; VENERABLE VIRGIN APOLLINARIS OF EGYPT
Tone 7
1 Corinthians 9:19-27
Luke 3:1-18

SUNDAY, January 25 **OBEDNITZA—SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM—UPSTAIRS**
10:30 AM
33RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; ZACCHAEUS SUNDAY; SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY; AFTERFEAST OF THE THEOPHANY; MARTYR TATIANA OF ROME; MARTYR MERTIUS OF MAURETANIA; MARTYR PERER APSELAMUS; VENERABLE EUPRAXIA OF TABENNA IN EGYPT
*******Blessing of Waters Downstairs after Service *******
Tone 8
1 Timothy 4:9-15; Ephesians 4:7-13; 1 Timothy 1:15-17
Luke 19:1-10; Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 18:35-43

SUNDAY, February 01 *******NO SERVICE IN SLICKVILLE*******

**34TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN & THE PHARISEE;
SAINT MACARIUS THE GREAT OF EGYPT; VIRGIN-MARTYR EUPHRASIA OF
NICOMEDIA; VENERABLE MACARIUS OF ALEXANDRIA; SAINT ARSENIUS-
ARCHBISHOP OF KERKYRA; VENERABLE MACARIUS OF PERCHEVSKY
LAVRA; VENERABLE MACARIUS-DEACON OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA**

Tone 1

2 Timothy 3:10-15

Luke 18:10-14

*Litany in Blessed Memory of Milton G. Chicka, Nickolai Pivtoriako, Evelyn
Burlack, Anne Cherepko Mazock, Roy Wyke, and Katherine Debick—Fr. Bob*

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 18 JANUARY 2026

**32ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY;
THEOPHANY EVE; MARTYRS THEOPEMPTUS-BISHOP OF NICOMEDIA;
VENERABLE SYNCLETICA OF ALEXANDRIA; PROPHET MICAH;
VENERABLE VIRGIN APOLLINARIS OF EGYPT**

*******Blessing of Waters Downstairs after Service *******

Troparion for the Eve of the Theophany—Tone 4

The river Jordan was once turned back by Elisha's mantle when Elijah was taken up,

and the waters were divided hither and thither.

The watery path became dry for him as a type of baptism whereby we cross the flowing stream of life.

Christ has appeared in the Jordan to sanctify the waters.

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

Kontakion of the Eve—Tone 4

The Lord cried to John in the running waters of Jordan:

Be not afraid to baptize Me,

for I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man.

PROKEIMENON—TONE 7

READER: The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall bless His people with peace!

PEOPLE: **The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall bless His people with peace!**

READER: Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!

PEOPLE: The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall bless His people with peace!

READER: The Lord shall give strength to His people!

PEOPLE: The Lord shall bless His people with peace!

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 7

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High!

To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night!



From Father Milorad Orlic

St. Nikolaj Velimirovich writes to the teacher Nikola C.:

On Why Christ Had to Be Born, and Not Just Appear?

You have asked: why did the Lord Christ have to be born, then grow, then suffer?

Why did he not, immediately, appear from heaven in the guise of a mature man as, according to hellenic mythology, Apollo appeared to men? It is an entirely inappropriate comparison! How can a real man be equated with a phantom, and the true God with an imagined monstrosity?

As high as Heaven is above the Earth, so exalted is the wisdom of God above the reason of men. By the wisdom of The All-Exalted, Christ had to come into the world as a child, then a youth and finally as a mature man, that He be apprehensible to all, and acquire all. Had He never been a child, pale and cold would be His word: "allow the children and do not forbid them to come to me, for to such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven; and again: "Truly, I say unto you, if you do not repent and become as children, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." You are a teacher of children; as a teacher consider—how completely different would be the

relationship between yourself and the children if you, let us assume, had never been a child?

Christ could have, undoubtedly, appeared to the world as He would have wished. But had He done so, He could not have been to humanity that which He wished to be: The Teacher and Savior of all, and the ideal for all generations. You are tormented by the thought: the Lord, by His wondrous incarnation increased our understanding of the mystery of His being. But would not the mystery of His being be all the more greater and incomprehensible, if He had unexpectedly descended amongst men, and had no relational ties to humanity? Would not the world, in that case, speak of Him as of some sort of phantom? In such a case His person, along with His doctrine and sacrifice, would lose all true basis and true meaning. For if a phantom were in question, who of us would listen to and support a phantom?

