



“ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU

Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE

St. John the Baptist - HOREN

Holy Ascension - CALMAR

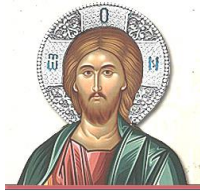
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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December 13th – Holy and All-Praised Apostle Andrew the First-Called

The Apostle (from Greek, "messenger") Andrew was a fisherman from the village of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. He was a member of the community of John the Baptist, and then was the first to be called by Jesus Christ as a disciple, which is why he is called the First-Called. Andrew also brought his elder brother Simon, the future "first-enthroned of the apostles and teacher of the universe" Peter, to Saviour. Since then, the brothers followed the Savior everywhere until His death on the cross.

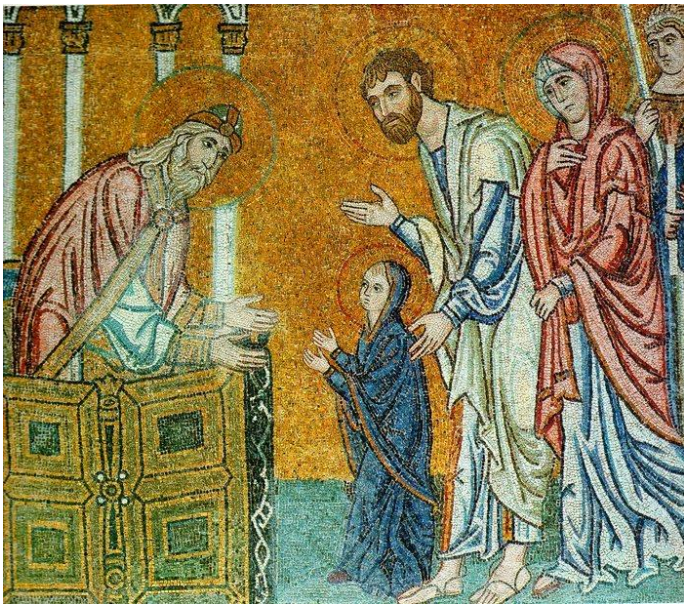
After the Resurrection of the Savior, the Apostle Andrew, along with other disciples, was honored to meet with Him and was present on the Mount of Olives when the Lord, having blessed them, ascended to Heaven. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the apostles cast lots for whom to go to which country to preach the gospel.

The Apostle reached as far as the Slavic regions, and according to Church History he “softened the hearts” of the ancestors of the southern Rus, addressing Scythians and Thracians at the Danube river with the Word of Life.

Then he went along the river Dnieper up to the place where the city of Kiev now stands. “There will be a great city here, and God shall raise up many churches.” The apostle went up around the hills, blessed them and set up a cross. He went up even further along the Dnieper and reached a settlement of the Slavs, where Novgorod was built.

On his journeys the First-Called Apostle endured many sufferings and torments from pagans: they cast him out of their cities and they beat him. In Sinope they pelted him with stones, but remaining unharmed, the disciple of Christ continued to preach to people about the Savior. Through the prayers of the Apostle, the Lord worked miracles. By the labors of the holy Apostle Andrew, Christian Churches were established, for which he provided bishops and clergy. The final city to which the Apostle came was the city of Patra, where he was destined to suffer martyrdom. The city ruler Egeate ordered the crucifixion of the apostle. The Apostle Andrew was crucified on a cross, the bars of which resembled the Greek letter "X", the first letter of the name of Christ - $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$.





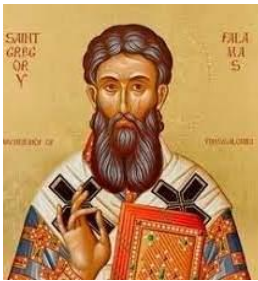
We have entered the Nativity Fast, with a goal of being better and spiritually ready to meet the Newborn Saviour. At the beginning of the fasting – December 4 – we have a Greatest Twelve Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.

Like the feast of her Nativity, this feast of Mary is without direct biblical and historical reference. But like the nativity, it is a feast filled with important spiritual significance for the Christian believer.

Mary was brought as a small child to the temple by her parents in order to be raised there among the virgins consecrated to the service of the Lord until the time of their betrothal in marriage, and was solemnly received by the temple community. She was led to the holy place to be "nourished" there by the angels in

order to become herself the "holy of holies" of God, the living sanctuary and temple of the Divine child who was to be born in her.

