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BULLETIN



THIS ISSUE

THE DATES FOR THE NATIVITY
OF CHRIST
SUNDAY SCHOOL
ADULT RELIGIOUS CLASSES

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SAINTS CONSTANTINE & HELEN PARISH HERALD

THE DATES FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

The observance of the Birth of Christ on this date had no historical relationship to His actual date of birth, which was unknown even in antiquity, but it served a special sacramental relationship between the concept of the First and Second Adam; between First: sinful one and death and the Second: beginning of life and salvation. The Second Adam by the sacramental insight of the ancient Church was born and died on that day in which the First Adam was created and died-the 6th day. This gives the reason for the 6th day of January: the 1st month of the year.

It is known, however, that in the early Christian Church the Birth of Christ, Adoration of the Magi and Theophany were celebrated on the same day, January 6. The date of introduction of the Nativity Feast into the Church calendar was different in all 5 Patriarchates (Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome). The Church of Jerusalem was the last one to adopt this feast in the 6th century. December the 25th, was the date of a pagan festival in Rome, originated in 274 by the emperor Aurelian, as the birthday of the "unconquered sun" (natalis solis invicti). Sometime before 336, the Church of Rome established a commemorative festival of the birth of Christ, the Son of Righteousness. The first evidence

of the Nativity celebration in the East, as a separate feast, comes from Constantinople. In 381, Gregory the Theologian delivered his 39th sermon on the feast of Theophany and called it the festival of lights, commemorating the Baptism of Christ, the true light. He speaks of the Nativity as recently past and reminds his audience that in the Nativity Feast they followed the star, worshipped with the Magi, were bathed in light with shepherds, glorified God with angels, took Christ in their arms with Simeon and confessed Him with Anna. He continues: "Now, however, at Theophany, this is another event and another mystery, the Baptism."

There are no pictorial representations of Christ's Birth in the first three centuries. The catacomb and funerary art dealt basically with the figurations of Christ in His ministry, such as: the Good Shepherd, Who came to save the lost; the perfect Teacher, Who reveals the Heavenly Kingdom to the people and the Miracles of Christ, to show that He is vested with the Divine Power. It was not until the bitter dispute over the Arian heresy that the Nativity of Christ was instituted as an independent Feast Day. The physical birth of our Lord becomes the principal issue in the Christological controversy of the 4th and 5th centuries concerning the human and divine natures of Jesus. The Newly Born Christ is shown as "the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger" (Lk.2:12).



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Other compositions show the Divine Child lying over an elevated manger covered with a cloth and placed in an open stable, indicated by a roof supported by two pillars. The scene of the manger bears a very close similarity to the Christian altar, which will remain throughout the Byzantine era. The artistic rendition of the manger in the form of an altar was not only timely in the battle against the Arian heretical movement, but vividly expressed the principle dogma of Christ's incarnation. The long-heralded Messiah came in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), and appeared in the flesh at a point in history when the law of Moses had done its work of demonstrating the sinfulness of man and the impossibility of achieving righteousness by human effort. People exhausted and tired of wandering and waiting were ready for the spiritual and redemptive food. Several early Church Fathers, including St. John Chrysostom, speak of Christ as He Who became the Bread of Life in His Incarnation. The manger typifying a Christian altar expresses the sacramental importance of Christ's earthly mission: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John. 6:51).

Two things resulted from the battle with Arianism. First, a commemoration of Christ's birth was separated from Theophany and the Nativity of our Lord was established as an independent Feast to emphasize the prominence and importance of His Incarnation, from which "all other feasts came." And second, the iconography of Christ's Nativity originated. As soon as the feast was singled out liturgically, artists rendered their support visually. Although at the beginning of the 4th century Christianity was proclaimed as the official religion of the Empire, a new kind of struggle emerged on the horizon. In the course of time there were many individuals discrediting Christ and disseminating false teaching among the faithful. Some of such expressed opinions gained considerable

attention of people and caused an enormous confusion within the Church. In turn, the 'giants of faith' arose from among the ranks of believers in defense of the True Faith. (This is where the concept of Orthodoxy derives.) One of such pride-afflicted figures was Arius.

A titanic wave of his followers threatened Christianity. It was necessary for the spiritual leaders of the entire Church to assemble and settle this alarming argument. From this turning point on, the official Church will make official pronouncements every time it confronts a heretical movement. The informal Christian meetings will be transformed into liturgical ceremonies and commemorative observances. The unclear or questionable biblical statements will be interpreted and defined into the formal doctrinal teachings of the Church.

CALENDAR OF CHURCH SERVICES AND EVENTS AT STS CONSTANTINE & HELEN DECEMBER 2014

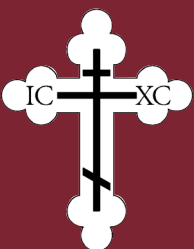
Sunday, December 14th
27th Sunday after Pentecost

Friday, December 19th
St. Nicholas the great
Wonderworker of Myra

Sunday, December 21st
28th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, December 28th
29th Sunday after Pentecost
(Week of the Holy Forefathers)

All Divine liturgies begin at
10:00 a.m.





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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Just a quick note to all parishioners that we have started with Sunday School on Sunday mornings and that all parents are encouraged to bring their children so they can participate in learning more about their faith. Also following Divine Liturgy and after a small lunch and fellowship in the church hall we have Adult Religious classes. Our church community can only survive with the faith, hope and love that you continually show towards your church. We must never waiver from the path of life which our Lord has prepared for us. This means that we must not become complacent, lazy, and set in our ways where we rely on antiquated traditions and customs that in themselves do not bring life but hinder our growth as true Orthodox Christians. The only tradition or custom that we need to follow is our Lord's who Himself went to church as was His custom from his youth upwards. (Luke 4:16) Let us all start honoring this tradition by bringing our families to participate in the liturgy where all, depending upon their talents can offer their respected gifts to God and to one another.

Also I would like to take this opportunity in thanking all of you for your tireless support in our church functions. This last Saturday was a complete success (see pics below). A special thanks goes out to all the ladies who diligently prepared all the delicious dishes and manned, bad pun I know, all their stations. To the men who with the hard labor helped put up all the banners, signs, chairs and tables. You all know who you are and how we thank everybody collectively. That's what makes our community truly unique. We know that the work/praise never rests on one individual. Thank you all again so very much. I am so proud of you all.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Serge Veselinovich

