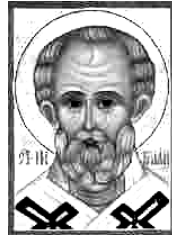


December 21, 2008
Virgin Martyr Juliana

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

320 Munson Avenue
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
412-331-1053
<http://www.stnicholas-oca.org>
info@stnicholas-oca.org



Rev. Thomas Soroka, *Rector*
(412) 299-3942
Rev. Dn. Joseph Mell, *Attached*
Ms. Doris Wasilko, *Choir Director*

Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ Forefeast of the Nativity

Schedule of Services and Activities

| | | |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Monday, December 22nd | 5:00 PM | Daily Vespers |
| Tuesday, December 23rd | 5:00 PM | Royal Hours |
| <i>Pre-feast of the Nativity of Christ</i> | | <i>(OT, Epistle and Gospel Nativity readings)</i> |
| Wednesday, December 24th | 9:30 AM | Vesperal Divine Liturgy |
| <i>Pre-feast of the Nativity of Christ</i> | | |
| Wednesday, December 24th | 8:00 PM | Vigil (Compline and Matins) |
| <i>Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ</i> | | |
| Thursday, December 25th | 10:00 AM | Festal Divine Liturgy |
| <i>Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ</i> | | |
| Friday, December 26th | 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy |
| <i>Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary</i> | | |
| Saturday, December 27th | 5:00 PM | Great Vespers |
| Sunday, December 28th | 10:00 AM | Divine Liturgy |

Everyone is invited downstairs after the Divine Liturgy today to enjoy our annual Yolka by the Church School Students. May God bless Matushka Joni and all the Church School teachers for their work and diligence during this season.

Everyone is invited to join us in Christmas caroling to our elderly parishioners and shut-ins after the Yolka today. Last year's event was a great success! After the caroling, Melissa and Nathan Graff have graciously opened their home for some post-caroling fellowship and refreshments. We hope to see you there!

The 2009 Calendars and Envelopes are now available at the candle kiosk.

Next Sunday after the Divine Liturgy we always share our "leftover" cookies with one another. Please bring your cookies and pastries for our annual Cookie Sunday during coffee hour!

It's time again to update the Church directory! Please see Kristie Mertz if any changes have been made to your contact information. Additionally, we would like everyone to have their picture taken so that we can publish a new church directory for 2009. Photographs will be taken for the next few weeks so that the directory can be made available at the yearly parish meeting, after the Divine Liturgy on the stage.



Next Sunday after the Divine Liturgy, we will serve the one-year memorial for the departed handmaiden of God, Matushka Olga Soroka. May her memory be eternal!

St. Nick's Corner News: Our showcase is overflowing with new merchandise! Please stop by and check out the dozens of beautiful ornaments, glass tealight holders and assorted wooden boxes, dolls, eggs, icons, and much more. Also available are several boxes of Christmas cards. See Michelle Bittner or Marsha Wasilko for assistance.

Our gracious thanks to parishioner Steve Meno and the staff of **Della Robbia Flowers and Gifts of Distinction** for providing the beautiful decorations and flowers which adorn our temple for the feast of the Nativity of Christ. Please support this worthy business! Della Robbia, 842 Gill Hall Road, Clairton, PA 15025, phone 412-650-4200.

Vigil Light Donations (Please remember the following people in your prayers): **From Marsha Wasilko** for the departed servant, (grandmother) Katherine Dyczko; for the health of the Wasilko family; Happy Birthday & Many Years to Uncle Joe & cousin Michael. **From Charles A. Wasilko** for Uncle Joe Dichko on his birthday. **From Doris M. Wasilko** for the departed servants (parents), Charles & Mary and (grandmother) Katherine Dyczko; for the health of the Wasilko family, Uncle Joe Dichko and Carol Kowalcheck. **From Donya Yewisiak** for the departed servant, George Porvaznik; for the health of Tom Robes, Justin Fuller, Michael Soroka and Carol Kowalcheck. **From Susan Sipes Stroehlen** for her departed husband, Jon. **From Carol Kowalcheck** for God's grace & mercy. **From John A. Kowalcheck** for the health of Carol Ann Kowalcheck.



