

ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

Vol. 5 No. 1.1

ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH

505 Jefferson Avenue, Scranton, Pa. 18510

Fr. Nicholas Ferencz, Ph.D., Pastor
Rectory: 621 Vine St., Scranton, PA 18510
Rectory: 570-344-5917
Cell: 724-953-6046
nferencz35@gmail.com
www.stnicholasorthodoxscranton.org

Jane Togher, Board President
570-842-3311
jctogher@gmail.com
Madelyn Hodanich, Choir Director
Hall - 570-344-1522

JANUARY 3, 2016

SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS

PARISH CALENDAR

Sun., Jan. 3 *Sunday of the Holy Fathers.* Virgin
Martyr Juliana.

8:45–9:15 AM Confessions

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets

Newly Elected Board Members take the
Oath of Office.

Mon., Jan. 4 Great-martyr Anastasia.
10:00 AM Funeral Service - George Senich.

**WED., JAN. 6 VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR
LORD, Martyr Eugenia.**

7:00–7:30 PM Confessions

8:00 PM Great Compline

**THU., JAN. 7 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST.**

8:45–9:15 AM Confessions

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – pp 132–135

Fri., Jan. 8 Synaxis of Holy Mary Theotokos.

9:00 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets

No Fast today.

*Sat., Jan. 9 Holy First-martyr & Archdeacon
Stephen. Saturday after Christmas.*

9:00 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets

Sun., Jan. 10 *Sunday After Christmas. Remembering
Holy Joseph the Betrothed, King and
Prophet David & Apostle James,
Brother of the Lord.*

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy – Special Sheets

Important Notice About Christmas Services & Parking: Please remember that we no longer have permission to park in the big lot next door (across Vine St.) that belongs to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. All spaces are rented out, so even if the lot is empty, we cannot use it for parking for services. You will be able to use any of the parking garages in town.

FEASTING . . .

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD is celebrated with four days of services. *Christmas Eve* is celebrated with the service of Great Compline. On *Christmas* we celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the usual Sunday time, 9:30 AM. The day after Christmas we remember *Our Lord's Mother*, who gave Him birth. And on January 9 we celebrate the feast of *St. Stephen the First-martyr*. Both Liturgies will be at 9:00 AM.

Thursday, January 14 (Jan. 1) is the beginning of the New Year. It is also the celebration of the *Circumcision of Our Lord and the Feast of St. Basil the Great*, one of the greatest saints of the Church. Divine Liturgy will be celebrated on that day at 9:00 AM. All are encouraged to celebrate as much of the Christmas season with us as you can.

. . . AND FASTING

- *CHRISTMAS EVE* is a Day of Fasting from Meat and Dairy in preparation for the celebration of the Birth of Our Lord – this is why it is called the “Paramony,” a word which means “Preparation.

On this day no solid food should be eaten until the first star is seen in the evening sky. That's why the *Vilija* or *Holy Supper* traditionally begins when the first star is seen.

- There is **NO FASTING** permitted between Christmas (Jan. 7) and Theophany Eve (Jan. 18). These are days of celebration of the goodness of our God Who loves us so much that He becomes one of us for our salvation.

Confessions: Scheduled for today, Wednesday and Thursday. See Parish Calendar for times.

PEOPLE STUFF

Please remember in your prayers:

Deceased: George Senich.

Living: Fr. George Dursa. Fr. Donald Valasek. Stephanie Bonk. Owen Bonn. Gloria Bracey. Bob Chalk. Susan Danchak. Ricky, Rick & Sarah. Michael Danchak. Jada Eiden. Tammy Hall. Heather Harris. Robert Hawley. Lorraine Kacaba. Mary Kneiss. Anna Mae Kuklis. John Lange. Dee Lositski. Peggy Majcher. Rose Markiewicz. Dolores Naglak. Theresa Niester. Mary Phillips. John Polanichka. Karen Rolka. JoyAnn Scarnato. Amy Shimo. Faye Snell. Russell Spilka. Jeff Thomas. Ann Marie Tigue. Gary Wassel.

At Home: Michael Andreosky. Elizabeth Basalyga. Anna Senich.

