



“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

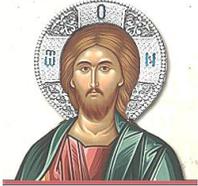
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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December the 4th – The Feast of The Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple



Today the holy Orthodox Church celebrates the day of the Entrance of the Most Holy Virgin into the Jerusalem Temple, brought there by Her parents, as they had made a vow to dedicate Her to God.

Great was the love of Her parents! They gave to the Lord their only daughter, their only joy, whom they had received as a consolation in their old age. The child Mary lived only three years in the home of Her parents, the Forebears of God Joachim and Anna; in Her fourth year, She was brought to the temple to serve the Lord.

What, then, could Her service consist of? First, in the glorification of God, Who always accepts praise from the mouths of babes; and later, the Most Holy Virgin acquired grace from the Lord through obedience and Her humility, which She proved by taking upon Herself the great and awesome duties of the Mother of God.

All Her life She served God as the true "handmaiden of the Lord": raising the Divine Child, fearing for His life, and protecting Him from enemies; suffering in expectation of His glorification on earth, when the people did not recognize Him as the Messiah, and when even the Apostles did not yet possess firm faith; invisibly to all bearing Her own cross — poverty — and caring for the needs experienced by Christ Himself.

Now She shuddered at the sight of the hostility against Jesus increasing day by day; and finally, a weapon pierced Her maternal heart during the trial of Christ, when She saw Her Son—given to humanity for salvation—tormented, bloodied, and crucified on the Cross. Now She was tormented by the inconsolable sorrow of loneliness, remaining on earth after the Savior's Ascension; now She served the Lord by fulfilling an apostolic calling and establishing the Christian Church in pagan lands; and finally, languishing until advanced years on earth, awaiting Her translation to the Heavenly Kingdom of Her Son and Savior.

She serves God and people even now as our Intercessor, Advocate, and Prayer-offerer for the sins of humanity; as the Deliverer from troubles and deserved punishments; as the Comforter of those who grieve. This greatest service will be performed and continue until the Second Coming of Christ. ...

Open unto us the door of thy compassion, O blessed Theotokos. As we set our hope in thee, may we not perish, but through thee may we be delivered from all adversities. For thou art the salvation of the Christian people! Amen.

from the sermon of St. Hieromartyr
Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), †1937

Brief Account of life of the Hieromartyr Seraphim (Chichagov) the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg (Feast Day – December 11)

Hieromartyr Seraphim (Leonid Mikhailovich Chichagov) was born in 1856 into a military family from a distinguished noble lineage. After graduating from the Imperial Page Corps, he participated in the Balkan War (1876-1877), and under the impression of what he experienced, began to contemplate questions about the meaning of life and the moral dimension of suffering that had confronted him with complete clarity during the war. He found spiritual support from the holy righteous Father John of Kronstadt, and upon retiring, in 1893 he received priestly ordination with the blessing of the Kronstadt pastor.

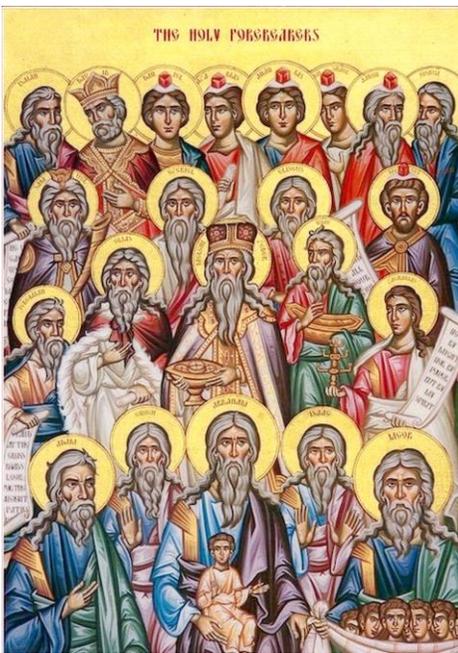
When his wife passed away in 1895, grieving the loss of a loved one and concentrating on prayer, Father Leonid was drawn during this time to monastic life: it was then that he began compiling the "Chronicle of the Seraphim-Diveevo Monastery" and studying the life and spiritual feats of Saint Seraphim of Sarov. In 1898, Father Leonid Chichagov took monastic vows with the name Seraphim and entered the Holy Trinity of St. Sergius Lavra. The future hierarch continued work on the Chronicle and prepared for the canonization of Saint Seraphim, in 1903 – whose spiritual support he felt throughout his entire life.

