

JOAN SKINTA AT CARE CENTER

Woodhaven Care Ceeter, c/o Joan Skinta Room 226, 2400 McGinley Rd., Monroeville Pa 15146

2020 ENVELOPES

Please pick up your box of 2020 envelopes in the social hall. If you know someone who will be unable to pick up their 2020 envelopes, please take their box to them. If there is no box for you, please contact Father Vitalii.

THIS WEEK'S USHER TEAM - Team C

OUR GIFTS TO GOD AND OUR CHURCH, DECEMBER, 1, 2019:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| SUNDAY OFFERING | \$ 637.00 |
| LOOSE CASH | 5.00 |
| CHILDREN'S COLLECTION | 4.00 |
| CANDLES | 21.00 |
| MONTHLY | 40.00 |
| CHRISTMAS | 100.00 |
| HOLIDAY FLOWERS | 159.00 |
| HOLY DAY | 140.00 |
| ARCHDIOCESAN COLLECTION | 100.00 |
| TOTAL | \$ 1206.00 |

CATHOLIC TEACHING

III. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

A foretaste of the kingdom: the Transfiguration

From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ... and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he. In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem". A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter's confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to "enter into his glory".

Moses and Elijah had seen God's glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah's sufferings. Christ's Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God's servant; The cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. "The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud."

You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendour of the Father.

On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection. From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. the Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body." But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God":

Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?"

Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem

"When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem." By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."

Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart's desire: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes."

Jesus' messianic entrance into Jerusalem

How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David". Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (Hosanna means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass". Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth. and so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds. Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord", is taken up by the Church in the Sanctus of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST'S LIFE.)

PIROHI SALE

Holy Ghost, 225 Olivia Street, McKees Rocks PA. To order call 412-331-5155 9 am to noon Wednesday prior to sale. Pick-up 10 am to 2 pm, Fridays November 1st to December 13th. Handmade, fully cooked, made fresh and ready to eat. Potato, sauerkraut and cheese. Voted no. 1 for second year in a row at Kennywood Pirohi Fest.

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT: 1ST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

Author: Unknown; Date Written: 517-400 BC; Date of Narrative: 1050-970 BC



Like the books of Samuel and Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles should be read together because they were originally one book. The books of Chronicles review the history of Israel in a different way than Samuel-Kings. Rather than offering a systematic presentation of Israel's history, they offer an interpretation, an understanding of Israel's history. The books quote from and allude to several biblical books and they even copy some sections directly from Samuel and Kings. The author, often referred to as The Chronicler, is writing after the people have returned from exile. He seeks to explain God's plan for his people and his commitment to his promises down through the generations. While the books of Kings saw the exile as the end of the nation, Chronicles is about the nation's new beginnings after exile. The returned exiles are struggling to pick up the pieces of their civilization and regain their identity as Israelites. The Chronicler puts covenant faithfulness at the heart of this process. St. Jerome said that Chronicles was so important and so valuable that anyone who claims to know Scripture without knowing Chronicles ought to laugh at himself.

Traditionally, the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles was thought to be the same as the author of Ezra-Nehemiah. Yet recent scholarship has found serious differences between the writing of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles which suggest that they were not written by the same author.

1 Chronicles begins with a series of long genealogies from Adam to the period after the exile (1-9). These sections seem boring to contemporary readers, but they serve as an historical record of the people. They connect Adam, Abraham, Jacob and David with the present day of the Chronicler. They show a direct link between the past and the present, helping the returned exiles to understand that the promises of God which applied to their ancestors now apply to them. The genealogies are the template of Israelite identity. Additionally, they preserve the lineage of the kings of Judah, which designate certain men as claimants to the vacant throne of David. They constitute an ancestral record for the priests and Levites, which confirms their privilege to serve in the Temple. The genealogies are like a constitution of ancient Israel, designating who holds political and religious power which is transmitted by birth.

1 Chronicles highlights the achievements of David and avoids discussing his most embarrassing sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11). The Chronicler records David's victories (18-20), his devoted soldiers (11-12) and his kingdom officers and officials (27). The narrative pays a great deal of attention to the Ark of the Covenant, which David brings to Jerusalem and to the everlasting covenant which the Lord establishes with him (17). The only sin of David that Chronicles emphasizes is the census of fighting men which he conducts near the end of his reign (21). The census symbolizes that David is trusting in human power rather than in God's power so God releases a plague against Israel. David stops the plague by building an altar at the threshing floor of Araunah, which later becomes the site of the Temple.

