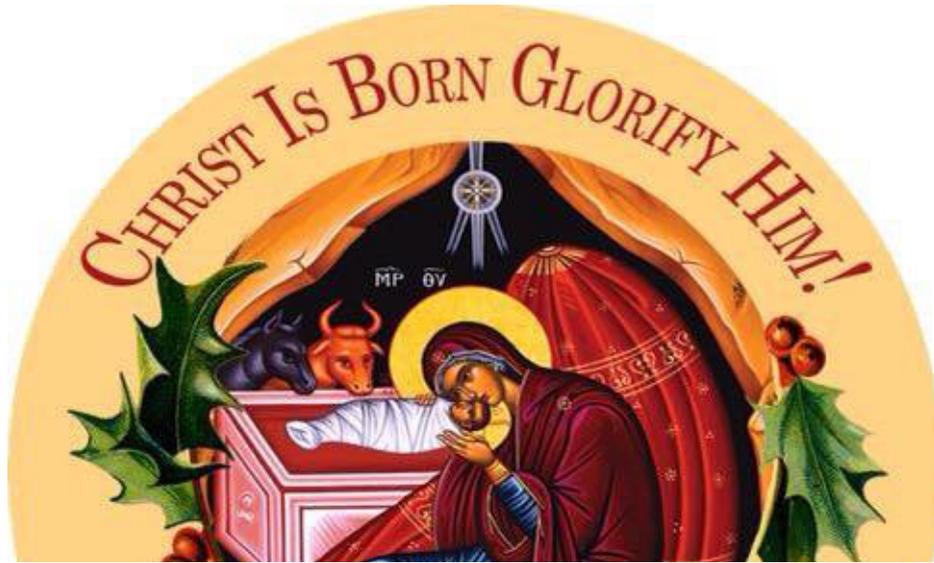


St. Innocent Orthodox Church

December, 2019 Newsletter



(Written for the Monroe County Reporter)

Every year, as we journey towards Christmas, I find myself thinking how busy-making and consumeristic our society is at this time of year. Increasingly, it seems we all live at a frenetic pace and our attention is pulled in a multitude of directions. It seems that most of us feel like we have no choice but too busy to experience the grace and joy of the Christmas season. Work, school, Christmas shopping, and planning the holiday are prioritized over our pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In this anxious context, somehow focusing on the real meaning of Christmas can feel like an additional burden heaped on top of everything we are already juggling. We may see many "memes" that suggest we should "put Christ back into Christmas;" but it is often the case that people of God themselves are not all that interested in centering the season around Christ.

Traditionally, when Christianity is taken seriously by its adherents it becomes radically counter-cultural. Christmas in our culture has become primarily about consumerism. How does one keep "Christ in Christmas", or keep "Christmas in Christ?" Here are some pragmatic suggestions.

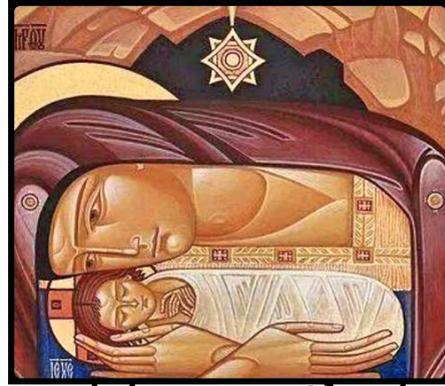
- Go to church regularly, especially on Christmas eve and Christmas day. This is one of the surest ways to make Christmas a Holy day.
- Take time to read the prophecies in the Scriptures that were fulfilled when Jesus was born. Micah (4:6-7; 5:2-4), Jeremiah/Baruch (3:35-4:4), Isaiah (7:10-16), (8:1-4, 9-10), (9:6-7), (11:1-10) Numbers (24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18), Daniel (2:31-36, 44-45). These are some of the prophecies of the Messiah which were fulfilled in Jesus and preached by the Apostles.

December 2019

- Take time to read the stories of Jesus' birth in the Gospels. Matthew (1:18-25), (2:1-23), Luke (2:1-20). These Gospels tell the basic story of Jesus' birth. a Jesse Tree or an Advent Calendar for your children to make these readings fun and to build anticipation for the coming festival.
- Give of your time, talent, and treasure to a local charity which feeds and cloths those who have needs. Or, simply be charitable to whoever you might run into who has needs.
- Spend more time in prayer and spiritual reading than you do shopping.
- Instead of feasting and celebrating before the feast, set aside some time to fast in preparation for the feast. Also, traditionally Christmas was celebrated for at least a week after the 25th of December, up to 12 days.
- Pray that our Lord Jesus Christ would be born anew in your heart this year.

