



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, September 08, 2019

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 - General Confession;

First Wed of the Month

(The Church is open at 4:30p for "Open Doors" - during fasting seasons or by appointment).

Thursday at 8:30a - Daily Matins

Saturday at 5:30p - Great Vespers

Sunday at 9:30a - Divine Liturgy

Members of our Parish Council are:

Deacon Timothy Skuby - Attached

Greg Jankura - Council President

Michael Kuziak - Council Vice President

Natalie Kucharski - Council Treasurer

Glenn PenkoffLidbeck - Council Secretary

Kyle Hollis - Member at Large

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

We need volunteers to help with the upcoming Tag and Bake Sale. Sign-up sheets can be found on the candle desk. Please consider signing up; any time you can offer would be greatly appreciated.

The Tag Sale will be held on Saturday, Sept 21st (rain or shine) from 9a to 3p.

Please contact Stasia PenkoffLedbeck if you have any questions. Stasiasx2vt@me.com
call/text 860-395-9966

Due to technical issues with the recorder and microphone, there is no recording of last week's sermon.

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



William, Sophia, Robert, Ann, Evelyn, Nina, John, Alex, Vincent, James, Luke, Aaron, Kathryn, Veronica, Richard, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Susanne
All of our College Students: Alex, Sam, Nadia, Isaac and Matthew.

Many years! to Ann Pavlik, Max and Isaac Freeman and Kathryn Jankura on the occasion of their birthdays.

Memory Eternal +Archbishop Nikon and +Deborah Bray

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.

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Today we commemorate:

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary . Sunday before Elevation.

Parish Calendar

Services and Events

September 8 to September 16, 2019

Sunday, September 8

Fellowship and Stewardship Ministry
Sunday before Holy Cross
Nativity of the Holy Theotokos
Maxwell Freeman - B
Ann Pavlik - B
9:15AM Reading of the 3rd Hour
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, September 9

The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God,
Joachim and Anna
6:00PM Finance Committee Meeting.

Tuesday, September 10

Menodora, Metrodora, & Nymphodora the
Martyrs
8:30AM Daily Matins
9:00AM Book Study

Wednesday, September 11

Akathist to Venerable Silouan

Thursday, September 12

Apodosis of the Nativity of Our Most Holy
Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary
Kathryn Jankura - B
8:30AM Daily Matins
7:00PM Book Study

Friday, September 13

Forefeast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross
6:00PM Great Vespers w/ Litya

Saturday, September 14

The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-
Giving Cross
Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Isaac Freeman - B
9:30AM Divine Liturgy for the Elevatoin
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, September 15

Evangelism and Outreach Ministry meeting
9:15AM Reading of the 3rd Hour
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, September 16

Melissa Josefiak

Saints and Feasts

September 08

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

According to the ancient tradition of the
Church, the Theotokos was born of barren and
aged parents, Joachim and Anna, about

the year 16 or 17 before the birth of Christ. Joachim was descended from the royal line of David, of the tribe of Judah. Anna was of the priestly tribe of Levi, a daughter of the priest Matthan and Mary, his wife.

September 09

The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna

Today, the day following the Nativity of the most holy Theotokos, we celebrate the synaxis of Saints Joachim and Anna, honouring them as her parents.

September 09

Memory of the Third Holy Ecumenical Council in Ephesus

Hymns of the Day



Tone 3 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let the heavens rejoice!
Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown
strength with His arm.
He has trampled down
death by death.

He has become the first born of the dead.
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
and has granted to the world//
great mercy.

Tone 4 Troparion (Nativity of the Theotokos)

Your nativity, O Virgin,
has proclaimed joy to the whole universe!
The Sun of righteousness, Christ our God,
has shone from you, O Theotokos.
By annulling the curse,
He bestowed a blessing.//
By destroying death, He has granted us
eternal life.