The last section of 1 Chronicles narrates David's preparations for the Temple. He divides the Levites into 24 groups to conduct Temple worship and he makes all the practical provisions possible for the Temple's construction. David and other Israelites donate building material for the construction of the Temple and David explicitly charges Solomon to construct it.

1 Chronicles offers an interpretation of the Israelite kingdom's early history which sees God's hand at work in the ancestors and leaders of Israel.

GENERAL INFORMATION

For security reasons, during 11:00 AM Sunday Liturgy, **the back door will be locked at 11:15 AM.** Also, please remember during the Weekly Liturgy, the back door will be locked. Please park your car in front of the church.

VISITATION OF THE SICK

The parishioners confined to their homes or nursing homes due to health reasons are visited monthly. Also, person who are hospitalized are visited when Fr. Vitalii is notified. It especially is important that a family member contact Fr. Vitalii whenever a loved-one is hospitalized.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

We welcome anyone to become a parishioner of Sts Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church. Only those who are registered are considered members of the Parish. When one registers to become a parish member, they assume the responsibility of rendering stewardship of time, talent and treasure to this parish family. Worship at this parish is always expected. Registration is done only by the pastor.

26TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (LUKE 17: 12-19)

As we just heard in today's Gospel, ten lepers appeal to Christ for healing that He alone gives. While all ten were healed, only one came back to Christ, prostrating himself before Him who gives life to all people, and thanking God for the healing he has received.

Brothers and sisters, you and I are like one of those lepers: we have received the greatest of gifts - something even greater than physical healing: new life in Jesus Christ, participation even now in His eternal Kingdom through the Sacraments of His Church, forgiveness of our sins and prayer, the possibility to converse with God. He blesses us, ministers healing to us through His Church, calls us to a greater, and brings eternal purpose to our otherwise temporal lives. He invites us to receive Him inside ourselves, to feed on Him with our eternal souls. He receives us as we are but always with the objective of transfiguring us into the men and women of God, He's made us and called us to be.

We are like one of the ten lepers who have been healed and given new life: We have all been offered deification; we have all been set upon the journey of healing that is life with God. But, the question is: are we like the leper who returns to God, prostrates himself before Him and thanks Him, or, are we like the other nine, who receive from God but take His work, healing, and salvation for granted? Do we avail ourselves of His life, of His healing, of this deification? Or, are we focused on ourselves to the extent that we forget those around us and their needs?

We have seen many people healed and healing in church. For many, church has been a place of return to the Faith, growth in the life in Christ, and healing from the passions.

The reality is that we have much to be thankful for in our church, including and especially the brother or sister sitting next to us, who is important for our salvation; he or she is someone to pray for, someone to learn to come outside yourself to love, to build up, to encourage, to give to, and to receive from. We are all members of the same Body. This church is a place of worship God together. We build up our church not just for ourselves, but for each other, because our brother or sister's growth also affects our growth in faith and the love which bonds us together in Christ means that I also care about my brother and sister's healing and growth as I do my own.

The difference between the one leper who came back to Christ and the other nine, who received healing, but forgot about Christ is thankfulness. Many times, our forgetfulness of God, our taking Him and our church for granted or on 'our terms', comes from a lack of a spirit of thankfulness, of remembrance of God's grace and mercy or recognition of His ongoing work in our lives, deifying us, forgiving us, healing us, saving us.

So let's choose this Nativity Fast to build each other up in this truth this holy season and be ever thankful to God for His work in our lives, in our Church, in each other.

Could God be calling you to be a priest, deacon, brother or sister in order to help our world of today to truly "prepare the way of the Lord"? If you think God is calling you to be a priest, religious or deacon, contact Fr. Vitalii Stashkevych.