In 1905, Archimandrite Seraphim was consecrated Bishop of Sukhumi (Georgia), and then was successively assigned to the Oryol (1906), Kishinev (1908), and Tver (1912) dioceses. Bishop Seraphim tirelessly visited practically all parishes, inspiring the clergy with his archpastoral example and bringing about a significant rise in prayerful enthusiasm among his flock. The hierarch took an active part in restoring the veneration of the great ascetic of the Russian Orthodox Church, the blessed Grand Princess Anna of Kashin; he organized vicariates (dioceses), opened monasteries and churches and supplied them with holy Christian relics; he published books of his sermons, which became an indispensable resource for preaching priests; and he opened theological schools.

Despite the sorrowful events of 1917, Bishop Seraphim continued active church work. At the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917-1918, he headed the Council's department on "Monasteries and Monasticism." In 1921, when he was already holding the rank of metropolitan, he was arrested and sentenced to exile in the Arkhangelsk region. A year later, Metropolitan Seraphim was arrested again: he was accused of glorifying Saint Seraphim of Sarov, which related to the Family of Royal Martyrs.

In 1928, the hierarch returned to church administration with his appointment to the former St. Petersburg diocese, where at that time a spirit of turmoil and church division reigned. In his sermons, Bishop Seraphim called the church people to a strict Orthodox life, sought to spiritually strengthen his flock, urging parishioners to intensify prayer and receive Holy Communion more frequently. In 1933, the 77-year-old hierarch, who had given all his strength to service, was retired. In spiritual reflections on theological and ascetic writings, in prayerful vigils, Hierarch Seraphim summed up his life and prepared to meet Christ, praying for those who had forgotten about the Savior and persecuted His Holy Church. Arrested in November 1937, the 82-year-old elder, sick and infirm, was brought on a stretcher to Taganskaya Prison. He did not admit to the charges brought against him and conducted himself courageously. He was shot on November 28/December 11, 1937, in the village of Butovo near Moscow.





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. So, today let us come closer in contemplating two more Saints of these Sunday – who in English-speaking culture is known as Joseph the Dreamer (because of his prophetic dreams in prison) or Joseph of Egypt (according to the place where he was in slavery) – Joseph, son of Jacob-Israel!

The unknown Forefathers

(the beginning is in the December bulletins of 2023/24)

Joseph and Judah

Joseph is perhaps the most exquisite flower cultivated by the piety of the Patriarchs. Eastern Orthodox Tradition has bestowed upon him the title "Joseph the Beautiful". He is wise and chaste, a lover of God and a lover of mankind. Sold by his brothers into Egypt for twenty pieces of silver, he also became a prototype of Christ the Savior, who was sold by His brethren in the faith. He is a second Abel. He is beyond reproach. **In both dishonor and glory, he seeks the will of God in everything**, and in this, he reminds us of King David — his worthy descendant (although the lineage of King David stemmed from the tribe of Judah).

He was betrayed, yet Joseph does not curse in return; rather, he is concerned for his kinsmen. And when his brothers come to buy grain in Egypt, Joseph does not reveal himself to them, as if wishing to test them: have they changed for the better? To this end, Joseph accuses his brothers of espionage, as if they had come to spy out the "weak points of the land". And lo, the goal is achieved: the brothers speak among themselves in Hebrew, and it becomes clear that they repent of the sin they committed many years ago.

But it is required to show the fruits worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8). To verify this good change in his brothers, during their next visit, Joseph plants a cup in Benjamin's sack, accuses him of theft, and declares that he shall remain a slave in Egypt.

And here Judah — the very one who once suggested to the brothers not to commit a grave sin and kill Joseph, but to sell him — now proposes something else. He offers himself into lifelong slavery in Benjamin's stead, because he pities his father, the old man Jacob, whose only consolation is the youngest brother, Benjamin. Judah is ready to never see his own children or wife again, if only his father might be at peace and not destroyed by grief!

