



St. MARY MAGDALENE ORTHODOX ✝ CHURCH

December
2020

Fr. Gabriel Bilas, Rector

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2439 S. Long Lake Rd, Fenton, MI 48430

<http://www.st-marymagdalene.org>

Office Hours*:

Monday 10:00am-3:00pm

Wednesday 10:00am-3:00pm

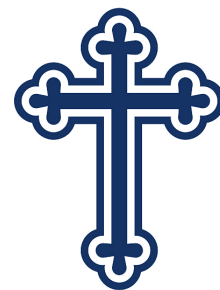
Friday 10:00am-3:00pm

*or by appointment

“But our Lord came, when this King of Kings made His entrance into mankind, He did so in a ‘not so king like way’. Jesus wasn’t born in a golden palace, surrounded by the riches of the Jewish Kingdom. His mother did not give birth in a featherbed made from the cedars of Lebanon.”



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MONTHLY BULLETIN DECEMBER 2020

Important Dates to Remember:

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- ✝ 12/2, 12/9, 12/16 Advent Adult Education
- ✝ 12/5 Vespers & Lijtia at St. Nicholas 5:00pm
- ✝ 12/6, 12/13, 12/20 Internal Craft Sale
- ✝ 12/10 Akathist to St. Herman of Alaska 6:00pm
- ✝ 12/13 **Parish Annual Meeting**
- ✝ 12/19 Drop of Baked Goods
- ✝ 12/20 Internal Bake Sale
- ✝ 12/24 Royal Hours 10am, Nativity Vigil 7:00pm
- ✝ 12/25 Divine Liturgy 10am
- ✝ 12/26 Divine Liturgy 10am (No Vespers)
- ✝ 12/31 Vesperal Divine Liturgy 5:00pm

The Humility of Manassah

A message from Fr. Gabriel

Our hearts today are filled with anticipation as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the Joy of the Nativity of our Savior! Our Lord is coming. The star is shining brightly above Bethlehem, and like the magi, we continue our journey towards the cave to fall down and worship this King of Kings, Who had been foretold to us throughout the centuries in the Old Testament.

Our Lord's family history was filled with many kings and nobleman. When we read through scripture, we cannot help but marvel at the power and wealth of some of these men that are part of Jesus's Family. Solomon's throne for example, was made of ivory, and overlaid with gold. His cups, dishes, and even his royal bathtub...solid gold! The best made furniture, the strongest horses, the sweetest spices, the most beautiful brides...this is what was expected for the most powerful kings of the world!

But our Lord came, when this King of Kings made His entrance into mankind, He did so in a "not so king like way". Jesus wasn't born in a golden palace, surrounded by the riches of the Jewish Kingdom. His mother did not give birth in a featherbed made from the cedars of Lebanon. The Savior came into this world in the middle of a damp, cool, and rocky cave, being warmed by the breath of the animals that dwelt there. This seems completely backwards doesn't it? Why would the King of Kings, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, God Himself choose to be born in the midst of filth and darkness!?

If WHERE and HOW Christ was born wasn't bad enough, we are given this incredible Gospel text that we read every Sunday before Christmas, which gives us the listing of Jesus's family tree. Although some may regard it as a rather dull reading, the significance



behind reading and understanding who these people are, is perhaps one of the most striking images in all of scripture! One would think that the family line of Christ would be full of virtuous leaders and kings (and indeed we do find many names on this list of people who led lives full of the Grace of God). More often than not however, when we look at some of the names on Jesus's family tree, what do we find? More filth than what was on the cave floor where He was born! We hear stories of idolatry, murder, anger, greed, and rape. Christ didn't come from a perfect lineage...He came from an extremely **imperfect** lineage, full of men and women who missed the mark, just like we do in our own relationship with God!

In the names we read that day, there is one that I hoped to bring to the forefront, who wrote a beautiful prayer that we still use in one of our worship services today. Although it was King David who wrote perhaps Orthodoxy's most popular psalm 50 (51), there was another King later on in the list who also experienced and wrote beautifully about repentance, whose name was King Manasseh.

Despite a positive upbringing by his father Hezekiah, Manasseh completely rejected a God Centered Life. When he was made king, he did everything he could to block out the Grace of our Lord. Rather than worshiping the One True God in the temple, he ordered that altars be built to Baal. Instead of asking God through prayer for help and advice on how to rule God's people, Manasseh spent his time consulting wizards and fortune tellers. Scripture even makes it a point to say that he put a lot of trust in the flight patterns and cries of birds to predict certain omens, rather than conversing with God.

Eventually, we know from experience that when we live a life absent of God, it catches up with us. King Manasseh was eventually captured and carried off into Babylon, and it was in the midst of the darkest time of his life, that he was finally humbled. Coupled with that humility came Manasseh's repentance and lament of the life with God that he had rejected.

As is the case with all who turn back to God through humility, our Lord's response to Manasseh was one of complete restoration. He was returned back to his kingdom in Jerusalem and lived out the rest of his days in peace and in communion with our Lord.

I bring up this story of this evil king who turned good, because I think it serves as a small picture of our own relationship with Christ. Although we might not create altars to Baal or consult with wizards and birds, we do not always put our complete trust in God. There are times in our lives where we too create idols out of money, politics, people, and possessions. We become anxious when our lives do not go as planned. We often lose sight of all that God has done for us. Yet despite all of these failings, when we finally wake up and decide to humble ourselves before the feet of our Lord, we become like Manasseh, and are restored to our former glory.