This is an extract from St. Gregory Palama's, Archbishop of Thessalonica in the 14th century, word about the feast of the Entrance, where he reveals the bond between the two Holy Events.



"Today we celebrate the memory of those things that contributed, if only once, to the Incarnation. He Who is God by nature, the Co-unoriginate and Coeternal Word and Son of the Transcendent Father, becomes the Son of Man, the Son of the Ever-Virgin. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today, and forever* (Heb. 13:8), immutable in His divinity and blameless in His humanity, He alone, as the Prophet Isaiah prophesied, *Practiced no iniquity, nor deceit with His lips* (Is. 53: 9). He alone was not brought forth in iniquity, nor was He conceived in sin, in contrast to what the Prophet David says concerning himself and every other man (*Ps. 50/51: 5*). Even in what He assumes, He is perfectly pure and has no need to be cleansed Himself. But for our sake, He accepted purification, suffering, death and resurrection, that He might transmit them to us.

God is born of the spotless and Holy Virgin, or better to say, of the *Most Pure* and *All-Holy* Virgin. She is above every fleshly defilement, and even above every impure thought. Her conceiving resulted not from fleshly lust, but by the overshadowing of the Most Holy Spirit. Such desire being utterly alien to Her, it is through prayer and spiritual readiness that She declared to the angel: *Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto Me according to thy word* (Lk. 1:38), and that She conceived and gave birth...

Turn your attention then, to where this choice began. From the sons of Adam God chose the wondrous Seth, who showed himself a living heaven through his becoming behavior, and through the beauty of his virtues. That is why he was chosen, and from whom the Virgin would blossom as the divinely fitting chariot of God. She was needed to give birth and to summon the earth-born to heavenly sonship. For this reason also all the lineage of Seth were called *sons of God*, because from this lineage a son of man would be born the Son of God. The name Seth signifies a rising or resurrection, or more specifically, it signifies the Lord, Who promises and gives immortal life to all who believe in Him.

And how precisely exact is this parallel! Seth was born of Eve, as she herself said, in place of Abel, whom Cain killed through jealousy (cf. Gen. 4:25); and Christ, the Son of the Virgin, was born for us in place of Adam, whom the author of evil also killed through jealousy. But Seth did not resurrect Abel, since he was only a foretype of the resurrection. But our Lord Jesus Christ resurrected Adam, since He is the very Life and the Resurrection of the earth-

born, for whose sake the descendants of Seth are granted divine adoption through hope, and are called the children of God. It was because of this hope that they were called sons of God, as is evident from the one who was first called so, the successor in the choice. This was Enos, the son of Seth, who as Moses wrote, first hoped to call on the Name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26).

In this manner, the choice of the future Mother of God, beginning with the very sons of Adam and proceeding through all the generations of time, through the Providence of God, passes to the Prophet-king David and the successors of his kingdom and lineage. When the chosen time had come, then from the house and posterity of David, Joachim and Anna are chosen by God. Though they were childless, they were by their virtuous life and good disposition the finest of all those descended from the line of David. And when in prayer they besought God to deliver them from their childlessness, and promised to dedicate their child to God from its infancy. By God Himself, the Mother of God was proclaimed and given to them as a child, so that from such virtuous parents the all-virtuous child would be raised. So in this manner, chastity joined with prayer came to fruition by producing the Mother of virginity, giving birth in the flesh to Him Who was born of God the Father before the ages.

Now, when Righteous Joachim and Anna saw that they had been granted their wish, and that the divine promise to them was realized in fact, then they on their part, as true lovers of God, hastened to fulfill their vow given to God as soon as the child had been weaned from milk. They have now led this truly sanctified child of God, now the Mother of God, this Virgin into the Temple of God. And She, being filled with Divine gifts even at such a tender age, ... She, rather than others, determined what was being done over Her. In Her manner She showed that She was not so much presented into the Temple, but that She Herself entered into the service of God of her own accord, as if she had wings, striving towards this sacred and divine love...

