

ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH

From the desk of Father Eugene.....

Journey to the Nativity of Christ

Our journey to the Nativity is marked initially by a forty day fast, providing a constant reminder of this special *time* of the liturgical year. To complete the fast, we must consciously labor each day, carefully considering what we look at, what we listen to, what we eat and what we say. During this fast, we also encounter special liturgical days that act as signposts along our journey. The first of these days is the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. This feast calls us to contemplate how, before the coming of Christ, the Temple had become barren and needed to be reestablished as the dwelling place of God.

The Theotokos enters the Temple to provide not only what was lacking, but to

become the living temple herself. This feast also orients us to the coming of our Lord by calling us to *preparation*, so that we may receive Christ as He comes into the world for our salvation. This foretelling of the coming of Christ is not given to us subtly. Rather, the festal canon of the Nativity is regularly sung while the Feast itself remains afar off. The Church gives us a constant reminder of the journey's end with the words *Christ is Born!*

As the journey continues, we pause briefly at other signposts such as the feast of Saint Nicholas. Here, we are called to celebrate one of our quintessential saints who is so revered because of his charity. By looking at him, we can check our own charity during this time, not by considering a worldly standard, but by joining with compassion and allowing Christ, through His compassion, to give birth to our own. Once again, these features of the Nativity season are not momentary, but permeate each day of the fast. This gentle push by the Church continues until we meet the two Sundays before the Nativity. While not setting aside charity and compassion, we are additionally instructed to focus on the Old Testament. During these two Sundays, of the *Forefathers* and *Fathers*, we *remember*. We recall those who prepared and foretold the coming of Christ. The scores of names and events in the OT illustrate to us that all of those figures have led to the coming of Christ; they show that in Him we find Scriptural fulfillment. Finally, these Sundays bring us to the Forefeast of the Nativity. Now, all of the readings and hymnography of our liturgical services point to the Feast.

It is in the liturgy that we finally see clearly our journey's end. Not that it has been withheld from us, because we have been constantly, gently given a foretaste of its fulfillment. We see how the Church *teaches* us to embrace the joy of Christ amongst us. As with all of the liturgical journeys, this one brings a certain, and needed, intensity and call to steadfastness in its final days. The services that celebrate the Nativity, and there are many spread over a few days, are longer and more elaborate than other services. This is a gift. Our personal shortcomings throughout the fast are amended with these services. In a way, that can only be grasped as a mystery, we discover that each of us can greet Christ as Lord and Savior. The joy and peace of the Nativity is well beyond what the world can give to us and thus, the Feast itself is not momentary or short-lived. Rather, the Feast extends for a number of days so that we can again and again celebrate the richness of the season with the Synaxis of the Theotokos and commemoration of other saints and events. As the postfeast draws to an end and we have a chance to catch our breath, we find ourselves thrust into the forefeast of Theophany (foretold in the services of the Nativity). The Church once again summoning us to a liturgical and scriptural encounter with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.





SMOC Ministry Team - Giving Opportunities

Our **Adopt a Family project** is underway! This is an opportunity to bless a local family through the Salvation Army. With our current Covid situation, we'd like to offer an additional way to participate.

If getting out to purchase an article for the family isn't convenient, please consider making a donation instead. Donations will go to purchasing things they have requested as well as the gift certificates.

Donations need to be made by December 7th and unwrapped gifts need to be at church by the 13th. The sign up booklet will be available 11/21 in Herrick Hall.

Many thanks!!

Many thanks!!

Many thanks!!

Ministry Team December Focus is House of Hope

House of Hope provides emergency shelter with a safe and stable environment for young homeless moms and their children. Their intensive case management program supports residents by focusing on areas such as employment, positive parenting skills, financial literacy and debt management to name a few.

By donating needed items and/or making a financial contribution, we help support the positive support system for those they serve during the challenges and celebrations of their journeys to independent stability. Please consider picking up an extra item when you are shopping.

Items on our immediate wish list include: laundry detergent, diaper cream, children's body wash, children's shampoo, face wash, conditioner, garbage bags - small and large, baby powder, and bed pillows.

Many thanks!!

Many thanks!!

Many thanks!!

In addition, here are the items needed for the **Martin School Christmas Cleaning Tubs**:

We are on our third year for providing "cleaning tubs" for some Martin School families at Christmas. The Martin School staff gives clothing and toys to some of their neediest families. They ask us to provide cleaning supplies. So, we supply a "Cleaning Tub" to go with their gifts. Items needed include: glass cleaner, all purpose cleaners, dish detergent, soft scrub, (Bonami), bathtub cleaner, magic eraser sponges, cleaning cloths, garbage bags, paper towels, liquid hand soap, & toilet bowl cleaner.



Parish Council President's Perspective.....Paul Novak

Notes and reminders.....

I hope that you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Divine Liturgy on Thanksgiving morning was well attended and it was a nice way to start the day. The Nativity Service Schedule is posted on our website: www.smocgb.com. Many of the services are open to all, so please try and make it to those that you can.

As it is now December, the Parish Council starts its preparations for the upcoming annual meeting which will be held in February. Many items about the meeting need to be discussed, in addition to any direction we will be receiving from Bishop Paul. More to come on this, and I will share details as I have them.

