

*We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.*

# Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



**Sunday, December 11, 2016**

Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

**Tone 8 (12<sup>th</sup> of Luke)**

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

## *25<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost*

**Sunday of the Forefathers.** Ven. Daniel the Stylite of Constantinople (489-490). Ven. Nikon the Dry of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—12th c.). Martyrs Mirax, Acepsius and Aithalas, of Egypt (7th c.). Ven. Luke the New Stylite of Chalcedon (ca. 970-980).

### **Troparion – Tone 2**

*Through faith You justified the Forefathers, / betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles. / These saints exult in glory, / for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: / She who bore You without seed. / So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!*

### **Kontakion – Tone 6**

*You did not worship the graven image, / O thrice-blessed ones, / but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, / you were glorified glorified in a trial by fire. / From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: / Hasten, O compassionate One! / Speedily come to our aid, / for You are merciful and able to do as You will.*



*Sunday of the Forefathers*

## *Prayer Requests*

### *For Health of:*

**Evgenia (Ergina) Kaci & Paulo Puqja (Home of Hope),** on their birthdays, offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

### *In Memory of:*

**Antonita,** offered by the Bodulow family.

## *Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity*

**St John Chrysostom: Always Give Thanks To God**

“The mark of a soul that loves wisdom always gives thanks to God. If you have suffered evil, give thanks and it is changed to good. He has not sinned who suffered the evil but he who has done the evil. Give thanks even in disease, lack of possessions, or false accusations. It is not we who are injured but those who are the authors of them”

### *Liturgical Schedule*

#### **Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am: Sunday School

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

**12:15 pm: St. Nicholas Day  
Celebration**

#### **Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

#### **Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am: Sunday School

9:40 am: Hours

10:00 am: Divine

Liturgy/Pannikhida

#### **Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

6:30 pm: Christmas Eve  
Service

#### **Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

No Divine Liturgy

#### **Saturday, December 31<sup>st</sup>**

6:30 pm: Vespers

#### **Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup>**

9:30 am: No Sunday School

9:40 am: Hours

9:45 am: General

Confession

10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

### *Bulletin Sponsors:*

***The Bodulow Family; Sub-  
Deacon Vlashi***

### *Readings:*

#### **The Prokeimenon in the 4<sup>th</sup> Tone:**

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers / and praised and glorified is Thy name  
forever! (*Song of the three Holy Children, v. 3*)  
vs. For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (*v. 4*)

#### **Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11 (Forefathers)**

**Brethren**, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

#### **Alleluia in the 4<sup>th</sup> Tone:**

Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on  
His Name. (*Psalms 98:6*)  
vs. They called to the Lord and He answered them. (*Psalms 98:6*)

#### **Gospel: Luke 14:16-24 (Forefathers)**

**The Lord said this parable:** "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

### *Sunday of the Forefathers*



The Sunday that falls between December 11-17 is known as the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. These are the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, who lived before the Law and under the Law, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God said, "In thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, 22:18).



**Bulletin Sponsor:** Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

**Memorial Candles:** Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

**Private Confessions:** Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

**General Confession:** Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

**Pannikhida Service:** The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

**Special Announcements** for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

[OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com](mailto:OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com)

**The Living Clean Group** of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

**The Grey Book Step Meeting Group** of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



### *Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News*

*St. Nicholas' visit and pizza party for the children are today Sunday December 11th.* We hope to see all the little ones at these events! For more information, contact Maribeth Romanofsky or Linda Dantine.

