



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Church

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Rector

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

Bulletin for Sunday, December 16, 2018

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, it is offered "*on behalf of all, and for all.*" As Orthodox Christians

we stand against racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

Weekly Services

Tuesdays at 8:30a - Daily Matins
Wednesdays at 6:00p - Daily Vespers (The Church is open at 4:30p for "Open Doors" - confession, meditation and reflection).
Thursday at 8:30a - Daily Matins
Saturday at 5:30p - Great Vespers
Sunday at 9:30a - Divine Liturgy

Members of our Parish Council are:

Susan Hayes - Council President (Leaving the Council)

Susan Egan - Council Treasurer (Leaving the Council)

Greg Jankura - Member at Large

Glenn PenkoffLedbeck - Council Secretary

James Pepitone - Council Vice President (Resigned from the Council)

Vincent Melesko - Member at Large (On Leave from the Council)

Roderick Seurattan, Kyle Hollis - Newly

Elected: Michael Kuziak, Natalie Kucharski -

Elected Replacements

Pastoral Care - General Information

- *Emergency Sick Calls* can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.
- *Anointing in Sickness*: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.
- *Marriages and Baptisms* require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!
- *Funerals* are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

Announcements

Fri, 28 Dec: "Rally after Rally" Youth Retreat @ All Saints - Hartford

On Friday December 28th at All Saints in Hartford, all our Orthodox Youth are invited to a "Rally after Rally" event from 6:30pm-9:30pm. In addition to having time for fun, food, and fellowship, our Youth will be continuing a discussion on the theme from Youth Rally (John 10:10b --"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.") Having looked at doing this "daily" in October, we'll now be looking at how to live an abundant life "weekly." Using the service of the Great Blessing of Water (which we'll celebrate the next weekend, in conjunction with the Feast of Theophany), as a starting point for brainstorming how we can change the way we look at the blessings God gives us, , we'll be asking ourselves: "How does the blessing & setting aside of items, people, things, change our use of them... and our thinking about them?"

Schedule:

**Friday, 28 December 2018
@ All Saints Orthodox Church--Hartford, CT**

6:30pm Small Blessing of Water

7:15pm "Fast-Free" Dinner & Fellowship

7:45pm Discussion - "Living an Abundant Life -- Weekly"

8:30pm Group Activity / Fellowship

9:15pm Night Prayers (Small Compline)

9:30pm Dismissal

within our means so that we can share generously with the poor and support the ministries of the Church, we become addicts to desire for more and more possessions that will never satisfy us.

The problem here is not that we have families, possessions, and jobs, and have to deal with whatever other circumstances we face. The problem is that we use them as excuses to fall back into the ways of our old nature, the ways of corruption that disorder our most basic human desire to be united in holy love with God. All sin is a form of idolatry, of putting our devotion to a false idol before our worship of the Lord. That idol is ultimately ourselves, and our slavery to any particular passion is a symptom of that deeper disease.

The good news is that Christ is born at Christmas to restore us to the blessedness for which He breathed life into us in the first place. He calls us all through His birth, but now we must choose to lay aside our obsession with earthly cares in order to accept the invitation to His great banquet. He is coming, and we will judge ourselves by how we respond to Him. Now is the time to prepare as did the Holy Forefathers of our Lord by confessing and turning away from our sins, opening our hearts and minds to Him in humble prayer each day, and giving generously to the needy in whom He is present to us. The point of this way of life is not simply to obey laws for their own sake, but to find the healing and strength that we need in order to respond to the birth of the God-Man with great joy.

So in the remaining weeks before Christmas, let us devote ourselves daily

to getting ready to enter into the great mystery of our salvation by prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and repentance. For the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin and truly one of us. What could be more important than to refuse to be distracted from welcoming Him into our lives at His birth?

December 11, 2016 · [Fr. Philip LeMasters](#)

and have put on the new nature.”

The recent Gentile converts to whom St. Paul wrote needed these reminders about how to live lives pleasing to God. We need them just as much today in a time when many celebrate lust for material possessions, violent hatred of those they consider to be their enemies, and unrestrained sexual pleasure. And just like those to whom St. Paul first wrote, we are also susceptible to these and other powerful temptations. If we do not recognize that and stay on guard against them, they will seem much more appealing to us than truly preparing to enter into the Kingdom.

In the weeks before Christmas, we must focus on embracing the healing and restoration of our humanity that Christ is born to work in us. We died to the corruption of the first Adam in baptism and now we must live intentionally as those who have been restored to a new and holy life through the Second Adam. He makes it possible for us to share in the true humanity that He has healed as the God-Man. That is why the Savior is born at Christmas.

