

The Twelve Days of Christmas in the Orthodox Church

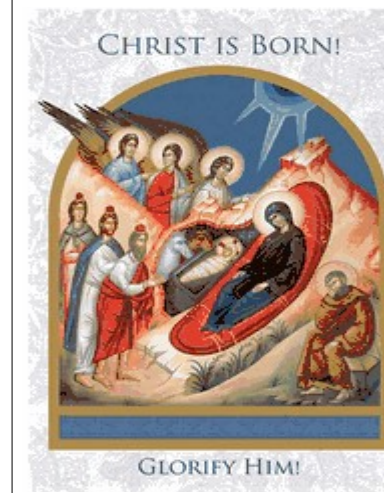
The Twelve Days of Christmas, are a festive period linking together two Great Feasts of the Lord: the Nativity and Theophany. During this period one celebration leads into another. The Nativity of Christ is a seven day celebration: the formal title of the first day is "The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ", and celebrates not only the Nativity of Jesus, but also the Adoration of the Shepherds of Bethlehem and the Veneration of the Magi from the East. The second day is referred to as the "Synaxis of the Theotokos", and commemorates the role of the Virgin Mary in the Incarnation, as well as the flight into Egypt of the Joseph, Mary and Jesus to escape the slaughter of the infants by Herod the Great. The third day is known as the "Third Day of the Nativity", and is also the feast day of the Protodeacon and Protomartyr Saint Stephen. The 29th of December is the Orthodox Feast of the Holy Innocents, which honors the children slaughtered by Herod.

The After-feast of the Nativity continues until the 31st of December (that day is known as the *Apodosis* or "Leave-taking" of the Nativity).

The Saturday following the Nativity is commemorated by special readings from the Epistle (1 Tim 6:11-16) and Gospel (Matt 12:15-21) during the Divine Liturgy. The Sunday after Nativity has its own liturgical commemoration in honor of "The Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King and James the Brother of the Lord."

The 1st of January, at the center of the festal period, is another feast of the Lord (though not ranked as a Great Feast): the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord. On this same day is the feast day of Saint Basil the Great, and so the service celebrated on that day is the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil. The 2nd of January begins the Forefeast of the Theophany.

The Eve of the Theophany (5th of January) is a day of strict fasting, on which the devout will not eat anything until the first star is seen at night. This day is known as *Paramoni* ("Preparation"). That morning is the celebration of the Royal Hours. There are certain parallels between the hymns chanted on *Paramoni* and those of Good Friday, to show that, according to Orthodox theology, the steps that Jesus took into the Jordan River were the first steps on the way to the Cross.



Saint Mary Orthodox Church of West Palm Beach

1317 Florida Mango Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406

The Very Reverend Father Peter Shportun, *Priest /Pastor*

Church Office: (561) 965-5007

Fr. Peter's Cellular: (561) 632-7066

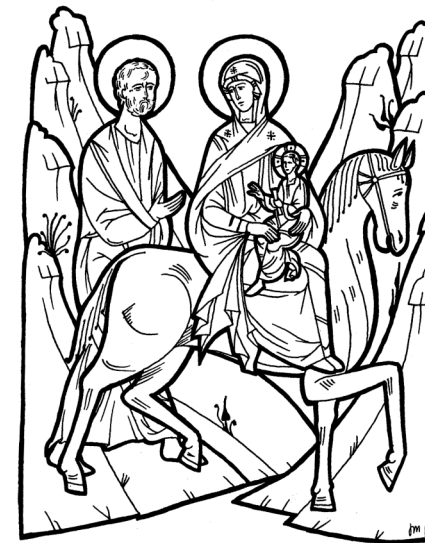
Email: stmaryschurch@bellsouth.net

Website: stmaryschurchwpb.org

Banquet Hall Rentals: Maribel Perez - (561) 721-5696

*A Parish of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast,
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America*

Worship Guide and Bulletin – December 31, 2023



Flight into Egypt

St Nikolai Velimirovic (in the Prologue) relates the following tale: "the holy family, fleeing into Egypt, were accosted by robbers, one of whom, seeing the Christ Child, was amazed at his supernatural beauty and said 'If God were to take human flesh Himself, He would not be more beautiful than this child!'. The robber told his companions to take nothing from the family. In gratitude the Mother of God told him 'This Child will reward you richly for having spared Him today.' Thirty years later it was this robber who was crucified at Christ's right hand, and was granted to hear the words 'Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise'."