From Helen Cobb for the departed servants, Ray Cobb, Mat. Olga, Richard Shancey, Darius, Joseph Kovacs, Ann Hruch, Steve Gulewicz; for the health of George, Ruth, Vic, Todd, Aleisha, Dick, Jared, Kowal family, Fuller family, Kasnot family, Speth family, Wasilko family, Barsom family, Helen M. Shancey & family, Dr. Chris Baxter & family, Fr. Soroka, Dn. Joseph Mell and their families. **From Paul & Lois Fuller** for the health of children—Katherine & (soldier) Justin. **From Peter & Garnette Kerchum** for the departed servant, Mat. Olga Soroka; for the health of Grandson, Michael Lopez, Jr., Reader Michael Soroka, Diane Zeronki and David Zeronki. **From Georgiann Robes** for the newly departed servants, George and Johanna & Beverly Porvaznik; for the health of Tom & Ronnie Robes; Glory to God for Anna Elizabeth Robes. **From Nancy Shaytar** for the health of George Shaytar; special intention. **From Natalie Soroka** for the health of Uncle Michael. **From Tatyana Sechler** for the departed servants, Victor, Polina, Valentina, Marina, Bruce, Maria and Maria; for the health of Tatyana, Dasha, Veronika, Galina and Slava. **From Raisa Burd** for the departed servants, Stepan, Agrippina, Nina, Zinovi, Anna, Denis, Vassili, Vladimir, Peter, Christya; for the health of Polina, Roman, Marina, Vladimir, Yevgeniy, Raisa, Alexandra, Ludmila, Valentina, Tatyana, Larissa and all our relatives and friends. **From Helen M. Shancey** for the departed servants, her beloved husband, Richard Shancey, Norma Jean Evans, Joyce Duster, Ray Cobb, Joseph Kovacs, Ann Hruch, Steve Gulewicz & wife, Mat. Olga, Melissa Torok, and all deceased members of the Halajcio & Shancey families; for the health of Dr. Chris Baxter & family, Shancey & Halajcio families, Jim & Leslie Wokutch, Helen Cobb, Olga Novak & son, Bittner family, Hruch family, Wasilko family, Kasnot family, Namisnak family, Barsom family, Kovacs family, Carol Kowalcheck family, Garnett & Peter Kerchum, Michael Lopez, Jr., Robes family, Pravlochak family, Kowal family, Steve Meno, Reader Michael Soroka, Fr. Thomas, Rev. Dn. Joseph Mell and all their families and all parishioners. God bless all our service men & women. God bless America.

Don't forget to attend the services celebrating the Nativity of Christ – Christmas!

*Many of the people in the history of our parish are from the Carpathian region of Eastern Europe. This is a beautiful account of Christmas Eve in a typical home of that area. Many people in our parish have fond memories of growing up with some of these customs. We encourage everyone who is able, to adopt the beautiful custom of the **Holy Supper** or **Svyati Vecher** as a very rich and meaningful tradition worthy of continuation.*

As the first star of the evening appears, the festivities begin. The father comes into the room, extends Christmas greetings and spreads hay over the floor. Next he places a sheaf of wheat and other farm products (a sample of each) on the table. With a prayer, he ties the four legs of the table with a chain, asking God's blessing and protection from all corners of the world. He also prays that the family be always united like the links of the chain and that those separated from the family be united to them in spirit. This being done, the candles are lit and a star with a candle is placed in a window as a sign of welcome to any stranger who is hungry or needs shelter.



Blessing

After thus the mother sprinkles everyone present with holy water. Then the father takes the holy water to the barn to bless the animals and to make sure that on this holy night they are well fed. Now a traditional toast is offered. Then the mother takes a clove of garlic, dips it in some honey, and makes the sign of the cross upon the forehead of those present. The honey symbolizes the sweetness of life, the garlic symbolizes the bitterness. Thus, each is reminded to bear sweetness and bitterness of life during the coming year.

Menu

The co-called Holy Supper consists of mushroom soup (with sauerkraut juice); bobal'ki (small biscuit like breads mixed with nuts or poppy seeds); beans; stewed fruits and/or vegetable dishes; fish; kolachy (Christmas cakes) and tea. The menu varies according to the custom of the village. However, whatever the menu, no meat is served in keeping with the fast. (Twelve courses are traditionally served, reminiscent of the Twelve Apostles, with one empty place setting at the table for any unseen, or unexpected guest -- perhaps even Christ himself disguised as such).

Prayers are offered during supper for a prosperous growth of products during the coming year. Carols are sung, presents exchanged. An exciting part of the evening for the children would be the hunt for nuts and fruit hidden in the straw on the floor by the father of the house. The games are interrupted by the carolers, who make the village rounds.

The Orthodox Services Celebrating the Nativity of Christ

The celebration of the feast of the **Nativity of Christ** in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord's Resurrection. A fast of forty days precedes the feast, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Saviour. Thus, on St Andrew's Day (November 30) and St Nicholas Day (December 6) songs are sung to announce the coming birthday of the Lord:

Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger. O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing Christ in her womb (Vesperal Hymn of St Nicholas Day)

On the eve of Christmas, the **Royal Hours** are read and the **Divine Liturgy of St. Basil** is served with **Vespers**. At these services the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's birth are chanted, emphasizing the prophecy of **Micah** which foretells Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Saviour, and the prophecies of **Isaiah** about the appearance and character of the Messiah:

The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which translated is, God with us (Is 7:14-15).

