



St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church

5402 Acorn Street, Houston, Texas 77092

Very Rev. Fr. Elias Rafaj, Protoperbyter of the South, Pastor

Fr. Deacon Andrew Veres

Confession at 9:00am on Sundays or upon request.

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www.stjohnchrysostom.com

December 20th, 2009 – Sunday before Christmas-of the Holy Fathers

Today's Divine Liturgy: Propers: Tone 4 Readings: Heb 11:9&32-40
Mt 1:1-25

LITURGY SCHEDULE AND INTENTIONS:

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|-----------|--------|---------|---|
| Sunday | Dec 20 | 10:00am | Sunday before Christmas-Of the Holy Fathers-Divine Liturgy- +Anton Hoffart by Hoffart Family |
| Tuesday | Dec 22 | 7:00pm | Anastasia Great Martyr-Divine Liturgy- for health of Damien Yalch by Mary Well |
| Thursday | Dec 24 | 7:00pm | Vigil of Christmas-Vespers & Divine Liturgy For our Parish Family |
| Friday | Dec 25 | 10:00am | Christmas-Birth of Our Lord-Divine Liturgy For our Parish Family |
| Saturday | Dec 26 | 10:00am | Synaxis of the Theotokos-Divine Liturgy- +Joseph Sakmar by wife Virginia |
| Sunday | Dec 27 | 10:00am | Sunday after Christmas-David, Joseph, & James-Divine Liturgy +Anton Hoffart by Hoffart family |
| Friday | Jan 01 | 10:00am | Circumcision of Our Lord-Basil the Great- Archbishop-Divine Liturgy-+Mary & +George Kudlak by Anna Kudlak |
| Sunday | Jan 03 | 10:00am | Sunday Before Theophany-Divine Liturgy- +Anton Hoffart by Kowalik Family |
| Wednesday | Jan 06 | 7:00pm | Theophany of Our Lord- <u>Holy Day of Obligation</u> -Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Water-+Anthony Litus by Robert & Johanna Urban |

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|--------|--------|------|---|
| Sunday | Jan 10 | 10am | Sunday after Theophany-Divine Liturgy +Elizabeth Urban by Robert & Johanna Urban |
| Sunday | Jan 17 | 10am | 33 rd Sunday after Pentecost-Sunday of Zacchaeus- Divine Liturgy-For all victims of abortion by Kowalik family |

SCHEDULES

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Altar Servers</u> | <u>Lectors</u> | <u>Ushers</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <u>December 2009</u> | | | |
| 20 | Pinkham, Black | Donna Kowalik | Hoffart/Dowgun |
| 24 | Monks, Black | Robert Mihalo | Dancsak/Dowgun |
| 25 | Pinkham, Monks | Teresa Wells | Hoffart/Dowgun |
| 27 | Monks, Black | Tom Wells | Kee/Dowgun |
| <u>January 2010</u> | | | |
| 03 | Monks,S. Hoffart | Leslie Bohannon | Hoffart/Dowgun |
| 10 | Monks,M. Hoffart | Ralph Kowalik | Kee/Dowgun |
| 17 | Monks, Black | Al Dancsak | Dancsak/Dowgun |

We welcome Fr. Daniel Forsythe to Houston....he is currently serving St. Basil's in Irving over the Holidays before returning to Pittsburgh where he serves as parrochial vicar at St. Elias Church in Munhall. Fr. Daniel is the head of the Metropolitan Cantor Institute and the newest (and youngest) priest of the entire Byzantine Metropolia. On Monday we will have a gathering with the parish youth and on Tuesday evening following the 7pm Liturgy we will have the opportunity to welcome Fr. Daniel before he returns to Irving on Wednesday....all are warmly invited. After the Liturgy refreshments will be served in the Social Hall.

Please remember in your prayers the sick and homebound in our parish:
Metropolitan Basil, Anna Skuchko, Victoria Christine, and Damien Yalch

COLLECTIONS

Sunday December 13, 2009 \$1,881.17 *God bless you for your generosity!*

WELCOME...to all our visitors worshipping with us!
Please be sure to fill out a Visitor's Card and drop it in the collection basket (or give it to the usher). And we would like you to be our guest in the Social Hall for coffee and refreshments after the Liturgy is over this morning. We look forward to meeting you and welcoming you personally to Saint John Chrysostom's.
We are glad you're here!

Coffee Social is held in the church Hall following Divine Liturgy on Sundays

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Parish census forms are in the rack in the narthex. Please fill out a form if there has been any change in your contact information in the past year, or if you are new to the parish and have not previously done so. Please return the forms in the collection basket.

Please pick up your contribution envelopes for 2010, which are on the table at the rear of the church. Using these envelopes enables us to give you a statement of your annual contributions for tax purposes. Thank you for your continuing generosity to our parish.

