



“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

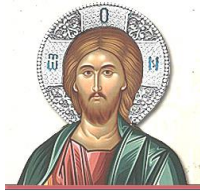
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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December 18 – The commemoration St. Savva the Sanctified (532)

Saint Savva the Sanctified was born in the fifth century at Cappadocia of pious Christian parents, John and Sophia. His father was a military commander. Journeying to Alexandria on military matters, his wife went with him, but they left their five-year-old son in the care of an uncle. When the boy reached eight years of age, he entered the monastery of Saint Flavian located nearby. The gifted child quickly learned to read and became an expert on the Holy Scriptures. In vain did his parents urge Saint Savva to return to the world and enter into marriage.

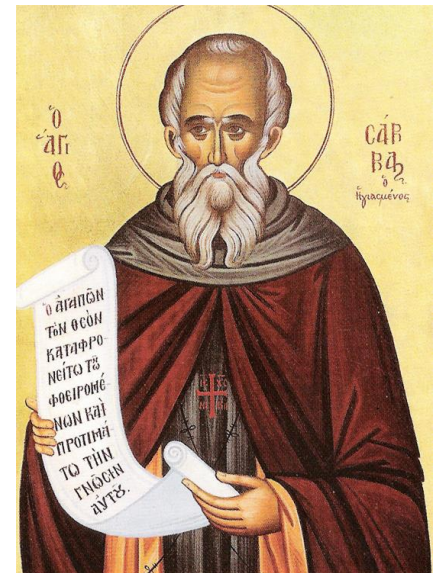
When he was seventeen, he received monastic tonsure, and attained such perfection in fasting and prayer that he was given the gift of wonderworking. After spending ten years at the monastery of Saint Flavian, he went to Jerusalem, and from there to the monastery of Saint Euthymius the Great (Jan. 20). But Saint Euthymius sent Saint Savva to Abba Theoctistus, the head of a nearby monastery with a very strict rule, where he lived in obedience until the age of thirty.

After the death of the Elder Theoctistus, his successor gave Saint Savva a blessing to seclude himself in a cave. On Saturdays, however, he left his hermitage and came to the monastery, where he participated in divine services and ate with the brethren. After a certain time Saint Savva received permission not to leave his hermitage at all, and he struggled in the cave for five years.

Saint Euthymius attentively directed the life of the young monk, and seeing his spiritual maturity, he began to take him to the Rouba wilderness with him. They set out on January 14, and remained there until Palm Sunday. Saint Euthymius called Saint Savva a child-elder, and encouraged him to grow in the monastic virtues.

When Saint Euthymius fell asleep in the Lord (+ 473), Saint Savva withdrew from the Lavra and moved to a cave near the monastery of Saint Gerasimus of Jordan (March 4). After several years, disciples began to gather around Saint Savva, seeking the monastic life. As the number of monks increased, a lavra (big monastery) sprang up. When a pillar of fire appeared before Saint Savva as he was walking, he found a spacious cave in the form of a church.

Saint Savva founded several more monasteries. Many miracles took place through the prayers of Saint Savva: at the Lavra a spring of water welled up, during a time of drought there was abundant rain, and there were also healings of the sick and the demoniacs. He composed the first monastic Rule of church services, the so-called “Jerusalem Typikon”, accepted by all the Palestine monasteries. The saint surrendered his soul to God in the year 532.



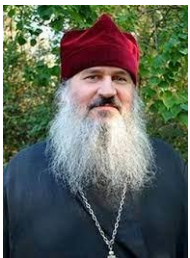


What we might not know about Holy Forefathers and Fathers

The two last Sundays of December and before the Nativity of Christ are called the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers and the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. The Holy Forefathers and Fathers are the Old Testament relatives according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, beginning with the holy ancestors Adam and Eve, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and his sons, the holy patriarch Abraham, and so on up to the glorious Nativity of Christ.

So, today let us come closer in contemplating these Sundays. And as we do, we might notice two our weaker points in perceiving them. So, today I would like to present to your pious attention the two insights of the two contemporary Orthodox Christian priests, that might be of interest for us.

Stump the Priest: What is the Difference Between the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, and the Sunday of the Holy Fathers? – by Fr. John Whiteford



The two Sundays prior to Christmas seem to have almost identical themes. What is the difference between the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers and the Sunday of the Holy Fathers (the Sunday immediately before Christmas)?