There are many more suggestions that could be made as to how to properly put Jesus at the center of the Christmas season. These suggestions above are traditionally how Christians have prepared for the joy of Christmas while at the same time loving their families by giving and receiving gifts.

As we journey through to our Lord's Birth in the manger/cave lets challenge ourselves to see what or who is at the center of our lives. The hardest part of the Christian life is realizing and making day to day choices that put the Kingdom of Heaven first. May God bless us to experience the true joy our Lord's Nativity in a new and real way this year.



Nativity Fast Charity

During the season of the Nativity Fast, we will be supporting The Child Abuse Reporting Enforcement (C.A.R.E.) Cottage, a division of the Monroe County Sherriff's Office.

C.A.R.E. Cottage is a combination child advocacy center and victim/witness program serving Monroe County since 1991. Services are funded by grants, 5% fine money and private donations.

Services include: assisting victims of child abuse, supporting crime victims through advocacy, and pursuing compensation, counseling and referral, teaching life skills to middle school students, including dealing with bullying and recognizing offenders. "Backpack Buddies" provides food for the weekend for children. In addition, they provide temporary emergency housing for victims and families.

They are in need, noting they depend heavily on financial support from the community. In addition, they need in-kind donations of canned and non-perishable food items, plastic cutlery and paper products, clothing in a variety of sizes, children's clothing, personal hygiene products, washer detergent and like items, and toys for the children.

Beginning November 15 we will begin collecting your generous donations through December. Please consider being a part of this charity. Make out any checks to St. Innocent with the charity noted in the subject line, cash placed in an envelope indicating the charity or on Realm indicating the same.

December 2019

News & Announcements

- St. Nicholas' feast day will be celebrated on December 5, Great Vespers @ 6 pm and the Liturgy will be at 9 am on the 6th.
- Family Church School is on Saturday the 7th
- St. Herman of Alaska's feast day will be celebrated on December 12, Great Vespers at 6 pm and the Liturgy at 9 am on the 13.
- The Nativity Fast continues until December 25th. Please, let's refrain from bringing a lot of dessert items as they tend to be non-Lenten and don't fit with in the spirit of the fast.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, December 18th at 7 pm.

Many Years!

Birthdays

5 Diane Dorogy
6 Michael Muth
6 Leah Hough
9 Plato Powers
9 Diana Grace Stephens
9 Izzy Magnusson
9 Henry Gordy
11 Pauline Magnusson
11 Landon Williams
14 Aidan Hintermaier
15 Sophia Gratigny
15 Nicholas Curington
18 Muryah Scouten
21 Ray Lanier
25 John Haralson
27 Edward Demenchonok
28 Daniel Bush
31 Isaac Curington

Fasting and Repentance

Fasting seasons are always good times to partake of the sacrament of confession. Fr. Theophan hears confessions on Saturday evenings, either before or after Vespers, on Sundays from 9:20-9:40 am (while the canons are being read during Matins), and if need be, by appointment. Confessing our sins to God in the presence of a priest is one of the ways we grow closer to Christ.