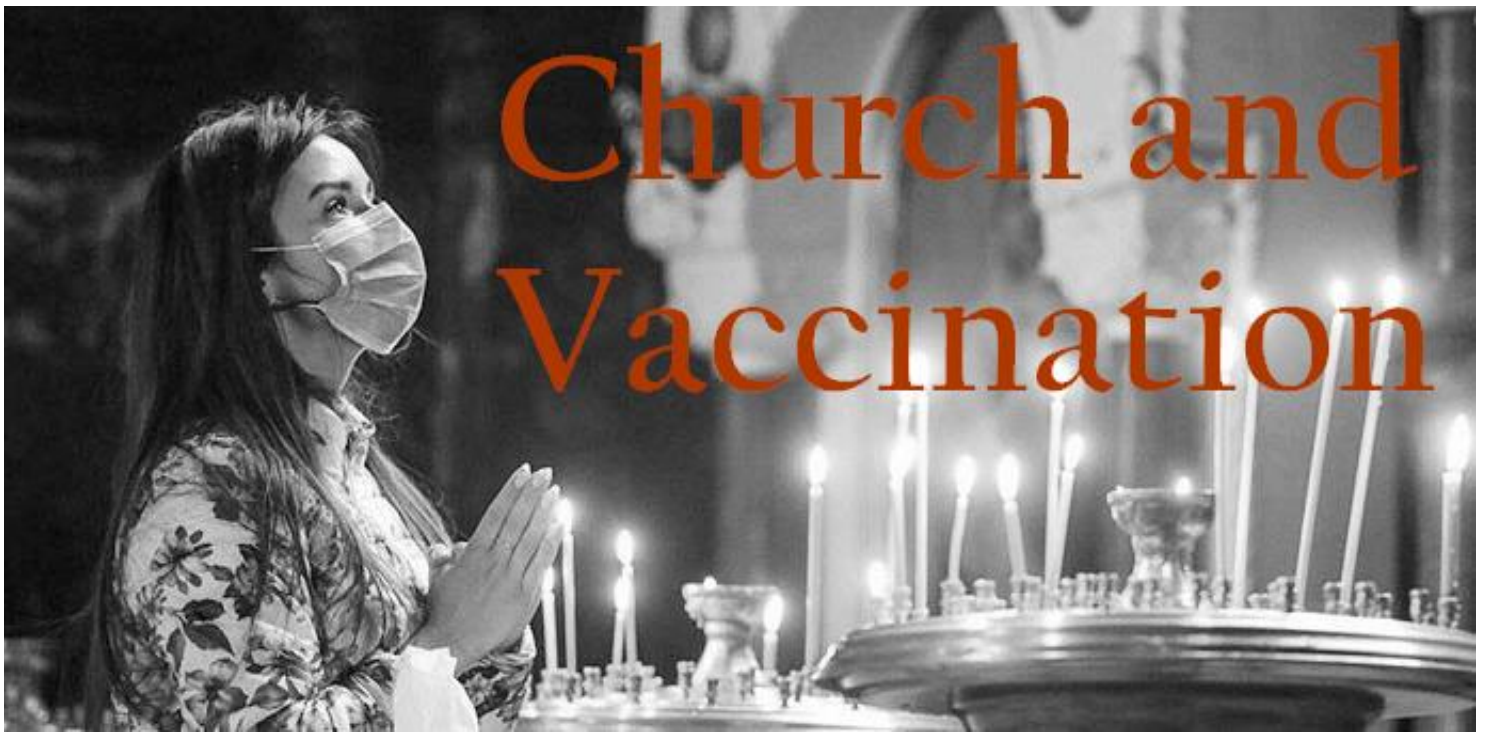
Therefore, the High Priest, seeing that this child, more than anyone else, had divine grace within Her, wished to set Her within the Holy of Holies. He convinced everyone present to welcome this, since God had advanced it and approved it... She was led into the Holy of Holies not just once, but was accepted by God to dwell there with Him during Her youth, so that through Her, the Heavenly Abodes might be opened...

So it is, and this is why She, from the beginning of time, was chosen from among the chosen... so that in due time, (as it later came to pass) She would serve for the enrichment of, and an ornament for, all the world. Therefore, Christ God also glorifies His Mother, both before birth, and also after birth.