Why did Christ come to us in such a humble way? To teach us all, like He taught King Manasseh, how we need to approach the throne of God: **With complete and perfect humility.**

St. Ambrose of Milan wrote beautifully in the 4th century: "He was in a manger, so that we might be able to be at the altar. He was on earth, so that we might be in the stars. He had no place in the inn...so that we might have mansions in paradise." What beautiful words from this early saint, that describes for us the life that we are all called to! This is our mark! This our destiny with the Christ Who comes into the world this week! But we learn today that it can only be achieved through extremely humility and sincere repentance.

When Manasseh was captured in Babylon, he wrote a beautiful prayer that we read during the Great Compline Service called "The Prayer of Manasseh". In this prayer, he humbled himself before God, and confessed all of the ways in which he had failed to live up to a Godly way of life. As we approach the Incarnation of Christ, let us echo Manasseh's words by saying:



"Lord, I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven, because of the multitude of mine iniquities. I am weighed down with many iron fetters, so that I cannot lift up my head by reason of my many sins...and now I bend the knees of my heart, asking for your Grace. I have sinned O Lord, and I acknowledge my iniquities...but I humble ask of Thee...Forgive me O Lord...forgive me. For You are the God of those who repent, and in me You will manifest your goodness. For unworthy as I am, you will save me in your great mercy, and I will praise you henceforth, all the days of my life...Amen"

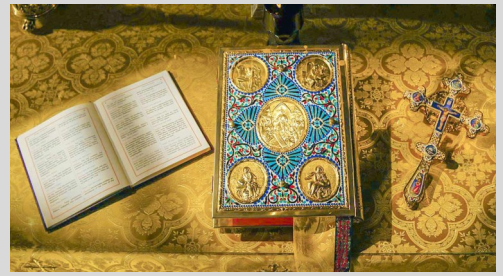
Month in Review

This past month, our parish shifted into "joyous fasting" mode, as we began our preparation for Advent on Sunday the 15th. We also were blessed to begin some work on the office buildings for some much needed maintenance a "buttoning up" of the existing building. For the next few weeks, if you will be visiting the parish office, please "pardon our dust"!

Book of the Month Club

There will be no club gathering this month. If you are interested in continuing gathering to discuss the book of the month in January (either in person or via zoom) please contact Father Gabriel or the parish office.

We are currently looking for someone to be the point of contact and liaison for the book of the month club. If your are interesting in this task please contact Fr. Gabriel.



This Month's Sunday Scripture Readings

December 6th:

Ephesians 5:9-19
Luke 17:12-19

December 13th:

Colossians 3:4-11
Luke 14: 16-24

December 20th:

Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40
Matthew 1:1-25

December 27th:

Galatians 1:11-19
Matthew 2:13-23



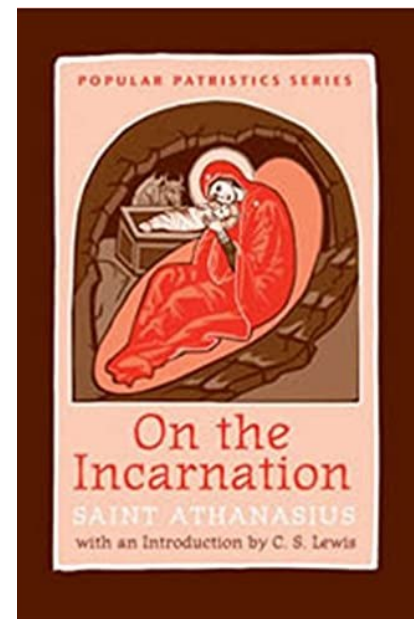
Recommended Book of the Month

On the Incarnation

By: Saint Athanasius

By any standard, this is a classic of Christian theology. Composed by St Athanasius in the fourth century, it expounds with simplicity the theological vision defended at the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople: that the Son of God himself became "fully human, so that we might become god." Its influence on all Christian theology thereafter, East and West, ensures its place as one of the few "must read" books for all who want to know more about the Christian faith.

Introduction by C.S. Lewis



WISHING YOU MANY BLESSED YEARS!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

- ✝ 3– Subdeacon Andrew & Nicholas Oslin
- ✝ 4– Emma Lanterman
- ✝ 5– Richard Ziats & Winifred Daugherty
- ✝ 6– Romanos Royer Durand
- ✝ 7– Douglas Wilkinson
- ✝ 8– Christopher Cooley
- ✝ 9– Charlotte Shipley
- ✝ 11– Lucille Bilas
- ✝ 12– Richard Schlaack
- ✝ 13– Anne Khoury
- ✝ 14– Matushka Laura Bilas & Owen Dollins
- ✝ 17– Rdr. David Schutt & Katherine Schutt
- ✝ 18– Elizabeth Kekel & Joshua Forwerck
- ✝ 19– Maura Burtka
- ✝ 21– David Wlech
- ✝ 23– Robert Oginsky Jr.
- ✝ 24– George Branoff
- ✝ 30– Kristen Wolf
- ✝ 31– Christine Suriano & Isaiah Durand

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

- ✝ 19– James & Tonya Rice
- ✝ 27– Stephen & Inna Bondira
- ✝ 28– John & Denise Oslin
- ✝ 29– Paisios & Anna Hamman
- ✝ 30– Sbdn. Robert & Adelaide Lanterman



PARISH LENDING LIBRARY

Don't forget while you are social distancing to turn off the T.V. and to utilize our wonderful parish lending library to help feed your spiritual growth . Simply sign-out the book you are borrowing on the sheet next to the bookshelf in the Parish Education Center. The parish lending library can be accessed Sunday after Liturgy or during office hours.