Assisted Living Homes: Julie Roberts. Marion Sosnowski. Kathryn Stocoski.

Eternal Memory! George Senich fell asleep in the Lord on January 1. The funeral service will be Monday, January 4. Please keep his wife Anna, and children Bob, Carol & Diane and all of George's family in your prayers.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Breadbasket of NEPA: We are starting up again. Donation boxes are in the hall.

PARISH FUND RAISERS

PIROHI SALES are starting up fairly soon (first one is Fri., Jan. 22). Let's not think about it until we have to!

PARISH STUFF

Thanks again to all of our parishioners for your warm welcome for Fr. Myron. I hear all went very well with him.

Thanks & God Bless! To all who helped clean and

decorate the church in preparation for the celebration of Our Lord's Birth.

And also Thanks & God Bless to all who remembered me with your prayers, cards and gifts this Christmas season.

2016 Envelopes and Calendars are now available in the church hall for pick up.

YOUR GIFTS TO GOD AND OUR CHURCH

Dec. 20, 2015

\$868.00	General Collection
96.00	7 Day Light
2,325.00	Pirohi Sale
76.00	Holy Days
20.00	Taper Candles
187.00	Maintenance & Repairs
765.00	St. Nicholas Dinner
61.00	Christmas Flowers
\$4,398.00	Total

Dec. 27, 2015

\$417.00	General Collection
71.00	7 Day Light
35.00	Pirohi Sale
22.00	Holy Days
20.00	Heat Offering
5.00	Taper Candles
3.00	Maintenance & Repairs
65.00	Christmas Flowers
13.00	Calendar Donations
\$651.00	Total

Renovation Donations to date: \$1000.

FROM THE DIOCESE & OTHER STUFF

Diocesan Donation Program with Amazon! Amazon.com offers a program whereby shoppers can use a special web address so that with every purchase made a donation is given to the diocese.

How do I participate? It's easy. Just go to the Diocesan website (<http://www.acrod.org>) and click on the "AmazonSmile" link on the left of the page. Please note that Amazon lists us as the "American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese of the USA."

Stewardship Workshop Saturday, January 16. The Deanery Stewardship Workshop has been scheduled for parishioners from all local parishes to attend, to be held at St. George's Orthodox Church (Taylor, PA) on

January 16, 2016. Attendance is free, and the workshop is open to all clergy and parishioners in the Pocono Deanery. (Stewardship coordinators are especially encouraged to attend.) The workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m., and a lunch will be provided.

The workshop will give attendees a greater understanding of what Stewardship means for Orthodoxy, and ways that it can be incorporated into our churches. Attendees are asked to RSVP by December 26th. Please contact Michael Shimko by phone (570-430-6749) or by e-mail at michael.shimko@me.com.

All members of the parish are encouraged to attend (free lunch!).

St. Mary's International Dinner Club Presents "Greece" on Thursday, January 14, 2016 with Seatings at 5:30 and 6:30. The Menu will start with an Assorted Sample Tasting Plate of (Stuffed Grape leaves, Spanakopita, Hummus and Olives served with fresh pita bread. The Entrée is Braised Lamb Shanks with Orzo and oven roasted zucchini & eggplant with Kalamata olives. The dessert is a Homemade Baklava. Coffee, Tea, Soda and Water is included. Cash Bar is available. Special Beverages will be Cuzo and Retsina. Reservations can be made at 570-343-5151 by January 11. The price for this culinary delight is only \$20.00 per dinner.

THE CRÈCHE (NATIVITY SCENE)

Adapted from Wikipedia

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene in 1223 at Greccio, Italy, in an attempt to place the emphasis of Christmas upon the worship of Christ rather than upon secular materialism and gift giving. The nativity scene created by St. Francis is described by St Bonaventure in his *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi* written around 1260. Staged in a cave near Greccio, St. Francis' nativity scene was a living one with humans and animals cast in the Biblical roles. Pope Honorius III gave his blessing to the exhibit. Such pantomimes became hugely popular and spread throughout Christendom. Within a hundred years every church in Italy was expected to have a nativity scene at Christmastime. Eventually, statues replaced human and animal participants, and static scenes grew to elaborate affairs with richly robed figurines placed in intricate landscape settings. Charles III, King of the Two Sicilies, collected such elaborate scenes, and his enthusiasm encouraged others to do the

same.

