Guide us to Thy Perfect Light



Nativity Fast Desk Calendar

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
Tampa, FL



Join us in person or online!

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Introduction to the Nativity Fast

When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the Child was.
Matthew 2:9

The Feast of the Nativity is sometimes referred to as "The Winter Pascha." This is because this feast is second only to Pascha, the Resurrection of Christ, in its importance. The Resurrection opened the path to Paradise for the world. The Nativity, or Incarnation, paved the way to the eventual Crucifixion and Resurrection, as the Son of God was incarnate in the flesh, and came to live amongst His Creation.

Most of us are familiar with the forty days of Great Lent, which precedes Holy Week and Pascha. We know this time as a solemn season of prayer and fasting and an increased number of services. What most of us are not familiar with is the forty-day period which precedes the Feast of the Nativity, called The Nativity Fast. Other Christian denominations have a season called "Advent" which precedes the Nativity for the four Sundays before Christmas.

The Orthodox Nativity Fast begins on November 15, and unlike the contemporary practice of the pre-Christmas season being a time filled with parties and revelry, only to see it all end abruptly on December 26, this season is a time of reflection and preparation, so that when the Feast of the Nativity arrives on December 25, there is something to truly celebrate, not only the Incarnation of Christ but our personal growth as we have prepared for it.

It is the Orthodox Tradition that the Nativity is celebrated for 12 days, concluding with the Feasts of Theophany and St. John the Baptist.

It is our hope that you will use this desk calendar, along with the other materials you have received, to mark a more reflective and purposeful period of the Nativity Fast, so that when we reach the Feast of the Nativity, you will experience it with more spiritual joy.

We wish you a blessed period of the Nativity Fast, in anticipation of a blessed Feast of the Nativity!

With love in the Incarnate Lord,
+Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis



A GUIDE TO USING THIS CALENDAR

This daily calendar has been created to help deepen our relationship with Christ, for our parish as a whole AND for you as individuals and as families as we anticipate His birth. It is meant to sit in a prominent place in your home - on your desk, kitchen table, or countertop - where you can see it daily and flip the pages as we count down the days until the Nativity of Christ and celebrate the twelve days following His birth.

The first few pages contain Orthodox prayers, quotes from Church Fathers, hymns and carol lyrics to go along with our own choir's playlist "O Come Let Us Adore Him" which can be found on our church app, St John GOC.

The next 54 pages are dated from November 15th, the first day of the Nativity Fast period, through January 7th, the Feast of St. John the Baptist, our patron saint.

Each calendar page contains a daily Scripture verse for you to read and meditate on, as well as a personal reflection point and a family action item. We encourage you to use these tools as a topic to consider throughout the day, as a prompt for journaling, and as a daily conversation starter with your loved ones. Additionally, the family action items provide enriching and fun activities to do throughout the season. There is no stress in trying to do every item. Choose the ones that work best for you!

It is our hope that families of all ages and sizes will find a way to incorporate this daily calendar to experience the richness and fullness of Christ dwelling among us, as we approach the Holy Feast of the Nativity as individuals, as families, and as a parish.

Fasting Guidelines

The word "passion" means something that is really attractive to us. We may have a "passion" for cooking or sports or lawn mowing. These are examples of good things that people do to fill their time and to find joy. In spiritual terms, "passions" are things we are attracted to that do not serve us well, in fact they take us farther from God. Examples include things like lust, power, greed, avarice, and anger. The most basic of all "passions" is hunger. Because we can go several hours or even days without a greedy thought or an angry thought. But we can't go more than a couple of hours without a hungry thought.

The purpose of fasting is to practice "askesis" or discipline over filling our bodies with food. If we can learn to abstain from certain kinds of food, if we can tame our passion for eating, then hopefully we can calm passions for the aforementioned things that take us away from God.

The Orthodox Church year consists of periods of fasts and feasts. Most of us are familiar with the fasting period during Great Lent. Surrounding the Feast of the Nativity, there is also a forty day fast, followed by a twelve-day feast in which there is no fasting at all until January 5. The Orthodox Tradition of fasting includes abstaining from meat, fish, dairy products, oil and wine. However, the Nativity Fast is less strict than the Fast of Great Lent. Fish, wine, and olive oil are permitted, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, until December 12. By "economia" (dispensation), meat is allowed on Thanksgiving Day.

