

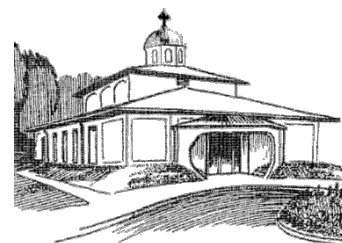


# St Nicholas Orthodox Church

*A Parish of the Diocese of the Midwest  
of the Orthodox Church in America*

9650 Johnnycake Ridge Road, Mentor, OH 44060

<https://saintnicholas-oca.org/>



Parish Rector: Fr Mark Therrien + (216) 678-8181 + fr.mark.therrien@gmail.com



## Services & Events Beginning Sunday, December 15, 2024

- Sunday, Dec. 15     *The 25th Sunday after Pentecost & the Sunday of the Forefathers*  
9a Church School || 9:35a Hours || 10a Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday, Dec. 17     6:30p Choir Practice
- Thursday, Dec. 19     4p Confession || 6p Daily Vespers
- Friday, Dec. 20     *The Beginning of the Forefeast of the Nativity, St Ignatius of Antioch, & St John of Kronstadt*  
4p Confession || 6p Daily Vespers followed by book group
- Saturday, Dec. 21     3:30p Confession (*final scheduled time before the Nativity*) || 5:30p Great Vespers
- Sunday, Dec. 22     *The 26th Sunday after Pentecost & the Sunday before the Nativity*  
9:35a Hours || 10a Prayers at the Making of a Catechumen Divine Liturgy  
5:30p Daily Vespers



## ATTENDANCE & STEWARDSHIP FOR DECEMBER 8, 2024

Attendance: 171 (127 adults + 44 children); Operating: \$4,291; ZOE: \$20; Capital Maintenance: \$190; Holy Day: \$380; Diocesan Dues: \$23; Candles: \$113; Uganda: \$45; Parish Charities: \$240; Flowers: \$50

“Again we pray for those who bring offerings and do good works in this holy and all-venerable temple . . .”  
(*from the final petition of the Augmented Litany*)



## WEEKLY CATECHESIS

### A Short Explanation of the Services Surrounding the Nativity of our Lord

As we come closer to the Lord's Nativity, the services have started to include more hymns and readings help to prepare us. This Sunday, for instance, we celebrate the first Sunday in preparation for the feast: The Sunday of the Forefathers. And then, next Sunday, we will celebrate the second Sunday in preparation for it: The Sunday of the Ancestors—an especially beautiful day

since it is the day on which we read the account of the Lord's genealogy from Matthew's Gospel.

### This Thursday Evening: The Beginning of the Prefeast

Starting with this Sunday's commemoration, then, and looking ahead to next Sunday's celebration, in-between the two we continue to intensify our preparations for the Feast. December 20 is an especially important day: On this day, we begin what is called in the liturgical books **the Pre-feast (or Forefeast) of the Nativity**. By way of background: A forefeast is a preliminary celebration of an upcoming feast that, even while being penitential in tone, also anticipates the joy that is coming. All major feast-days have a forefeast, but the length of each is variable. For some, the forefeast is only a day or so. But for the Nativity, the forefeast is extended—thus indicating its importance in the year.

To celebrate the Prefeast in our temple, we will serve Vespers **every evening starting on Thursday, December 19**. (Originally, I also want to include at Vespers the Canon appointed for Compline each day. These Compline Canons are particularly beautiful, because they are modelled on the texts of Holy Week. In this

way, a beautiful thematic link is made between the feasts of the Nativity and Pascha. But lacking the time to prepare them, we will forego them for this year.)

In addition to Vespers, there will be another special opportunity to prepare for the feast. On **Monday, December 23**, we will serve what are called the **'Royal' or 'Great' Hours**. During this service, the lesser Hours (i.e., 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 9th Hours) are served together as an aggregate. And then, instead of being chanted plainly (as on most days), each Hour includes special hymns and readings that are meant to help attune us to the coming festivities. Simple in ceremony and rich in content, this service offers a beautiful opportunity to meditate on the Lord's Nativity. **(A note especially for parents:** The whole service of the Royal Hours takes around 1 ¾ to 2 hours, but each Hour by itself is only 20–30 minutes. So, if you can't come for all of the service, come for some of it and leave when you must.)