*Help to beautify our church this holiday season by bringing in a poinsettia plant at any time from now until the Nativity feast. There will not be a collection for flowers this year. Thank you!*

*Christmas Eve Service: 12/24 at 6:30 p.m. here at Orthodox Church of the Mother of God. (To receive communion, fast from noon on)*

*Christmas Day (Sunday): There will be no Divine Liturgy at our parish. Please worship at any of the Orthodox churches in the area. The nearest OCA parish from Mays Landing is Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, 11 Wilkins Station, Medford, NJ. See their website for directions (<http://www.holycrossmedford.org/>). Their services are Friday (12/23; 7:30 p.m.) Vespertal Liturgy for Christmas Eve, Saturday (12/24; 4:00 p.m.) Matins and Compline for Christmas Eve; and Sunday (12/25; 10:00 a.m.) Christmas Divine Liturgy.*



### *NY/NJ Diocese News*

#### **Pentecost Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Archbishop Michael: June 4-17, 2017**

The Department of Evangelization of the Orthodox Church in America, together with Archbishop Michael (Dahulich) and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey announce a **first annual Pilgrimage** -- this year to the Holy Land, beginning in Nazareth and ending in Jerusalem, with an optional additional trip to Petra in Jordan, **June 4-17, 2017**. The pilgrimage begins on the Monday of Pentecost, in Israel. The itinerary includes the following cities and major sites: Capernaum, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Mar Sabba, Jerusalem (Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Garden of Gethsemane, Mount Zion), and Petra (in Jordan).

*"It is my joy to be able to lead this inaugural pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As an Archbishop and as a Professor of New Testament at St Tikhon's, I cannot overstate the value of the living connection between the Scriptures and the Holy Sites where our Lord took flesh, grew up, was tempted; where he taught, where he healed; where he was crucified and where he arose from the dead. We will walk on those paths, we will stand in*



*those hallowed sites, we will sit in those holy places, we will pray where he prayed, as we trace the Lord’s ministry in the Holy Land,”* said His Eminence, Archbishop Michael.

*“My experience in the Holy Land,” added Priest John Parker, Chair of the Department of Evangelization, “indeed brought the Scriptures to life. For my whole life I had read about the Sea of Galilee, but to sail on it puts it in perspective. How many times did I play the role of the inn-keeper in the Nativity Play as a child? But touching the very cave where Jesus was born brings his Holy Nativity into a whole new focus. And indescribable is the opportunity to kneel at the very tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ (still empty!) and to pray for my family, my parish, and the salvation of the world. These are some of the gifts of a pilgrimage of this nature.”*

In addition to the usual sites one would expect on such a pilgrimage, we will also have the opportunity to visit significant archeological sites, not to mention Petra, an ancient city that is literally carved into rock cliffs.

The Pilgrimage will offer a remarkable opportunity for us to get back to our roots, and to make life-changing connections between the words of our Faith, and the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

**Invite a friend! Come and see!**

Space is limited and offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

The pilgrimage is organized by  
Diocesan Archpriest Ilya Gotlinsky.

For more information  
and/or to reserve your spot,  
please visit:

<http://orthodoxtours.com/itinerary-june-4-17-2017-pilgrimage-holy-land-eminence-michael-dahulich/>



***Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News***

**Preconciliar Commission holds first organizational meeting**

The first meeting of the Preconciliar Commission, tasked with organizing the 19th All-American Council [AAC] in Saint Louis, MO July 23-27, 2018, was held at the Chancery here during the second week of December 2016.

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, chaired the meeting. Participants included His Grace, Bishop Paul of Chicago, in whose diocese the AAC will be held; Archpriest John Jillions and Melanie Ringa, OCA Chancellor and Treasurer respectively; Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary and AAC Director; Deacon Peter Ilchuk, AAC Manager; Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, Metropolitan Council representative; Becky Tesar, Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America [FOCA] representative; Priest Benjamin Tucci, Youth Activity Coordinator; and Archpriest Timothy Sawchuk and Robert Butchko, Local Committee Clergy and Lay Chairs respectively.

According to Father Tosi, Commission members reviewed the AAC planning process and tasks completed to date.

“There was a review of the critical and mandated dates for the Council, while an action plan was discussed to ensure all deadlines are met,” he said. “An in-depth review of the delegate survey conducted after the 18th AAC in Atlanta will enable Commission members to utilize responses in the planning of the 19th AAC.”