Further, The Lord had to be born precisely as He was born that, in doing so, He demonstrate the possibility and emphasize the importance of our spiritual (re)birth, which stands at the center of His teaching about man. According to His words: "If you are not born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God. As He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit, and from the All-Pure body of the Virgin Mary, so we also can be spiritually (re)born of the Holy Spirit and in the purity of our souls. The great spiritual fathers of Orthodoxy always have taught—the new birth of a person is contingent upon the virginal purity of their soul. In other words: the soul which is entirely cleansed, of even sinful thoughts, becomes similar to the holy Virgin, and becomes worthy by God's benevolence to become an abode of Christ. If the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary is difficult for the ordinary mind to contemplate, it is exceptionally beneficial and encouraging for all who desire the spiritual, moral transformation of their being.

Thus, be comforted and give thanks to the eternal Wisdom that the Savior of the human race appeared as He found to be most expedient. And exclaim with the Apostle Paul: O the depths of the riches and wisdom and understanding of God!

And greet the children of your school with childish joy: Christ is born, children!



The Sunday before the Nativity Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying,

Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus. (KJV)

God's Holy Church has arrived at the Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel describes the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers are to contemplate deeply the mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Church has asked believers to devote themselves significantly to preparing for the feast. Increased prayer and fasting have been an expectation. Focusing on the meaning of Jesus taking on human flesh is the primary consideration.

The action of the Holy Spirit has a profound and lasting impact on the believer's understanding. Jesus taking on human flesh changed the world forever. The humble circumstances of Jesus' birth merits thorough consideration.

Celebrating Jesus' birth in the present world requires a resolute focus. Commercialism abounds as profiteers seek to enrich themselves at this time of the year. Keeping the focus on Christ and away from commercialism is a challenge.

The Church offers Divine services to nourish and strengthen believers during the Nativity Fast. The faithful have opportunities to confess their sins and to partake of Jesus Christ's Precious Body and Blood.

The present Gospel identifies specific individuals down through the centuries associated with Jesus' birth. Benefit exists in reading through the Scriptures and learning more about the individuals mentioned.

The time of earthly life is limited. Investing the time of life for the benefit of the soul includes learning more about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Scriptures are readily available to nourish believers' lives within the context of the Church.

God's Holy Church prepares believers for the Feast of the Nativity each year. The Church prepares and guides believers from birth to life eternal. Attentiveness is necessary to learn and grow in Christ.

Embracing Jesus Christ takes place at Baptism. Each day of life believers are to remain united with Christ and seek to grow in Christ. Repentance is possible when believers stray and take paths perilous to the soul.

Jesus Christ's birth is a time of great joy. The Divine taking on human flesh changed the world forever. Jesus Christ's birth is celebrated in the present and brings new hope to the world. The hope Jesus brings is triumphant!

Jesus' birth brings light to overcome the world's darkness. Jesus brings peace to confront the violence prevalent in the world. Jesus' birth establishes joy to eradicate sadness wherever sadness exists.

Thank God for the Church celebrating the Feast of the Nativity. May the New Born Christ fill our lives with peace, love, and joy. Each day is an opportunity to be united with Jesus Christ and to grow in Christ.

The Sunday before the Nativity. Holy Great Martyr Anastasia. Venerable Nikephorus the Leper. Serbian Fathers' Day. December 22, 2025/January 4, 2026 Father Rodney Torbic

One day a nun from the nearby convent of Diveyevo, coming to visit St. Seraphim at his hermitage in the woods near Sarov, found the old monk being visited by a bear. Terrified, the nun let out a scream. The staretz responded by patting the bear and sending it away, but when the nun came to sit beside the elder, the bear returned and lay down by Seraphim's feet. "I was as terrified as before," the nun later recorded, "but when I saw Father Seraphim, quite unconcerned, treating the bear like a lamb, stroking him and giving him bread, I calmed down." Her fear left her entirely.