Welcome!

Whether you are a parishioner or a visitor, we are glad you have chosen to pray with us at Saint Mary's. As a friendly reminder, please observe the following upon entering the church for prayer.

- If you arrive after the services begin, try to enter the Church quietly and observe what is happening. Try not to interrupt the service by your entrance.
- Please silence your cellular telephones.
- Please place your offerings in the basket on the counter in the Church Narthex (Entrance), or the Offering Tray when passed.
- You are invited join us in the Banquet Hall for coffee and refreshments following the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

Divine Liturgy Variables for the Sunday Before Theophany and the Leave-taking of the Nativity of Christ

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is celebrated on this day. The service text may be found beginning on page 91 in the Red Service Book in the pews.

The First Antiphon

I will confess Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Thy wonders. In the council of the upright, and in the congregation, great are the works of the Lord.

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

They are sought out in all the things that He hath willed. Confession and majesty are His work, and His righteousness abideth unto ages of ages. (**Refrain**)

Glory... Both now... (**Refrain**)

The Second Antiphon

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; in His commandments shall he greatly delight. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth. The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who wast born of a Virgin; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.



Church Services at Saint Mary

- ♦ Sunday: Matins at 8:50 AM; Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM
 - ♦ Wednesday: Vespers at 6:30 PM
- ♦ Confessions: Sunday 8:30 to 8:50 AM; Wednesday 6:00 to 6:30 PM; or by appointment with Fr. Peter

Monday, January 1st

Feast of Saint Basil the Great and the Circumcision of our Lord
Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great at 9:00 AM



Schedule of Services for Theophany

Friday, January 5th

Great and Royal Hours for Theophany at 9:00 AM

Saturday, January 6th

Festal Orthros at 8:45 AM

Festal Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

Great Sanctification of Waters follow the Divine Liturgy



"For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Hebrews 11:6

The Absence of Light

By Abbot Tryphon

Evil is not a primeval essence that is coeternal and equal to God, but rather a falling away from good. Evil does not exist in and of itself, and was not created by God. Our Orthodox Church rejects the Gnostic teaching that the entirety of being is made up of two realms which have forever existed together: the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkness.

Darkness does not exist in its own right, but is simply the absence or lack of light. Evil, according to Saint Basil the Great, 'is not a living and animated substance, but a condition of the soul which is opposed to virtue and which springs up in the slothful because of their falling away from Good. Do not, therefore, contemplate evil from without; and do not imagine some original nature of wickedness, but let each one recognize himself as the first author of the vice that is in him'.

This is precisely what happened when the light-bearing morning star (Lucifer), fell away from the Source of goodness, and became the evil one, Satan. Lucifer, by imposing his own will, found himself in darkness. Since his power is based in falsehood, he can only influence us by convincing people that he is as powerful as God. Yet his power is finite, and good will eventually triumph on the Last Day.

That God would allow evil to exist in the first place, is a mystery, for the scriptures do not explain this. Yet we do know through the scriptures that true love must express itself in action, and in the face of evil and suffering, a Christian is called to action by loving God and his neighbor. Evil then becomes but a simple practical problem, one that the Christian finds ways to alleviate. As Christians we are charged with bringing God's love and goodness into the world by our actions.

Nothing is greater than God, including evil, and evil results when the free will of God's creation is directed against God and thereby engenders evil.

