



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox 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 23, 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:

Greg Jankura - Council President

Natalie Kucharski - Council Treasurer

Kyle Hollis - Member at Large

Glenn PenkoffLedbeck - Council Secretary

Michael Kuziak - Council Vice President

Roderick Seurattan - Member at Large

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

I would ask that the members of the choir please stay after service, this Sunday, for brief meeting.

Great Vespers for the Nativity will begin at 5:30p on Monday evening. The Holy Supper will follow immediately after services. If you are planning on attending Holy Supper, please let Fr Steven know, so that we have an idea as to how many people will be coming. This will be a lenten potluck dinner. Following the prayers at the opening of Holy Supper, Anastasia Elliott and Nadia PenkoffLedbeck will provide the musical accompaniment

Beginning Wednesday, Dec 26th, scaffolding will be erected in front of the iconostasis in order to help facilitate the installation of the new iconography. Later in the week, scaffolding will also be placed in the altar for the work to proceed there as well. Because of this, there will be no scheduled services for the remainder of the week. The scaffolding should come down and the work completed by Saturday the 29th.

Saints and Feasts



December 23

Sunday before Nativity

On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eighteenth of this month, we celebrate all those who from ages

past have been well-pleasing to God, beginning from Adam

I declare Thy truth with my mouth.

For Thou hast said: Mercy shall be built upon for ever.

In the heavens shall Thy truth be established. His seed forever shall abide.

And His throne shall be as the sun before Me.

And as the moon that is established forever.

And I will establish His seed unto ages of ages.

And His throne shall be as the days of heaven.

And He shall have dominion from sea to sea.

And from the rivers even unto the ends of the inhabited earth.

He shall call upon Me and shall say: My Father art Thou.

My God, and the helper of My salvation.

And as for Me, I will make Him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

And all the kings of the earth shall worship Him.

What God is as great as our God? Thou art God Who alone work us wonders.

With the arm of Thy power has Thou scattered Thine enemies.

Thou shalt heard them with a rod of iron.

Thou shalt shatter them like a potter's vessels.

Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy comeliness and Thy beauty.

Thine arrows are sharp, O Mighty One.

Under The show peoples fall - sharp in the heart of the enemies of the king.

From the womb before the MorningStar have I begotten The.

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent. Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.

The Lord said unto Me: Thou art My, This

The Lord said unto Me: Thou art My, This

Day I begotten The.

Ask of Me, and I will give the Nations for Thine inheritance.

In the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.

In the heading of the book it is written concerning Me.

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.

A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom.

Wherefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness more than Thy fellows.

For Thou shalt have an inheritance among all the nations.

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

Blessed is the Lord forever. So be it. So be it.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Wisdom of the Fathers

The tribes of Judah and Levi were united by a fusion of their lines of descent, and that is why Matthew assigns Christ's family to the tribe of Judah. And the Apostle says, 'for our Lord has sprung out of Judah' (Heb. 7:14).

St. Ambrose of Milan

Seven Exegetical Works, 4th Century

Thus, from the tribe of Levi may be counted a heritage that is priestly and filled with holiness, while from the tribe of Judah - to which David and Solomon and the rest of the kings belonged - there shines forth the splendor of a royal descent. And so, by the testimony of the Scriptures, Christ is shown to be at once both king and priest.

St. Ambrose of Milan

Seven Exegetical Works, 4th Century

Reflection



Shout with jubilation into the Lord, all the earth.
Chant ye unto His Name.
Give glory in praise of Him.
Tell forth all His wonders.
Say unto God: How awesome are Thy works!

Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice.
Sing unto God, chant unto His Name.
Prepare ye the way for Him that rideth upon the setting of the sun.
Lord is His Name; ye, rejoice before Him.
Confession and majesty are His work.
And His righteousness abided unto ages of ages.
The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people.
Holy and terrible is His Name.
The right hand of the Lord hath brought strength.
The right hand of the Lord hath exulted me.
A man will say: Mother Zion; and: That man is born in her.
Comely in beauty more than the sons of men.
The Most High Himself have founded her.
Out of Zion is the magnificence of His comeliness.
Our God is in heaven and on earth; all things soever He hath willed, He hath done.
Of Thy mercies, O Lord, will I sing forever.
Unto generation and generation will

even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as the Evangelist Luke hath recorded historically (Luke 3:23-38); we also commemorate the Prophets and Prophetesses, and especially the Prophet Daniel and the Holy Three Children.



Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city's inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

"I behold a strange and most glorious mystery," the Church sings with awe, "Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid." (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three

December 23

Ten Martyrs of Crete



These Saints, who were all from Crete, contested for piety's sake during the reign of Decius, in the year 250. Theodulus, Saturninus, Euporus,

Gelasius, and Eunician were from Gortynia, the capital; Zoticus was from Knossos; Agathopus, from the port city of Panormus; Basilides, from Cydonia; Evarestus and Pompey, from Heraklion. Haled before the Governor as Christians, they were subjected to torments for thirty days, being scourged, racked, dragged upon the ground through dung heaps, stoned, spit upon. They were questioned again, but their constancy roused the Governor to greater fury. After subjecting them to torments more bitter still, he had them beheaded.

Lives of the Saints

The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (Saint Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Theophylactus, commenting on Saint Matthew’s Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was “a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star.” Saint Demetrius of Rostov says it was a “manifestation of divine energy” (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi “fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt. 2:11).

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, “Brethren, observe the feastsdays; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month.” In another place it also says, “Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God

from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world.”

In the second century Saint Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century Saint Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of Saint Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century.

Saint John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the Cave of Bethlehem, made famous by the Birth of Jesus Christ, the empress Saint Helen built a church, which her mighty son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nicephorus Callistus,

was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Gospel Reading

Sunday before Nativity The Reading is from Matthew 1:1-25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

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

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what

Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Tone 5 Kontakion (Resurrection)

You descended into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. You have delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, // and we cry to You: “O Lord, save us!”

Tone 1 Kontakion (Fathers)

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 (Forefeast)

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!

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 Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40.

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world

a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Saints John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called “Theophany” (“Manifestation of God”). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from Saint John Chrysostom’s sermon on the Nativity of Christ: “it is not the day on which Christ was born which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized.”

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that “Jesus began to be about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23) when He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves

the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feastdays and the feastdays themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. The angel said to the shepherds, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, glorifying God and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Those who heard these things were astonished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, “for the Savior is Born!”

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation

for all the other Feasts.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Parish Calendar

Service and Events

November 15 to December 31, 2018

Thursday, November 15

Nativity Fast

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

8:30AM Royal Hours

5:30PM Nativity Vigil

6:30PM Holy Supper

Tuesday, December 25

The Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

Nativity of Our Lord

8:30AM Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, December 26

Installation of Iconography

Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos

8:30AM Canceled - Akathist for Nativity

6:00PM Canceled - Great Vespers

Thursday, December 27

Akathist to St Stephen

Stephen, Archdeacon & First Martyr

Protomartyr Stephen

8:30AM Canceled - Akathist to St Stephen

Friday, December 28

Akathist to St Righteous Joseph

20,000 Martyrs burned in Nicomedia

Akathist to Prophet David*

Saturday, December 29

Saturday after Nativity

5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, December 30

Sunday after Nativity

9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 31

Apodosis of the Nativity of Our Lord and

Savior, Jesus Christ

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.

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Many Years! to: William Brubaker and Roderick Seurattan on the occasion of their birthdays; and to Anastasia Elliott, Stasia PenkoffLedbeck and Nancy Davis on the occasion of their Name's Day.

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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 institutionalize, 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.

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Today we commemorate:

The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ . The Adoration of the Magi: Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar. Commemoration of the Shepherds in Bethlehem who were watching their flocks, and went to see the Lord. . Priestmonk Jonah the Martyr of Pechenga (1590).

Hymns of the Day

Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
born for our salvation from the Virgin;
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh,
to endure death,
and to raise the dead//
by His glorious Resurrection.

Tone 2 Troparion(Fathers)

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 Forefeast

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.//