The themes of these two commemorations are indeed close. The Titles of these two commemorations are part of the confusion. The second Sunday before Nativity is called the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, to distinguish it from other Sundays of the Holy Fathers (which commemorate the Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils) at other times during the year. The proper title of the Sunday before Nativity is actually "The Sunday Before Nativity", and only secondarily is it referred to as a commemoration of "the Holy Fathers" (Christopher Veniamin, trans. Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009) p. 632, note 952).

In the service of the Holy Forefathers itself, we hear the following hymns:

"O ye faithful, let us praise today all the fathers of the old Law: Abraham, the beloved of God, and Isaac, who was born according to the promise, and Jacob and the twelve patriarchs, the most meek David, and Daniel, the prophet of desires, glorifying with them the three youths that transformed the furnace into dew, and who ask remission of Christ God, Who is glorified in His saints" (The Doxasticon at Lord, I have cried...).

"Come, ye lovers of the feasts of the Church, and with psalms let us praise the assembly of the forefathers: Adam, the forefather of us all, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and, after the Law, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel and David, and, with them, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve prophets, together with Elijah, Elisha and all the rest, Zachariah and the Forerunner; who all preached Christ, the Life and Resurrection of our race" (The Doxasticon of the Vespers Aposticha).

During the Canon, we also hear mention of Abel, Enoch, the Patriarch Joseph, and Job... none of whom were ancestors of Christ.

The prophets of God are mentioned by name: Hosea and Micah, Zephaniah and Habbakuk, Zechariah and Jonah, Haggai and Amos, Malachi, Obadiah and Nahum, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, together with Daniel, Elijah and Elisha -- and none of these were ancestors of Christ.

There is also mention of the Fore-mothers: "Hannah and Judith, Deborah and Huldah, Jael and Esther, Sarah and Miriam the sister of Moses, Rachel and Rebecca, and Ruth the exceeding wise" -- only 3 of whom are ancestors of Christ.

So the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers commemorates all of the faithful of the Old Testament, with special emphasis on Daniel and the Three Youths.

The Sunday before Nativity has many similar themes, and even some of the same hymns, but being the Sunday of the Genealogy, there is more of an emphasis on the Patriarch Abraham. He is mentioned about twice as frequently in this service. The Prophet Daniel is again included, but less frequently than in the previous Sunday. So, there is a good deal of overlap, but there is a subtle shift from focusing on all the fathers and mothers of the Old Testament, to Christ's ancestors -- especially Abraham.

The unknown Forefathers – by Fr. Sergiy Begiyan



Almost all of us know the forefathers, someone once read something somewhere and remembers which of them "gave birth to whom" and even briefly knows the life story of the most famous of them. We have read and seem to know – but at the same time we do not know. The Bible gives us only a scheme, a plan, a skeleton on some issues, which we ourselves must develop and “clothe with flesh”. We should be motivated by our curiosity and piety, the desire to find something else important that the writer did not make so much obvious.

Cain and Abel

And we will start with the well-known plot. Abel and Cain offer a sacrifice to God. But the Lord looked only at the fiery heart of Abel, and rejected the indifferent sacrifice of Cain. Cain, out of envy, killed his brother and fled to the land of Nod, east of Eden. Further, only this is said about Cain: "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city; and he called the city after the name of his son, Enoch" (Gen. 4:17). We no longer meet him on the pages of the Bible. But this last verse gives a lot to an inquisitive mind. You and I know that the first children of Adam married each other, and so the human race continued; the interdiction of the marital communication between close relatives arose much later. Thus, it turns out that one of the sisters (and, most likely, brothers) of Cain fled to the land of Nod with him. That is, the first murderer Cain did not become an exile in the human race, but received the support of some of his relatives. This means that not only Cain disliked Abel, but also some of his other brothers and sisters. Perhaps he irritated them with his holiness, aroused envy, and a desire to finish with the "holy one". Isn't it true that the case already resembles another biblical story with other brothers: "Behold, the dreamer is coming; let us go now and kill him [Joseph, who saw predictive signs in his dreams]" (Gen. 37:19-20)? And a woman who is willing to marry her brother's murderer and share a bed with him already evokes certain emotions.