The Very. Rev. Abbot Tryphon is Igumen of All-Merciful Savior Monastery on Vashon Island, Washington. This and other articles may be found on his website abbottryphon.com

Glory and riches shall be in his house, and His righteousness abideth unto ages of ages. (*Refrain*)

There hath risen up in darkness a light for the upright; he is merciful and compassionate and righteous. (*Refrain*)

Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...

- *During the Little Entrance, after the verses of the Third Antiphon, the Apolytikion of the Nativity of Christ is sung. Then, the following:*

The Third Antiphon

The Lord said unto my Lord: sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The Lord shall send Thee a rod of strength out of Zion. With Thee is dominion in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of Thy saints.

Apolytikion for the Resurrection in Tone 5

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Apolytikion for the Nativity of Christ in Tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come. O Lord, glory to Thee.

Apolytikion for the Sunday after the Nativity of Christ in Tone 2

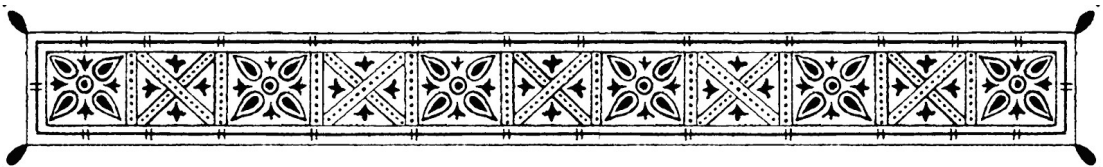
Proclaim, O Joseph, to David, the grandparent of God, the amazing wonders; for thou hast seen a Virgin great with child; for with the shepherds thou didst give glory, with the Magi thou didst worship, and by the angel it was revealed to thee. Wherefore, plead thou with Christ God to save our souls.

Apolytikion of the Church (Dormition) in Tone 1

In thy birth-giving, O Theotokos, thou didst keep and preserve virginity; and in thy falling-asleep thou hast not forsaken the world; for thou wast translated into life, being the Mother of Life. Wherefore, by thine intercessions, deliver our souls from death.

Kontakion for the Nativity of Christ in Tone 3

On this day the Virgin beareth the Transcendent in Essence; to the Unapproachable, the earth doth offer a small cave; Angels join in choir with shepherds in giving glory; with a star the Magi travel upon their journey; for our sakes is born a young Child, He Who existed before the ages as God.



THE EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS

The Epistle (For the Sunday before the Theophany)

Verse: All those on earth worship thee and sing unto Thee: Alleluia to God, O all the earth.

The Reading from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy. (4:5-8)

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.

الرسالة (للأحد قبل عيد الظهور الإلهي)

لَيَسْجُدَنَّ لَكَ كُلُّ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ وَيَرْثَلُوا لَكَ.
هَلِّلُوا لِلَّهِ يَا جَمِيعَ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ بُولُسِ الرَّسُولِ الثَّانِيَةِ إِلَى تِيمُوثَاوَسَ.

يا ولدي تيموثاوس، تيقظ في كل شيء واحتمل المشقات، واعمل عمل المبشر، وأوف خدمتك. أما أنا فقد أريق السكيب عليّ ووقفت انجلالي قد اقترت. وقد جاهدت الجهاد الحسن، وأتممت شوطي، وحفظت الإيمان. وإنما يبقى محفوظاً لي إكليل العذل الذي يجزييني به في ذلك اليوم الرب، الديان العادل، لا إياي فقط، بل جميع الذين يحبون ظهوره أيضاً.



Time To Have Your Home Blessed!

Each year following the Feast of Epiphany, it is the tradition of the Orthodox Church to have the priest come and bless our homes. Through the prayers and by the sprinkling of Holy Water the priest invokes God's blessings and protection upon the home and those living in it. We bless homes for many reasons:

- to show that the family is a small Church in Christ,
- to consecrate and sanctify the home and all activity in it to God,
- to fill the home and all who live in it with the fullness of God.