PRAY FOR VOCATIONS



The **Byzantine Catholic Serra Club of Pittsburgh** is an organization that fosters and promotes priesthood and religious vocations in the Byzantine Catholic Church. They also support Seminarians, Priests and Religious Sisters in their sacred ministry. The Byzantine Serra Club meets monthly. If you would like to join, call William Kress 412-761-1499 or email kb.kress@gmail.com

Join the Serrans in their work to ensure the future of our Church.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE



Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Roman Catholicism, the Virgin Mary in her appearance before St. Juan Diego in a vision in 1531. The name also refers to the Marian apparition itself. Our Lady of Guadalupe holds a special place in the religious life of Mexico and is one of the most popular religious devotions. Her image has played an important role as a national symbol of Mexico.

According to tradition, Mary appeared to Juan Diego, who was an Aztec convert to Christianity, on December 9 and again on December 12, 1531. She requested that a shrine to her be built on the spot where she appeared, Tepeyac Hill (now in a suburb of Mexico City). The bishop demanded a sign before he would approve construction of a church, however. Mary appeared a second time to Juan Diego and ordered him to collect roses. In a second audience with the bishop, Juan Diego opened his cloak, letting dozens of roses fall to the floor and revealing the image of Mary imprinted on the inside of the cloak—the image that is now venerated in the Basilica of Guadalupe.

The traditional view has been questioned by various scholars and ecclesiastics, including the former abbot of the Basilica of Guadalupe. The primary objection is that there is no documentary evidence for the apparition until 1648; critics claim that documents purporting to be from the 16th century are actually from the 17th. Critics have also noted that the bishop approached by Juan Diego was not consecrated until 1534, and he makes no mention of Juan Diego or of Our Lady of Guadalupe in his writings. Defenders of the Virgin of Guadalupe—including Pope John Paul II, who canonized Juan Diego and declared Our Lady of Guadalupe the patroness of the Americas—accept the authenticity of the early documents and point also to various oral accounts of the apparition.

John Paul's actions were only the latest in a series of developments affirming the importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A shrine to the Virgin has existed on the site since at least 1556, when the archbishop of New Spain promoted devotion to the image of Mary at a chapel in Tepeyac. The image was described by an English prisoner in Mexico City in 1568, and by the end of the 16th century Our Lady of Guadalupe formed part of a wide network of shrines to the Virgin throughout Mexico. The story of Mary's appearance to Juan Diego was codified in the work of Miquel Sánchez in 1648, and an account in the indigenous language (Nahuatl) was published in 1649 and widely accepted as accurate. The devotion continued to grow, especially after Our Lady of Guadalupe was credited with ending a deadly epidemic of hemorrhagic fever that ravaged Mexico City in 1736–37. In 1737 she was proclaimed patroness of Mexico City, and in 1746 her patronage was accepted by all the territories of New Spain, which included part of present-day California as well as Mexico and regions as far south as Guatemala and El Salvador. In 1754 Pope Benedict XIV approved her patronage and granted her a proper feast and mass for December 12. Pope Pius X proclaimed her patroness of Latin America in 1910, and in 1935 Pius XI approved her patronage over the Philippines. Veneration of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been particularly strong among women, especially in Mexico, and since at least the early 18th century the devotion was spread throughout the world by the Jesuits and other religious.

TIME TO READ THE HOLY BIBLE

Old Testament

1 The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. 2 "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." 4 Abram went as the LORD directed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai, his brother's son Lot, all the possessions that they had accumulated, and the persons they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, by the terebinth of Moreh. (The Canaanites were then in the land.) 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So Abram built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel, pitching his tent with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. He built an altar there to the LORD and invoked the LORD by name. 9 Then Abram journeyed on by stages to the Negeb. 10 There was famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, since the famine in the land was severe. 11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai: "I know well how beautiful a woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'She is his wife'; then they will kill me, but let you live. 13 Please say, therefore, that you are my sister, so that it may go well with me on your account and my life may be spared for your sake." 14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw how beautiful the woman was; and when Pharaoh's courtiers saw her, 15 they praised her to Pharaoh. So she was taken into Pharaoh's palace. 16 On her account it went very well with Abram, and he received flocks and herds, male and female slaves, male and female asses, and camels. 17 But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife Sarai. 18 Then Pharaoh summoned Abram and said to him: "How could you do this to me! Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Here, then, is your wife. Take her and be gone!" 20 Then Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

Book of Genesis 12:1-20

CHRISTMAS KIELBASA



The Duquesne Men's club of Saints Peter and Paul is selling Christmas Kielbasa (\$5.00/Lb.). Order by December 15th. Delivery to the Church will be Sunday December 22nd. **The order sheet will be in the vestibule if you are interested.** Thank You.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Fr. Vitalii is accepting requests for 2020 Divine Liturgy's on a first come first serve basis. Please submit your requests in writing with the intention and date requested to St Peter and Paul attention with your offering and place on Sunday collection basket.

