

**SAINT NICHOLAS
ORTHODOX CHURCH
JANUARY 2020 NEWS**
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THIS MONTH'S NEWS

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REGULAR WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS 8:15 a.m. Matins (Orthros)
9:30 A.M. DIVINE LITURGY Coffee Hour afterwards
Mondays and Wednesdays 8 a.m. Matins (Orthros)
Vespers before evening meetings as announced
Saturdays 5 p.m. Great Vespers
Confessions after Saturday Vespers, before Sunday Liturgy or by appointment

JANUARY FASTING:.

No meatfast through Saturday January 4.
Then regular **Wednesday and Friday Fast** for the rest of the month

Wednesday January 1
Feast of the Circumcision,
The Naming of Jesus Christ
Commemoration of Saint Basil the Great
Secular New Year's Day
9 a.m. Festival Orthros: 9 a.m.
10 a.m. Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great

The Epiphany (Theophany) of
Our Lord, God and Savior
Jesus Christ

celebrating his Baptism in the River Jordan
 The Feast is transferred from its usual date, January 6,
 to **Sunday January 5** so that more people can attend.

Friday January 3:

9 a.m. Royal Hours of Epiphany

Sunday January 5:

9:30 a.m. Sunday: Divine Liturgy of St Basil
 followed by **The Great Blessing of Water**

This is a gorgeous service, but l o n g. Be prepared!



Sunday January 12: Blessing of the Water of Cedar Creek

Cal McIntyre, our Parish Council chairman, will celebrate his **80th birthday** in mid-January, and his wife Peggy is hosting a lunch in his honor at church after Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, January 19**. Since they will be out of town for the first 2 weeks in January, please call Peggy at **414-464-7413** to leave a message to let her know you're coming so she can plan food, drinks, etc., **OR** add your name(s) to the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board(s) upstairs and downstairs by **January 12**. Thank you!

OUR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Sunday January 26 after Liturgy

Business will include:

Pastor's Report,

Treasurers' Report which will include current state of financial events,
 2020 pledges, and report of 2020 budget.

Reports from parish officers and heads of parish organizations

Anything else anyone wishes to bring up.



All year we have heard of the incredible work of International Orthodox Christian Charities in response to the many emergencies around the world and right here at home.

On **Saturday February 1, 2020**, the Milwaukee Metropolitan IOCC Committee will be hosting the **Seventh Annual IOCC Tailgate Event!** Join us at **Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa** to support IOCC and their ability to provide emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide. Enjoy brats and brews, games with friends and family, live music, and hear about the impact of IOCC programs. Wear your favorite jersey or bring your favorite game! The event will begin with **Vespers at 5:00 p.m.** and **doors will open at 6:00 p.m.**

Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has provided over \$692 million in emergency and disaster relief in more than 60 countries. Most recently IOCC has provided more than 11,000 people in Greece with dry food parcels, prepaid grocery cards or other food assistance, repaired or built water infrastructure in Lebanon so more than 97000 people could have reliable access to clear safe water; and over 250 IOCC volunteers in the U.S cleared 69 houses of muck and debris after floods and helped repair 15 homes damaged in natural disasters.

You can make a world of difference by sponsoring this event as a “Coach” (\$250), “General Manager” (\$500), or “Team Owner” (\$1000). Sponsorships received by January 15, 2020 will be recognized in the evening program. For more information, visit iocc.org/Milwaukee

Yours in Christ,
Katherine Newhouse and Ana Treptow, IOCC Event Co-Chai

Editor’s note: Katherine and Ana are members of Saint Nicholas, They have chaired this event for many years, and we are very proud of them.

January 2020

May Christ Who is constantly directing human history toward that which is Eternal bless this year.

2020 promises to be a tumultuous year for the United States. However we need to remember that we are not of this world but are looking forward toward the Eternal Kingdom. The history of the Holy Orthodox Church is filled with uncertain times since its' very beginning - yet those of True Faith who were involved in the times, did not let themselves be overtaken by them. We only have to look at the early persecutions of the Church by the Jews to know this. Despite all attempts by the secular world to stamp out that which Christ ordained, we are still here today. The Church has withstood Roman emperors, Muslim persecution, Communism and secularism. She has always held herself above the political frays of the times because she understands herself to be concerned with a kingdom not of this world but that of Christ which is heavenly.

We too need to take the examples of history and not let that which is happening around us destroy our peace of soul. As pastor, we at St. Nicholas are not going to get involved with the politics of the times and remain a place of peace and a sanctuary of that which is Holy. Politics today are divisive, angry, bitter, intolerant, judgmental, and are no longer uniting us as a people but tearing us apart. Anything that causes this among peoples and individuals, is not of God. It does not belong in the Church.