The scene's popularity inspired much imitation in Catholic countries, and in the Early modern period sculpted cribs were set up in Catholic churches and homes, often exported from Italy. These elaborate scenes reached their artistic apogee in the Kingdom of Naples in the 16th to 18th centuries, but also Genoa had an important tradition in the same period, notably those of Anton Maria Maragliano. By the end of the 19th century nativity scenes became popular beyond Catholic settings, and many versions of various sizes and in various materials such as terracotta, paper, wood, wax and ivory were marketed, often with a backdrop setting in the stable.

Different traditions of nativity scenes emerged in different countries. Hand-painted *santons* are popular in Provence. In southern Germany, Austria and Trentino-Alto Adige the figurines are handcut in wood. Colorful *szopka* are typical in Poland.

A tradition in England involved baking a mince pie in the shape of a manger to hold the Christ child until dinnertime when the pie was eaten. When the Puritans banned Christmas celebrations in the 17th century, they also passed specific legislation to outlaw such pies, calling them "Idolaterie in crust".

Distinctive nativity scenes and traditions have been created around the world and are displayed during the Christmas season in churches, homes, shopping malls, and other venues, and occasionally on public lands and in public buildings. The Vatican has displayed a scene in St. Peter's Square near its Christmas tree since 1982 and the Pope has for many years blessed the mangers of children assembled in St. Peter's Square for a special ceremony. In the United States, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City annually displays a Neapolitan Baroque nativity scene before a 20 feet (6.1 m) blue spruce.

Nativity scenes have not escaped controversy. A life-sized scene in the United Kingdom featuring waxworks celebrities provoked outrage in 2004, and, in Spain, a city council forbade the exhibition of a traditional toilet humor character in a public nativity scene. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) indicates that animals in living displays lack proper care and suffer abuse. In the United States, nativity scenes on public lands and in public buildings have provoked court challenges, and the prankish theft of ceramic or plastic nativity figurines from outdoor

displays has become commonplace.

Static Nativity Scenes

A static nativity scene may be erected indoors or outdoors during the Christmas season, and is composed of figurines depicting the infant Jesus resting in a manger, Mary, and Joseph. Other figures in the scene may include angels, shepherds, and various animals. The figures may be made of any material, and arranged in a stable or grotto. The Magi may also appear, and are sometimes not placed in the scene until the week following Christmas to account for their travel time to Bethlehem. While most home nativity scenes are packed away at Christmas or shortly thereafter, nativity scenes in churches usually remain on display until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

The nativity scene may not accurately reflect gospel events. With no basis in the gospels, for example, the shepherds, the Magi, and the ox and ass may be displayed together at the manger. Some traditions bring other scriptural characters to the nativity scene such as Adam and Eve and the serpent, Noah and his animals, the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve prophets and the twelve apostles. Mundane activities such as Mary washing diapers in the River Jordan, or a dove descending on the newborn infant may be depicted.

The art form can be traced back to eighteenth-century Naples, Italy. Neapolitan nativity scenes do not represent Palestine at the time of Jesus but the life of the Naples of 1700, during the Bourbon period. Families competed with each other to produce the most elegant and elaborate scenes and so, next to the Child Jesus, to the Holy Family and the shepherds, were placed ladies and gentlemen of the nobility, representatives of the bourgeoisie of the time, vendors with their banks and miniatures of cheese, bread, sheep, pigs, ducks or grape, and typical figures of the time like gypsy predicting the future, people playing cards, housewives doing shopping, dogs, cats and chickens.