Fr. Peter will begin the Blessing of Homes on Sunday, January 7th. To schedule a Home Blessing, you may contact Fr. Peter by doing one of the following:

- *Telephone or Text (Fr. Peter's cellular # is 561.632-7066);
- *Email at frpshport@gmail.com;
- *Speak to him following services or during Coffee Hour;
- *Complete the form below and either mail or give it to him directly.

When the Fr. Peter comes, have as many family members present as possible. On a table include an icon and a lit candle; a list of names (living and departed) you want Fr. Peter to pray for; You may also include anything that you may want to have blessed (i.e. icon, cross, personal item, etc.) This is also a wonderful time for you and Fr. Peter to visit. (Note: It is not expected to feed Fr. Peter unless prior arrangements are made).

HOME BLESSING REQUEST FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____



Saint Mary Orthodox Church of West Palm Beach, Florida

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December 13, 2023

NOTICE OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Dear Parishioners,

This letter serves as official notification of the Annual Parish Meeting of Saint Mary's Orthodox Church of West Palm Beach, Florida, to be held on **Sunday, January 21, 2024, 11:45 AM**, at Saint Mary's Banquet Hall, 1317 Florida Mango Road, West Palm Beach, FL.

The purpose of the meeting is to receive and review the reports from the Parish Council, Pastor, and Parish Organizations for the year 2023. In addition, the 2024 Church Budget will be presented for approval and elections to the Parish Council will be held.

All reports are asked to be submitted by January 7, 2024. These reports and the meeting agenda will be made available in the Church Narthex on or before January 14, 2024, and during the Annual Parish Meeting.

To participate and vote, parishioners must be in good spiritual and financial standing with Saint Mary's Orthodox Church of West Palm Beach, FL.

Your support of Saint Mary's over the year has been greatly appreciated. Please continue with your support by participating in the forthcoming Annual Parish Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Pasley, Parish Council Secretary, on behalf of:

The Very Reverend Fr. Peter ~~Shportun~~, Pastor:

Parish Council of Saint Mary's Orthodox Church,
Mark Samra, Chairman

The Very Reverend Father Peter ~~Shportun~~, Priest/Pastor
1317 Florida Mango Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33406

Telephone: (561) 965-5007 • Fax: (561) 965-0679 • E-mail: stmarychurch@bellsouth.net

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America / Diocese of Miami and the Southeast

THE GOSPEL (For the Sunday before the Theophany)

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark. (1:1-8)

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, "Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes He Who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

الإنجيل (للأحد قبل عيد الظهور الإلهي)

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ مَرْقُسِ الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ.

بَدَأَ إِنْجِيلَ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ ابْنِ اللَّهِ كَمَا هُوَ مَكْتُوبٌ فِي الْأَنْبِيَاءِ "هَاءَنْذَا مُرْسِلٌ مَلَائِكِي أَمَامَ وَجْهِكَ يَهَيِّئُ طَرِيقَكَ قُدَّامَكَ. صَوْتُ صَارِخٍ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ: أَعِدُّوا طَرِيقَ الرَّبِّ وَاجْعَلُوا سُبُلَهُ قَوِيمَةً." كَانَ يوحنا يُعَمِّدُ فِي الْبَرِّيَّةِ وَيَكْرِرُ بِمَعْمُودِيَّةِ التَّوْبَةِ لِغُفْرَانِ الْخَطَايَا. وَكَانَ يَخْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعُ أَهْلِ بَلَدِ الْيَهُودِيَّةِ وَأُورُشَلِيمَ فَيُعْتَمِدُونَ جَمِيعُهُمْ مِنْهُ فِي نَهْرِ الْأُرْدُنِّ، مُعْتَرِفِينَ بِخَطَايَاهُمْ. وَكَانَ يوحنا يَلْبَسُ وَبَرَ الْإِبِلِ وَعَلَى خَفَوَيْهِ مِنْطَقَةٌ مِنْ جِلْدٍ، وَيَأْكُلُ جَرَادًا وَعَسَلًا بَرِّيًّا. وَكَانَ يَكْرِرُ قَائِلًا: إِنَّهُ يَأْتِي بَعْدِي مَنْ هُوَ أَقْوَى مِنِّي، وَأَنَا لَا أَستَحِقُّ أَنْ أُنْخَنِي وَأَحْلَّ سَيْرَ حِذَائِهِ. أَنَا عَمَّدْتُكُمْ بِالْمَاءِ، وَأَمَّا هُوَ فَيُعَمِّدُكُمْ بِالرُّوحِ الْقُدُّوسِ.