We who understand the salvation begun for our sake through the Most Holy Virgin, give Her thanks and praise according to our ability. And truly, if the grateful woman (of whom the Gospel tells us), after hearing the saving words of the Lord, blessed and thanked His Mother, raising her voice above the din of the crowd and saying to Christ, *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts Thou hast sucked (Lk. 11:27)*, then we who have the words of eternal life written out for us, and not only the words, but also the miracles and the Passion, and the raising of our nature from death, and its ascent from earth to Heaven, and the promise of immortal life and unending salvation, then how shall we not unceasingly hymn and bless the Mother of the Author of our Salvation and the Giver of Life, celebrating Her conception and birth, and now Her Entry into the Holy of Holies?

Now, brethren, let us remove ourselves from earthly to celestial things. Let us change our path from the flesh to the spirit. Let us change our desire from temporal things to those that endure. Let us scorn fleshly delights, which serve as allurements for the soul and soon pass away. Let us desire spiritual gifts, which remain undiminished. Let us turn our reason and our attention from earthly concerns and raise them to the inaccessible places of Heaven, to the Holy of Holies, where the Mother of God now resides.

Therefore, in such manner our songs and prayers to Her will gain entry, and thus through her mediation, we shall be heirs of the everlasting blessings to come, through the grace and love for mankind of Him Who was born of Her for our sake, our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory, honor and worship, together with His Unoriginate Father and His Coeternal and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."



Attitude to communicable diseases and vaccination in Church History

Unlike the persecution of Christians, the quarantine measures were accepted by the Church (having been given since the time of the apostles the words about obedience to the authorities) with understanding, and no one was embarrassed that the laws and regulations, for example, of the Russian Empire, provided for the situations with temporary closure of churches during epidemics.

Among the saints we honor holy righteous Fyodor Ushakov. Did you know that he managed to save his naval crew and the whole city of Kherson during the plague epidemic, and how he did it? The most severe quarantine was enforced there, and public worship services were banned. Admiral Ushakov put patrols at the entrances and exits, ordered everyone to stay at home, and isolated all patients. The disease was defeated, and the admiral was awarded the Order of St. Vladimir. This deeply believing man has become a holy prayer for us at the throne of God!

Many people remember one of the Orthodox patriarchs — Patriarch Pimen (Izvekov), and they revere him very much. About a year before his election as patriarch, he participated in the fight against the outbreak of cholera in the southern regions of the Soviet Union. The Caucasus, Astrakhan Region and Odessa were stricken with the disease — and the disaster threatened the whole country.

And then a decree was signed, according to which it was strictly forbidden to kiss the icons, and the Communion of the laity was blessed exclusively at home in case of infirmity or illness. This did not cause any changes in the attitude towards Patriarch Pimen in the church community, and the joint actions of the authorities and the Church made it possible to defeat the most dangerous disease quickly and with a minimum number of losses.

The historical experience of the Russian Orthodox Church has given us examples of the active participation of clergy in promoting vaccination as a medical procedure aimed at preserving the lives and health of people. In particular, the decree of the Holy Governing Synod of 1804 recommended that bishops and

priests should explain to the people the benefits of vaccinations from smallpox. At the time, clergy had to study as part of their general education the basic means of applying vaccinations from this disease. The spread of vaccination programmes was supported, for example, by the ruling bishop of Moscow Innocent.

These are just some of the examples. Those interested can also refer to the "Handbook for Church Ministers" (Настольная Книга Священнослужителя), published for the first time at the end of the 19th century.

Here are some of the measures regarding epidemics that the book prescribes: special treatment (cleaning) of the spoon after Communion; Communion of the sick after healthy; serving special (separate, everyday) liturgies for the sick; the order to leave the sick at home; and communion of the sick at home (and in the hospital), etc.

This is considering the fact, that the level of knowledge about the causes and the course of epidemics was completely different than it is now. (As the author of the article that is referred here, a bishop-virologist Peter (Mansurov) concludes.)

So, speaking of communicable diseases, the main feat of the clergy more often consisted in visiting hospitals or temporary housings filled with sick people, that was and remains a huge risk. But not at all hindering the civil authorities in their tremendous exertion on confronting a new, fatal for many, illness.

"Deserving of our gratitude and respect are the scientists and doctors who have exerted every effort to combat the effects and to avert the further spread of COVID-19 virus which has taken the lives of many people and caused significant disruption to peoples' lives. Today, as in the past, thanks to the achievements of medical science, including in the field of vaccine prophylactics, it has become possible to warn of and lower the spread of many diseases, to alleviate the suffering which they bring to people and to reduce the mortality rate to zero after the use of vaccines for these diseases", - is said in the Round Table Final Document on the Ethical Aspects of Vaccination in the Light of Orthodox Teaching, that was held on 20th of May 2021 at the Sretensky Theological Academy (also used for this article).