And now we note that Cain and his relatives, who sympathize with him in evil, built the first city on earth. And then it will become clear that this first city of villains determines the vector of development of the fallen world, is the forerunner of the kingdom of the Antichrist and the opposite of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Abraham and Sarah

Abraham is our common father by faith. With his life, he teaches us unquestionable trust in God's Providence, sacrifice, and humanity. When Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldeans, the Lord commanded him to move to another land. This was how God wanted to separate him from the idolaters and the wicked (ungodly). Every church person remembers how the holy patriarch reacted to this revelation. He packed up his things and went with his family to a land he did not know. Of course, this is a feat. But this feat looms especially clearly when we look more closely at what Abraham abandoned in his homeland and what he received in return.

Ur of Chaldea was a huge city. Its population at that time (two thousand years before the Birth of Christ) was about 65 thousand people – at that time a huge number. Even then, there was a division of labor, that is, guild crafts flourished. Some were engaged in breeding animals, others spun wool, and others made clothes. Merchant ships were sailing up the Euphrates from the Persian Gulf. Science and art developed. The well-to-do citizens of Ur had the most comfortable dwellings in the world at that time: two-story brick houses, which already in that hoary antiquity had a lavatory and a swimming pool. It was the capital of the empire and the world. Any place Abraham could go from there was obviously worse than Ur of the Chaldeans. But idolatry and witchcraft flourished in Ur, so it was necessary to leave it.

And so, Abraham, obedient to the will of the Lord, comes out of this city of luxury and bliss. It turns out that he does not know the end point of his journey. As you know, on the way to the promised land, Abraham stopped in the city of Haran. It is difficult to say for what reason the stop occurred. Maybe it was hard for Abraham's elderly father, Farrah, to continue the tedious journey. After all, only about a thousand kilometers from Ur to Haran, and about five hundred kilometers from Haran to Canaan, the new homeland of the forefather. With the condition that a camel with a load travels from 20 to 40 kilometers per day, we can conclude that the journey to Harran lasted about a month. It is no wonder that during a month of wandering in the desert, Farrah's health could deteriorate, because he was about 200 years old at the time. The travelers stopped in Harran, where they apparently lived for quite a long time. Farrah, Abraham's father, died and was buried there. And again God called to Abraham and commanded him to go on.

I look at this wonderful journey of the elder Abraham, who was already 75 years old at that time, and I ask myself questions. Yes, it is clear that God spoke to him, so Abraham readily went on the upcoming journey. But what words did he find for his household: his father, wife and other relatives, when he convinced them that it was God's will to leave their place and become, in fact, homeless, wanderers without a fixed place of residence? After all, until his death, Abraham no longer lived somewhere permanently, but wandered like a nomad, finding peace instead of home only in tents and tabernacles... And look at the humble Sarah, who does not complain about this gypsy life, and without questions follows her husband "no one knows where", while enduring the test of childlessness – and does not despair. How did she find the strength not to scold her husband, to trust him to the end and never doubt his faith? Yes, they stumbled, and they fell. But even their falls are high for us. Even with these errors, the picture of their greatness is striking.

And the most vivid color in this painting is the plot of the sacrifice of Abraham. Somehow there was a stereotype: a gray-haired elder and a boy go uphill at the command of God, and there the elder sacrifices a boy, but an Angel stops him at the last minute. Many icons confirm this. However, if Isaac had been a "boy", Abraham would not have made him carry a bundle of firewood up the mountain for a burnt offering. And indeed, according to the Bible, Isaac's age is 25 years old. And in this regard, the sacrifice is even more amazing: the elder leads, the young man does not interfere in the least. Isaac, who was full of strength, would have had enough strength to fight Abraham, who was 125 years old at the time. But he absolutely humbly allows himself to be tied up and laid on the altar, showing the perfect prototype of Christ...

The Puschenia Event of November 2023 at St. Mary's Church at Nisku

We have been given again this opportunity to participate in the old tradition of celebrating our pre-Lenten (before the Christmas lent) fall social event of Puschenia, that is alike the Pancake Sunday before the Easter.

It actually begins from thoroughly planning it during the Parish Council meetings, the time and place, the decorations, the dishes and the prizes for the auction and the ruffle, and the announcements and communication with people.



It is always inspired by the people willing to join this joyful event.

The foundation for the event is always the Divine Liturgy, the Sunday 24th after the Pentecost that day, with its Gospel of the marvelous occasion of how the synagogue official openly, in front of everyone, fell to the



Saviour's feet beseeching the Lord to heal his daughter, and the woman suffering from the disease just touched, but with a strong faith, the Lord's garment, and both of them were heard and given salvation.