#### **December 24: The Eve (Preparation) of the Feast**

On **Tuesday, December 24**, we come a special day in the forefeast: a day that in some editions of the liturgical books is called the *paramony* of the feast (i.e., the day of *preparation*). As the name suggests, on this day we make the final preparations for the Nativity.

There are two special services appointed for this day: The first is the Royal Hours that I've discussed above. (Although the Royal Hours should be served on December 24, Vladyka Daniel gave me a blessing to serve them on December 23 this year). The second is the service of **Vespers and Divine Liturgy**. Strictly speaking, this service is appointed to be served at about one o'clock in the afternoon, but in parish practice it is oftentimes anticipated at an earlier hour. In our temple, we will serve it at **9a** this year. This service is patterned after the service of Vespers and Divine Liturgy as celebrated on Holy Saturday. Thus, in addition to the usual vesperal hymns, it also includes an extended series of Old Testament readings interspersed with special hymns that are sung in call-and-response fashion with a single chanter. (This method of singing, actually, is one of the church's oldest forms, but in our current practice it has largely been lost except for a few occasions in the year.) After the readings, the Divine Liturgy picks up with *Holy God...*, the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, and the rest as usual. To mark the special nature of this service, we use the anaphora of St Basil. Then finally, at the end of the service, the Troparion of the Kontakion of the feast will solemnly be chanted for the first time.

Having retired to home to rest after the morning's

service, in the evening of December 24 we will reconvene in the holy temple at **6p** to celebrate the service that brings the time of preparation to its completion and inaugurates the feast itself: The Vigil. The Vigil is actually comprised of several services that are joined together: Great Compline, the *Lity* (as celebrated at festal Vespers), and finally Matins. With the blessing of His Eminence, this year we will serve an abbreviated order. Still, it will be very festive. The high points will come during Matins: It is during this part of the service that the festal icon will be brought from the altar to be solemnly placed in the middle of the temple for veneration. It is also during Matins that we will be anointed with blessed oil as the choir chants the Canon, beginning with those famous words: **"Christ is born! Glorify him!"** Finally, at the end of the service, the choir will offer a selection of traditional carols.

#### **December 25: The Nativity of our Lord**

✱ ✱ ✱ PASCHA ✱ ✱ ✱

Having spent so much time in preparation, and having now transitioned to the actual feast, our celebrations will come to their highpoint with **Divine Liturgy of the Nativity on the morning of December 25**. To note here: Liturgically speaking, the Nativity ranks as second only after Pascha. In fact, the liturgical books even call this feast **the three-day Pascha**. This is why the church appoints such a long pre-feast before it, and this is also why the post-Nativity period is marked by an extended period of time without fasting (just like Bright Week). Related to this, it should be said: It is *not* the resumption of normal eating that breaks the Nativity Fast. Rather, it is partaking of the holy Eucharist at the festal morning liturgy. **For these reasons, all should make every effort to participate in the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the Nativity, considering its celebration as being just as important as the celebration of Pascha.**

#### **December 26: The Synaxis of the Theotokos**

Having begun on December 25, the feast of the Nativity then continues for several days. This period is called the **post-feast**. The first two days of this period, December 26 and 27, are especially important: On these days (and, of course, on December 25), the Church prescribes that we rest from laborious work. By way of honoring this precept, we will serve the Divine Liturgy in honor of the Mother of God on **December 26**. To mark the solemnity of the day, I would like to have a potluck after the Liturgy this morning. I am also going to bring copies of some carols that we sing at home to share; please bring some of your own if you would like for some very informal sing-along caroling.

In sum: There will be a lot going on starting late next week and continuing on to the days before and after December 25. And so, I want to encourage everyone: Even if you cannot be in the temple for everything, be in it for as much as you can, for the grace given in the services cannot bear fruit if it is not received (a theological truth affirmed time and again for us in the holy Gospels, including in today's reading).



## UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

### Next Sunday: The Making of a New Catechumen

God willing, next Sunday Connor Stumperth will be made a catechumen. Connor has been inquiring into the faith at our parish for a number of months now. Please pray for him especially intensely this coming week as he prepares for this important step in joining the Church.



## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

### ZOE for Life Donations during the Nativity Fast

We are now beginning our second round of collecting diapers for ZOE House. Thank you to all those who have already given.

### Last Day for Collections for the Parish Card

This Sunday, December 15, is the last day that money will be collected for the parish Christmas card. If you want to contribute to this, please see Maureen.



## PARISH PRAYER LIST

*SPECIAL NOTE: In the new year, I will reset the prayer list. So, if you want to keep a name on it, please communicate that request to me via email.*

Perry Capitan, Julian, Sarah Crivella, Emily Finazzo, (friend of the Rendas), David Campbell (Debbie Clements' brother), Patrick Leahy (Dave K.'s brother-in-law), Joseph Chuppa, Mary Ann Sheranko, Kevin, Declan, and Teagon (husband and children of the reposed, Kristen), Andrew Dzura, Rich Cook (Cindy Renda's brother), Daniel Conger (friend of Jim Renda); the residents of St Herman's House, as well as those who serve them; our seminarian, Cole (Paul) Schlafer, and his family members: Sarah, Simon, Michael, & Nikolai; the members of the Bagley family, especially Joseph, Rosemary, Isaac, Lucia, & Julian; Jim Barkas; Delphine (mother of Sean Kiernan); Jennifer, Janice

(Laurie Alexander's mother); Maria (friend of Anna Kozikov, wife of newly-repose Boris); Michael (cousin of Anna Kozikov); Katarina (relative of Natalie Antonoff); Aleksey Byltsov (son of Natalie Antonoff); Willie Gomer (in baptism: Alexander); Archpriest Jan, Matushka Jana, and the parishioners of St Theodosius Cathedral; Theodore Tollefson; James Horabik; Carol Lehman (Darlene Horabik's sister, wife of newly-reposed George); Joe Dzura (brother of Andy Dzura); Viktor and Dominik Povozahev; Vincent (Thomas Alexander's father); Renee Kirouac (goddaughter of Ruth Bede) & Tristan Scott (newly crowned); Hank & Diane (Jim Horabik's brother-in-law and sister); Julia & Iosif (newly crowned); Alexander (friend of Anna Kozikov) & his wife Olena; Dana Wagner; Bob Wick; the suffering Christians of Ukraine, the Middle East, and Armenia; all those affected by the recent hurricanes

Birthdays this week: 12/16: Sarah Kleven; 12/17: Joseph Bagley, Lea Majer

Expecting Parents: Elizabeth & Patrick

Catechumens: Dalton Moses, Scott Salzgeber, Erin (Xenia) Dull, Joshua Peter Tichel, Christina Rausch

Infants Awaiting Holy Illumination: Gianna Denise (daughter of Jake & Allison) (*who is soon to be illumined*); Michael Roman (son of Brian & Katya); Elizabeth Irene (daughter of TJ & Jessica)

Newly illumined: Kennedy Anne; Margaret Lee; Charlotte Xenia; Alex (John) Wittie

Serving in the military: Kenneth Hockenberry; Patrick Miller; James Chongris; Edward (Mat. Olena's father)

Departed: Joseph & Pauline Demanski, Cathy Ubancic (friend of the Rendas), Patricia (Michael Abernathy's grandmother), Nun Elizabeth (of Holy Transfiguration Monastery), Kristen (Michelle Hoover's cousin), Jane Hunt (great grandmother of Sofia Kiernan), Patricia Wilcoxson (Rosemary Bagley's mother); Joseph Naymik; Theodore Kisha (father of Ted Kisha); Daniel (infant son of Fr Peter and Matushka Sophie Ries); John (father of Sean Kiernan), Ronald (in baptism, Thomas) (Collin Moore's father); Priest James Bernstein; Carol Wright; Paul Webb (friend of Abby Goodell); George (Bim) Lehman (Darlene Horabik's brother-in-law); Anna Mae Sokol (Darlene Horabik's cousin); Janet Evans (friend of Ruth Bede); Olga (Nicholas Covelli's mother); Helen (Jan Ursinyi's mother); Rick Wagner (Merrick and Mia's grandfather); Boris (friend of Anna Kozikov); Dennis (newly-reposed brother of Claudia Moore); Joella (LuAnn Dzura's daughter); Gail (friend of Maureen Medakovich)