What does one do then? Just as those before us, we pray for those whom we may think are intolerable (but is not that even a judgement itself?). That is the true Christian response, done in love and with peace of heart. It will be a lesson in humility, "pray for those that persecute you" (whether real or imagined). If we truly hold that each person is an Icon of Christ, then that applies to everyone - no matter which political party, persons or person.

What an individual chooses to do outside the church is their business. There is nothing wrong in getting involved with platforms and people you support. One might say it is our civic duty: "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's ; and to God that which is God's". But it stops at the door of the Church - which includes sending parishioners your political views via email, texts and postings. If they did not ask to be included in your proselyting then please respect their privacy. Just because one is a member of this Church does not give anyone the liberty to use the Church address lists for anything outside of Church communications. This extends even beyond politics.

*This is **Father Bill's Sermon** from **The Sunday after Christmas 2019**.
If you missed it or were asleep during it, keep reading. If you were paying attention in church or if you follow my Blog, you may stop reading this now!*

David Prophet and King, Joseph Betrothed of the Virgin Mary, and James Brother of the Lord

Christ is born. Glorify him

First, on December 29 we commemorate the **Innocent Boys of Bethlehem** slain by Herod. Orthodox tradition says there were 14,000. Perhaps. The population of Bethlehem in those days was less than 1000. But it says Bethlehem “and the surrounding region”, so who knows?

On Christmas we heard the story of the Wise Men who had gone to King Herod looking for a newborn King of the Jews. Now, Herod was paranoid. (I know we should not analyze people from a distance, but in this case...) He'd had most of his in-laws murdered for fear they'd try to take the throne and finally had his wife executed. They said he truly loved her but he thought she was plotting against him, so what else could he do...? They said he never was the same after that -and he hadn't been exactly normal before! So the massacre of the boys of Bethlehem was entirely in character.

Now he had to get this the baby king Jesus. All he knew was he was in Bethlehem. Maybe the Star had appeared 2 years before? Maybe that was why he ordered the slaughter of all boys there under age 2. But Joseph warned in a dream took the Boy and his mother and fled to Egypt. So the Holy Family began their life together as refugees. The Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox Church has icons of the Holy Family arriving (with pyramids in the background) and of them sailing down the Nile.



Today, please pray for all children in the world who are mistreated - refugees from war, violence, poverty, those who are beaten or sexually abused, separated from their parents, kept in pens. May God have mercy on them all. Just as he commanded us to do, too.

On this Sunday after Christmas we always remember **King David, Joseph spouse of the Virgin Mary, and James Brother of the Lord.** These are good stories!

David one of the most fascinating characters in history. 1000 years BC he was the greatest Jewish king. David, a shepherd boy from Bethlehem - a young hero who killed the giant enemy warrior Goliath with his slingshot - a musician who played the harp, a singer of songs and writer of poems - a deeply religious man. Many of the 150 psalms so familiar to us who pray them every day are titled “A Psalm of David”. Psalm 22/23 is well known to us all: “The Lord is my shepherd...he leads me beside green pastures, he restores my soul.” (If you don’t read the Psalms of David you really should. They are beautiful, and there is something in them that speaks to our every occasion. Read, no, *pray* a Psalm a day, and see for yourself.) David, made King of the Jews by popular acclamation, and thus began the golden age of the Jewish nation.



David, a tender loving man: when his son Absalom led a rebellion against him and was killed, David wept over him: “Absalom, my son, my son, if only I had died instead of you.” David a godly man: he kept in his court the prophet Nathan because he knew he would proclaim the true word of God whether David liked it or not. It was Nathan who told him: Thus says the Lord “When...you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendent after you and I will establish his kingdom...forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son.” 1000 years later the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary “You shall give birth to Son. He shall be the Son of God, and “his Kingdom will never end”. We recite those words in the

Creed every Sunday, 3000 years after the prophet Nathan first proclaimed them to King David.

David a ladies' man, a sinner: You know the story of how David looked out his palace window and saw Bathsheba wife of Uriah in her room bathing. (Why she left the shade up the story doesn't say). So he sent for her and... there she was pregnant. So David had her husband sent to the front line of battle and he was killed. After a suitable period of mourning Bathsheba was taken to the palace and became one of David's wives. They thought they had got away with it till one day Nathan told David about a rich man with great flocks who killed his poor neighbor and took his only ewe. What should be done? He should be put to death! said David. Then Nathan said: *You are the man!* David repented, in grief and shame. Psalm 50/51 is titled "A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba": "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy. According to the multitude of thy mercy do away my offenses. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin..." We hear David's Psalm of Repentance daily in our Orthodox services. David's line continued, and 28 generations later, as you heard last Sunday, it led to Joseph who was betrothed to the Virgin Mary.