New Testament

1 At that time Jesus was going through a field of grain on the sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads 2 of grain and eat them. 2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the sabbath." 3 He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, 4 how he went into the house of God and ate the bread of offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? 5 Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the sabbath and are innocent? 6 I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. 7 If you knew what this meant, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned these innocent men. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath." 9 Moving on from there, he went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man there who had a withered hand. They questioned him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. 11 He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep that falls into a pit on the sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much more valuable a person is than a sheep. So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." 13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored as sound as the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him to put him to death. 15 When Jesus realized this, he withdrew from that place. Many (people) followed him, and he cured them all, 16 but he warned them not to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 18 "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom I delight; I shall place my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. 19 He will not contend or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory. 21 And in his name the Gentiles will hope." 22 Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see. 23 All the crowd was astounded, and said, "Could this perhaps be the Son of David?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons." 25 But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. 26 And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 How can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. 30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. 33 "Either declare the tree good and its fruit is good, or declare the tree rotten and its fruit is rotten, for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you say good things when you are evil? For from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good person brings forth good out of a store of goodness, but an evil person brings forth evil out of a store of evil. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. 37 By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." 39 He said to them in reply, "An evil and unfaithful 28 generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. 40 Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. 41 At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here. 42 At the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here. 43 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a person it roams through arid regions searching for rest but finds none. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my home from which I came.' But upon returning, it finds it empty, swept clean, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and brings back with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they move in and dwell there; and the last condition of that person is worse than the first. Thus it will be with this evil generation." 46 While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. 47 (Someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you.") 48 But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The Gospel According to Matthew 12:1-50

JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS

(LUKE 17:11-19)

U Y C R E M Q A U P I K J R F
 Q F N J N I T M A L W E Z P A
 S O M N G V A B N D E F Z I Y
 S P H S B V Q T S E E P K Q Y
 I E A I R A M A S U Z L E D O
 L O T Z G B F Y M S S J A R F
 F O L E R Q H C G G B E C E S
 A C D K N Y P L L D K T J J H
 I D E N R U T E R E Q S T Q V
 T F R B Q E J I F E A K I R B
 H K E Z I E T O H P J N O I S
 S B B F P L N V A Z B A S L V
 G A L I L E E I W C B H T E M
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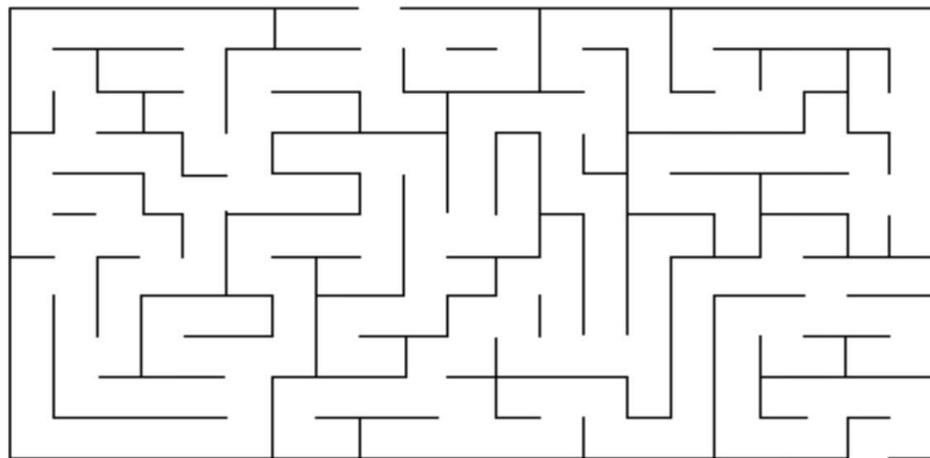
CLEANSED
 FAITH
 GALILEE
 HEALED
 JESUS