Contrary to what the religious and political leaders who rejected Christ believed, our human ancestry and national identity are totally irrelevant in the Kingdom of God. As St. Paul wrote, “Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.” In our world of corruption, people use many excuses not to accept the great invitation of our Lord to the heavenly banquet. Some are more concerned with political parties, racial or ethnic groups, or national identity than with

true holiness. Even as we can easily fall into idolatry by covetousness or being enslaved to a desire for material possessions that others have, we can shut ourselves out of the Kingdom by giving our souls to the false gods of worldly power in whatever form we encounter them. Remember the chief priests who shouted “We have no king but Caesar!” to Pilate as they encouraged him to have our Lord crucified. (John 19:15) We certainly do not want to become like them.

During the remaining weeks of the Nativity Fast, we should each recognize that we are preparing ourselves for a kind of judgment that will reveal our true spiritual state. At Christ’s first coming at His birth, He does not come as our judge. No, we judge ourselves by how we respond to Him. Contrary to popular opinion, there is much more at stake here than whether we have warm, sentimental feelings about a baby born long ago or the cultural trappings of the season. If that were the standard of judgment, we would need no preparation at all. But if the standard of judgment is whether we will be prepared to turn away from all that distracts us from being united with Christ in holiness, it is an entirely different matter. For just like the people in today’s parable, we routinely become so burdened and obsessed with daily cares that we disregard prayer. Instead of mindfully turning our attention to Christ, we become paralyzed by worry and fear. Instead of making our marriages icons of the fulfillment of the man-woman relationship for the salvation of the world, we so easily fall prey to resentment, selfishness, and neglect. Instead of living

Saints and Feasts



December 16

11th Sunday of Luke

On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eleventh of this month, we commemorate Christ's forefathers according to the flesh,

both those that came before the Law, and those that lived after the giving of the Law.

Special commemoration is made of the Patriarch Abraham, to whom the promise was first given, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). This promise was given some two thousand years before Christ, when Abraham was seventy-five years of age. God called him and commanded him to forsake his country, parents, and kinsmen, and to depart to the land of the Canaanites. When he arrived there, God told him, "I will give this land to thy seed" (Gen. 12:7); for this cause, that land was called the "Promised Land," which later became the country of the Hebrew people, and which is also called Palestine by the historians. There, after the passage of twenty-four years, Abraham received God's law concerning circumcision. In the one hundredth year of his life, when Sarah was in her ninetieth year, they became the parents of Isaac. Having lived 175 years altogether, he reposed in peace, a venerable

elder full of days.



December 16

The Holy Prophet Aggaeus (Haggai)

The Prophet Aggaeus, whose name means "festive," was born in Babylon at the time of the captivity Of the Jews. He began to prophesy in

Jerusalem after their return thereto, and to admonish the people to rebuild the Temple, in the days of Zorobabel, the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, King of Persia, about the year 520 before Christ. His prophecy, divided into two chapters, is ranked tenth among the minor Prophets.



December 16

Our Rigueous Mother Blessed Empress Theophania

Saint Theophania, who was born in Constantinople, was of

royal lineage. Instructed in letters, and adorned with many virtues, she was united in marriage to Emperor Leo the Wise (reigned 886-912). But counting the glory of the earthly kingdom as nought, she spent her nights and days in serving God with psalms and hymns and prayers, working

various good deeds until she surrendered her spirit to God in peace, while still in her youth, being, according to some, about twenty years of age, according to others, twenty-seven. Her holy relics are still preserved in the patriarchal church in Constantinople as a source of healing for those that draw nigh with faith and longing. She was also the builder of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropigeal Monastery of St. Anastasia the Protector from Potions in Chalke (883).

Lives of the Saints

Righteous Priest Aaron

Commemorated on [December 16](#)



The Righteous Aaron was the son of Amram and Jochebed, and the elder brother of the Prophet Moses the God-seer, and also of Miriam. He was a direct descendent of Levi by both parents. God called him “the Levite” in Exodus 4:14, when He appointed Aaron to be the spokesman for Moses, who was “slow of speech,” before the people. Later, he would also speak on behalf of Moses before Pharaoh in Egypt (Ex. 4:30; 7:2). Aaron was married to Elisheba,

the daughter of the Prince of Judah (Ex. 6:23), who bore him four sons.

Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh and asked that the Hebrews be released from their slavery. The Lord told Moses that Pharaoh would ask them for a miracle, and that Aaron should throw down his rod before him, and it would become a serpent (Ex. 7:9). When Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt, God told Moses to have Aaron stretch forth his rod over the Nile River, and it would turn to blood.

