



SAINTS CONSTANTINE & HELEN PARISH HERALD

Jan 6 @ 5 pm Nativity Eve & Yule Log
Jan 7 @ 10 am Nativity Liturgy
Jan 19 @ 10 am Theophany & Bless Waters
(see Weekly Update for full calendar)

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

To all members and parishioners, to the youth and children of our church, we extend the warmest greetings upon the Feast Day of Our Lord's Nativity, together with the sincere wish that all of you celebrate it in good health, joy, and good fortune. It is our deepest prayer that the newborn Savior bless you with the wonder and joy of this Season. The new coming year of 2018 promises to be a special one indeed. Our church is embarking on an ambitious building program which will involve traditional bricks and mortar yet also be accompanied with a spiritual re-dedication to God and His church, which undoubtedly will lead to securing a living church within our community.

In this past year, we have been blessed to have the first ordination of a priest in our church's 122 year plus history. Father Thomas Colyandro was ordained by His Grace Bishop Longinus and will continue to serve this small but great parish. We are slowly but surely securing a bright future for our growing faithful. We have a new board that vows to continue the work of their predecessors and one that will be guided by the experience and wise counsel of the previous board and their hard labors. We have introduced Sunday School for our children in the hall following the Divine Liturgy. We feel this is the best practice so the children can partake of the Holy Gifts in church and then fellowship in the hall. We have purchased many beautiful icons, church books and other liturgical items for our own bookstore. We have a ladies auxiliary board that diligently prepares Sunday lunches and banquets for special occasions.

We cannot continue doing this work without the help of our own workers and parishioners of Saints Constantine and Helen. This is the acceptable time, according to the Lord, for all of



this issue

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

us to offer our gifts before the Newborn Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those with voices, let them sing praises to our God; and those with hands; let them continuously labor in the Lord's vineyard. Simply put, there are no acceptable excuses before the Lord and your church-community to avoid this righteous work. We have all been gifted with certain talents and now is the time for us to multiply the good activity started. In giving, our motives are love and humility. As we see in the Gospels of Matthew and John:

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, That your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. (Matthew 6:1-6) or "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

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Past President:
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Treasurer:
Joanne Valencia

Secretary:
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Reporting Secretary: Sylvia
Hallum-Hood

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Michael Schooley
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Cemetery Manager:
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Prosfora - Holy Bread
Prepared Weekly By: John
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And in the Letters of the Holy Apostle John we have an image of Perfect Love: "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Fathers Serge Veselinovich and Thomas Colyandro together with the Church School Congregation of Saints Constantine & Helen

THE DATES FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

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; that day on which Adam was created (the 6th day). The first evidence of the Nativity celebration 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. This theological opposition of the Church inspired artists to create imagery of Christ's birth. As the subject of the Lord's birth in the flesh gained its prominence in the liturgical and dogmatic teaching, corresponding iconography began to develop. The earliest representations of Christ's birth are found in the sarcophagus reliefs of the first quarter in the 4th century.

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 (Galatians 4:4), and appeared in the flesh at a point in history when the



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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. It helps to understand historical events easier if we explore the background of particular situations and find out what caused them to happen. Visualize early Christians who were not free to worship, to propagate their faith or build churches. Those who were identified as Christ's followers and refused to deny their God were punished. Massive persecutions continued for nearly three centuries. Those who chose to believe that Christ was the expected Messiah and the Savior of all men, faced the danger of death. Execution of Christians was an everyday spectacle. This was the time of extraordinary tribulation and no less remarkable was the test. Contrary to the expectation of the emperors that the death penalty will persuade Christians to abandon their religion, they increasingly grew in number and unshakable faith. Those Christians did not require scientific or expert theological proof that Christ was the true God. Faith was their principle source of strength and endurance. No theological dialogues nor doctrinal books were

for their spiritual growth. They were too close to God, their relationship with Him was immediate and there was no need to interpret what was obvious. This is the early picture of Christianity, but soon it will start changing. The bloody persecution will change into intellectual and political warfare.

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.

The dedicated-to-God men and women will go into seclusion, creating fortresses of devoted soldiers for the defense and safeguard of Christ's mission here on earth. These fortresses, the nurseries of spiritual maturity, will produce a multitude of spiritual giants, such as the best known hierarchs, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian and Basil the Great. And great they were! Saints Constantine and Helen were unmatched in their dedication to the Lord and ceaseless in their contemplation of God. This filled them with the guiding power of the Holy Spirit. These are the living icons, the roots of Christianity and the image of uncompromised



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and undivided Orthodoxy.

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The setting of the celebration of the Birth of Christ on December 25/January 7 had a very important part in the formation of the Church Calendar. As soon as the date was set and affirmed, other days which bear relationship to it were set. The days tied to it, are the Annunciation, March 25/April 7; The Circumcision, January 1/13; the Presentation, February 2/15."

THE MAGI

The word **Magi** is often translated as wise men. St. Justin the Martyr and Philosopher (died 165 A.D.) in one of his letters, interprets the Magi as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy regarding the coming of the messiah. St. Justin cites Isaiah 8:4 "before the child knows how to call 'My father' or 'My mother', the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria".

The magi were considered priests of an eastern cult and practitioners of magic and astrology. The wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria represented the sorcery and idol-worship that the magi gave up when they worshiped Jesus. Their names are **Balthazar, Melchior and Gaspar**.

Balthazar, is a Greek corruption of the Babylonian name Belshazzar familiar with the Book of Daniel: it means "**O Lord, protect the king.**" **Melchior**, is an Aramaic name often encountered in Assyrian and Babylonian texts. It means "**The king is my light.**"

Gaspar is a Roman corruption of Gondophares, a Parthian name in a language spoken in Persia.

Two translations of the name areb "**May he find glory**" or "**keeper/master of the treasure**". St. Irenaeus of Lyons alluded to the role of the magi in the allegorical interpretation of their gifts. Gold because he was a king of an eternal kingdom, frankincense (burnt on altars as divine offerings) because he was God, and myrrh (used for anointing corpses) to indicate that he would die and be buried for the sake of mankind. Venerable Bede (8th Century) recorded a later tradition that the three magi signified the three parts of the world - Africa, Asia and Europe - and that they were thus linked with the sons of Noah, who fathered the three races of Earth. "He who sits at the right hand of the Father goes without shelter at the inn, that He may for us prepare many mansions in the house of His heavenly Father...He was born, not in the house of His parents, but at the inn by the wayside, because through the mystery of the Incarnation He is become the Way, by which He guides us to our home."

PRAYER FOR THE BLESSING OF THE YULE LOG

PRIEST:

O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, who didst plant the tree of life in Paradise so that it might bestow upon us eternal blessedness, but on account of our sin didst close the way into paradise; who on the Cross didst raise us up again who had fallen and didst lead us to salvation, do thou the same, O Lord, bless also now this tree which is a symbol of thy Cross and the Tree of Life in Paradise, and which reminds us of thy holy Birth and of the logs which the shepherds of Bethlehem kindled to warm themselves they came to worship thee, the Divine Infant, and thereby the salvation bearing cross. Bless also our homes with the divine blessing and cleanse us all who venerate thy Nativity. Help thy holy church to unite all with the cross, for thou art a good and the lover of mankind and to thee we send up glory, thanksgiving and worship to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto the ages of ages, Amen