



St. MARY MAGDALENE ORTHODOX ✝ CHURCH

January
2021

Fr. Gabriel Bilas, Rector

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2439 S. Long Lake Rd, Fenton, MI 48430

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Office Hours*:

Monday 10:00am-3:00pm

Wednesday 10:00am-3:00pm

Friday 10:00am-3:00pm

*or by appointment



St. MARY MAGDALENE ORTHODOX CHURCH



Fr. Gabriel Bilas, Rector

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MONTHLY BULLETIN JANUARY 2021

Important Dates to Remember:

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- ✝ 1/1 Parish Office Closed
- ✝ 1/3 One year Parastas for Denis Perez
- ✝ 1/5 Blessing of the Waters, 7pm
- ✝ 1/6 Theophany Liturgy, 10am
- ✝ 1/7 Akathist to St. John the Baptist
- ✝ 1/10 River Blessing & Take-out Lamb Roast
- ✝ 1/12 Parish Council Meeting
- ✝ 1/17 Sanctity of Life Sunday
- ✝ 1/21 Holy Dormition Monastery Virtual Fund-raiser
- ✝ 1/27 Metanoia Begins
- ✝ 1/30 Vespers & Lijtia for the 3 Holy Hierarches

Perpetual Christmas

A message from Fr. Gabriel

We spent 40 days in tremendous anticipation of the coming of the Savior to the world, and now stand at the brink of a second feast of **joy and revelation**, as we celebrate this month the Feast of Holy Theophany or the “unveiling”, when Christ descended into the waters of the Jordan and the world saw the heavens open up with a voice coming down from the sky proclaiming: *“This is my beloved Son of Whom I am well pleased!”*

The joy of these two feasts (Nativity and Theophany) comes from one striking truth, that is read multiple times in the services of Christmas and of Theophany: “God is with us.” He stands in the midst of His Creation. He isn’t just some omnipotent being in the heavens who plays with His creation like pawns on a chessboard. He is here when we are experiencing the greatest joys in our life. His arm is around us when we are shrouded in the darkness of despair. When we spend a majority of our days with our backs turned from Him and towards the world...God is With Us. Those four words, that wonderful reality, is what unites the Feasts of Nativity and Theophany together. It is why we can all agree with Andy Williams when he sings in that beautiful baritone: *“It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.”*



In light of the Feasts that we are celebrating, I want to offer a resolution that we as Orthodox Christians simply cannot break this year. There is a habit that needs to be formed within us NOW, while it is fresh. One change that we can make in our lives that is guaranteed to give us the strength that is necessary to draw closer to God: *Take the Joy of Christmas and Theophany with you throughout the rest of the year.*

That child-like joy and innocence that we experience during the Feast of Christmas...that special feeling that somehow makes Christmas Day stand out from all of the rest...take it all, bottle it up like Holy Water, and sprinkle it throughout the next 365 days. All of that joy, all of those smiles, and the glorious reality that is the coming of Christ cannot cease in our hearts once the Christmas Tree has been taken down.

There are times this year where life will become rather difficult. The world is recovering from a massive pandemic. The effects of being bottled up in 2020 will add stress to our lives that will make us want to pull our hair out. There are some families who have been recovering from the loss of a family member who has gone on to eternal life. But through all of those challenges, and throughout all of the challenges that await us in 2021, we have to remember and lean on those words that we sang during Compline: *"God is with us!"* He is here! He is present in the Church! He is present in our lives! His Holiness is found within each and every one of us!

There is a question that often comes up every year from Non-Orthodox Christians around this feast of Theophany, when they ask: *"Why do you bless water? What was wrong with it before?"* The answer is always the same: We bless things to make them Holy. We bless water to set it apart for use by God and His Church. That once ordinary water is then used to bless the inside of our Church, and to be "sprinkled" on each and every one of us for that same purpose: To make us all holy, to strengthen us, and to set us apart to live a life with God.