Our church choir directed by Cathy Krawchuk was traditionally reinforced by



Fedor family, Denis and Synthia this time.



And while people were praying and taking Confession and the Holy Communion, our kindest hostesses – Beverley Borys, Tanni Doblanko, Marianne Lecapoy, Natasha Borys, and Dawn Hennes, were at the Church Hall, on the other (already, Edmonton 😊) side of the highway, decoration, cooking, laying the tables, arranging the prizes at the side of the auction and the other – of the ruffle; and

again – creating a special place for the kids with toys and colorings. So that the people could seamlessly enjoy the social part of the event!



As it usually happens at Puschenia, we were glad to greet our traditional guests from St. Barbara's Cathedral and the other Patriarchal Parishes, as well as some new people who came to support us and to share with us their joy, as the young couple who we were greeting with the birth of their daughter Florence! God grant many years (and many kids) to them!

We are especially thankful to those who constantly support this event, and its silent auction.



Like Kosmos Restaurant, and Lounge, our local treasure where we like to spend our time after the services and on some occasions!

Rig Hand Distillery for once again granting us one of our most special prizes – the Gift Certificate for the tour & tasting experience for up to 30 people, including 35 minutes of the production processes observation and certainly testing samples of their best-selling products for each guest!

Ranchland Meats from Thorsby once again donated us some of their garment items.

And to all our people, who donated the new

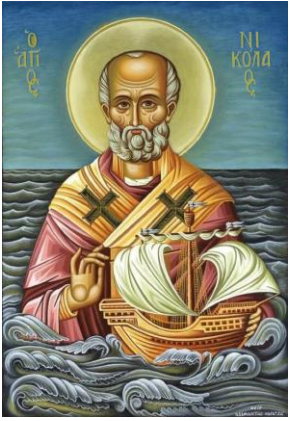
items, the Christmas ones, for the kitchen, sweets and spices, the devices and appliances for households, the ones for children, and for just giving us direct financial support! And for all the good-looking, delicious and family special dishes and treats that made us happy!

And special thanks to the Parish Council of St. Mary's Church, especially – to Natasha Borys who prepared and conducted the event!



May God help and keep us, and give Peace from Above and Good Health to all our parishioners!

The Children's Corner: Drop in with your children and great & grand children!



The Church is like a ship that is in the stormy and dangerous everyday sea of life. The Saints help the Lord to steer this Ship, saving the lives of many people.

We want the waters of this sea be blue like the skies or like the mountain lakes in Alberta, but sometimes it can be dark, brown or even black, just like the name of the Black Sea of the old country, called so, because, while usually light blue and warm, it gets black during the storms.

St. Nicholas – commemorated on December 19, a fourth-century Bishop of Myra, and the renown prototype of Santa Clause was the one who could, due to his painstaking spiritual experience, save people from both kinds of sea.

Here he is, in the bishop's vestments, guarding the Ship of the Church or just a ship with the sailors, saying his saving prayers to the One he so much tried to imitate during his life!

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ΑΓΙΟΣ
ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΣ

ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΣ



December 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>3</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku</p>	<p><u>4</u> The Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple</p> 	<p><u>5</u></p>	<p><u>6</u> Saint Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium</p> 	<p><u>7</u></p>	<p><u>8</u> Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria</p> 	<p><u>9</u></p>
<p><u>10</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku</p>	<p><u>11</u> Hieromartyr Seraphim (Chichagov)</p> 	<p><u>12</u></p>	<p><u>13</u> Apostle Andrew the First-Called</p> 	<p><u>14</u></p>	<p><u>15</u> Saint Solomon, Archbishop of Ephesus</p> 	<p><u>16</u></p>
<p><u>17</u> Great Martgr Barbara</p>  <p>10:00 am – Liturgy & banquette at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> St. Nicholas Bishop of Myra Day</p> 	<p><u>20</u></p>	<p><u>21</u> St. Cyril of Chelmogora</p> 	<p><u>22</u></p>	<p><u>23</u> St. Joasaph of Belgorod</p> 
<p><u>24</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>25</u></p>	<p><u>26</u> St. Dositheus, metropolitan of Moldavia</p> 	<p><u>27</u></p>	<p><u>28</u> St. Stephen the Confessor, of Surozh</p> 	<p><u>29</u></p>	<p><u>30</u> St. Daniel the Confessor</p> 
<p><u>31</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>						