A preliminary budget and financing proposal were presented, along with a review of logistical needs and procedures for registration, certification, credentials and reports.

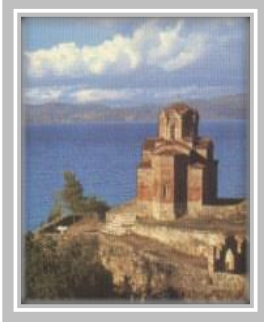
The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America [FOCA] will be holding its annual convention in conjunction with the AAC, as had occurred in Atlanta. There will be a youth program at the AAC, and plans were considered with regard to the integration of both activities with the operation of the AAC.

“The bulk of the two-day meeting was devoted to discussing the theme, major agenda items, possible speakers, and a preliminary overall AAC agenda,” Father Tosi added. “A comprehensive plan was developed for presentation to the Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod of Bishops for approval at their respective Spring 2017 meetings.”

During the week of December 11, Father Tosi and Deacon Ilchuk will travel to Saint Louis and Kansas City to meet with local committee chairs, representatives of the Kansas City Deanery, and hotel personnel.

The 19th AAC will be held at the historic Saint Louis Union Station Hotel.

Additional information will be posted as it becomes available.



*Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, LXXXVI:*

*Good will be with the just man.*

Whoever searches for the grave of an unjust man? What purpose would it serve him? But everyone seeks the grave of the just man. They encircle it with a fence and erect a monument for it.

What purpose will it serve them? It is an acknowledgment by the world that the just man lives even after death, but that the unjust man perishes like a ripple in the water of the sea!

You are the justice of the just, O Living God. His justice is not to be found in the laws of men, laws which people write hastily but implement lazily. Your presence is his justice, and Your every breath -- is his new law.

A great just man has no old laws, nor does he care about laws written on paper. From the dawn of each morning he perceives You writing on his heart and his mind, and he reads.

Hundreds of ruffians and liars rise up against a just man and rejoice, after they clench his throat to silence him. But the ruffians and liars are admitting within themselves that all the wheels of the world have been clattering over them from dawn to dusk. In solitude, which is as distressing to those following their erring minds and ways as the dreadful Judgment Day, ruffians and liars admit that, to the extent that the world still exists, it exists only on account of the just -- on account of those just-minded people following the right way.

Who is a just man besides those who bear God within them? No one, Lord.

He who brings You into the world brings life into a shell of life, brings water into empty wells, and a song into muted throats.

As a cloud of dry smoke, without thunder or rain, is omnipotently dispersed to nothingness by the winds on high, so truly would this entire world be without God-bearers. The entire world is dry smoke, to which only a God-bearer can give thunder and rain, and which only a God-bearer can transform into a genuine cloud.

A cloud resembles a cloud, a man resembles a man, and a world resembles a world.

But one cloud is illusory dry smoke, while another is full of thunder and rain.

One man exists, while the other is nonexistent, even though one resembles the other. One world is, while the other is not, even though it appears as though they both exist.

Until You are born on earth, O Lord, the earth remains a nonexistent shadow; and all the beings on earth are nonexistent shadows.

Your birth is the entrance of electricity into a dry cloud.

Your words are the rain that makes a cloud a cloud.

Your miracles have created men out of vampires.

Your blood, and tears, and sweat have filled the empty shadow of the world with reality.

Good will always be with the just man. His grave will always be sought.

Indeed, the grave of the just man contains more power than the unjust living do. For the unjust are clouds of dry smoke.

Blessed is the nation which has its just!

*Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LXXXVI:*

**III. Us and Our Neighbors  
Relationships With Other People**

With all your power, ask the Lord for humility and brotherly love, because God freely gives His grace for love towards one's brother. Do an experiment on yourself: one day ask God for love towards your brother, and another day - live without love. You will see the difference'

+ St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, XVI.8



## *The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon*



### **A Gladsome Heart**

*Disappointments are meaningless with a gladsome heart*

We often find ourselves disappointed in life. The job we really wanted is given to another person. An associate at work doesn't invite us to the dinner party, yet invited a coworker and his wife. A person we'd love to have as a friend shows no interest and we feel rejected. The music director at church doesn't allow us to join the choir. Someone much younger gets the promotion, along with an increase in salary. You get the idea.