From the Parish Kitchen...

All orders are ready to be picked up in the Social Hall after Divine Liturgy, see Helen Kee. There are nut and poppyseed rolls available for \$10 each.

Last Chance to purchase tickets for Christmas Chinese Auction.....

St. John's is having a Christmas Chinese Auction of beautiful donated items. All proceeds will benefit the parish kitchen up-dating. The winners will be pulled TODAY at 1pm. Thank you for your support!

Please remember in your prayers Damien Yalch who is hospitalized again....May God restore him to good health and grant him many years!

Please continue to keep Mary Black and her new-born baby Nicholas in your prayers as he grows in strength and may they both (and father Ryan also) be blessed with health and happiness for many years!!!

TODAY.....after Divine Liturgy, our parish will have a Holiday Bakery and Home-made Soup sale!!!

If you have your own containers for the soup, please bring them (....although we will have containers)....soup will be available for 'eat-in' and 'take-out'!

\$2 for a bowl (with bread)

\$6 bottomless bowl (with bread and salad) ...you can mix the soups and try all!

\$4 a quart (2 generous servings)

The homemade soups that will be featured are:

Chicken Soup

Vegetarian Lentil Soup

Italian Wedding Soup

Hungarian Goulash Soup

(there may be more and we will let you sample....)

On a cold winter day, there is nothing better than a steaming bowl of homemade soup!!! ...and you are also helping the young people of the parish!

In celebrating Holy Supper on January 10th, we are remembering our ancient tradition of observing the Nativity on Jan. 7, according to the Julian Calendar. In the spirit of "Russian" or Old Calendar Christmas, we will collect donations of items for babies in need. The Baby Shower to honor Baby Jesus will take place on Sunday, January 10, 2010, after Divine Liturgy and as a part of our Parish Holy Supper. Donations of baby formula, food, diapers, clothes, toys, or anything else for babies will be collected and given to MANNA. Monetary donations are also accepted and checks should be made out to MANNA. No fragile or glass items, please.

Today, at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, (just around the corner) all are invited to their Living Nativity. St. Giles is located at 5900 Pinemont, between Antoine and Bingle. Dec 20 - 6:00 - 8:00 - Living Nativity - sharing lessons and carols in the tableau with live animals! Fun for kids of all ages!

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Appear on 60 Minutes Segment on Orthodox Christianity

His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians who constitute the second largest Christian denomination in the world, will be featured on the CBS News program *60 Minutes* reported by Bob Simon, scheduled to air on Sunday, December 20, 2009 at 7 p.m. EST. The segment will focus on the Orthodox Church, and its development from its earliest years to modern times in what is now the Republic of Turkey.

The show will also be broadcast over the Internet on the *60 Minutes* website: www.60minutes.com

This morning we blessed a beautiful hand written icon of our Holy Father among the Saints, John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople, patron saint of our parish. This icon was donated by Joan Cole of Dallas, TX, a student of Fr. Elias'. The icon, with the relic of St. John will be enthroned permanently in the 'Tomb of Christ' in the back of the Church. When entering the Church and passing around the Tomb, we are encouraged to venerate the icon and relic and offer our prayers to our heavenly protector.

The situation in the Middle East has been difficult and tense for many years, but the last years especially have become difficult for the Christian minorities living in the midst of the conflict. A four

families have been relocated to the Houston area in the last couple of months (the last family arriving a week ago) and they have been assisted by various organizations. They are Chaldean Catholics and here in our area, there is no outreach or community at this time for Chaldean Catholics. As fellow Eastern Catholics, we are trying to assist them and bring them to our parish for Christmas Liturgy on Friday....in the Social Hall there is a basket collecting donations to help buy necessities for the families and gifts for the children (10 children). Thank you for your generosity!

A brief introduction: Who are the Chaldean Catholics?

The word Chaldean identifies this Catholic community with an ancient people who once controlled the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (modern Iraq and portions of Syria and Turkey). The Chaldean Church traces its origins to the Assyrian Church of the East, which was founded by Saint Thomas the Apostle and his disciples Addai and Mari in the first century. Contact with Catholic missionaries in the 16th century prompted many Assyrian Christians to seek full communion with Rome. In 1553, Pope Pius VIII confirmed Metropolitan John Hormizdas as the first patriarch of a nascent Chaldean Catholic Church. Today Chaldean Catholics are found in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, France, USA and Canada.

The *[Selected Hymns of the Great Vespers for the Nativity of the Theotokos](#)* CD is now on sale. The cost of the CD is \$12. Please see Larry Monks for available CDs to purchase now. Additionally, check our website. www.stjohnchrysostom.com for updates as well as to hear selections from the recording. The production of this recording, sung by parishioners of both Texas Byzantine parishes who formed the Choir for the Evangelization Conference of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese, is from the Vespers of the Nativity of the Theotokos as served at the Co-Cathedral on Sept. 11, 2009. To arrange for purchasing please contact Larry Monks at larry@stjohnchrysostom.com or 713-459-8009.