— at Новодевичий монастырь. shared by our Holy Cross Monastery



CHRISTMAS IN A SMALL PARISH: A TOUCHING MEMORY #84

Dear Father Bob,

On the Feast of the Nativity, we would like to share a simple Christmas memory, told by the daughter of a priest. It is not a story of remarkable

events, but of something far more familiar to many of us: a small parish, a cold church, and the quiet labour of serving the feast with what one has.

This recollection speaks of Christmas as it is often lived in parish life—not in outward splendour, but in faithfulness, togetherness, and a joy that needs no embellishment. We hope it will resonate with your own experience of welcoming the newly-born Christ.



AN UNFORGETTABLE CHRISTMAS

I was about fifteen at the time. My father and I travelled together for Christmas to Saldus—a tiny town in Latvia. Our family was then living in another city, Liepāja, about a hundred kilometres from the parish where my father served. My mother had a newborn in her arms, the weather was bitterly cold, and without us the church and the parish house would not be heated. So it was decided that the two of us would go alone: my father would serve the festal night service, and in the morning we would return home straight away. My older brothers were already studying at seminary, so there was really no alternative—helping my father as regent, singer, and reader fell to me.

When we arrived in Saldus, the temperature in the parish house was exactly zero degrees. In the church it was even colder. The plan was simple: to heat one room as much as possible—the kitchen—and live there. My father lit the stove and brought in a heater; I switched on the cooker and began to cook. We could not imagine Christmas without a festive night meal, even if there were only the two of us at the table.

I should say that I set about cooking with great enthusiasm (where has it gone now?!) and decided to prepare something entirely different from our usual fare. Using recipes found online, I put together a menu: a salad called Tenderness, another called Delight, baked meat (something like meat “à la française”), a cheese-and-meat pie made with puff pastry, potatoes, and—if I remember rightly—something sweet as well.

Wearing a jacket and a hat, cooking on an old stove, I prepared our Christmas table. My father was already in the church—stoking the little stoves and thawing the “holy ice.”

By evening we had managed to warm the kitchen up to a whole +15°C. That was the maximum programme, and we accomplished it successfully.

And then—the Christmas service. The Typikon was always a struggle for me, no matter how much my father tried (and later Fr Michael, who taught Church Typikon at the regents’ school). So it’s quite possible that the service included a few slips. But our small women’s quartet—myself and three other girls—was filled to the brim with Christmas joy. In general, in our little parish the festal exultation of those who came to the night service was felt especially strongly.

A Christmas tree, lovingly set up by the parishioners on Christmas Eve right in the middle of the church, was tall and decorated in an old-fashioned way—with vintage ornaments, garlands, and tinsel.



I remember very clearly how we returned home in a wonderful, festive state of mind, and my father said that never in his life had he broken the fast so deliciously. We went to sleep right there in the kitchen. I don’t remember exactly how my father slept (I think on a bench). I slept on a folding cot, placed with its foot end right up against the stove—exactly where the firewood is fed in—wearing all my outdoor clothes, a hat, thick woollen socks, and covered with a large blanket on top.

In the morning we packed the salads into containers and drove back home to Liepāja. But you know, every Christmas I remember precisely this: Saldus, our dear church, the cold kitchen, the stove, the folding cot, the meat pie, and the two of us welcoming the newly-born Christ. Simplicity, togetherness, a quiet joy, and contentment with what one has—this is what there was then, in a small provincial parish, in a cold church.

Elizaveta Gavrilova, Choir singer; musician

UPCOMING SERVICES SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 NO SERVICE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 01 NO SERVICE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 08 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15 NO SERVICE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS

*****MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23 GREAT LENT BEGINS*****

SUNDAY, MARCH 01 NO SERVICE

SUNDAY, MARCH 08 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS

SUNDAY, MARCH 15 NO SERVICE

SUNDAY, MARCH 22 OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS

SUNDAY, MARCH 29 NO SERVICE

SUNDAY, APRIL 05, PALM SUNDAY

OBEDNITZA UPSTAIRS