If we have peace in our heart, all these disappointments are meaningless. The man who has peace in his heart gives thanks to God for all things. Even illnesses and poverty can be embraced if we see all as allowed by God because He loves us and grants just what we need for our salvation.

When we approach all that comes our way with a gladsome heart, we gain that which is most profitable. The treasure that is ours is one that cannot be taken away. Not even death can deprive us of this treasure. If we give glory to God for all things, a peaceful heart will be ours.



### **Daily Reflection** **Fear of Others**

*“But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον, the old human being) with its practices and have put on the new (τὸν νέον), which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col 3: 8-11)*



I am called to “put away” or “put off” the things we use to mask and protect ourselves from our inherent unity, in “the image” of our One Creator. My “old nature” tends to cherish a certain tribal self-isolation, and the feeling that “we’re different” from “the others.” So we “lie to one another” to protect this delusion, and to protect ourselves from the vulnerabilities of loving Christ “in all.”

Today let me let Christ “put off” my old fear of other people, and be “renewed in knowledge” after the image of our One Creator.

Let me recognize His image in others, however and whenever they cross my path today, in His humility and His acceptance of us all.

### **Holy Orthodox Quotes**

*“May hatred never make a nest in my heart against those who plot evil against me.”*

**+St Nikolai Velimirovich**

### **Luke 6:27-36**

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.† “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

***The Philokalia: Daily Readings***

Use the senses and sense objects as means of spiritual contemplation.

The hypocrite, like the false prophet, is betrayed by his words and actions.

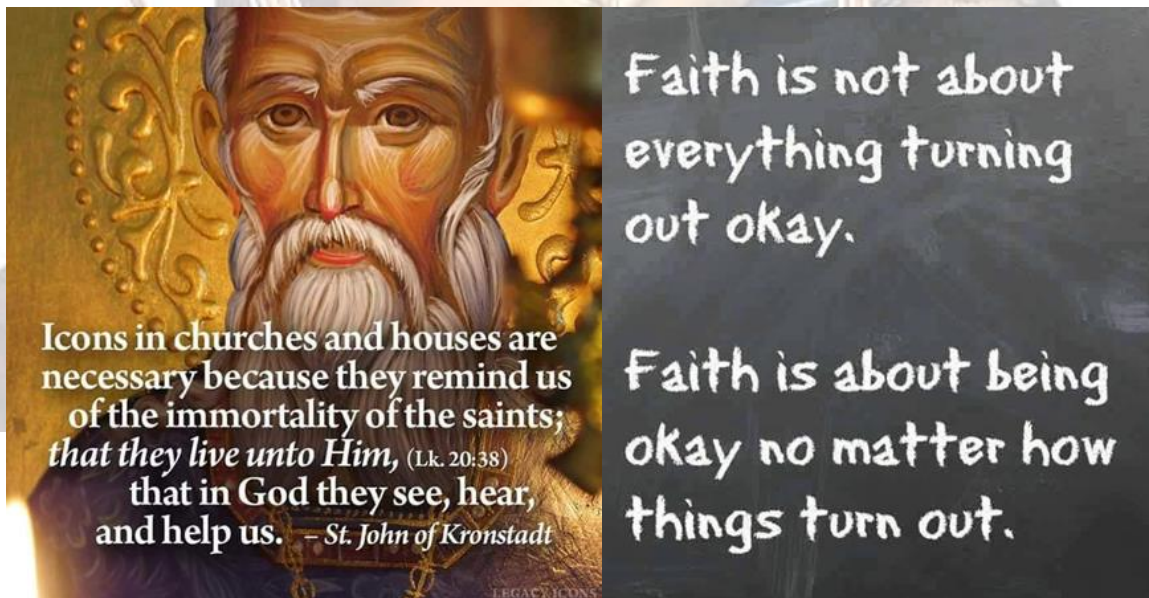
+ *St Thalassios the Libyan, 400 Texts on Love and Self-Control*