So today, and every day this year, I urge you all to embrace that holiness! Don't just let the joy of this feast pass away after you get back into your cars following Theophany Liturgy! Take the Holy Water that we will bless this month with you and into your homes. Sprinkle

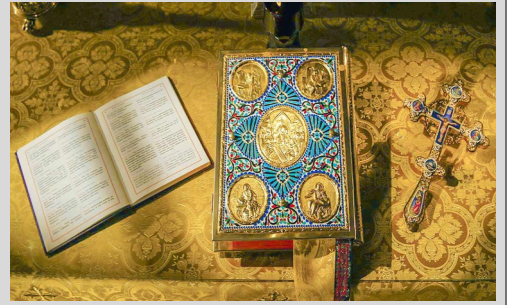
yourselves with it every day, reminding you of your own baptisms...that day when you were consecrated and set apart for a life of holiness and life of joy with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God is With Us and We are with Him! May that be the reality that is celebrated not just during the 12 days of Christmas, but throughout every day and every moment of our lives.



Month in Review

Where to begin! In December, we were visited by St. Nicholas who had special gifts for all of our children. We then held a successful annual meeting where we were able to approve new and updated bylaws, as well as vote on our new slate of Parish Council Members. All of this was followed up by the joyous feast of the Nativity of Christ! For as difficult 2020 has been, what a blessing it was to finish it off with a bang!



This Month's Sunday Scripture Readings

January 3rd:

2 Timothy 4:5-8
Mark 1:1-8

January 10th:

Ephesians 4:7-13
Matthew 4:12-17

January 17th:

Colossians 1:1-12
Luke 18:18-27

January 24th:

Colossians 3:4-11
Luke 18: 35-43

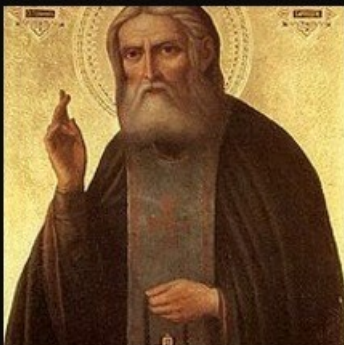
January 31st:

Colossians 3:12-16
Matthew 25: 14-30

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 February (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.



Seraphim of Sarov

You cannot be too gentle, too kind. Shun even to appear harsh in your treatment of each other. Joy, radiant joy, streams from the face of one who gives and kindles joy in the heart of one who receives.

AZ QUOTES

WISHING YOU MANY BLESSED YEARS!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

- † 1– Robyn Dollins
- † 3– Jeremy Becklehamer & Benjamin Cooley
- † 4– John Oslin & Jacob Yonan
- † 6– Brion Cooley & Mason Shipley
- † 7– Anastasia Branoff
- † 10– Jaclyn Daugherty, Layla Yonan & Theresa Cooley
- † 11– Theodora Tyrell
- † 13– Hanna Burtka & Theresa Serafimovski
- † 15– Mark Yonan & Jason Derry
- † 16– Minka Owens, Logan Welch & James Rice
- † 18– Katherine Senter & Cindy Welch
- † 19– Katherine Arnes & Adalyn Joseph
- † 20– Jeanette Hildreth, Terri Oginsky & Laura Khoury
- † 21– Fr. Dn. David Shephard
- † 22– Denise Oslin
- † 23– Theophan Forsyth
- † 24– Katheryn Auxier
- † 25– Michael Khoury, Carly Locascio & Oskar Hall
- † 29– Fr. Dn. Michael Schlaack & Ruthie Becklehamer
- † 30– Renee Wilkinson & Shannon Joseph
- † 31– Stephen Schlaack

- † 4– Adam & Rosanne Cody
- † 31– James & Helen Locascio



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

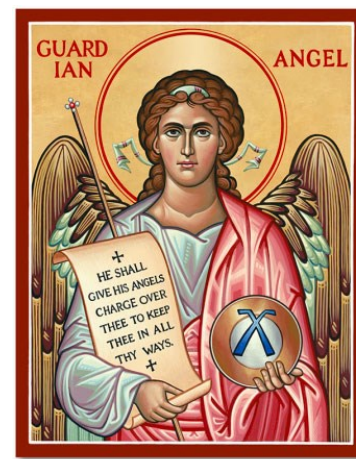
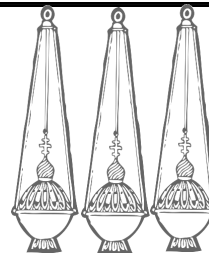
Office Hours