Following a succession of plagues, Pharaoh relented and let the people go, then Moses led them on their long journey to the Promised Land. In Chapter 17 of Exodus, the Hebrews fought Amalek in a battle at Rephidim. Moses stood atop a hill with the rod of God in his hand. As long as he raised his hand, the Hebrews prevailed, but when he became tired and lowered it, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur sat Moses on a rock and held up his hands, one on each side. This was a prefiguration of the suffering of Christ, because the arms of Moses formed a cross. In the Greek Septuagint, the names Aaron and Hur begin with the letters Alpha and Omega, another reference to Christ (Revelation 1:8).

Aaron and his sons were anointed and sanctified to serve God as priests (Exodus chapter 29). In chapter 32, Aaron fell into temptation when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Commandments. Since Moses was taking a long time, the people grew restless and asked Aaron to make them a golden idol in the form of a calf so that they could offer sacrifices. He gave into

challenges judge us because they reveal the true state of our ability and character. They often open our eyes to our weaknesses in surprising ways.

Christ’s birth certainly provided unexpected challenges to the leaders of first-century Israel, many of whom were so obsessed with their power and self-righteous legalism that they rejected their own Messiah. He spoke of them in today’s gospel reading as those who excused themselves from the great banquet of the Kingdom of God, claiming that other concerns were more important. They judged themselves by how they refused to accept the invitation to such great blessing. As the Lord said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” They chose other things before God and turned away from life eternal.

In the remaining weeks before Christmas, we must prepare to be judged by how we respond to our Savior’s birth. We must get ready to enter into the deep mystery of the Son of God becoming a human being. He does so for our salvation, to invite us to share in the heavenly banquet of His Kingdom. As members of His Body, the Church, we have no excuse not to be prepared. We have no excuse not to accept this great blessing. He certainly calls us. And if we do not accept, we will judge only ourselves.

As we commemorate the Holy Forefathers of Christ today, we remember all those who foretold or foreshadowed the coming of our Lord, all the way from Adam to the Theotokos. Perhaps part of the reason that it took so many generations to get ready for Him is that there could be no greater

challenge than to be prepared to embrace with joy the good news that the Son of God has become the Son of the Virgin, that He has truly become one of us. Remember that many of those who had the benefit of the Old Testament Law and the Prophets failed that test during the earthly ministry of the Savior.

St. Paul reminds us of the gravity of the situation that we all face. He writes that “when Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Our Savior is born to make us participants in His divine glory by grace so that we will become perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. That is ultimately what it means to share in His banquet as partakers of the divine nature. That is why the Second Adam is born, to fulfill our vocation to become like God in Whose image we are all created.

We cannot achieve these great spiritual heights by ourselves, of course, which is precisely why Christ is born to save us. But the One Who enters our world as a helpless baby in a barn does not force us to do anything. He calls us, but we must choose to respond by cooperating with His grace in doing all that we can to accept His invitation for the healing of our souls. St. Paul instructs us to do that by dying to all that stands in the way of preparing ourselves to receive Him.

He lists especially “fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Then he mentions “anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth.” He follows that up with a warning not to “lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices

And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

Wisdom of the Fathers

This parable ... proclaims beforehand both the casting out of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles; and it indicates together with this also the strictness of the life required, and how great the punishment appointed for the careless

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 69 on Matthew 22, 4th Century

And when were they bidden? By all the prophets; by John again; for unto Christ he would pass all on, saying, "He must increase, I must decrease;" by the Son Himself again, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you;" and again, "If any man thirst, let him

come unto me, and drink."

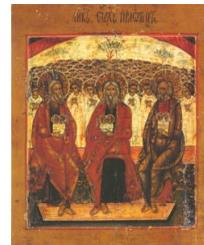
St. John Chrysostom

Homily 69 on Matthew 22, 4th Century

Reflection



On Getting Ready
for the Banquet:
Homily for the
Sunday of the
Forefathers of
Christ in the
Orthodox Church



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

It is easy to accept illusions about ourselves when we have not been tested, when there is no crisis to which we must respond. We usually think that all is well until we find ourselves falling short of meeting a goal that we thought we could achieve. Great

them, and Moses was angry when he returned and saw them dancing and singing before the calf. He threw down the tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments, and then he burned the golden calf and ground it to powder. He scattered the powder on the water, and he made the people drink it. When Moses asked those who were on the Lord's side to gather around him, the Levites came to him. He ordered them to take their swords and slay their sons, companions, and neighbors. About three thousand people were killed that day.