This is a fruit worthy of repentance; this is true sacrificial love. And Joseph, tormented by spiritual anguish, understands this and joyfully reveals himself to his brothers. He forgives them, recognizes Divine Providence in their actions, and rejoices at the change that, over these years, has transformed them from egoists into men of love. Perhaps this self-sacrifice of Judah was the reason the Lord chose, out of the 12 tribes of Israel, precisely the tribe of Judah for the Incarnation of the Son of God.

While we read the genealogy of Christ at the Christmas/Nativity Eve, one thing is to think about is what kind of genealogy we create by our life, what we put into the genetics of our offspring... Every decision we make, every secret prayer we whisper, and every passion we conquer (or succumb to) writes a line in the invisible history of our family. Are we passing down a lineage of anger, pride, and despair? Or are we, like the patriarchs, cultivating a "genetic code" of faithfulness, repentance, and sacrificial love, thus making the spiritual path straighter for them?



after 'The unknown Forefathers by Fr. Sergiy Begiyan, pravoslavie.ru

The Puschenia Event of November 2025 at St. Mary's Church at Nisku



On November 16 we were blessed again to have our longstanding tradition and a very bright feast – so that to have a good time and a lot of friendly communication before the stricter time of the Christmas lent; the feast that gathers our parishioners as well as our dear guests from St. Barbara Cathedral and our Orthodox IX parishes, and Orthodox V.

Beautifully crafted invitations made by Natasha Borys, the main organizer, were sent to all the parishioners to remind and to invite everyone to the special event, and special Christmas decorations were prepared.

The beginning of it is always the serving of the Divine Liturgy at St.

Mary's Church to receive the Holy Gifts, the edification from the Holy Gospel, and the blessing of the Lord. This time our church choir was backed up by Nadezhda and Alexiy from St. Barbara's and Denis Fedor.

This year we combined this fest with the celebration of the 115 Years Anniversary of the parish, which you could tell at once by the special



beautiful decorations dedicated to this event right at the photos of all our pioneers and parishioners at the head of the table.

The Parish Council, our parishioners, and guests cooked again a variety of festive dishes, main courses, salads, cakes and pastries, and brought some beverages.

After a good meal and communication there followed a report on the history of St. Mary's Church prepared and presented by



the rector of the parish archpriest Yevheniy Protsenko, based on the “Echoes of Faith” book (the collection of the historical documents, reminiscences, and family stories) and other sources. The history of the immigration of the pioneers to the new land, their labor for the sake of the betterment of the land, and how they carried on the Orthodox Faith; and especially the great and touching event of the reunion under one Shepperd, that people humbly consider now the beginning of church life.

After the report we again had our joyous and friendly silent auction and raffle with different each year but always very nice and pleasant item prizes: home and kitchen appliances, decorations, candies and home-made bakeries, pieces of



special clothing, gift sets, toys, pieces of art, and so on. So that everyone can get exactly what they want!

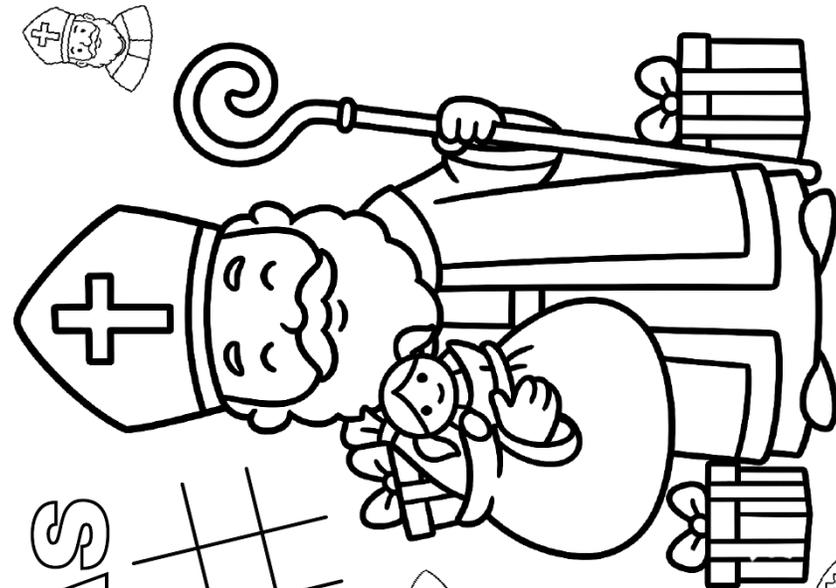
There was a special item this year – a decorative masterpiece – the replica of St. Mary’s Church (as a bird house) presented by Chuck and Sonia De Jong, so nice and matching the moment that we decided to save it for another special occasion. Chuck told us that he is planning to also create a

replica of the older St. Mary’s Church building, may God help him!