Joseph of the House of David. Don't believe those pictures and Christmas cards with Joseph as a handsome young guy. Earliest tradition says Joseph was an old widower with grown children. A carpenter or craftsman, and a just man it says. When Mary came to marrying age (about 13) and refused, and her parents were dead, so the high priest had to do something. So by lot it fell on old Joseph to be her guardian and legal husband. She was younger than his own children. But then... as today's Troparion goes: "Joseph...You have seen a Virgin great with Child; You have given glory with the shepherds; you have worshipped with the Magi; And you have been instructed by an angel." Joseph was something of a



mystic, guided by angels in his dreams. He saw wonderful things!

But then... The usual Christmas icon shows what it was like for him. Joseph off in the corner with his head in his hands: How can I handle this? at my age? foster father to the Son of God, guardian to the Mother of God. Have you ever felt like that like that? at your wits' end? Yet by God's grace Joseph did it, our example that by the grace of God so can you.

Even early on, Jesus knew who his true Father was. When Jesus was 12 they took up up to Jerusalem, and 3 days later as they were on their way home they realized they had lost him. (Imagine a society where they figured for 3 days that he was safe.) So they went back and finally found him in the temple. Mary scolded him: "Your father and I have been anxious, looking for you." Jesus answered: Didn't you know I must be in my Father's house?" and it can be translated "about my Father's business". That must have startled Joseph, even hurt some. But yet he was Jesus' true father on earth. He guided the Boy all through his childhood, had spent time with him, taught him to be a carpenter like himself. But then... before Jesus began his ministry, Joseph the old man died.

I can't help but think that when Christ descended into hades to rescue the dead, that when he first saw Joseph Jesus said to him, "Father!" And that Joseph said to him, "My son!" Saint Joseph is sort of the forgotten man in the Orthodox Church. Icons of him alone are rare. I wish we paid him more attention. He deserves it. Holy Joseph, pray for us, we who have been adopted into Jesus' family, just as you took Him into your family.

James the brother of the Lord. Earliest tradition is clear that Mary had no other children, that James was Joseph's son by his first marriage. And some say that James was the first of Josephs' family to believe in Jesus, and that James went along to with them into Egypt. Old Joseph certainly could have used the help.

James had a special place in the early Church. I Corinthians 15 says that after the resurrection, before Christ appeared to the other apostles he was seen first by Peter, then by James. This implies they were close and he had a special task for each of them. In today's Epistle Paul says when he went

up to Jerusalem 3 years after his conversion, he met with only 2 men, Peter chief of the apostles and James brother of the Lord. The Book of Acts tells us that James was what we now call first Bishop of Jerusalem. James (not Peter, interestingly enough) presided over the first apostolic council and announced the decision that we Gentiles would not be required to keep the Old Testament Law. Which is why I could have bacon on Christmas morning. Thank you James!

James wrote a New Testament Epistle which begins “James servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”, servant to his young stepbrother Jesus! He and the other Christians who stayed in Jerusalem after persecution tried to make themselves acceptable to the non-believers, and James came to be respected by the people. They called him James the Just. He was so trusted that the authorities were misled, for they worked out a plan to nip Christianity in the bud. They took James up onto a wall of the temple and instructed him to tell the crowd below that Jesus was not the Messiah. Instead he proclaimed his little brother as Messiah and Lord and Son of God. Then somehow immediately James, uh..., “just happened” to fall off the wall onto the street. He survived but someone in the crowd hit him in the head with a rock. So James Brother of the Lord was martyred about the year 62.

So there we are: the Family of Jesus. I think we all here are concerned by the breakdown of the traditional family in the modern world. But we do need to remember that the Holy Family was anything but a traditional family. Joseph, an old widower on his second marriage, From the outside it looked like one those May-December things that old men are sometimes suckers for. Can you imagine how Joseph’s sons and daughters reacted when he came home engaged to this girl! and then she was pregnant but claimed the Holy Spirit had done it. Yeah, right! and Joseph fell for it! (I’m not being irreverent - just describing what it looked like from the outside.) No doubt Mary and Joseph were glad to have the Child born somewhere



besides in Nazareth so they could get away from the gossip. And then they are refugees. And then Mary is a widow at age 25 or so and Joseph's family accepts this guy who was born illegitimate. And then Jesus never married (why? people asked - all Jewish men get married), and then, God deliver us all, he was then justly executed as a heretic, a criminal and finally his so-called brother James is murdered by the authorities. Not quite the usual family.

But yet out of this complicated, (ok, bizarre in the eyes of others) family situation came Jesus the Christ and a new and very different kind of family which would spread all over the world - all of us newly born in Baptism into the Church, the eternal family of God, all of us fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, a family that even death can't destroy. Out of that strange Holy Family came the salvation of the world. Who would ever have believed it:?

So if your family is unusual or imperfect (and whose isn't?) who knows what God can bring out of it? who knows what God can do with it that you cannot yet see? 2000 years ago there wasn't a soul who could imagine that out of that strange Holy Family would come *this*, our blessed family here at Saint Nicholas.

So...maybe there's hope for the modern world. Maybe there's hope for us.