If you aren't used to fasting, use this Nativity Fast period as an occasion to practice this spiritual discipline. Begin by fasting from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays this year. If you are used to fasting from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, consider adding Mondays. Or fast from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays and then from December 13-24. If you are able, fast from meat for all 40 days. If that is not a challenge, then add the fast from fish and/or dairy products. The Church recognizes that not everyone can fast to the same degree, and assumes that individual Christians will observe the fast prescribed for them by their Spiritual Fathers.

Prayers

Trisagion Prayers

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Glory to You, our God, glory to you!
Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, the treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurity and save our souls, gracious Lord.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, forgive our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for the glory of Your name. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

I praise, bless and thank You, Almighty God, the Father of Light, that You have again shown to me the light of this day. I entreat You: forgive my sins and accept my prayer in Your great mercy, for I seek refuge in You, the merciful and Almighty God. Shine in my heart the Light of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. Enlighten my mind and my whole being that I may live according to Your commandments and serve You in all that I do and say. For You are the source of life and light, and to You I give praise and thanksgiving, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.



Prayers

Morning Prayers

Having risen from sleep, I worship You, blessed God, and sing to You mighty Lord, the angelic hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God; through the intercessions of the Theotokos have mercy on me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Having awakened me from sleep, Lord, enlighten my mind and heart. Open my lips to praise You, Holy Trinity: Holy, Holy, Holy, are You, O God; through the intercessions of the Theotokos have mercy on me.

Now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Suddenly the Judge will come and the deeds of all will be revealed. Therefore, early in the morning let us cry out in awe: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God; through the intercessions of the Theotokos have mercy on me.

Evening Prayers

Now that the day has come to a close I thank You, Lord, and entreat that the evening with the night may be sinless; grant this to me, Savior, and save me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Now that the day has passed I glorify You, Master, and entreat that the evening with the night may be free of stumbling; grant this to me, Savior, and save me.

Now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Now that the day has run its course I praise You, Holy One, and entreat that the evening with the night may be undisturbed by evil; grant this to me, Savior, and save me.

Prayers

Prayer to Christ

Christ our God, Who at all times and in every hour are worshipped and glorified in heaven and on earth; long-suffering, generous in mercy, and rich in compassion; loving to the righteous and merciful to the sinner; You call all to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: Lord, in this hour accept our prayers and direct our lives in the way of Your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds and deliver us from all affliction, evil and distress. Encompass us with Your holy angels, so that guided and guarded by their company we may reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory, for You are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Prayer of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

Lord, I know not what to ask of You. You alone know what my true needs are. You love me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my real needs which may be hidden from me. I dare not ask for either a cross or a consolation. I only wait upon You; my heart is open to You. Visit and help me in Your steadfast love. Strike me and heal me; cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Your holy will. I offer myself to You as a living sacrifice. I put all my trust in You. I have no other desire than to fulfill Your will. Teach me to pray. Pray Yourself in me. Amen.

Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Shine in my heart, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of my mind to comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in me also reverence for Your holy commandments, so that having conquered sinful desires I may pursue a more spiritual life, thinking and doing only those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the Light of our souls and bodies, and to You I send up glory, with Your Father who is from everlasting, and Your all-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.



Prayers

Prayer Before Beginning a task

Lord, Jesus Christ, my God, You have said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." In faith I embrace Your words, Lord, and I entreat Your goodness. Help me to carry out the work I am about to begin and to bring it to completion. To You I give glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

My Lord and Savior, You became man and labored with Your hands until the time of Your ministry. Bless me as I begin this work. Help me to bring it to completion. Lord, enlighten my mind and strengthen my body, that I may accomplish my task according to Your will. Guide me to bring about works of goodness to Your service and glory. Amen.

Prayer After a Task

Thank You, Lord, for Your strength and guidance in my work. You are the fulfillment of all good things. Fill also my soul with joy and gladness, that I may praise You always. Amen.