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 | Damian |
| Archpriest Joseph | Thom |
| Matushka Laura | Theodore |
| Vinnie | Bill |
| Anastasia | Joann |
| Alex | Ahron |
| Elaine | Linda |
| Stacie | Joane |
| Peter | Irene |
| David | |
| Michael | |
| Mason | |
| Pat | |
| Joseph | |
| Linda | |
| Tonya | |
| Arminda | |
| Ryan | |
| Dimitri | |



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
 Sarah Tyler—U.S. Air Force

Catechumens

Alyssa
 William
 Anthony
 James
 Anastasia
 Dennis
 Veronica
 Conner
 Lydia
 Oliver
 Oskar

Recently Departed

Archbishop David

Mother's With Child

Robyn
 Christina
 Ann
 Anna
 Christine
 Shannon

Seminarian Family

Alexander & Danielle Earl

Anniversary of Parish Member's Repose

8— Denis Perez
 29— Andrew Ziats

Parish Greeters

January 3rd:
Seth & Mia Hillaker

January 10th:
Scott & Tina Shephard

January 17th:
George & Julie Jonascu

January 24th:
Steve & Sue Walton

January 31st:
Seth & Mia Hillaker

Coffee Hour Volunteers

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

January 3rd:

January 10th:
(take out lamb roast)

January 17th:

January 24th:

January 31st:

Epistle Readers

Primary

Back-up

January 3rd:
Sbdn. Andrew Durand

January 10th:
Rdr. Chris Ballnik

January 17th:
Janet Wiese

January 24th:
Rdr. John Auxier

January 31st:
Rdr. Nathaniel Auxer

January 3rd:
Jenni Otis

January 10th:
Sue Walton

January 17th:
Sbdn. Andrew Durand

January 24th:
Rdr. Chris Ballnik

January 31st:
Janet Wiese

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.



Hand Painted Theophany Water Bottles Available!

Suggested Donation of \$10 / bottle

Monthly Forecast

Blessing of Holy Water

On Tuesday, January 5th, we will have the great blessing of waters at 7:00 PM at the Church. Be sure to bring your holy water containers that day!

Theophany Divine Liturgy

On Wednesday, January 6th, there will be Theophany Divine Liturgy, beginning at 10:00 AM! Be sure to bring your holy water containers if you could not be with us the night before!

Theophany “Lamb Roast To Go”

Our annual Blessing of the River and Lamb Roast will take place after the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, January 10th**. With so many restrictions this year, things will look a little bit different than in years past. There will not be a pot luck that day, as the parish council has decided to bypass the buffet line and just have the meals in “to go” containers. Parishioners are welcome to take the meals home, or for those wishing to stay, we will have the patio heaters out for those that want to sit and eat outside!

Sanctity of Life Sunday

On Sunday, January 17th we will have our memorial prayer service for all of our departed unborn infants of God. We kept the list of names from last year, if you have any new names to add or would like to verify your name is on the list please contact the parish office by Friday, January 15th.

House Blessings

House blessings will begin in earnest in Mid-January! Please fill out the House Blessing Form and get it to the parish office as soon as possible!

Monastery Virtual Fundraiser

On Thursday, January 21st in the Evening we will still have our annual fundraiser for Holy Dormition Monastery. It will look a bit different this year as we will virtually join the Sisters of Holy Dormition at the Monastery for Vespers and talks. The details are still being worked out so stay tuned!

Metanoia Classes Scheduled

Metanoia Class for the Spring Semester will be starting on Wednesday, January 27th at 6:30 PM and continue until Wednesday, Marcy 10th. This 7 week course will be covering the basic teachings of Orthodoxy, and how we can go about using them in our every day life! Register by either emailing Fr. Gabriel or by reaching out to the parish office!

Akathist to St. John the Baptist

On Thursday, January 7th at 6:30pm we will have a short Akathist Service to St. John the Baptist for his Synaxis. All are welcome to attend.

Bell Ringers Workshop

For anyone, aged 12 or up that is interested in learning how to play the bells for liturgical services, we will have a bell workshop this month. The workshop will take place on Saturday, January 23rd at 2:00pm. Matushka Laura will go through everything you need to know about our beautiful bells.

Lazarus Bags

Again, the fellowship of St. Photini will start off the year with the collection of items for the Lazarus Bags. See the flier below for exact items needed, there is a sign-up sheet for items in the Narthex.