Megalynarion of the Leave-taking of the Nativity in Tone 1

(*Sung instead of 'It is truly meet...')

Magnify, O my soul, her who hath delivered us from the curse.

Verily it is easier for us to endure silence since there is no dread danger therefrom for us. But because of our strong desire, O Virgin, and Mother of same-ness, to indite well-balanced songs of praise, this becometh indeed onerous to us. Wherefore, grant us power to equal our natural inclination.

Communion Hymn of the Nativity of Christ in Tone 8

The Lord hath sent redemption to His people. Alleluia.

After receiving Communion, please read the 'Prayers of Thanksgiving After Holy Communion' on pages 128-131 in the Red Service Book in the pews.

- *After Communion, instead of singing "We have seen the true light", sing the Festal Apolytikion: "Thy Nativity, O Christ."*

Liturgical Offerings for December 31st

Weekly Altar Candle

♦ In glory of the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*****If you would like to offer a Weekly Altar Candle, or Holy Bread for a Divine Liturgy, please speak with Fr. Peter.***

Please Remember in Your Prayers

For the Living

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." James 5: 14

For the Good Health of the Servants of God: Archpriest Michael & Matushka Annette Zaparyniuk, Michael, Priest Andrew Short, Sub-Deacon William Hall, Jodet Rae, Leon & Judy Chalhub, Johnny & Joyce Chalhub, Raouf Saballeil, Sabah Shalhoub, Craig Miller, Emma, George, Alice Kelly.

For the Shut-ins of our Church Community: Gloria Yedlinsky, Lidia Pawlcuk, Zakia Salloum.

For peace in the Middle East and the Ukraine.

For all Christians and people suffering from violence, war, persecution, captivity, hunger, and homelessness throughout this world.

For those serving in our armed forces here and abroad: Christopher Smith, Jonathan Shportun, Alexios Gavrilos.

For the Departed

"With the spirits of the righteous made perfect, give rest O Lord to the souls of Thy servants..."

Florence Esper (newly departed 12/8/23), Lama Chalhoub (newly departed 12/6/23), Gail Camileri (6/26/23), Angie Smith (6/23/23), Archdeacon Joseph Harb (3/8/23).



Sunday School Classes

There are no Sunday School Classes this Sunday (December 31st). Classes resume on Sunday, January 7th.



Be a Sunday Coffee Hour Host

A beautiful way to celebrate an occasion, honor a loved one's memory or simply show your love for Saint Mary's is to host a Sunday Coffee Hour. It is also a great way to contribute to our parish fellowship. Please speak with Jane Pasley of Khouryia Myriam for more details and to host a Coffee Hour.

Weekly Spiritual Discussion

Thank you to everyone who have participated in the Spiritual Discussions led by Fr. Peter on Wednesday's following the Vespers Service. The Wednesday evening discussions will resume on January 10th.

Our Sympathies

To the Samra Family on the falling asleep in the Lord of Virginia (Ginny) Samra on December 23rd in Worcester, MA. She is survived by her husband Raymond, their children and many family and friends. May her memory be eternal!

Online Donations

In addition to giving by Sunday Offering Envelopes, or by mail, the church offers Zelle as an online means of fulfilling your '**Annual Pledge.**' To use Zelle, please access it through your online bank to: stmarywpbfinance@gmail.com. Paypal continues as an option for those who wish to donate online.

*****NOTE: To receive 2023 credit and a donation letter for filing you taxes with the IRS, all donations must be received by December 31, 2023.**

For questions and information, please speak with our Parish Council Treasurer Sam Pasley.