The Library covers the following topics and MORE!

- ✝ Introduction to Orthodoxy, Orthodox Theology, Patristics, Spiritual Study, Children's Books, Service Books, Orthodox Living & Prayer, Orthodox Ethics, Church History, Lives of the Saints, Liturgical Theology

Office Hours

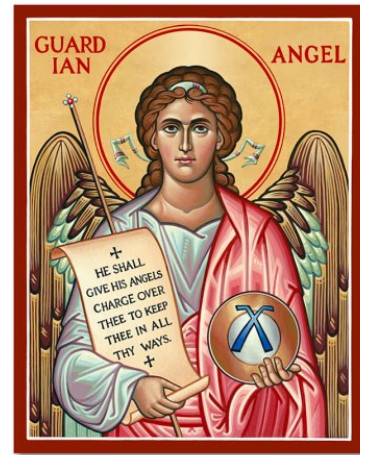
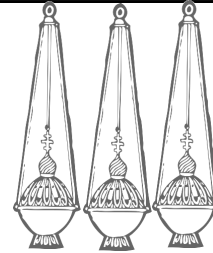
The Church Office and Sanctuary will now be open from 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for private prayer and reflection, phone inquiries, deliveries, or for setting an appointment with Fr. Gabriel.

Prayer Life

Pray for our sick and suffering brothers and sisters

Metropolitan Herman	Fran
Matushka Laura	Corina
Vinnie	Ryan
Anastasia	Dimitri
Alex	Damian
Elaine	Thom
Perpetua	Joseph
Carol	Theodore
Katelyn	Bill
Frankie	Joe
Stacie	Ahron
Peter	Linda
David	Sean
William	Sophia
Sharon	Michael
Michael	Linda
Mason	Tonya
Patricia	Anastasia
Joseph	Arminda

Joane
Duncan



Armed Forces
Matthew Beck; Air Force Michael Oginsky; U.S. Marines Patrick Tejkl; U.S. Marines Lindsey Cazatt; U.S. Navy Stephany Bishop; U.S. Navy Jason Wilburn; Army Rangers Alex Suriano; Air National Guard

Armed Forces Cont.
Dallas Watson; Air Force Bradley Grimes, Seraphim Lazar-Watson; Air Force Stephen Bondaria– Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander

Catechumens
Alyssa William Anthony James Anastasia
Recently Departed
Metropolitan Theodosius Robert Michael

Mother's With Child
Robyn Christina Ann Anna
Seminarian Family
Alexander & Danielle Earl
Anniversary of Parish Member's Repose
8– Manuela Kemp 24– Marcella Moorman

Parish Greeters

Coffee Hour Volunteers

(Please note that coffee hour is suspended for
the time being)

Epistle Readers

Primary

Back-up

December 6th:
Scott & Tina Shephard

December 13th: (Annual Meeting)
Seth & Mia Hillaker

December 20th:
Pat Smith

December 27th:
George & Julie Jonascu

December 6th:

December 13th:

December 20th:

December 27th:

December 6th:
Dr. Janet Wiese

December 13th:
Rdr. John Auxier

December 20th:
Sbdn. Andrew Durand

December 27th:
Rdr. Nathaniel Auxier

December 6th:
Rdr. Chris Ballnik

December 13th: (Annual Meeting)
Rdr. David Schutt

December 20th:
Dr. Janet Wiese

December 27th:
Rdr. John Auxier

WE NEED YOU! As our parish opens up more and more we are in need new parish greeters and coffee hour volunteers. If this is a ministry that you are interested in taking part in please reach out to Sue Walton or the parish office.



Annual Meeting

There are several important decisions that will be coming up at this year's annual meeting, including new bylaws, a parish council slate, and perhaps even discussion about where to go from here regarding the church facilities. **The scheduled date for this year's annual meeting is Sunday, December 13th, immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Mark that down please!**

Monthly Forecast

Early Roots Advent Lecture Series:

We are extremely excited to announce our Early Roots 3 Part Lecture Series on Wednesday, December 2nd, 9th, and 16th! This class will go through some of the amazing accounts of what early Christians had to deal with and how the Roman Empire viewed this "new religion". To wrap up the class, we are extremely blessed to be joined by Fr. Stephen De Young from the Ancient Faith Radio Podcast "The Whole Counsel of God", who will be offering a class entitled: "Where the Bible Came From".

St. Nicholas Day Weekend:

On Saturday, December 5th, there will be no Vigil at St. Mary Magdalene, because we will be joining the Pan Orthodox Community at St. Nicholas Church in Burton to celebrate their patronal feast day! Vespers and Lijtia begins at 5:00 PM. On Sunday, December 6th, we will have the Divine Liturgy at our parish, followed by a special visitation from St. Nicholas Himself! All of our children will be receiving their Nativity gifts from the parish on that day! Also, a reminder, this year for our youth advent almsgiving we ask that each child make one or two nativity themed cards to send to our shut-ins. Please return them on St. Nicholas day so that our parish office can mail them in time for the Feast!