Theophany Schedule

2021



Saint Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church
2439 S. Long Lake Road, Fenton, Michigan

Tuesday, January 5th Eve of Theophany Blessing of the Waters 7:00pm

Wednesday, January 6th Divine Liturgy for Theophany 10:00am

Saturday, January 9th Vespers 4:00pm

Sunday, January 10th Divine Liturgy, Blessing of the River and Annual Lamb Roast 9:50am



ST. MARY MAGDALENE HOUSE BLESSING FORM 2021

Family Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Best Number to Reach You:

Circle What Days and Times Work Best For Your Family:

Monday

Tuesday

Thursday

Friday

Mornings

Afternoons

Evenings

In preparation for your House Blessing, please have a candle, an icon, a small dish to hold the Holy Water, and a list of names for your family's living and departed.

Bell Ringers Workshop



Anyone, 12 years or older, interested in learning to play the bells

Saturday, January 23rd 2:00 p.m.

Taught by Matushka Laura

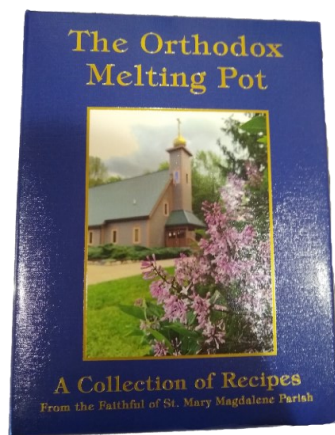


Parish Kiosk



“The Orthodox Melting Pot”

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



The Parish Cookbook is available for a suggested donation of \$25 each. Please use the specific envelope designated for the cookbook to make your donation. If you would like a copy shipped to you please contact the parish office

Mid-month 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 ASAP so that we can add it to the order forms!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Nativity Sale through our Kiosk!!

Kiosk New Arrivals

- ✝ We will be placing an order at the end of January if you would like to order any items
- ✝ 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!

Feast of the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Commemorated on January 6
from oca.org

Theophany is the Feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord (Mt.3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). God the Father spoke from Heaven about the Son, the Son was baptized by Saint John the Forerunner, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son in the form of a dove. From ancient times this Feast was called the Day of Illumination and the Feast of Lights, since God is Light and has appeared to illumine “those who sat in darkness,” and “in the region of the shadow of death” (Mt.4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

In the ancient Church it was the custom to baptize catechumens at the Vespers of Theophany, so that Baptism also is revealed as the spiritual illumination of mankind.

The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this Feast.

There is a third century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

The monks Joseph the Studite, Theophanes and Byzantios composed much liturgical music for this Feast, which is sung at Orthodox services even today. Saint John of Damascus said that the Lord was baptized, not because He Himself had need for cleansing, but “to bury human sin by water,” to fulfill the Law, to reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and finally, to sanctify “the nature of water” and to offer us the form and example of Baptism.

On the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, the Holy Church proclaims our faith in the most sublime mystery, incomprehensible to human intellect, of one God in three Persons. It teaches us to confess and glorify the Holy Trinity, one in Essence and Undivided. It exposes and overthrows the errors of ancient teachings which attempted to explain the Creator of the world by reason, and in human terms.

The Church shows the necessity of Baptism for believers in Christ, and it inspires us with a sense of deep gratitude for the illumination and purification of our sinful nature. The Church teaches that our salvation and cleansing from sin is possible only by the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, therefore it is necessary to preserve worthily these gifts of the grace of holy Baptism, keeping clean this priceless garb, for “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27).

Troparion — Tone 1

When You, O Lord were baptized in the Jordan / the worship of the Trinity was made manifest / for the voice of the Father bore witness to You / and called You His beloved Son. / And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, / confirmed the truthfulness of His word. / O Christ, our God, You have revealed Yourself / and have enlightened the world, glory to You!



Our Parish Youth

January Church School Announcements

Mark your calendars:

Thank you to all who participated in our Nativity Almsgiving and our St. Nicholas Day Celebration! A wonderful, albeit non-traditional, time was had by all!

This month be sure to read the story of Theophany with your children. Discuss the importance of Baptism and share stories from their baptisms. When you schedule your annual house blessing, be sure to involve your kids in the process. They can lead the priest around your home with a candle, older children can hold the bowl of Holy Water and everyone can join in with the singing of the Troparion.