As always, we are very much grateful to all the organizers and participants, first of all, for a good and heartfelt time spent together, and also for the generous biddings and other donations that give us an opportunity to uphold the Holy Church and to give an appropriate continuation to our holy history!



May God bless the organizers and participants! Have a good Christmas lent!



ST. NICHOLAS

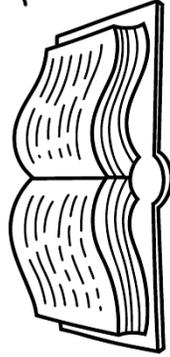
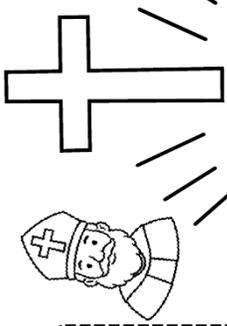
Unscramble the Words:

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- HSOBIP _____
- YMRA _____
- FTIGS _____
- HIRATCY _____

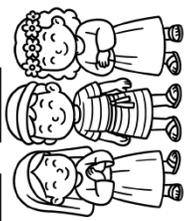
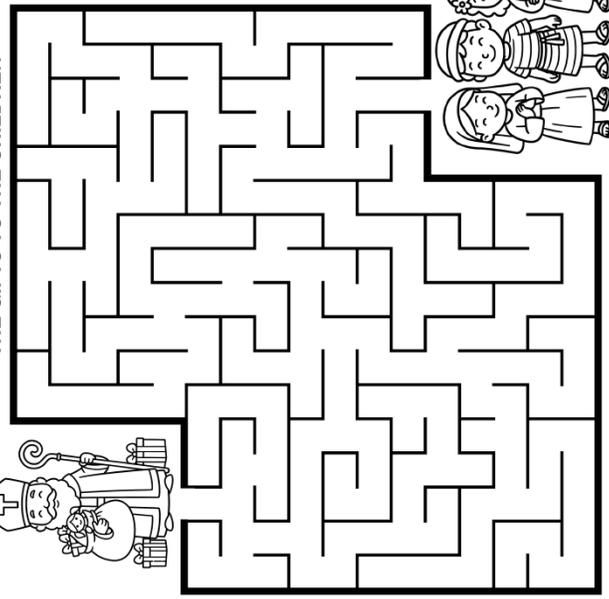
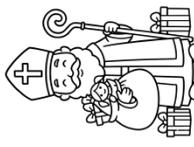
TRACE:

"It is more blessed to
give than to receive."

Acts 20:35



HELP ST. NICHOLAS DELIVER
THE GIFTS TO THE CHILDREN



Who Was St. Nicholas?

St. Nicholas was a kind and generous man who lived long ago in the 3rd century in a place called Myra (modern-day Turkey). He loved God deeply and followed Jesus' teachings by helping the poor, caring for children, and giving gifts in secret.

Nicholas became a bishop and was known for his compassion, courage, and miracles. Many stories tell of how he helped families in need and protected sailors in storms. His loving heart and acts of giving inspired the tradition of gift-giving at Christmas — and over time, he became known around the world as Santa Claus!

how many St.
Nick's are on
this page?

FIND THE
HIDDEN WORDS:

1. Nicholas
2. Bishop
3. Myra
4. Generous
5. Charity
6. Gifts
7. Miracle
8. Children

M I R A C L E A N N D S
 G H I J R K L M I O P A
 G E N E R O U S C S I I
 F R S A S P L I H G N
 A B H C D F G A O A I T
 W P A H H I C K L R F M
 E N M A L I O I A D T D
 A N R R K L L C S E S O
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 Y U C T S V T L R N D D
 R F K Y W E R S H E P S
 A S G G B I S H O P N O

This is my [first] time doing the **Nativity Fast**, where do I start?



If you are new to fasting or participating in the Church calendar, let me put your mind at ease. It can feel overwhelming - I've been in your shoes. The first time I participated in the Nativity fast I was in my mid-twenties, totally new to the Orthodox faith. Fasting alone is difficult work, so let's pair it down a bit so we can keep our focus on the one thing needful. The first time you go through the Nativity fast, you should plan to do just a little bit. Then maybe next year you add a little more. If we set out to do "all the things" we likely will be setting ourselves up for failure.