Prayer in Time of Need

Almighty God, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, come to my help and deliver me from this difficulty that besets me. I believe, Lord, that all trials of life are under Your care and that all things work for the good of those who love You. Take away from me fear, anxiety and distress. Help me to face and endure my difficulty with faith, courage and wisdom. Grant that this trial may bring me closer to You, for You are my rock and refuge, my comfort and hope, my delight and joy. I trust in Your love and compassion. Blessed is Your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

**Adapted from "My Orthodox Prayer Book"*

Orthodox Hymns of the Nativity Fast and Nativity

Kontakion of Nativity Fast

On this day the Virgin Maid goes to the grotto to give birth to the pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy, all the inhabited earth, on hearing. Glorify along with Angels and with the shepherds Him who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God.

From the Royal Hours

Prepare, O Bethlehem. Let the manger make ready and the grotto anticipate. The truth has come and the shadow has passed away. Born of a Virgin, God has appeared to men, taking our form and deifying that which He assumed. Therefore Adam and Eve are renewed, and they cry out, "The good pleasure of God has appeared on earth for the salvation of the human race."

From the Royal Hours

This is our God; no other shall be compared to Him, Who was born of a Virgin, and Who lived among men. The only-begotten Son is seen, as a mortal, lying in a spare manger; and He, the Lord of Glory, is wrapped in swaddling clothes. A star signals the Magi, to come and adore Him. And we, for our part, sing our hymns: "O Holy Trinity, save our souls!"

From the Royal Hours

Today, He who holds the whole world in His hand is born from a Virgin. (3) He who is impalpable in essence is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a mortal. God, who in the beginning established the heavens of old, is lying in a manger as a newborn babe. He who rained down manna for the people in the wilderness is nursed by His mother. He who is the Bridegroom of the Church is summoning the Magi. And He is accepting their gifts, now as the Son of the Virgin. "We adore Your Nativity, O Christ. We adore Your Nativity, O Christ. We adore Your Nativity, O Christ. Also show us Your divine Epiphany."

Orthodox Hymns of the Nativity Fast and Nativity

From Vespers of Nativity

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, as we tell about this mystery. The middle wall of separation has been broken down; the fiery sword has turned back, the Cherubim permits access to the tree of life; and I partake of the delight of Paradise, from which I was cast out because of disobedience. For the exact Image of the Father, the express Image of His eternity, takes the form of a servant, coming forth from a virgin Mother; and He undergoes no change. He remained what He was, true God; and He took up what He was not, becoming human in His love for humanity. Let us cry out to Him: "You who were born from a Virgin, O God, have mercy on us."

From the Matins of the Forefeast of the Nativity

O Bethlehem, prepare, Eden is opened unto all. And be ready, Ephrata, for the Tree of life has in the grotto blossomed forth from the Virgin. Indeed her womb is shown to be spiritually a Paradise, in which is found the God-planted Tree. And if we eat from it we shall live, and shall not die, as did Adam of old. Christ is born, so that He might raise up the formerly fallen image.



Orthodox Hymns of the Nativity Fast and Nativity

From the Matins of Nativity
Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth. Today Bethlehem receives Him who is ever seated with the Father. Today Angels glorify in a manner fitting God the Babe that is born. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will among men.

From the Matins of Nativity
O heavens, be exultant. Leap for joy, O mountains, at the birth of the Messiah. Resembling the Cherubim, the Virgin Maiden is seated and holds in her embraces God the Logos incarnate. The shepherds glorify the newborn Babe; Magi bring the Master their precious gifts. Angels are singing hymns of praise, and say, "O Lord incomprehensible, glory to You."

From the Matins of Nativity
The Father was well pleased; the Logos became flesh; and the Virgin gave birth to God who became man. A Star reveals Him; Magi bow in worship; Shepherds marvel, and creation rejoices.

From the Matins of Nativity
Today in Bethlehem, Christ is born of the Virgin. Today, the Unoriginate begins, and the Word becomes flesh. The hosts of heaven are rejoicing, and the earth and humanity are merry. The Magi bring their gifts. The Shepherds proclaim the marvel. And we unceasingly cry aloud: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"



Prayer From The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Christ our God,
You are the fulfillment of the Law
and the Prophets.
You have fulfilled
the Father's entire plan
of salvation.
Fill our hearts
with joy and gladness always,
now and forever
and to the ages of ages.
Amen.