Tone 3 Kontakion (Resurrection)

On this day You rose from the tomb, O
Merciful One,
leading us from the gates of death.
On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices;
with the Prophets and Patriarchs//
they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of
Your power.

Tone 4 Kontakion (Nativity of the Theotokos)

By your nativity, most pure Virgin,
Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness,
Adam and Eve -- from the corruption of death.
And we, your people, freed from the guilt of
sin, celebrate and
sing to you://
"The barren woman gives birth to the
Theotokos, the nourisher of our Life."

Tone 6 Prokeimenon

O Lord, save Your people, and bless Your
inheritance! (*Ps 27/28:9*)
*v: To You, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not
silent to me! (Ps 27/28:1)*

Tone 3 Prokeimenon (*Song of the Theotokos*)

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
(Lk 1:46-47)

(Instead of "It is truly meet ...," we sing:)

Tone 8

Magnify, O my soul, the most glorious birth of the Mother of God!

Virginitly is foreign to mothers;
childbearing is strange for virgins.
But in you, O Theotokos, both were accomplished./
Therefore all we nations of the earth
unceasingly magnify you.

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! (*Ps 148:1*)
I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. (*Ps 115/116:13*)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 3rd Tone. Luke 1: 46-48.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
Verse: For he has regarded the humility of his servant.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 2:5-11.

Brethren, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Reading

**The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary
The Reading is from Luke 10:38-42,
11:27-28**

At that time, Jesus entered a village; and a woman called Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve you alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Wisdom of the Fathers

For since Nicodemus had said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God," on this very point He sets him right, all but saying, "Think Me not a teacher in such manner as were the many of the prophets who were of earth, for I have come from heaven (but) now. None of the prophets hath ascended up thither, but I dwell there."

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 27 on John 3, 4th Century

For not in heaven only is He, but everywhere, and He fills all things; but yet He speaks according to the infirmity of His hearer, desiring to lead him up little by little ... For after having spoken of the very great benefaction that had come to man by Baptism, He proceeds to mention another benefaction, which was the cause of this, and not inferior to it; namely, that by the Cross ...

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 27 on John 3, 4th Century

Beyond the Sermon



On the Icon of the Nativity of the Theotokos

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Good morning! Once again March is

Antiochian Women's month, and throughout the Archdiocese, women are serving their parishes in some of the more visible ways: taking the collection, taking part in the Great Procession, ushering, assisting with communion, and giving a homily. Last year, our homilies explored the icons of some of the great feasts of the Church—the Nativity of Jesus, The Transfiguration, Pascha, and Pentecost. This year each of the homilies will be about one of the icons of the Theotokos - her Nativity, her Presentation in the Temple, the Annunciation, and her Dormition. Each of these events in her life is one of the major Feasts of the Church, and tells us not only about her life, but about her relationship to her Son.

The icon we will be talking about today is from the first Feast in the church year - the Nativity of the Virgin Mary the Theotokos, which we celebrate every year on September 8th. I'd like to start by telling you a little about the background of the birth of the Theotokos. Most of what we know about her parents and her early life comes not from the Bible, but from

an apocryphal book called the Protoevangelium of James. While her parents' story is not from Holy Scripture, it is part of the Holy Tradition of the Church.

Mary's parents were descendents of King David. Her father, Joachim, grew up in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. He was a wealthy shepherd who owned many flocks of sheep and had many shepherds working for him. He was a devout man and was very generous - he regularly divided his lambs, sheep, and wool into three parts, and gave one part to orphans and widows and strangers and the poor; the second part he gave to the temple and those who ministered there, as well as to those who worshipped there, and the third part he kept for himself and his family. (Imagine how much our church could do if we practiced stewardship like that!)

When Joachim was 20 years old he married a young woman named Anna, whose father was a priest in the town of Bethlehem in Judea. She too was very devout. They were in love and were very happy together throughout their marriage - with one exception: they were not able to have any children. In those days being barren was considered a curse; everyone assumed it meant God was displeased with you. If you had no children you would have no one to carry on your name and your memory, you would have no one to keep your inheritance in the family, and it meant that none of your descendants would live to see the promised Messiah.