Seminarian Gift Cards Due:

The deadline to get your Seminarian Gift Cards from the Angel Tree returned to the Church is on Sunday December 6th (St. Nicholas Day). We need to make sure we have them back in enough time to send out to the seminary before they go on winter break!

Final Parish Council Meeting and Annual Meeting Questions or Comments:

Everyone was sent an Annual Meeting Parish Primer in mid November. If you had any questions, comments, or concerns, please bring them to our final parish council meeting on Tuesday, December 8th at 7:00 PM.

Parish Only Craft and Bake Sale:

From Sunday, December 6th to Sunday December 20th, we will be having a parish only craft and bake sale. Crafts will be for sale in the Education Center following Divine Liturgy, while the baked goods will be available on the 20th **only**. If you are baking for this year's sale, please make sure your baked goods are in the Church on Saturday the 19th and packaged individually!

Pledge Card Returned:

Please be sure to turn in your pledge/membership cards prior to the annual meeting! If they were mailed out, please send them back as soon as you receive them so that we can give an accurate census count to the diocese!

Nativity Week Schedule:

This year, we will be adding Royal Hours on the morning of December 24th to our regular schedule! Royal hours will begin at 10:00 AM, with our normal Nativity Vigil beginning at 7:00 PM. Divine Liturgy for Christmas itself will be at 10:00 AM on December 25th! Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him! There will be Divine Liturgy on December 26th at 10:00am for the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos.

New Year's Eve Divine Liturgy and Outing:

This year, we will be having a Vespers Divine Liturgy for St. Basil the Great on New Years Eve, beginning at 5:00 PM. Following Divine Liturgy, (if restaurants are open) we had planned on having a dinner outing together at a local restaurant.

Parish Office

The parish office will be closed on December 24-26th.

NATIVITY SCHEDULE

2018

Sunday, December 23rd: Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Monday, December 24th: Christmas Vigil 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 25th: NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 26th: Divine Liturgy for the Theotokos 10:00 a.m.



Advent Confessions: Please make sure that you make time this advent season for the Holy Sacrament of Confession. Fr. Gabriel is available after compline on Wednesday evenings (see schedule) or on Saturday's after vigil. If these do not work for your schedule, email him to make other arrangements.

Orthodox Tradition of the Holy Supper

Nativity Eve



Following 40 days of the Advent Fast, the birth of Jesus Christ is commemorated with a final Lenten feast December 24th before the Nativity Vigil.

This tradition may look different village to village but the structure and the meanings stay the same. There are several symbolic features to the dinner table, including the placing of hay under the tablecloth in memory of the manger in which the Holy Child was placed by His Mother at His birth. Some grain is also thrown in the straw to represent the abundance of Christ's Coming. The linen table-

cloth represents the birth clothes Christ was wrapped.

The Supper usually consists of 12 courses, symbolic of the 12 Apostles. The twelve fasting foods usually served are: barley, honey, stewed prunes, pierogi, sauerkraut, potatoes, lima beans, garlic, Lenten bread, mushroom soup and salt. Reminders that life is both bitter and sweet and that the work of each day throughout the current year was required to truly celebrate Christ's Coming.

God willing next year we will come together as a parish family to celebrate the Holy Supper together.

The Holy Supper

The meal begins with the singing of the Christmas troparion and the lighting of a candle placed in the center of the table. The candle symbolizes the star of Bethlehem.

The Holy Supper usually takes place in the home with the father leading the family in the prayer ritual. It begins with the youngest child reading the Nativity account from the Gospel of St. Matthew 2:1-12.

The father then starts with an opening prayer asking God to bless the bread, wine, and food. He then breaks the bread and passes it out to all present. This symbolizes Christ at the Last Supper.

The supper begins with a spoonful of the traditional Kutya, a cooked wheat or barley kasha, sweetened with honey, poppy seeds and chopped nuts – symbolic of joy and happiness.

An extra empty place is always set at the table for Jesus, either in Spirit, or in the form of a traveler or stranger invited into the home, for none are turned away on this day without a warm invitation to partake of this Holy Supper.

Then the prayers are said by the father. If there is a priest present the prayers are lead by him instead of the father.

Troparion — Tone 4

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, / has shone to the world the Light of wisdom! / For by it, those who worshipped the stars, / were taught by a Star to adore You, / the Sun of Righteousness, / and to know You, the Orient from on High. / O Lord, glory to You!

Orthodox Tradition of the Holy Supper

Nativity Eve

The Prayers & Ceremony

FATHER: O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who blessed the five loaves in the wilderness and with them You satisfied the five thousand, bless this loaf, wine, and the food we are about to eat and multiply them in this city, and in all the world, and sanctify all the faithful who partake of them. For it is You, O Christ our God, Who bless and sanctify all things, and to You we ascribe glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, and good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

FAMILY: Amen. *Honey is placed on the forehead with the words:*

“May we love one another as the bee loves honey. The cup of wine is passed around for each to drink.”

“Unite us in Faith and Love. Bread is broken and passed to all. It is then dipped into the honey and eaten:”

“Let us love one another. Garlic is eaten – not peeled but cracked with the teeth.”

“May God Spare us from all Evil.”