The Nativity Sermon of St. John Chrysostom (excerpt)

Behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised. Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged. And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.



On the Nativity of Christ
St. Gregory Palamas (excerpt)

"For today I see equality of honor between heaven and earth, and a way up for all those below to things above, matching the condescension of those on high…For nothing done by God from the beginning of time was more beneficial to all or more divine than Christ's nativity, which we celebrate today."

"He is born without suffering, as he was conceived without passion…"

"He gathered both things into one, mingling humanity with divinity, and by so doing He taught everyone that humility is the road which leads upwards, setting forth today Himself as an example before men and holy angels alike."

"Not only does He assume this nature and raise it up from the fall, but He inexpressibly clothes Himself in it and unites Himself inseparably with it and was born as both God and man: from a woman, in the first instance, that He might take upon Himself the same nature which He formed in our forefathers; and from a woman who was a virgin, in the second, so that He might make man new."

"Let us be at peace with one another, 'forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you' (Col. 3:13), and showing mercy to each other out of mutual love, just as Christ, solely for love of us, had mercy on us and for our sake came down to us."

A Christmas Sermon of St. Gregory Nazianzus "The Theologian" (Excerpt)

Christ is born, glorify Him! Christ from heaven, go out to meet Him! Christ on earth, be exalted! Sing to the Lord all the whole earth; and that I may join both in one word, let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for Him Who is of heaven and then of earth. Christ in the flesh, rejoice with trembling and with joy; with trembling because of your sins, with joy because of your hope.

Again, the darkness is past; again Light is made; again Egypt is punished with darkness; again Israel is enlightened by a pillar. The people who sat in the darkness of ignorance, let them see the great Light full of knowledge.

Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. The letter gives way, the Spirit comes to the front. The shadows flee away, the truth comes in on them. Melchizedek is concluded. He who was without Mother becomes without Father (without mother of His former state, without father of His second). The laws of nature are upset; the world above must be filled. Christ commands it, let us not set ourselves against Him.

O clap your hands together all you people, because unto us a Child is born, and a Son given unto us, whose government is upon His shoulder (for with the cross it is raised up), and His name is called The Angel of the Great Counsel of the Father. Let John cry, prepare the way of the Lord; I too will cry the power of this Day. The Son of God becomes the Son of Man, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. This is our present Festival; it is this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man, that we might go forth, or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God – that putting off of the old man, we might put on the new; and that as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and rising with Him.



O Come Let Us Adore Him CD and Playlist Lyrics

1. O Come All Ye Faithful

O come all ye faithful joyful and triumphant, O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing choirs of angels sing in exultation, Sing all ye citizens of heaven above.
Glory to God in the highest,
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

2. I Parthenos Simeron (Forefeast Kontakion) Greek

I Par-the-nos si-me-ron, ton pro-e-o-ni-on Lo-gon en spi-le-o er-he-te, a-po-te-kin a-po-ri-tos. Ho-re-ve i i-kou-me-ni a-kou-ti-sthi-sa, do-xa-son me-ta An-ge-lon ke ton pi-me-non vou-li-then-ta e-po-fthi-ne, pe-di-on ne-on, ton pro e-o-non The-on.

3. I Parthenos Simeron (Forefeast Kontakion) English

On this day, the Virgin Maid goes to the cave to give birth to the pre-eternal Word in an ineffable manner. Dance for joy, O you inhabited earth upon your hearing, Glorify, along with Angels and with shepherds, Him Who willed that He appear as a newborn Child, the pre-eternal God.

4. I Gennisis Sou - Apolytikion of the Nativity Greek

I Gen-ni-sis Sou Chri-ste o The-os i-mon, a-ne-ti-le to kos-mo, to fos to tis gno-se-os; en af-ti gar i tis as-tris la-trev-on-des, i-po a-ste-ros e-di-da-skon-do, Se pro-ski-nin, ton I-li-on tis di-ke-o-si-nis, ke Se gi-no-skin ex i-psus a-na-to-lin, Ky-ri-e do-xa Si.

5. I Gennisis Sou - Apolytikion of the Nativity English

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world. For therein the worshippers of the stars were, by a star, instructed to worship You, the very Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord.