During this year, the Parish Council has mainly focused on the challenges that the virus has presented: how many people can we have at services, can we have service, what about coffee and so on. While all of this has been a priority, we are still thinking about the future. We are making double payments on the parking lot so that we can move forward on our Iconography project. There have been discussions about new lighting in the Naïve of the Church. Once we are able to, a re-start of Sunday School needs to be a priority for our community and our youth.

Thank you for your continued financial support. Week after week, month after month your support has allowed us to meet all of of financial obligations. We have been blessed with many new members that have come to SMOC during the year. I have enjoyed meeting you all and look forward to seeing you again. SMOC continues to be a vibrant, growing Orthodox community for which I am thankful. God has blessed us all!

In Christ,
Paul M. Novak



Choir Notes

Jeff Zdrale
Director



I'd be telling a fib if I said that not singing with our whole choir group didn't bother me. I love to sing, and what I love more is singing with a group. As the virus does not seem to be letting up, I will have to accept the fact that one, two, or maybe four of us can get through the Liturgies in an acceptable way.

Because I've missed our 4-part arrangements so much, I've done two things. The first was to bring several music books from church back home and to sing along. Even with our slightly out-of-tune piano, they didn't sound too bad. There are so many arrangements of Orthodox songs! Same words, but the approaches are very unique to the time period and ethnic culture from which they arose.

My second effort has been to compose some new music of my own. In the past two weeks, I've written a new "Cherubic Hymn" and am now finishing up a "Mercy of Peace" sequence. Even if we can't sing them now, I'd like to figure out how I can share these with the choir via the computer.

Pedro suggested some Liturgy music that is very beautiful. He made me aware of this composer and, as a result, we started to do one of his litanies at the start of the service. His name is Nazo Zakkak (and I thought my name was different!). Pedro gave me one of his CDs and I'd be glad to let anyone interested borrow it. Makes for a very relaxing and moving evening.

Happy Birthday



Anastasia Sarsama - 12-1
Mary Petersen - 12-2
Micki Dangutis - 12-5
Julian Sarsama - 12-6

Maria Nistor - 12-6
Brandon Enck - 12-8
Natalya Tomac - 12-11
LinLan Holzman-Crass - 12-11



Michael Jeffers - 12-13
Eric Johnson - 12-19
Henry Yogerst - 12-20
Marina Lyudmer - 12-21

Mark Schahczenski - 12-24
Tara Enck - 12-25
Barbara Crass - 12-26
Alexandra Schweiner - 12-30
Jeff Zdrale - 12-30



Happy Anniversary

Bernie and Dorothy Olson - December 15
Chuck Bayerl and Elaine Gavaras - December 26
Dale and Mary Petersen - December 30



Spinach With Rice

2 - 10oz packages frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed of most liquid
 1 onion and or garlic to taste
 1/2 cup parsley chopped
 1 fennel bulb chopped or 1 tsp dried fennel
 1/4-1/2 cup rice, uncooked
 1-15 oz can tomatoes
 Salt & Pepper
 1 1/2 cup water
 Juice of 1 1/2 lemons

Brown onions, garlic and fennel in oil and add parsley and basil to taste. Add water and rice and bring to boil. Add tomatoes and simmer until rice is almost done. Add spinach, stir and mix and continue until done. If you like it on the thicker side, simmer with lid partially on. If you like a thinner version keep lid on. With either, you might have to add water. Finish with lemon juice.



Pasta e Ceci or Chick Pea Soup



1 carrot peeled and chopped
 1 onion chopped
 2-4 cloves garlic chopped
 1 T fresh parsley
 1 - 15 oz can tomatoes
 1 - 15 oz can chick peas, rinsed
 Salt & Pepper
 Rosemary
 Basil
 2 cups water
 Lemon juice
 1/2 cup ditalini pasta or any short pasta

Brown onions carrots and garlic in oil and add parsley, basil, and rosemary. Add tomatoes, chick peas and water. Bring to boil and add pasta. Cook and stir until pasta is done. Can add a little lemon juice and red pepper. Adjust liquids and seasoning to taste.



Thank you!!!!

- Julian** - Week of November 29, for Sunday, December 6
- Tomac** - Week of December 6, for Sunday, December 13
- Weiland** - Week of December 13, for Sunday, December 20
- Sarsama** - Week of December 20, for Sunday, December 27
- Nassios** - Week of December 27, for Sunday, January 3, 2021
- Mykhaylyuk** - Week of January 3, for Sunday, January 10
- Odman** - Week of January 10, for Sunday, January 17
- Bisbee** - Week of January 17, for Sunday, January 24
- Schweiner** - Week of January 24, for Sunday, January 31
- Enck** - Week of January 31, for Sunday, February 7



Nativity Service Schedule

- 24 Dec, Thurs 9:30am
Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil
(all welcome)
- 24 Dec, Thurs 5:00pm
Vigil **(all welcome)**
- 25 Dec, Fri 9:30am
The Nativity of Our Lord Divine Liturgy
(all welcome)
- 26 Dec, Sat 5:00pm
Great Vespers **(all welcome)**
- 27 Dec, Sun 9:30am
Divine Liturgy **(email invitation only)**