The twelve Lenten foods are eaten without knives or pepper. Pepper symbolizes arguments and knives the cutting of friendship.

FATHER : May He who was born in a cavern and lay in a manger for our salvation Christ our true God, through the prayers of the Holy Theotokos, of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke and of all the saints have mercy on and save us for He is good and loves mankind.

FAMILY: Amen

After Supper, the candle is blown out gently and if the smoke rises straight up it means a blessing for the year. It is traditional for all to attend a Vigil Service following which the choir may begin visiting homes to sing Christmas Carols.

Traditional Foods Served

The foods range from bitter to sweet to remind us of the bitterness of life before Christ was born and the sweetness of life which comes after His birth. The number 12 symbolizes the twelve apostles.

Two may be chosen from each category – except soup.

Appetizers: Ikra (caviar), Kutya, Pick-led Mushrooms, Piroshki (with mushroom or sauerkraut filling), Herring (with beet and onion slices), Baklazhan (eggplant caviar).

Soup: Mushroom, Barley, Fish (with dumplings), Borscht, Cabbage, Vegetable.

Fish dishes: Baked Pike, Trout or other, Fried Filet of Sole or Bluefish, Fish in Aspic, Stuffed Carp, Fishcakes, Fried Smelts, Boiled Lobster.

Vegetable dishes: Potato Pancakes, Boiled Potato (with dill), Baked Sauer-kraut, Baked Sliced Beets, Potato Salad (with beets), Cauliflower (with bread crumbs and margarine topping), Lenten Cabbage Rolls, Pickled Baked Cabbage, "Malosolninyeh" Pickles (freshly dilled).

Fruit & cake: Dried-fruit Compote, Cherry or Blueberry Vareniki, Poppy seed Cake or Roll. Nut Pudding, Apple Strudel, Kissel, Fruit Rolls.

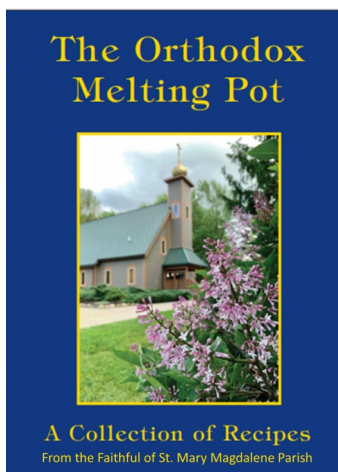
Beverages: Wine, Kvass, Tea (served with preserves and lemon slices)

Parish Kiosk



“The Orthodox Melting Pot”

A Collection of Recipes from the faithful of St. Mary Magdalene Parish



Our Parish Cookbooks will arrive and be available for purchase mid-December! Please see Katherine Schutt with any questions.



Available starting on St. Nicholas Day— St. Mary Magdalene Winter White Sangria. Limited Quantities are available for a free will offering donation.

After the 1st of the year we will have our second apparel sale. We are looking at T-shirts, zip-up



sweatshirt and hats for this sale. If there is anything else you would like to see or purchase please contact the parish office so that we can add it to the order forms!

Kiosk New Arrivals

- ✝ Nativity Stocking Stuffers are available through the kiosk!
- ✝ We have received new books to our parish kiosk.
- ✝ We also have several new children’s books available.
- ✝ We have new icons in stock! Perfect additions to your home prayer corner
- ✝ Home Altar items have arrived including vigil lights, censers and incense!

If you would like to see anything specific in the kiosk please let us know!

Nativity “Shoe Stuffers” are available in the parish Kiosk. There are several items available for \$15 or less. Please share your faith for the Feast of the Nativity this year.

The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

from oca.org

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (Saint Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Theophylactus, commenting on Saint Matthew's Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was "a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star." Saint Demetrius of Rostov says it was a "manifestation of divine energy" (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi "fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt. 2:11).

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, "Brethren, observe the feasts; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month." In another place it also says, "Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world."

In the second century Saint Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century Saint Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of Saint Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast

Troparion — Tone 4

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, / has shone
to the world the Light of wisdom! / For by
it, those who worshipped the stars, / were
taught by a Star to adore You, / the Sun of
Righteousness, / and to know You, the Ori-
ent from on High. / O Lord, glory to You!

of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century.

Saint John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the Cave of Bethlehem, made famous by the Birth of Jesus Christ, the empress Saint Helen built a church, which her mighty son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nicephorus Callistus, a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Saints John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called "Theophany" ("Manifestation of God"). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from Saint John Chrysostom's sermon on the Nativity of Christ: "it is not the day on which Christ was born which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized."

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feastdays and the feastdays themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. "The angel said to the shepherds, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, glorifying God and saying: 'Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Those who heard these things were aston-

ished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, "for the Savior is Born!"

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation for all the other Feasts.



*Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!*



Our Parish Youth

December Church School Announcements

Mark your calendars:

Nativity Almsgiving for our children will look a little different this year. We are asking that each child make one or two Nativity cards to be mailed to our shut-ins. We are asking that these cards are turned in on St. Nicholas day so that our shut-ins will receive them before the Nativity. Please keep the message in the card focused on the feast of the Nativity! If you need supplies to make cards please contact Matushka Laura or the Parish Office.

Sunday, December 6th: St. Nicholas will be visiting!! Mark your calendars.