6. I Parthenos Simeron (Feast) - Kontakion Greek

I Par-the-nos si-me-ron, ton i-pe-ru-si-on tik-ti, ke i gi to spi-le-on to a-pro-si-to pro-sa-gi. An-ge-li me-ta pi-me-non Do-xo-lo-gou Si; Ma-gi de, me-ta a-ste- os o-di-po-rou-si di i-mas gar e-ge-ni-thi, Pe-di-on ne-on, o pro e-o-non The-os.

7. I Parthenos Simeron (Feast) - Kontakion English

The Virgin gives birth today to Him Who is above all-being and the earth offers a cave to Him Whom no man can approach. Angels, with the shepherds, Glorify Him. Magi, with a star make their journey. For unto us is born today as a newborn Child, the Pre-Eternal God.

8. Osi is Christon

O-si is Chris-ton e-vap-tis-thi-te Chris-ton e-ne-thi-sa-sthe. Alliluia. (Three times)
All those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia. (Three times)
Do-xa Pa-tri ke I-o ke A-gi-o Pnev-ma-ti. Ke nin ke a-i ke is tous e-o-nas ton e-o-non. Amin.
Chris-ton e- e-thi-sa-sthe. A-li-lou-i-a. (Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen. Have put on Christ. Alleluia.)
O-si is Chris-ton e-vap-tis-thi-te, Chris-ton e-ne thi-sa-sthe. Alliluia. (All those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.)

9. Christos Gennate/Christ is born

Christos genate, doxasate. Christos ex ouranon, apandisate. Christos epi gis, ipsothite. Asate to Kyrio pasa i gi, ke en efrosini, animnisate lai, oti dedoxaste.
Christ is born; glorify Him! Christ is come from heaven; go and meet Him. Christ is on earth; arise to Him. Sing to the Lord, all you who dwell on the earth; and in merry spirits, O you peoples, praise His birth. For He is glorified. (Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)

10. Gesu Bambino

When blossoms flowered 'mid the snows upon a winter night
Was born the Child, the Christmas Rose the King of Love and Light.
The angels sang, the shepherds sang the grateful earth rejoiced
And at His blessed birth the stars their exultation voiced.
O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him Christ the Lord.

Again the heart with rapture glows to greet the holy night
That gave the world its Christmas Rose its King of Love and Light.
Let ev'ry voice acclaim His name the grateful chorus swell
From paradise to earth He came that we with Him might dwell.
O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him Christ the Lord.

11. Lo How a Rose

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, As men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret bright, Amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright, She bore to men a Savior, when half spent was the night.



12. O Little Town of Bethlehem
O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see the lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently, The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.

13. O Come, O Come Emmanuel
O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

14. Silent Night
Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child. Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar. Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth. Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

15. Joy to the World
Joy to The world! The Lord is come! Let earth receive her King!
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room! And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven and nature sing! And heaven and nature sing!

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love!
And wonders of His love! And wonders, wonders of His love!

16. Ding dong merrily on high
Ding dong merrily on high, In heaven the bells are ringing:
Ding dong! verily the sky is riven with angels singing
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis! Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis! Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, you ringers;
May you beautifully rhyme your evetime song, you singers
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis! Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis! Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

17. Hallelujah Chorus
Hallelujah!
For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Hallelujah!
The Kingdom of this world is become
the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and of His Christ
And He shall reign forever and ever
King of Kings (Forever and ever hallelujah hallelujah)
and Lord of Lords
And he shall reign forever and ever!
King of Kings forever and ever
And Lord of Lords Hallelujah, hallelujah
And he shall reign forever, forever and ever
Forever and ever, forever and ever
(King of Kings and Lord of Lords)
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah

Nativity Homily from St. Isaac the Syrian

This Christmas night
bestowed peace on the whole world; So let no one threaten;
This is the night of the Most Gentle One - Let no one be cruel;
This is the night of the Humble One - Let no one be proud.
Now is the day of joy - Let us not revenge;
Now is the day of Good Will - Let us not be mean.
In this Day of Peace - Let us not be conquered by anger.
Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake;
So, rich one, invite the poor to your table.
Today we receive a Gift for which we did not ask;
So let us give alms to those who implore and beg us.
This present Day casts open the heavenly doors to our prayers;
Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.
Today the Divine Being took upon Himself
the seal of our humanity,
In order for humanity to be decorated by
the seal of divinity.