Because truthfully you won't be able to do all the things. At least not at first. Evaluate what is reasonable to do this year, speak with your priest about it, make a plan and begin! My suggestion is to plan to keep your focus on these things: PRAY, FAST, GIVE.

Fasting - plan to fast! The Church has offered us a fasting rule, but if you have any questions specifically about how you ought to fast, speak with your priest. Pray - begin (or stay faithful) in practicing a daily habit of prayer (morning and evening) and my suggestion is to attend at least one extra service each week. Give - think of ways to serve the poor and those in need this season. And if you are able, pick up a spiritual book or devotional to read through during the fast. Now, that is plenty enough for you to get started, but if you're wanting to add one special tradition this year - set out to do ONE thing, and be faithful in that one thing, and add to it in the following years! Some examples, set up an Advent wreath, countdown calendar, celebrate St Nicholas day (Dec 19).

asceticlifeofmotherhood.com/blog/orthodoxnativityguide

As the Nativity Fast begins, I find myself entering it with a heart that's tired

The past couple of months have been heavy in ways I didn't expect. Spiritually, emotionally, and mentally, it's felt like walking through a fog praying but feeling distant, trying to stay strong but feeling worn down, holding on to faith while wrestling with exhaustion.

And yet, this season comes to meet us exactly where we are. The Nativity Fast isn't about pretending everything is fine. It's about making room (even in our weakness, confusion, and weariness) for Christ to enter the broken places. Christ was born into a world that was hurting, oppressed, and longing for redemption. He doesn't ask us to be perfect before He draws near. He steps into the chaos with us

This Fast is a reminder that God works quietly in the hidden places. In small efforts, in whispered prayers, in moments when we feel like we have nothing left to give.

Trying to stay faithful even when everything feels off-balance... But the Nativity Fast invites us to take all of that and lay it gently before Christ without shame, without fear, and without pretending. It invites us back into prayer, even if our prayer is simply "Lord, have mercy". It invites us into quiet acts of kindness, into patience with ourselves and others, and into trust that healing comes slowly, like dawn breaking through a long night.

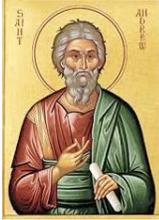
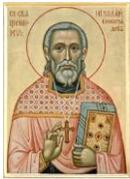
As we journey toward the birth of Christ, I pray that this Fast brings peace into every place that feels troubled, light into every place that feels dark, and strength into every place that feels weak. May this season soften our hearts, lift our spirits, and remind us that no storm lasts forever.

Christ comes. Hope comes. Light comes.

Blessed Nativity fast to all!

Nikita Sereda (altar helper and reader)

December 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	<p><u>1</u> Hieromartyr Romanus, deacon, of Caesarea in Palestine (303)</p> 	<p><u>2</u></p>	<p><u>3</u></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> St. Alexander Nevsky (Alexis in schema)</p> 
<p><u>7</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku</p>	<p><u>8</u></p>	<p><u>9</u> Hieromartyr Peter, archbishop of Alexandria (311)</p> 	<p><u>10</u></p>	<p><u>11</u> Monk-martyr Stephen the New (767)</p> 	<p><u>12</u></p>	<p><u>13</u> Apostle Andrew the First-Called</p> 
<p><u>14</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral. Patronal Feast Celebration</p>	<p><u>15</u> St. Athanasius “the Resurrected,” recluse of the Kiev Caves</p> 	<p><u>16</u></p>	<p><u>17</u> Great Martyr Barbara</p>  <p>10:00 am – Liturgy & banquet at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> St. Nicholas Bishop of Myra</p> 	<p><u>20</u></p>
<p><u>21</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku</p>	<p><u>22</u></p>	<p><u>23</u> Martyr Gemellus of Paphlagonia (361)</p> 	<p><u>24</u></p>	<p><u>25</u> St. Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska (1836)</p> 	<p><u>26</u></p>	<p><u>27</u> Hieromartyr Nicholas, presbyter</p> 
<p><u>28</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>29</u> Martyr Marinus of Rome (283)</p> 	<p><u>30</u></p>	<p><u>31</u> St. Michael the Confessor (845)</p> 			