Troparion — Tone 1

When You, O Lord were baptized in the Jordan / the worship of the Trinity was made manifest / for the voice of the Father bore witness to You / and called You His beloved Son. / And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, / confirmed the truthfulness of His word. / O Christ, our God, You have revealed Yourself / and have enlightened the world, glory to You!

**-In Christ,
Matushka Laura**

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.

Adult Education



"METANOIA"
LEARNING TO CHANGE ONE'S HEART FOR GOD



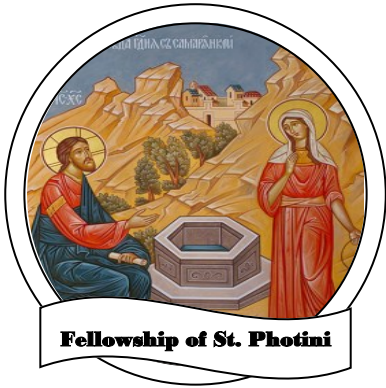
In a Christian World now littered with various denominations, each teaching a different version of the same Gospel, have you ever wondered or thought about what the earliest Christians taught, how they worshiped, and what believed? Now is your opportunity to come, discuss, and learn about the fullness of what the Ancient Christian Faith is all about!

This 7 Week Class will cover the fundamental beliefs of the Ancient Christian Church, passed down to us from Christ and His Disciples

Spring Semester 2021

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Wednesday, Jan. 27th | 6:30 PM: | Introduction to Holy Tradition |
| Wednesday, Feb. 3rd | 6:30 PM: | What do we know about God? |
| Wednesday, Feb. 10th | 6:30 PM: | What it Means to be a Human Being |
| Wednesday, Feb. 17th | 6:30 PM: | Who is Jesus Christ? |
| Wednesday, Feb. 24th | 6:30 PM: | The Eastern Christian View of Sin and Salvation |
| Wednesday, March 3rd | 6:30 PM: | The Church, Mary, and the Saints |
| Wednesday, March 10th | 6:30 PM: | The Holy Spirit and the Jesus Prayer |

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 participated and donated to the Seminarian Angel Tree. By the grace of God we were able to gift over \$2,300 to seminarians and their families for the Nativity Season!



Once again we will kick off the new year with our Lazarus Bag Project. This project allows us to make basic kits to give to the homeless and less fortunate in our area.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for items needed. See the Flyer below for more information.

Please return all items to the church by Sunday, December 31st so that we have time to fill in the missing items.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

We will come together on Saturday, February 6th, following Great Vespers, to assemble the bags. We will bless and distribute them on February 7th.

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.

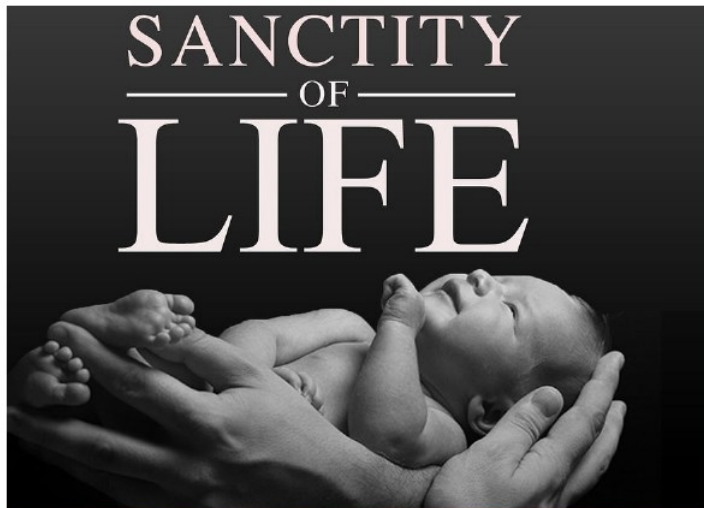
*Truly, I tell you,
whatever you did for one of
the least of these
brothers and sisters of mine,
you did for me.*
~MATTHEW 25:40