St. Athanasios
Excerpt from "On the Incarnation"

God became a man, so that man can become like God.

November 15

First Day of Nativity Fast

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Guide like the Star



Verse of the Day:
When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the Child was.
Matthew 2:9

Personal Reflection Point:
Do you have a "star" that guides you to Christ in your life?

Family Daily Action:
Call a friend or family member and thank them for being important in your life

November 16

Feast of St. matthew

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Guide like the Star



Verse of the Day:
He determines the number of the stars; He gives to all of them their names.
Psalm 147:4

Personal Reflection Point:
How did you get your name?

Family Daily Action:
Send a card to a friend who lives in another state

November 17

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Guide like the Star



Verse of the Day:
For You are my rock and my fortress;
and for Your name's sake You lead me
and guide me;
Psalm 31:3

Personal Reflection Point:
How would you define a fortress? How can the Lord be a fortress to you today?

Family Daily Action:
Decorate a prayer jar and leave it out with slips of paper to write prayers on

November 18

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Guide like the Star



Verse of the Day:
And He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."
Genesis 15:5

Personal Reflection Point:
Look at the sky on a clear night and think about the number of stars.

Family Daily Action:
Smile at everyone you see today

November 19

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."
Luke 1:30

Personal Reflection Point:
If an angel spoke to you would you be afraid?

Family Daily Action:
Text three people you haven't seen in a while that you miss them

November 20

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed."
Luke 1:46-48

Personal Reflection Point:
How can you magnify the Lord today?

Family Daily Action:
Pray for all mothers

November 21

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.
Luke 2:19

Personal Reflection Point:
How often do you take time to ponder things in your heart?

Family Daily Action:
Send a Thanksgiving card to an elderly person

November 22

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Personal Reflection Point:
How can our own insights sometimes lead us in the wrong direction?

Family Daily Action:
Purchase items or a gift card for a Box of Hope

November 23

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him.
Psalm 28:7

Personal Reflection Point:
How can you give thanks to God today?

Family Daily Action:
List five things you are thankful for

November 24

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
Let me hear in the morning of Your steadfast love, for in You I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul.
Psalm 143:8

Personal Reflection Point:
Are your mornings quiet enough to hear the voice of God?

Family Daily Action:
Surprise someone with a breakfast treat

November 25

Feast of St. Katherine

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Trust like Mary



Verse of the Day:
For You, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.
Psalm 71:5

Personal Reflection Point:
How do you think that hope and trust are different? How are they the same?

Family Daily Action:
Make and send someone a get well card

November 26

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."
Matthew 1:20

Personal Reflection Point:
Have you ever had a dream about an angel of the Lord?

Family Daily Action:
Make a Christmas Ornament for your tree

November 27

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a Son; and he called His name Jesus.
Matthew 1:24-25

Personal Reflection Point:
Take time today to think about Joseph, the role he played and the obedience he showed.

Family Daily Action:
Pray for all fathers

November 28

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."
Matthew 17:5

Personal Reflection Point:
How can you best listen to the voice of God?

Family Daily Action:
Donate food to a local food pantry

November 29

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.
2 Corinthians 10:5

Personal Reflection Point:
Are you good at taking your thoughts captive to obey Christ?

Family Daily Action:
Send a care package to a college student you know

November 30

Feast of St. Andrew

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments.
1 John 5:2

Personal Reflection Point:
Have you ever considered that obedience is an expression of love?

Family Daily Action:
Learn the words to a new Christmas carol

December 1

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
But this command I gave them, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'
Jeremiah 7:23

Personal Reflection Point:
How can we best walk in the way God commanded us?

Family Daily Action:
Spread Christmas cheer on your sidewalk or driveway with sidewalk chalk

December 2

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Obey like Joseph



Verse of the Day:
And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey."
Joshua 24:24

Personal Reflection Point:
What gifts do you have that help you to best serve the Lord?

Family Daily Action:
Leave a little gift or card for your postal carrier

December 3

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!"
Luke 2:13-14

Personal Reflection Point:
How can you describe what thousands of angels praising God would look and sound like?