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***Ancient Christian Wisdom***

Though you be sinful beyond measure, still pray. Do not heed the Devil’s provocation, craftiness, and despair, but overcome and conquer his wiles. Remember the abyss of the Savior’s mercy and love to mankind. The devil will represent the Lord’s face to you as terrible and unmerciful, rejecting your prayer and repentance; but remember the Savior’s own words, full of every hope and boldness for us: “the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37), and “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). Man! The Creator’s omnipotence, wisdom, and mercy, which were poured out upon the visible and invisible world, are ready to be bestowed, in all their infinity, upon you also, if you endeavor to be a true child of the Heavenly Father, if you fulfil His commandments to love God and your neighbor. Give yourself up, then, untiringly, and with all your might, to good works and deeds.

+ **St. John of Kronstadt**



## ***What if Christmas came from a Pagan Festival?***

December 9, 2016 By Nicole M. Roccas

While traveling on the subway the other day, I overheard an interesting conversation between two strangers.

“Actually,” one person began grumbling, “They don’t know *when* he was born. I mean, if Christ was so important, you’d think we’d at least know his birthday!” A second person responded with similar cynicism: “And plus, Christmas came from a pagan holiday.”

One hears these types of statements so often in the Christmas season. Part of me wanted to respond with an arsenal of reasons why this whole pop-historical conflation of Christmas with pagan winter solstice festivals is just... Inaccurate. The other part of me wanted to turn around and ask, simply, “So what?” What if Christmas *did* come from a pagan holiday—would it make our celebration of Christ’s birth any less meaningful? In my opinion, such a historical development would actually affirm rather than undermine the celebration of the Incarnation.

Before I explain what I mean by that, let’s start with some historical facts: Christmas was not celebrated in the first centuries of Christianity. This was partly because the date of Christ’s birth was unknown. Moreover, birthdays simply weren’t as meaningful in the Jewish society of late antiquity, the culture into which God saw fit to send Jesus as His incarnate son.

Unlike first-century Romans (who sometimes celebrated birthdays with lewd festivities and pagan sacrifices), Jews and early Christians honored a person’s death more than one’s birth. As it says in Ecclesiastes, “the day of death is better than the day of birth” (7:1).

### **A New Feast**

For the earliest centuries of Christianity, Easter (and all other Sundays) was the principal feast of the Christian year and had been observed since the beginnings of the Church. Additional holidays came to fill the Christian calendar, especially in the fourth century. Most likely, this was a response to the legalization of Christianity in AD 325, after which Christians had more freedom to hold public festivals, holidays and processions. For an abbreviated history of the Christian calendar.

In some territories of Christianity, Christmas was originally observed as part of Theophany (January 6). By the late fourth century, though, Christmas was increasingly celebrated as its own holiday on December 25.

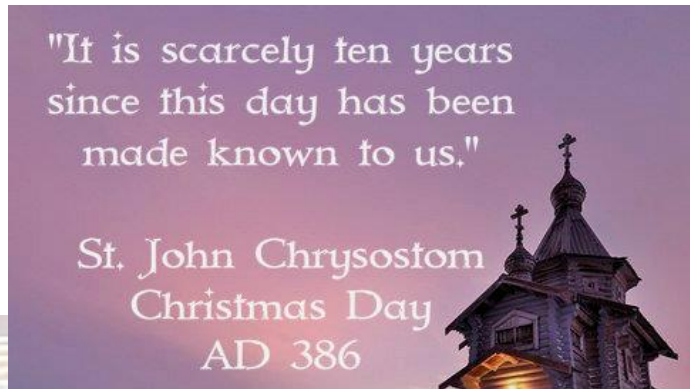
And, by the way, the Church Fathers were not under any grand delusions about the novelty of this holiday. They knew they were doing something new—and that was not an issue for them.