Lazarus Bags

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✦ Hand Warmers | TRAVEL SIZED: |
| ✦ Razors | ✦ First Aid Kits/ Band-aids |
| ✦ Gloves | ✦ Kleenex |
| ✦ Hats | ✦ Toothbrush |
| ✦ Protein Bars | ✦ Toothpaste |
| ✦ Bottled Water | ✦ Shaving Cream |
| ✦ Chapstick | ✦ 50 drawstring backpacks |
| ✦ \$5 McDonald's Gift Cards | |





MEMORIAL PRAYER SERVICE FOR ALL OF OUR DEPARTED INFANTS OF GOD

On **Sanctity of Life Sunday**, The St. Mary Magdalene Parish Family wishes to invite the entire community to our Church for a special prayer service in memory of all unborn infants. If you know of anyone who has ever suffered the loss of a child in the womb, please ask them to join us after the Divine Liturgy to offer prayers and consolation for their departed children, and for each other.

When: Sunday, January 17th, After the Divine Liturgy (Approx. 11:40 AM)

Where: St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church
2439 S. Long Lake Rd.
Fenton, Michigan, 48451

Contact: To submit names to be prayed for, or for more information on the service, please email smmocafenton@gmail.com or call the parish office at (810) 750-1401

Nativity Message from Metropolitan Tikhon

Nativity of our Lord 2020

To the Venerable Hierarchs, Esteemed Clergy, Reverend Monastics, and Beloved Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My Beloved Brethren and Blessed Children in the Lord, on this the glorious and light-filled Feast of the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, I greet you with the words that resound throughout our Churches and homes during this season: Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

By the grace of God, we have come through an extraordinary year fraught with challenges and trials that none of us could have expected. We have found ourselves confused, scared, and anxious. As we realized the frailty of our earthly life and the many fleeting things of this world to which we so often cling, more than anything, we have found ourselves in need of a Savior.

It is especially in these challenging moments that we are strengthened by God's promise, spoken in the book of Deuteronomy, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them: for it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you (Dt 31:6)." As children of God, as children of the promise, we should remain steadfast in hope. We should never let our hope waiver, because, as the present feast reminds us, we are strengthened continually by the presence of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus, who saves us from our sins and weaknesses, and reconciles us with our heavenly Father. The scripture, hymns, and rites of the feast testify that Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, is He who has also died on the Cross, and become the first-born of the dead, raised us all by the Power of God, and opened the gates of the kingdom to us.

The great Prophet Isaiah, speaking of this kingdom, tells us:

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever (Is 9:7).

Beloved hierarchs, clergy, monastics, and faithful, let your hope be renewed at the Nativity of Christ! Be assured that God is with us! Perceiving the mystery of this feast, difficulties and trials in this life will become bearable, as your faith is strengthened, and your hope remains firm.

With all the blessings of the feast, I remain

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Nativity Message from Archbishop Alexander

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2020 Our memories of holiday celebrations past, surrounded by loving family and friends, help set the stage for our present-day festivities. Perhaps this year, under the continued limitations placed upon us by the Coronavirus, chief among them the social isolation of many, we are in a more nostalgic mood than usual. This longing for Christmas celebrations of days-gone-by is not unexpected. Let us be mindful, however, that we must not regard the Lord's Nativity as merely the commemoration of a past event.

The birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is an event that both happens in time and also transcends time. Our festal greeting is, "Christ is born," not, "Christ was born." The "Lord, I call" verses for the Vespers of the Nativity begin with the words: *"Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord as we tell of this present mystery!"*

The singular act of God directly intervening in human history through the incarnation of his only-begotten Son reaches beyond first-century Bethlehem, spreading joy and good will into the past, to our Holy Forefathers of the Old Testament, and to future generations of believers until the Lord's return.

Through our services, our carols, and our acts of love towards others, we very truly become witnesses of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds and the Magi. With this in mind, our celebrations become for us, not just nostalgia, but a means by which the Christ-child is born in the manger of our hearts today.

Even if we must celebrate this year's Nativity season in a limited capacity, the truth of the feast is in no way diminished: "He-who-is becomes what He never was. He shares our substance without forsaking His own nature. Desiring to make us citizens of the world on high, Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, is born on earth as a man." (Nativity Matins)

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

With love in the newborn King,

Archbishop of Toledo and the Bulgarian Diocese – Orthodox Church in America

Referral Program To Benefit The St. Mary Magdalene Church Expansion



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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!