Family Daily Action:
Buy a gift from an angel tree for someone in need

December 4

Feast of St. Barbara

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.
Psalm 34:7

Personal Reflection Point:
What kind of fear do you think the psalmist is telling us about?

Family Daily Action:
Pray for sick children

December 5

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!
Genesis 28:12

Personal Reflection Point:
Have you ever had a dream about heaven?

Family Daily Action:
Share a favorite Christmas memory

December 6

Feast of St. Nicholas

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
A God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.
John 4:24

Personal Reflection Point:
How can we best worship in spirit and in truth?

Family Daily Action:
Read a story about St. Nicholas today

December 7

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."
Daniel 3:17-18

Personal Reflection Point:
Consider the phrase "but if not" in this verse. Do we give God this kind of freedom in our lives?

Family Daily Action:
Leave a post it note with encouragement for someone in your family to find

December 8

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; worship the Lord in holy array.
Psalm 29:2

Personal Reflection Point:
How would you describe the glory of God's name?

Family Daily Action:
Offer a prayer about the Light of Christ when you turn on your Christmas tree lights

December 9

Feast of St. Anna

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Worship like the Angels



Verse of the Day:
Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshiped Him; but some doubted.
Matthew 28:16-17

Personal Reflection Point:
Can you relate to the disciples who doubted Jesus?

Family Daily Action:
Make a list of three things you love about your family members and put it in their stockings

December 10

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.
Luke 2:8-9

Personal Reflection Point:
How could you put into words the power of the glory of the Lord shining around the shepherds?

Family Daily Action:
Place your Nativity set where you family can see it every day

December 11

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."
Luke 2:15

Personal Reflection Point:
Have you ever had friends encourage you to "go and see" something of God? Have you ever encouraged your friends to do the same?

Family Daily Action:
Pray for a loved one who passed away

December 12

Feast of St. Spyridon

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.
Luke 2:20

Personal Reflection Point:
What is so remarkable about the shepherds returning to their everyday lives?

Family Daily Action:
Bake and share some cookies

December 13

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
Psalm 23:1

Personal Reflection Point:
Describe in five words how the Lord can be your shepherd.

Family Daily Action:
Take a selfie in front of your Christmas tree

December 14

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
I Am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
John 10:11

Personal Reflection Point:
What surprises you about how Jesus describes Himself as a shepherd?

Family Daily Action:
Decorate a Christmas card for a Sunday School teacher

December 15

Feast of St. Eleftherios

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
Matthew 28:19-20

Personal Reflection Point:

What does "make disciples" mean to you?

Family Daily Action:

Watch a classic Christmas movie or TV show

December 16

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen.
Mark 16:20

Personal Reflection Point:
Do you think the disciples were more nervous or more excited to go preach everywhere?

Family Daily Action:
Go for a ride in your pjs to look at Christmas lights

December 17

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Go like the Shepherds



Verse of the Day:
Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.
Matthew 2:2

Personal Reflection Point:
When is the last time you searched for something not knowing what you will find?

Family Daily Action:
Hang some glitter lights in a window for people who pass by to see

December 18

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Seek like the Magi



Verse of the Day:
When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.
Matthew 2:10

Personal Reflection Point:
When is the last time you rejoiced with great joy?

Family Daily Action:
Pray for your priest

December 19

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Seek like the Magi



Verse of the Day:
And going into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
Matthew 2:11

Personal Reflection Point:
What treasures can you offer to Christ?

Family Daily Action:
Write a letter to your parents or children (spouse or friend!) telling them why they are special to you

December 20

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Seek like the Magi



Verse of the Day:
Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do His commands; seek righteousness, seek humility.
Zephaniah 2:3

Personal Reflection Point:
How can we seek righteousness and humility?

Family Daily Action:
Call your Godparents or Godchildren to wish them a Merry Christmas

December 21

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Seek like the Magi



Verse of the Day:
But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.
Matthew 6:33

Personal Reflection Point:
What does this verse tell us about priorities?

Family Daily Action:
Find and visit a "live" Nativity scene

December 22

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Seek like the Magi



Verse of the Day:
Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8

Personal Reflection Point:
What does this verse tell us about persistence

Family Daily Action:
Have a slumber party by your Christmas tree

December 23

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Seek like the Magi



Verse of the Day:
Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.
1 Corinthians 10:24

Personal Reflection Point:
How can we seek the good of our neighbor?