**-In Christ,
Matushka Laura**

Youth Advent Alms-Giving

This year's Church School Alms-Giving for the Nativity will look a little different. With various restrictions in place we will not be visiting the nursing home this year on Christmas Day.

We are asking that each child make one or two 'Feast of the Nativity' themed cards that can be sent to our shut-ins in time for the Nativity. Please keep the theme of the cards on the Nativity Feast. You can use the exclamation "CHRIST IS BORN" "GLORIFY HIM"

Please turn in all the cards that your child makes on St. Nicholas Day, we will mail the cards that week so that they are delivered before Christmas.

If you are in need of supplies to make cards please contact Matushka Laura or the Parish office. The Church School has plenty of arts & crafts materials available!



Share the Joy of the
NATIVITY
OF OUR LORD!

*2020 Youth Advent
Alms-Giving Project*

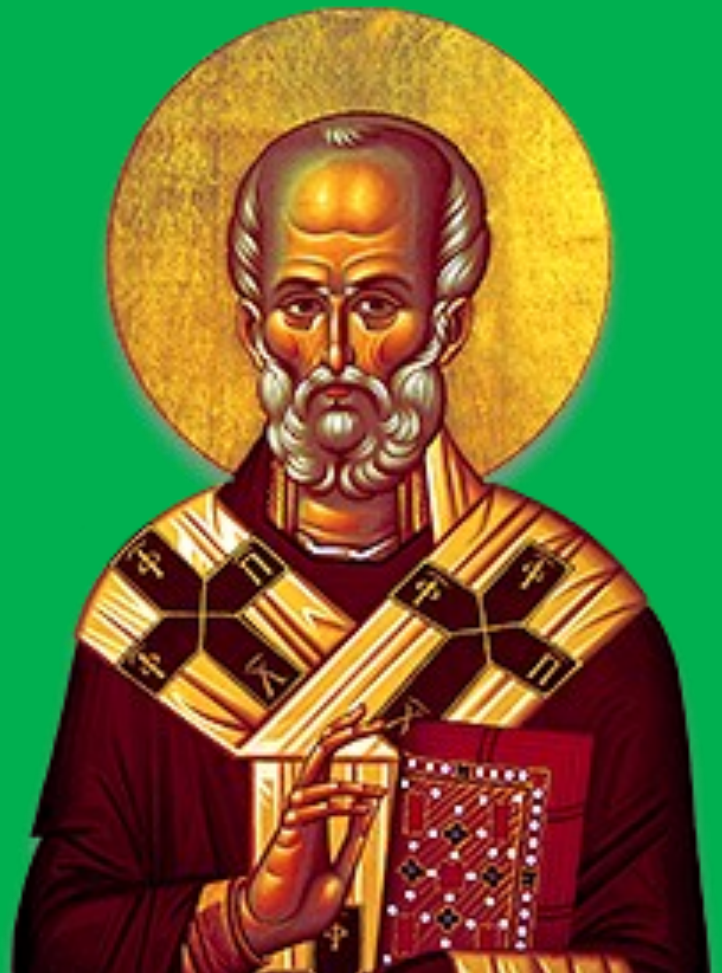
St. Nicholas Day!

On Sunday, December 6th our children will have the opportunity to meet with St. Nicholas and receive their nativity gifts from our parish. Please be sure to bring your children to Divine Services so that they can celebrate this feast!

O who loves Nicholas the saintly,
O who serves Nicholas the saintly,
Him will Nicholas receive,
And give help in time of need:
Holy Father Nicholas!*

He who dwells in God's holy mansions,
Is our help on the land and oceans,
He will guard us from all ills,
Keep us pure and free from sins
Holy Father Nicholas!*

Holy Saint, hearken to our prayer,
Let not life drive us to despair,
All our efforts shall not wane,
Singing praises to your name:
Holy Father Nicholas!*



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (OCF) is the official campus ministry organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.



Prayers for our college students:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Katherine Arnes | Sydney Wilkinson |
| David Schutt | Katerina Jonescu |
| Katherine Schutt | Katheryn Auxier |
| Oliver Lazar Senter | Alexandra Kekel |
| Elena Bucciarelli | Lauren Serafimovski |
| Zachary Wilkinson | Abigail Arnes |
| Douglas Wilkinson | |



Calling all Mothers!

The last few months have been a difficult time for many. With all of the changes in life and scheduling, balancing motherhood has been challenging to say the least. Check in on each other and be a listening ear until we can meet together again!

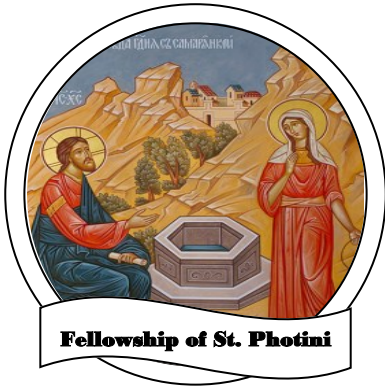
For more information about our St. Mary Magdalene Men's Group, please contact Tom Chitalas.



St. Mary Magdalene
Young Adults

Please see Peter Hamman
to be added to the online young adult group.

FELLOWSHIP OF ST. PHOTINI



“An inclusive opportunity for community outreach led by the faithful of St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church”

Thank you to everyone who made blankets! They will be distributed on December 5th as part of the Winter Walk for the homeless in the Greater Flint Area.