Later, Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses for marrying a Cushite woman (Num. 12:1). God was angry with them, so He punished Miriam with leprosy. She was healed by God seven days after Moses interceded for her.

In chapter 17 of Numbers, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron, so God commanded that the leaders of the twelve tribes should have their names inscribed on their rods and placed in the tent of testimony. One would be chosen to make the people cease their grumbling against Moses and his brother. Aaron's rod bloomed miraculously in the tent of the testimony, to show that he had been chosen for this purpose.

Aaron reposed atop Mount Hor when he was one hundred and twenty-three years old. One of his descendants was St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:5).

Parish Calendar

Service and Events

November 15 to December 24, 2018

Thursday, November 15

Nativity Fast

Sunday, December 16

11th Sunday of Luke

Evangelism and Outreach Ministry meeting
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 17

Daniel the Prophet & Ananias, Azarias, & Misail, the Three Holy Youths
6:00PM Parish Council

Tuesday, December 18

Sebastian the Martyr & his Companions
Fred & Sonia Geyer - A
8:30AM Daily Matins

Wednesday, December 19

Martyrs Boniface, Probus, Ares, Timothy, Polyuktos, Eutychios and Thessaloniki
4:30PM Open Doors
6:00PM Nativity Reflection

Thursday, December 20

Ignatius the God-Bearer, Bishop of Antioch
Akathist to St Ignatius
Akathist to St John Kronstadt
8:30AM Daily Matins

Friday, December 21

Forefeast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

Saturday, December 22

Saturday before Nativity
Ann Kiernan - B

Greatmartyr Anastasia
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, December 23

Sunday before Nativity
William Brubaker
Buildings and Grounds Ministry Meeting
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 24

Roderick Seurattan
Eve of the Nativity of Christ
Nativity Eve

Prayers, Intersessions and Commemorations



William, Sophia, Robert,
Ann, Evelyn, Nina, John,
Alex, Luke, Kathryn,
Anastasia, Malcolm,
Veronica, Darlyne, Irene,
Nancy, Elena, Jevon, the
new born Stella Anna,
Ivan and Joscean.

And for... Sofie, Katrina,
Olena, Valeriy, Olga, Tatiana, Dimitri,
Alexander and Maxim.

All of our College Students: Alex, Kaitlyn, Jack,
Sam, Connor, Nadia, Isaac and Matthew.

Pray for: All those confined to hospitals,

nursing homes, and their own homes due to
illness; for all those who serve in the armed
forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of
violence, and refugees;

All those suffering chronic illness, financial
hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse,
abandonment and despair; those who are
homeless, those who are institutionalized, those
who have no one to pray for them;

All Orthodox seminarians & families; all
Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those
considering monastic life; all Orthodox
missionaries and their families.

All those who have perished due to hatred and
intolerance and all those departed this life in
the hope of the Resurrection.

—
Today we commemorate:

Sunday of the Forefathers. Prophet Haggai
(Aggæus—50 B.C.). Martyr Marinus of Rome
(3rd c.). Bl. Empress Theophano (Theophania
—893-4). St Sophia (1542).

Hymns of the Day

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)

When the women Disciples of the Lord
learned from the Angel the joyous message of
the Resurrection,
they cast away the ancestral curse
and elatedly told the Apostles:
“Death is overthrown!
Christ God is risen, //
granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 2 Troparion (Forefathers)

Through faith You justified the Forefathers,
betrothing through them the Church of the
gentiles.
These saints exult in glory,
for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit:
she who bore You without seed.//
So, by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy
on us!

Tone 6 Kontakion (Forefathers)

You did not worship the graven image,
O thrice-blessed ones,
but armed with the immaterial Essence of
God,
you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you
called on God, crying:
“Hasten, O compassionate One!
Speedily come to our aid, //
for You are merciful and able to do as You
will!”

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Daniel 3.26,27.

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our
fathers.

Verse: For you are just in all you have done.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11.

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears,
then you also will appear with him in glory.
Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:
fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and
covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of
these the wrath of God is coming upon the
sons of disobedience. In these you once
walked, when you lived in them. But now put
them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander,
and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to
one another, seeing that you have put off the
old nature with its practices and have put on
the new nature, which is being renewed in
knowledge after the image of its creator. Here
there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised
and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,
free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

Gospel Reading

11th Sunday of Luke

The Reading is from Luke 14:16-24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a
great banquet, and invited many; and at the
time of the banquet he sent his servant to say
to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is
now ready.' But they all alike began to make
excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a
field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have
me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought
five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine
them; I pray you, have me excused.'