One year, when they had become elderly and remained childless for many, many years, they went up to Jerusalem to present

their offering in the Temple as usual. But when Joachim brought their gifts to the altar, the High Priest rejected his offering and said he was unworthy, because the Lord had not blessed him with a child.

Humiliated, Joachim left the temple and his wife and went up to the high mountain where his flocks and shepherds were; he wanted to avoid being seen and reproached by his neighbors, but he didn't lose his faith in God. He was determined to fast there on the mountain and pray until God would hear him. He remembered their ancestor Abraham, whose wife Sarah finally, when they were very old, gave birth to a son Isaac, and he prayed that God would bless him and Anna in the same way. He promised that if God gave them a child, they would devote that child to the Lord.

Meanwhile, Anna had returned home, grieving that she had no child and now didn't have her husband. She too spent her days in prayer, sitting under a tree in the garden. And she too prayed that God would bless her as he had blessed Abraham and Sarah.

One day while Joachim was praying on the mountain, the Archangel Gabriel appeared before him. The angel told him that his wife would have a daughter, and they would name her Mary. And as they had vowed, she would be devoted to the Lord from infancy. He gave Joachim a sign to watch for too: that when he came to the Golden Gate in Jerusalem on his way home, he would find Anna there, relieved and delighted to see him.

The same Archangel also appeared to Anna

as she prayed in the garden, and he gave her the same message. And sure enough, it happened just that way. Anna was waiting when Joachim came down from the mountain and approached the golden gate. And they joyfully returned together to their home, where they conceived the Theotokos. Nine months later Anna gave birth to a baby girl, and they named her Mary. And you'll recall that Mary herself, when she grew up, was told by the same Archangel Gabriel that she would conceive and bear a son, and call his name Jesus.

In the icon of the Nativity of the Theotokos we see Anna reclining on her couch after giving birth, with Joachim lovingly looking on from an upper room. Anna's handmaidens bring her refreshment - two carry plates of food, and one holds what I think is a fan. At the bottom we see the infant Mary in two other scenes from the day of her birth - on the left a maidservant preparing to bathe her, and on the right the infant Mary in her little bed, watched over by a couple of more servants. This icon is very similar to the icon of the Nativity of Jesus, which shows Mary, like Anna, reclining after giving birth, the midwife preparing to bathe the infant, and Joseph, like Joachim, somewhat apart from the others. The main difference is that Joachim is delighted at the birth of Mary, while Joseph is being tempted by Satan to doubt that Jesus is the child of God.

It's important to understand that we Orthodox believe Mary was conceived by the normal, ordinary union of a man and a woman, and that she was born, like any other human being, with the capacity to sin.

Hers was not an "immaculate conception."

This understanding is connected with our belief that no human being is guilty of what Western denominations call "original sin." The concept of "original sin" has to do with Adam and Eve and their disobedience in the Garden of Eden. The Western notion is that we are all guilty of the sin of Adam and Eve, and that God sent his son Jesus to take the punishment on our behalf. The Orthodox understanding, on the other hand, is that the ancestral sin of Adam and Eve was their own, and that we are not personally to be blamed for it, though we do inherit the consequence of their sin: being cast out of the garden of Eden, being separated from God and, ultimately, being subject to death. The birth of the Theotokos began the process of changing this destiny. And Her Son, Jesus Christ, would complete it. In His love for us, God would send His Son, born of Mary, to reverse the permanence of death and give us eternal life.

Therefore we sing this Troparion in our celebration of the Feast:

"Your Nativity, O Virgin, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe! The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, has shone from You, O Theotokos! By annulling the curse, He bestowed a blessing. By destroying death, He has granted us eternal Life."

Amen

- Melissa Nassiff