From Fr. Elias...

May God abundantly bless you through these Holy Days when we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ and may his love and peace fill your hearts and lives throughout the New Year!

God is with us!
Christ is born! Glorify him!

“Holy Supper”

An ancient Christian tradition, whose roots are in the Byzantine faith, is the Christmas Eve fast and meal. The fast, typically, lasts until the first star appears. The dinner that follows is very much a celebration, although, meat is not permitted. Fish is served as a part of the celebration, since the meal is not a penitential meal. It is very symbolic with its ingredients being various grains for hope and honey for happiness and peace.

Once the first star has appeared in the sky, the festivities begin. Although all of the food served is strictly Lenten, it is served in an unusually festive and anticipatory manner and style. The Slavs call this meal: "The Holy Supper." The family gathers around the table to honor the coming Christ Child. A white table-cloth, symbolic of Christ's swaddling clothes, covers the Table. Hay is brought forth as a reminder of the poverty of the Cave where Jesus was born and the manger which held him. A tall candle is placed in the center of the Table, symbolic of Christ "the Light of the World." A large round loaf of simple bread, symbolic of Christ the Bread of Life, is placed next to the candle.

The meal begins with the Lord's Prayer and the reading of the gospel of the Nativity (a reasonable portion). A prayer of thanksgiving for all the blessings of the past year is said and then prayers for the good things in the coming year are offered. All greet each other with the traditional Christmas greeting: "Christ is Born!" The response being: "Glorify Him!" Everyone partakes of the bread, dipping it first in honey and then taking a piece of the garlic. Honey is symbolic of the sweetness of life, and garlic of the bitterness. The "Holy Supper" is then eaten (see below for details). After dinner, no dishes are washed and the Christmas presents are opened. Then everyone goes to Church.

Christmas Eve dinner is meatless but festive. The most important ingredient is a special porridge called kutya. It is made of wheatberries or other grains which symbolize hope and immortality, and honey and poppy seeds which ensure happiness, success, and untroubled rest. A ceremony involving the blessing of the home is frequently observed. The kutya is eaten from a common dish to symbolize unity. Some families used to throw a spoonful of kutya up to the ceiling. According to tradition, if the kutya stuck, there would be a plentiful honey harvest.

Traditionally, the "Holy Supper" consists of 12 different foods, symbolic of the 12 Apostles. Although there was also some variation in the foods from place to place and village to village, the following is a good summary of what was typically served. What follows is just an example. Each

family personalizes their Holy Supper with their own family's foods and traditions, but still observing the fast.

- 1) Mushroom soup or Sauerkraut soup (some vegetarian soup)
- 2) Simple fasting bread (no eggs or dairy)
- 3) Garlic cloves
- 4) Bowl of honey
- 5) Baked fish
- 6) Stewed dry fruits or fresh fruits (compote or fruit salad)
- 7) Nuts
- 8) Sauerkraut, beans or another vegetable or salad course
- 9) Pyrohy (stuffed slovak 'ravioli') or a vegetable dish
- 10) Potatoes (boiled new potatoes with chopped parsley and margarine)
- 11) Bobal'ki (small biscuits combined with sauerkraut or poppyseed with honey)
- 12) Red Wine

2009 Calendar

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|--------------------|---------------|---|
| | Nov 15-Dec 24 | Philip's Fast |
| Sunday | Dec 20 | Christmas Bake Sale (donations needed!!) |
| <u>2010</u> | | |
| Thursday | Jan 7 | Elias speaks to the Galveston-Houston Serra Club at 6:30pm |
| Saturday | Jan 9 | Food Preparation & set up for Parish Holy Supper (9am-3pm) |
| Sunday | Jan 10 | Parish Holy Supper for Russian Christmas |
| Saturday | Jan 16 | Diaconal Discernment Meeting |
| Saturday | Feb 20 | Diaconal Discernment Meeting |
| | Feb 27-28 | Spring Iconography Workshop at St. John's |
| Saturday | Mar 20 | Diaconal Discernment Meeting |
| Saturday | Apr 17 | Diaconal Discernment Meeting |
| Saturday | May 15 | Diaconal Discernment Meeting |
| Wednesday | May 26 | Moleben & Meditation at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 7pm |
| | Aug 6-8 | Texas Byzantine Retreat, led by His Grace, Bishop Nicholas (Samra) at Holy Retreat Center, Houston |
| | Nov 1-4 | Eastern Catholic Eparchial Directors of Religious Education (ECED) meet in Houston. |