Beginning with the start of the Advent Fast (November 15th) we had our Annual Seminarian Angel Tree Project. As some of you know, it takes a tremendous financial sacrifice for a family to follow a calling to go to seminary to study the faith. Many of these future Priests give up their financial stability, and put their trust in God that He will support their families. Years ago, the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America began to collect gifts for those seminarian families who were unable to afford gifts for their children at Christmas. We are asking that everyone purchase one of the gift cards (\$25 or \$50) on the tree to be given to a seminarian family...giving them the opportunity to have some extra blessings during the Advent Season! Please contact Liz Ziats if you would like more information.

Gift Cards are due back by December 6th so that we can send them to Seminarians before they leave for winter break!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

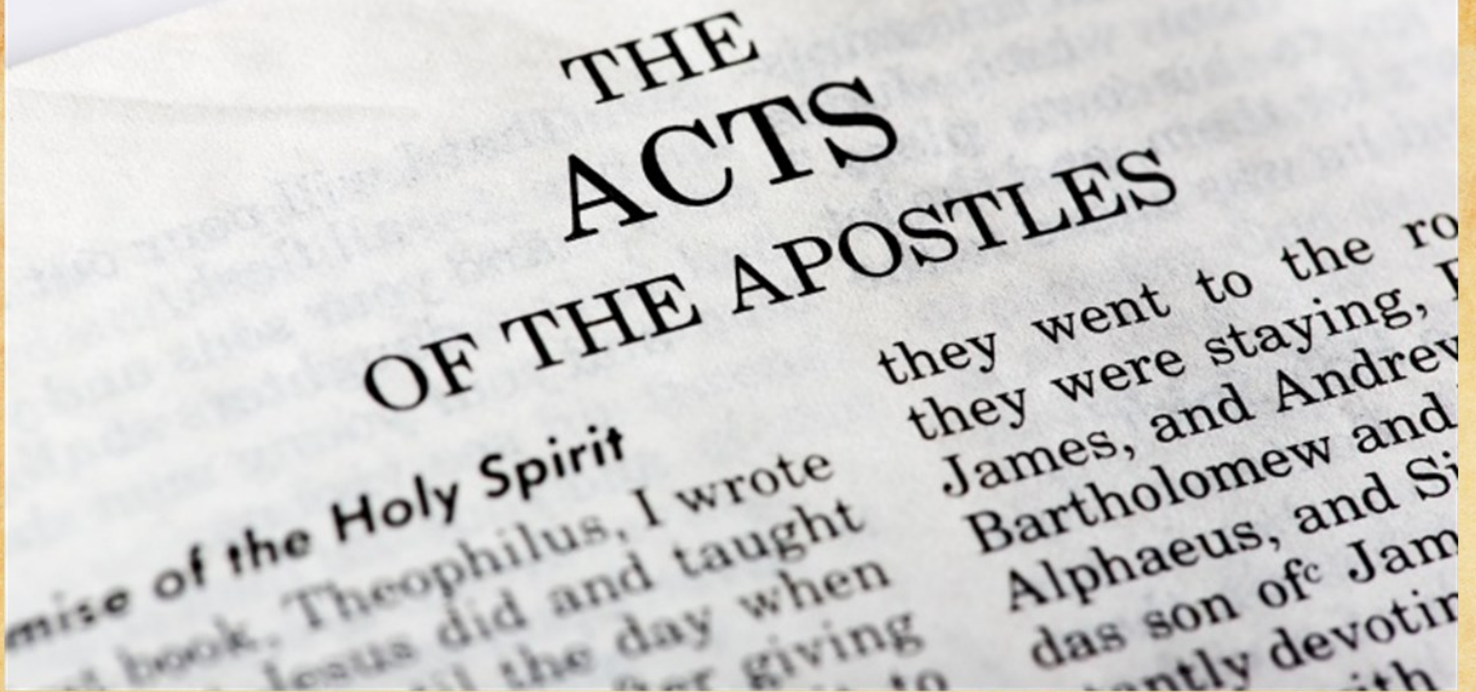
Catholic Charities in Flint, Winter Walk—December 5th. Please contact Deacon Mike for more information.

Please contact Theophan Forsyth, Terri Oginski or Rebekah Humphreys if you would like any information about upcoming projects or would like to donate to the works of the Fellowship of St. Photini.

*Truly, I tell you,
whatever you did for one of
the least of these
brothers and sisters of mine,
you did for me.*
~MATTHEW 25:40

"Early Roots"

The First Days of Christianity



Advent Three Part Lecture Series

Class 1, December 2nd, 6:30 PM:

The Apostolic Fathers, What did the Church Look Like After The Book of Acts

Class 2: December 9th, 6:30 PM:

Fighting for Truth: Defending Against
Heresy

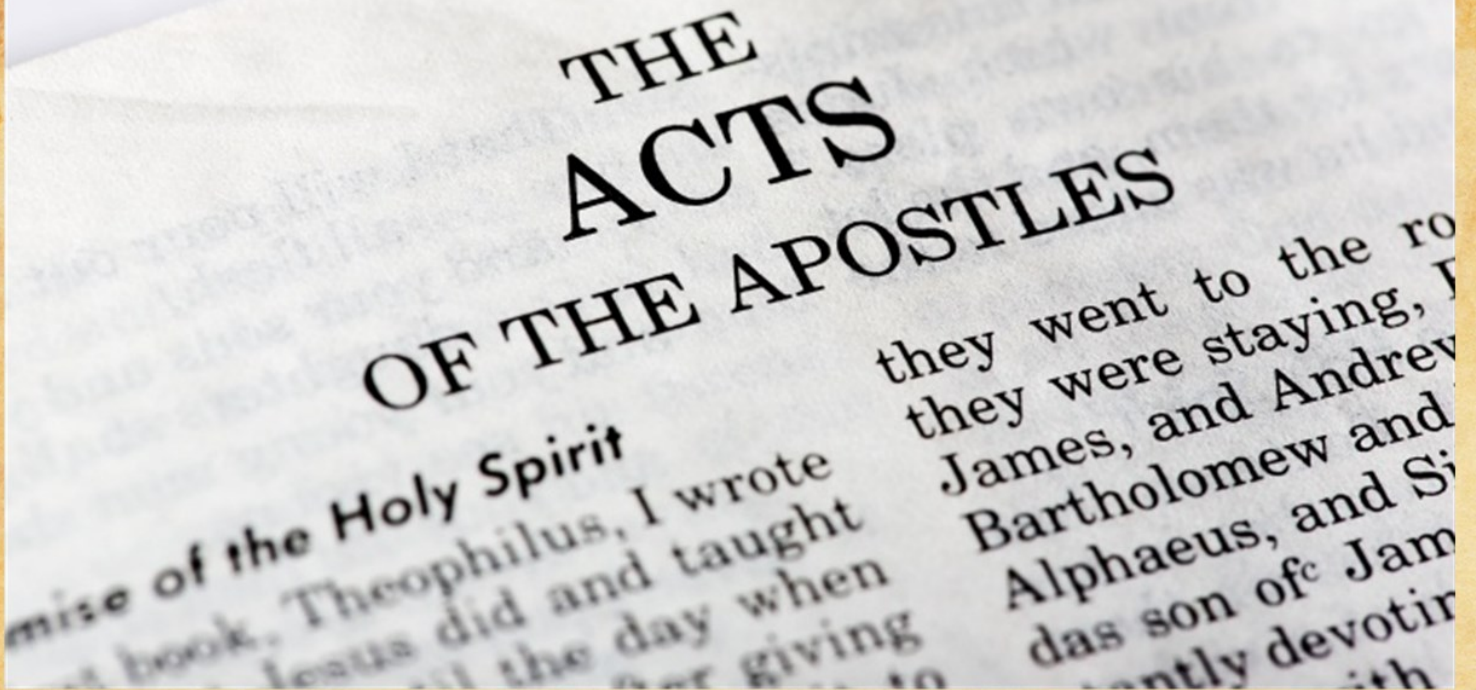
Class 3: December 16th, 6:30 PM:

Where Did the Bible Come From? With Guest Speaker, Fr. Stephen De Young



St. MARY
MAGDALENE
ORTHODOX CHURCH

Where Did the Bible Come From?



Advent Lecture—The Pan Orthodox Churches of Genesee County

December 16th, 6:30 PM: Where Did the Bible Come From? With Guest
Speaker, Fr. Stephen De Young

Rev. Dr. Stephen De Young is the Priest of Archangel Gabriel Orthodox Church in Lafayette, Louisiana. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from Amridge University. Fr. Stephen is also the host of the Whole Counsel of God podcast from Ancient Faith and author of the Whole Counsel Blog. He co-hosts the live call-in show and podcast Lord of Spirits with Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick.



Every year many families spend time away from their loved ones while they attend Seminary to further their call to God



Annual Seminarian Giving Tree

As some of you know, it takes a tremendous financial sacrifice for a family to follow a calling to go to seminary to study the faith. Many of these future Priests give up their financial stability, and put their trust in God that He will support their families. Years ago, the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America began to collect gifts for those seminarian families who were unable to afford gifts for their children at Christmas. Starting on November 15th (the beginning of Advent), there will be a Seminarian Gift Card Tree located in the front of the Church. We are asking that everyone purchase one of the gift cards (\$25 or \$50) on the tree to be given to a seminarian family...giving them the opportunity to have some extra blessings during the Advent Season!



Craft Sales & Cookie Walk

Beginning on Sunday, December 6th and running until Sunday, December 20th the Christmas store will be open in the Educational Center following Divine Liturgy (11:30 am-1pm). There will be many homemade crafts and gifts for purchase made by our parishioners.

On Sunday, December 20th we will have our annual bake sale. All items will be prepackaged for everyone's safety. Look for the sign up sheet to bring baked goods.

***This year's sales are not open to the public**

Any questions? See Liz Ziats or contact the parish office.

THEOPHANY SCHEDULE

2019



Saturday, January 5th Vigil and Blessing of the Water

4:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 6th: Divine Liturgy, Blessing of the River and Lamb Roast

10:00 a.m.

Referral Program To Benefit The St. Mary Magdalene Church Expansion



Conne Terova
Real Estate One
Cell: (248) 318-7342
Email:
cterova@gmail.com
teamterova.com

Know anyone who is looking to buy or sell a home in the state of Michigan? Conne Terova of Real Estate One is offering an incentive program to benefit the St. Mary Magdalene Church Expansion Fund by offering a \$500.00 donation for every referral that results in a closed transaction!