LEPERS
 MERCY
 NINE
 ONE

RETURNED
 SAMARIA
 TEN
 THANKS

LEPER

HELP THE HEALED LEPER TO FIND HIS WAY BACK TO JESUS



JESUS

SCHEDULES FOR CHRISTMAS TIME

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| 12/22/19 | Sunday before Christmas | 11:00 AM | Divine Liturgy |
| 12/24/19 | Christmas Eve | 05:00 PM | Christmas Eve Divine Liturgy |
| 12/25/19 | Christmas Day | 11:00 AM | Christmas Divine Liturgy |
| 12/26/19 | Synaxis of the Theotokos | 11:00 AM | Divine Liturgy |
| 12/27/19 | Stephen Protomartyr | 11:00 AM | Divine Liturgy |
| 12/29/19 | Sunday after Christmas | 11:00 AM | Divine Liturgy |

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS ON 25 DECEMBER?



In the first century the Church did not celebrate the birth of Christ. It is important to remember that in the very first few years of the Church, the only feast days being celebrated were those to do with the death and resurrection of Christ: that is, Pascha. After a few decades the Church desired to also celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord on 6 January. This meant celebrating the fact that God took on human form and visited us: “God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us!” Later the Church decided to break up the Epiphany feast into its components: the birth, baptism, the circumcision and the entering into the temple. These commemorations were each given different dates and you can be sure there was a lot of debate about the dates. In some parts of Christendom the feast of Christmas was celebrated on 6 December, while in other parts it stayed on 6 January. Eventually the majority of Christian bishops agreed to celebrate on 25 December. Interestingly, the Armenian Orthodox Church, which broke away from the Universal Church in the fourth century and thus did not change its practice of celebrating Christmas, still celebrates Epiphany as a combined commemoration of the birth and baptism of Christ, just as the Church did in the 2nd – 3rd century.

The actual date of the birth of Jesus Christ is unknown. No date is given in the Bible, only some hints according to certain historical events that happened at that time. In those days, birthdays were not recorded, nor were they considered important. Most people measured their ages by making a connection to a historical event. For example, they would say: “Mark was born during the reign of Tiberius” rather than on a particular date. So the birth date of Jesus was most probably never recorded. If the Church was to celebrate Christmas, they would have to select a date.

The earliest known indication of a celebration of Christmas comes in a passing statement by St Clement of Alexandria who mentions that the Egyptians of his time celebrated the Lord’s birth on 20 May. At the end of the 3rd century, many Churches celebrated it in the winter, and this was only accepted in Rome in the middle of the 4th century. The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336AD, during the time of the Emperor Constantine (306-337). A few years later, Pope Julius I officially declared that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on the 25th December.

There are several theories surrounding the question as to why 25 December was chosen as the day to celebrate the nativity of our Lord. One theory is that 25 December was chosen to Christianise the pagan festival which some Christians were still celebrating, even as late as the 4th Century. This festival was the “birthday of the unconquered sun” which was a celebration of the sun god at the time of the winter solstice.

Another theory is that the 25 December is exactly nine months from the Annunciation by Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to Christ. 25 March had already been chosen by the Church and it was only natural to put Christmas nine months later.

December 25th might have also been chosen because the Winter Solstice and the ancient pagan Roman midwinter festivals called ‘Saturnalia’ and ‘Dies Natalis Solis Invicti’ took place in December around this date. It was also the time of the Jewish festival of lights called Hanukkah. So, it was a time when people already celebrated things and it was good to give a Christian focus in that period of the year.

By the end of the fourth century, most Church jurisdictions all over the known world had agreed to celebrate the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ on 25 December.

Around the 1920s the Orthodox Churches around the world decided to move from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar, because the Julian Calendar was mathematically flawed and was thirteen days behind. When the calendar change was made, some jurisdictions such as Moscow, Serbia and Mount Athos, were given the blessing to stay on the “Old Calendar”. As a result these churches remain 13 days behind. This means that churches still on the Julian calendar celebrate Christmas on 6 January and they celebrate Epiphany on 19 January.