God is with us, understand all ye nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us (Is 8:9).

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end (Is 9:6-7).

The **Vigil of Christmas** begins with **Great Compline**, highlighted once again by the solemn chanting of **God is with us** and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah. At Compline there is also the singing of the Troparion and Kontakion of the feast along with the special hymns glorifying the Saviour's birth. There are also the special long litanies of intercession and the solemn blessing of the **five loaves** of bread together with the **wheat** and the **wine** of which the faithful partake and the **oil** with which they are anointed. This part of the festal vigil, which is done on all great feasts, is called the **litya** (in Greek, the *artoklasia* or the **breaking of the bread**).

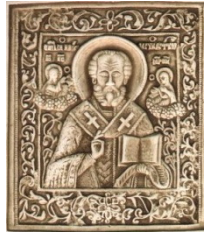
At the beginning of the **Christmas Matins**, which together with Compline form the Christmas Vigil, the six matinal psalms begin as usual with the words; Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men (*Lk 2:14*).

At the Christmas services these words of the angelic song are normally sung with great solemnity rather than being chanted as at the daily service. The Christmas Matins proceed as usual. The gospel reading from Matthew (*1:18-25*) tells of the birth of Christ, and all of the hymns and verses glorify his appearance on earth:

Christ is born, glorify him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet him. Christ is an earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For he is glorified. (First Ode of the Christmas Canon)

St Nicholas Orthodox Church

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December 21, 2008

Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ Forefeast of the Nativity

Tone 2 Troparion of the Resurrection

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal,
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead!
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out:
O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!

Tone 4 Troparion of the Forefeast

Great are the accomplishments of faith,
for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though in the waters of rest;
and the Prophet Daniel appeared
a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.
So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Tone 4 Troparion of the Pre-feast

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!
Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave!
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit;
if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.
Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Tone 1 Kontakion of the Forefathers

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha!
The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her womb.
The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him,
and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

Tone 3 Kontakion of the Pre-feast

Today the Virgin comes to the cave
to give birth to the Eternal Word.

Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!
Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds
the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little child!

Tone 4 Prokeimenon of the Forefathers (Song of the Three Youths)

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

Epistle of the Sunday before the Nativity (Heb 11:9-19,17-23, 32-40)

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Gospel of the Sunday before the Nativity (Matthew 1:1-25)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us."

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Communion Hymn (Psalm 148)

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest!

Of the Forefathers

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!

Welcome to our visitors!

While Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting, non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service. Please join us downstairs for coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy.

Metropolitan Jonah Interviewed by USA Today Newspaper (excerpts)



Q: You were a college student at the University of California when you converted. What drew you to the relatively exotic tradition of Orthodoxy?

A: I encountered Orthodoxy in a hippie bookstore, picking up a book called the Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church by Vladimir Lossky. It was one of the few books on Orthodoxy available in English at the time. When I read it, I knew it was the truth. I saw that Orthodoxy is the fully integrated experience and vision of what Christianity is all about.

Q: Recently, the Orthodox bishops of California signed a joint statement in support of Proposition 8, which outlawed gay marriage there. Do you plan to seek a public role on political matters, the way, for example, Roman Catholic bishops have?

A: There's a difference between political issues and moral issues. When there are things which destroy people's souls, it's our fundamental responsibility to stand up and say, this is wrong, and this is wrong because it will hurt you. It's not wrong because it says so in some book somewhere, in the canons or even in the Holy Scriptures. That's part of the basis of judgment, but it comes down to, it's wrong because it hurts you.

Q: Orthodox churches are getting a significant number of converts from Western Christian traditions. Is that a reflection on Orthodoxy, on Western churches, or both?

A: To a great extent, many of the other churches are falling apart. The mainline Protestants, the Methodists, the Presbyterians. The Episcopalians have lost half their membership. The Baptists, even. The evangelical movement is already coming to an end. It's only about 100 years old in American culture, and it's kind of come to the fulfillment of its potential. The Orthodox Church is the fullness of the apostolic faith and the apostolic tradition. People find in it what they always thought Christianity should be.

Q: Given that situation, how can Orthodoxy go about raising its profile?

A: We very much believe in free will. You can't drag people kicking and screaming into the kingdom of heaven, as much as you might want to try. While we have not had, for the most part, an aggressive outreach, I think we need to look at different ways in which to reach out to the general population. Truly as it's said in many circles, Orthodoxy is America's best kept secret, and it's our fault.