Family Daily Action:
Leave a poinsettia on a neighbor's porch secretly

December 24

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.
John 1:14

Personal Reflection Point:
How would you explain how Jesus was full of both grace and truth?

Family Daily Action:
Choose a Bible verse on grace and put it on your refrigerator

December 25

Feast of the Nativity

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:
For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11

Personal Reflection Point:
Celebrate the birth of Christ our Lord!

Family Daily Action:
Read the Christmas Gospel

December 26

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:
For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.
Mark 10:45

Personal Reflection Point:
How did Jesus serve others?

Family Daily Action:
Pray for your friends

December 27

Feast of St. Stephen

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:
For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.
Luke 22:27

Personal Reflection Point:
Have you thought about those in the service industry as being greater than the ones they serve?

Family Daily Action:
Mail thank you cards for the gifts you received

December 28

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:
And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
Deuteronomy 10:12

Personal Reflection Point:
What does loving the Lord your God with all your heart and soul practically look like?

Family Daily Action:
Visit someone who lives alone

December 29

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
Matthew 6:24

Personal Reflection Point:

Why do you think Jesus warned about money becoming your master?

Family Daily Action:

Make a donation to a charity of your choice

December 30

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Serve Like Jesus



Verse of the Day:
And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.
Joshua 24:15

Personal Reflection Point:
In what specific ways do you and your house serve the Lord?

Family Daily Action:
Write down three goals for the upcoming year

December 31

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:
So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had done in creation.
Genesis 2:3

Personal Reflection Point:
Do you take a day of rest each week as the Lord showed us to?

Family Daily Action:
Pray about your word for the upcoming year

January 1

Feast of St. Basil

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:
This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 118:24

Personal Reflection Point:
Say this verse out loud. How does it lift your mood?

Family Daily Action:
Bake a vasilopita (with a coin in it!) to share

January 2

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:
All the earth worships You and sings praises to You; they sing praises to Your name.
Psalm 66:4

Personal Reflection Point:
Have you visited a place where you saw the earth as worshiping God?

Family Daily Action:
Pray for something good for someone who has been unkind to you

January 3

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:
The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.
Psalm 19:1

Personal Reflection Point:
Think of a beautiful sunrise or sunset and describe "God's handiwork."

Family Daily Action:
Go with your family and watch a sunrise or sunset

January 4

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19

Personal Reflection Point:

What kind of spiritual goals can you set for this year?

Family Daily Action:

Send an old fashioned postcard to your grandparents or grandchildren

January 5

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Luke 3:4-6

Personal Reflection Point:

How did John the Baptist prepare people for the coming of Jesus?

Family Daily Action:

Make a sign or picture wishing our Parish a blessed Feast day of St. John

January 6

Feast of Theophany

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:

For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Isaiah 55:12

Personal Reflection Point:

Have you ever imagined the sounds of nature actually singing to the Lord?

Family Daily Action:

Offer a prayer of thanks for clean and fresh water

January 7

Feast of St. John

Guide us to Thy Perfect Light

Rejoice like Creation



Verse of the Day:
He must increase, but I must decrease.
John 3:30

Personal Reflection Point:
How is John the Baptist showing humility with this statement?

Family Daily Action:
Sing the hymn of St. John at the Divine Liturgy today



From Great Vespers of the Nativity

What shall we offer You, O Christ, because You have appeared on earth as a man for our sakes? For each of the creatures made by You offers You its thanks: the Angels, their hymn; the heavens, the Star; the Shepherds, their wonder; the Magi, their gifts; the earth, the Cave; the desert, the Manger; and we, a Virgin Mother. God before the ages, have mercy on us.
(trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)



Christ is Born!

Glorify Him!

As the New Year begins, we remain committed to our core values of Love, Worship, Community, Learning, and Service with renewed joy!

We invite you to worship weekly and to engage with our parish through our many ministries and groups, whether in person or online.

Saint John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
LOVE · COMMUNITY · SERVICE · LEARNING · WORSHIP
Tampa, Florida