Orthodox teaching

It is erroneous to think that a firm refusal to take a vaccine as such can be justified by Orthodox teaching. The right to choose a vaccine or the right to refuse is not a matter of Orthodox Christian faith, but it is the individual decision of each person based on personal beliefs, knowledge and experience of life, as well as by taking into account information from medical workers, the scientific community and vaccine manufacturers.

The (aforementioned) round table participants "regard as impermissible and sinful the spread of false evidence identifying the vaccine as "the seal of the antichrist" as well as conspiracy theories on the supposed use of vaccines as a secret means of introducing micro-chips into the human race."

The concerns for freedom and neighbour

On the one hand:

"The Russian Orthodox Church has consistently adhered to the principles of the protection of the individual's right to choose to use or not to use new and rapidly developing technologies, including in the field of

medicine. In particular, the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church emphasizes that “the doctor-patient relationships should be built on respect for the integrity, free choice and dignity of the personality. It is inadmissible to manipulate him even for the best purposes” (XI.3). In following this principle and at the same time recognizing the importance of supporting initiatives for defeating the pandemic, including the widespread use of vaccines, the round table participants believe it vital to guarantee peoples’ freedom to chose in relation to taking the vaccination against the COVID-19 infection and to exclude all forms of open or secret discrimination of people who refuse this vaccine for whatever reason.” (The Round Table)

By the way, this echoes very much to our Canadian practice of Managed Risk Agreement, that regulates a client’s high-risk behaviours in, for example, not taking prescribed medication...

On the other hand.

Here are the words of the Chairman of the Synodal Department for Relations of the Church with Society and the Media of the Moscow Patriarchate Vladimir Legoyda: "The Russian Orthodox Church consistently stands for voluntary vaccination. Everyone should make their own decision, taking into account, among the other things, the state of health and, at the same time, being aware of responsibility for themselves, loved ones and those with whom they have to contact at work and at home."

“Vaccination is a kind of social duty. Say, you're a young man, and maybe you don't care about the coronavirus. Even if you contract it, you'll get over it easily. But should you sneeze at an older [or confronting some condition] person, the one may not be able to survive the consequences...” (f. Vitaliy Shinkar, Kishinev, Moldova)

Is there anything stronger than communion? Of course not. Only some may not live up to receiving Communion, "thanks" to our "freedom". There is Communion, there is Repentance; and there is something (or someone) that "preserves us (and our neighbors) for repentance" (by the way, these words are from the Akathist to the Protecting Veil of the Holy Birth-Giver of God).

The Church stands for the right for informed consent, but at the same time “noting that an evaluation of the effectiveness and degree of risk of side effects of medicines is not within the Church’s competence and is not one of her tasks” (The Round Table).

The Church “emphasizes the importance of a broad expert and public debate on the side effects, including delayed ones, as well as on the certification of these medicines” (The Round Table), but should anyone use authority to undermine people’s trust to the things he is not competent of? Just think, what the one who laboured hard to create the remedy, may think of the Church because of that...

Myths and confabulations

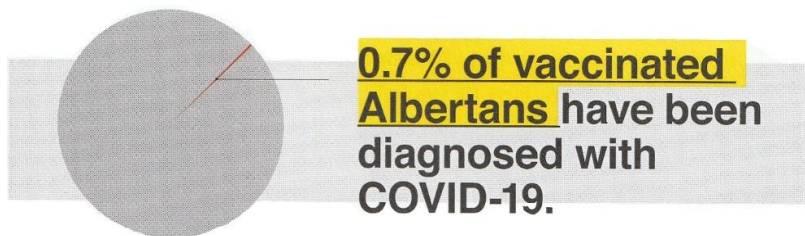
Some people are confused by the new kinds of vaccines, saying something like “these are not traditional vaccines, but rather a program designed to override and manipulate the natural immune system of the body; these vaccines are only experimental and stand to do irreparable harm to a persons God given immune system.” But if that is truth, every encounter with every kind of virus would alter our genes (DNA). So far, we know only a few that are capable of that, including HIV, but not at all any kind of flue-like viruses. Quite revolutionary, but new COVID-19 mRNA vaccines, do their job to stimulate our God given immune system, and keep a very high level of immune response for more that 5 months.