For example, on Christmas Day, 386, St. John Chrysostom preached:

**“It is scarcely ten years [...] since this day has been made manifest and known to us” (Comings, 62; see below for references).**

That’s right—St. John Chrysostom did *not* grow up opening presents on Christmas morning or attending a festal Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve. He didn’t celebrate the Feast of the Nativity for the first time until the last third of his earthly life—and he didn’t find adopting a new feast one bit scandalous.

Probably, he and his contemporaries were aware that devoting time to Christmas was a way to help communicate the incomprehensible reality of the Incarnation. And so, they started something new. They took a risk in faith. Maybe it wouldn’t catch on. Maybe their congregants would stare at them like, “You expect us to celebrate *what*?”





Turning towards God in a new way is not easy or comfortable—think of how many times you’ve tried to turn over a new leaf in your own life. But I’m so glad they took the risk, aren’t you?

### Why December 25th?

Although there is no clear explanation for why Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25th, it was likely a combination of several factors.

One possibility was that December 25th was exactly nine months after the date of the spring equinox, which in those days was March 25th. According to a popular Talmudic tradition, God had created Adam and Eve at the time of the first Spring equinox. The Annunciation (i.e. the conception of Christ) is celebrated on this day in part to reflect that Christ is the new Adam. Christmas, then, comes exactly nine months later—at the very least, the Church is biologically correct! It should be noted, though, that these dates were not necessarily selected for their “historical accuracy” in the modern sense, but for typological or symbolic reasons.

Since the Christ came to redeem the human race, it was only fitting His conception and birth echo the creation.

A second theory, popular on Facebook feeds and (evidently) in idle subway conversation, is that Christmas “replaced” pagan winter festivals (in the first century, the winter solstice occurred on or near December 25). In its most extreme form, this theory depicts Christmas as a sham holiday Christians deployed so they could have their pagan cake and eat their Christian one, too. Interestingly, however, this argument has little historical basis. It wasn’t even articulated until the 19th century or thereabouts.

### So What?

But let’s say it’s all true—let’s say Christmas *was* an effort to bring winter solstice observances into the realm of Christianity. Why would that undermine the Christian message or the integrity of our celebration of Christmas?

Are we not called by St. Paul to “redeem time, for the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16)?

I’ve already pointed out that pagan winter solstice celebrations were *not* the direct historical antecedent to Christmas. Nonetheless, early Christians lived in close relationship with agricultural and solar seasons. They couldn’t help but perceive in the winter solstice a type of Christ—the light of the world, who came in the flesh in humanity’s darkest hour. As the celebration of Christmas took hold, the Church fathers hoped people would come to worship not the sun, but the God who sent his Son as the light of the world. In the winter solstice for Christ, Christians of the fourth century and beyond modeled the Incarnation itself, the entrance of Christ into this world of flesh and time, seasons and years, life and decay.

Their efforts to bring Christ more and more into the fold of earthly experience have had some success. More than a millennium later, Christmas marks a season during which more money and resources are given to the poor than any other time. December 25 is now a date that silently reminds even our post-consumerist, secular society that the naked should be clothed, the hungry should be fed, and strangers should be visited. At the same time, though, our current society follows a new kind of paganism: the worship of consumer goods and luxury. We can and must continue the endeavour to “redeem time,” inasmuch as we allow the joy of Christ’s birth to fill us, to love God with our whole hearts and our neighbor as ourselves.

At the heart of this is the incarnation—the radical reality that the Son of God entered our world at a particular juncture and place. Some of the historical facts may have been lost with time. But thanks be to God, Christ’s birth is more than just a fact, it is the beginning of our salvation.