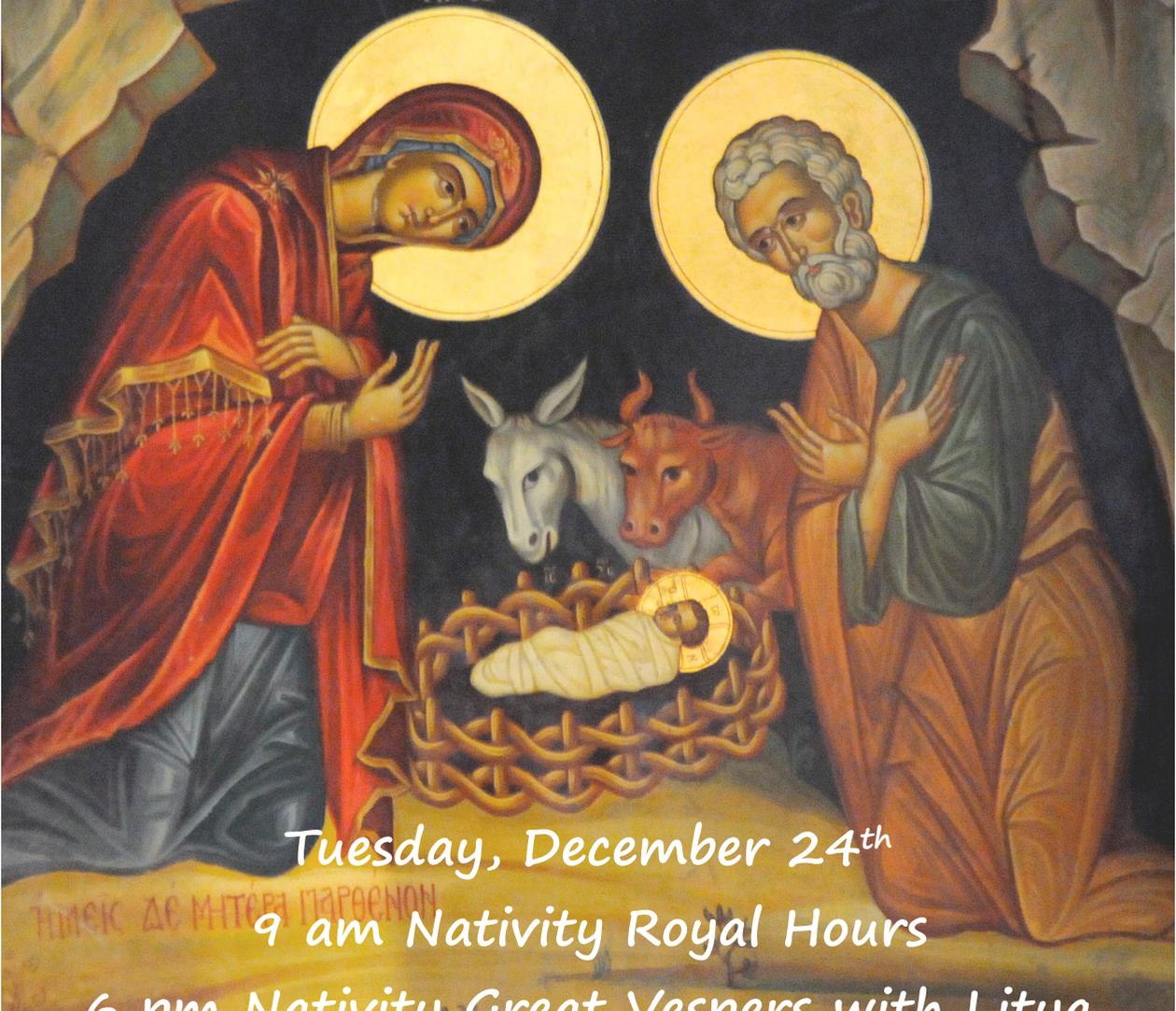
As Christians, we desire to have Christ abide in us and be born in us. In order for Him to abide in us we need to create room for Christ by cleaning out any sinful spiritual clutter we may have. This cleanings takes place in the sacrament of confession.

When we humble ourselves, by confessing our sins, the Spirit of God is drawn to us



December 2019

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ



Tuesday, December 24th

9 am Nativity Royal Hours

6 pm Nativity Great Vespers with Litya

Wednesday, December 25th

10 am Festal Divine Liturgy

Followed by food and fellowship

December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Everyday Orthodoxy	2	3 9am Morning Prayers	4 6pm Small Compline	5 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Great Vespers for St. Nicholas	6 9am Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas' Feast Day	7 4pm Family Church School 6pm Great Vespers
8 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Catechism	9	10 9am Morning Prayers	11 6pm Small Compline	12 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Great Vespers for St. Herman	13 9am Divine Liturgy for St. Herman's Feast Day 1pm Burris State Prison	14 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
15 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Everyday Orthodoxy	16	17 9am Morning Prayers	18 6pm Small Compline 7pm Parish Council	19 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	20	21 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
22 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:30 Catechism	23	24 Strict Fast 9am Nativity Royal Hours 6pm Great Vespers W/Litva	25 No Fast 9:40 3 & 6 th Hours 10am Festal Divine Liturgy for Nativity 11:45am Agape	26	27 No Fast	28 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
29 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	30	31 9am Morning Prayers				

Tentative January 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 No Fast 6pm Daily Vespers	2 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	3 No Fast 9am Royal Hours	4 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
5 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy w/ Blessing of the Waters 12:15am Agape	6 9am Divine Liturgy For Theophany	7 9am Morning Prayers	8 6pm Daily Vespers	9 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	10	11 10-3pm House Blessings Macon 4pm Family Church School 6pm Great Vespers
12 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy Blessing of the Waters at Amerson Water Park w/picnic	13	14 9am Morning Prayers	15 6pm Daily Vespers	16 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	17	18 10-4pm House Blessings Waner Robins 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
19 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape	20	21 9am Morning Prayers	22 6pm Daily Vespers	23 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	24	25 10-4pm House Blessings 5pm Confessions 6pm Great Vespers
26 8:45am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45am Agape 12:15pm Annual Parish Meeting	27	28 9am Morning Prayers	29 6pm Daily Vespers	30 9am Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	31	