Unfortunately, there are also multiple facts of *social* confabulation as for vaccination.

There is a video documented how one of the respected elders of the Church – now belated, and of blessed memory, archimandrite Vlasiy – had to declare, that he had not called anyone to reject vaccination, as his name had been used for that. He had to stand up and to emphasize, that, on the contrary, he asks “everyone to be vaccinated, to defeat this common enemy”.

Just recently the press office of the Diocese of Pskov had to deny the information about the alleged fleeing from the monastery of the three priests monastics because of their unwillingness to be vaccinated. “None of the brothers and employees, of course, were forced to vaccinate, leaving the decision to the free choice of everyone”, - also states the office.

Some Statistics for the Province of Alberta



Compiled by archpriest Yevheniy Protsenko

Archpastoral Visit of Bishop Matthew in December 2021



We are pleased to announce that December 11-17, we will welcome His Grace Bishop Matthew for his archpastoral visit to Canada.

The Hierarchical Services are going to take place on December the 11th (at St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 pm – Great Compile service), and the 12th (Divine Liturgy – 10 am – at St. Barbara Cathedral – the Patronal day celebration); December 13th (St. Apostle Andrew the First-Called day – Divine Liturgy – 10 am – at St. John the Baptist Church, Chipman); and the 17th (Divine Liturgy – 10 am – at St. Barbara Cathedral – the actual great martyr Barbara Festive day); with the rest of the events – to be announced later.

The celebration of the Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church in Nisku is rescheduled from December 12th to December 19th (St. Nicholas the Wonder-Worker day).

Who is St. Apostle Andrew, and why is he called The First-Called?



The Apostle Andrew was born in the beautiful town of Bethsaida, on the shore of Lake Gennesaret. He was a fisherman. The family was not rich, but pious and friendly. When a rumor spread that a prophet appeared on the Jordan, Andrew was sent from the whole family to see what was happening there. Andrew became a disciple of this prophet - John the Baptist for a while.

The last prophet of the Old Testament, pointing out to two of his disciples the walking Jesus, called him the Lamb of God Who takes the punishment of the world, after which they immediately followed Him.

When Jesus saw them following Him, he asked them what they needed, and in response to the question where He lived, He invited them to His house, where they spent the whole day in conversation. This is the first reason why Andrew became "The First-Called".

After he returns from Jesus, He calls his brother Simon, telling him: "We have found the Messiah." He was first to call Jesus – Christ, and the first to call someone (his brother Peter) and bring him to Christ. This is another reason why Andrew became "The First-Called".

Besides, dear children, Andrew was first to call the people of our ancestors to Christ too.

All the apostles were brothers to each other, and all were equal. Everyone shared the same shelter and food with Jesus, everyone listened to His parables, witnessed His miracles.

Andrew participated in one of the miracles – feeding 5000 people with 5 breads and 2 fish, as he told the Lord Jesus about "a boy who has five barley loaves and two small fish". Those were multiplied to nourish a lot of people. And people could stay with the Lord and be saved from a different and worse kind of hunger – the spiritual one.

And the twelve boxes of food that remained after the miracle symbolized the Twelve Apostles. They went out into the world to unite people to Christ, to bring the lost humanity back to God.

Let's look carefully at the icon above and paint the drawing in the next page!



December 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> St. Philaret, metropolitan of Moscow (1867) 	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> The Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple 
<u>5</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> Great-martyr Catherine (305-313) 	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 18:00 (6 pm) - Archpastoral Vespers and Matins at St. Barbara Cathedral
<u>12</u> 10:00 a.m. – Archpastoral Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral – Patronal Feast	<u>13</u> Holy and All- Praised Apostle Andrew the First-Called 	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> Prophet Habakkuk (7th c. b.c.) 	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> Great Martyr Barbara 	<u>18</u>
<u>19</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku 	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> Martyr Anthonia at Rome (5th c.) 	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> St. Ioasaph, bishop of Belgorod (1754) 	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> St. Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska (1836) 
<u>26</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u> Prophet Haggai (500 b.c.) 	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u> Martyr Sebastian of Rome 	