Regional variants on the standard nativity scene are many. The *putz* of Pennsylvania Dutch Americans evolved into elaborate decorative Christmas villages in the twentieth century. In Colombia, the *pesebre* may feature a town and its surrounding countryside with shepherds and animals. Mary and Joseph are often depicted as rural Boyacá people with Mary clad in a

countrywoman's shawl and fedora hat, and Joseph garbed in a poncho. The infant Jesus is depicted as European with Italianate features. Visitors bringing gifts to the Christ child are depicted as Colombian natives. After World War I, large, lighted manger scenes in churches and public buildings grew in popularity, and, by the 1950s, many companies were selling lawn ornaments of non-fading, long-lasting, weather resistant materials telling the nativity story.

Living Nativity Scenes

Pantomimes similar to the scene staged by St. Francis at Greccio became an annual event throughout Christendom. Abuses and exaggerations in the presentation of mystery plays during the Middle Ages, however, forced the church to prohibit performances during the 15th century. The plays survived outside church walls, however, and three hundred years after the prohibition, German immigrants brought simple forms of the nativity play to America. Some features of the dramas became part of both Catholic and Protestant Christmas services with children often taking the parts of characters in the nativity story. Nativity plays and pageants, culminating in living nativity scenes, eventually entered public schools. Such exhibitions have been challenged on the grounds of separation of church and state.

In some countries, the nativity scene took to the streets with human performers costumed as Joseph and Mary traveling from house to house seeking shelter and being told by the houses' occupants to move on. The couple's journey culminated in an outdoor tableau at a designated place with the shepherds and the Magi then traveling the streets in parade fashion looking for the Christ child.

Living nativity scenes are not without their problems. In 2008, for example, vandals destroyed all eight scenes and backdrops at Mount Carmel Christian Church's drive-through living nativity scene in Georgia. About 120 of the church's 500 members were involved in the construction of the scenes or playing roles in the production. The damage was estimated at more than US\$2,000. Additionally, the use of real animals in living nativity scenes has provoked complaint.

In southern Italy living nativity scenes (called *presepe vivente* in Italian), are extremely popular, and are rather elaborate affairs, which feature the classic nativity scene as well as a mock rural 19th-century

village, complete with artisans in traditional costumes working at their particular trades. These attract many visitors and have been televised by Italy's national station RAI. In 2010, the old city of Matera in Basilicata hosted the world's largest living nativity scene of the time, which was performed in the historic center Sassi.

RENOVATIONS PLANNED!

The Rectory and the Parish Hall both are in need of some serious repairs and renovations. At the October meeting, the Parish Board voted to accept a bid from S&H Construction Co., to do the following work:

Church Hall

Replace *Front Double Doors* and *Basement Door* at the bottom of the stairs. Paint *all exterior doors*.

Total cost: \$1644.

On hold until funds are available: Painting of the *banquet hall* and *hallway*. Refinish the *wood floor*.

Rectory

Paint *all interior*. Refinish *wood floors on first floor, stairs and upstairs hall*. Install *paddle fan* in living room. **Total cost: \$4636.**

On hold unless funds are donated: replace *all vinyl shutters*, cost \$1128. We have an anonymous donor who will cover half the cost if the other half is also donated by parishioners.

If anyone wishes to donate toward any of these projects, please see Nick Polanichka or send your donation to the rectory.

Animals in the Crèche

A donkey (or ass) and an ox typically appear in nativity scenes. Besides the necessity of animals for a manger, this is an allusion to Isaiah: "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" Isaiah 1:3. The Gospels do not mention an ox and donkey. Another source for the tradition may be the extra-canonical text, the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* of the 7th century. (The translation in this text of Habakkuk 3:2 is not taken from the Septuagint.):

"And on the third day after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary went out of the cave, and, entering a stable, placed the child in a manger, and an ox and an ass adored him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by the prophet Isaiah, "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Therefore, the animals, the ox and the ass, with him in their midst incessantly

adored him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Habakkuk the prophet, saying, "Between two animals you are made manifest."

The ox traditionally represents patience, the nation of Israel, and Old Testament sacrificial worship while the ass represents humility, readiness to serve, and the Gentiles.

The ox and the ass, as well as other animals, became a part of nativity scene tradition. In a 1415, Corpus Christi celebration, the *Ordo paginarum* notes that Jesus was lying between an ox and an ass. Other animals introduced to nativity scenes include elephants and camels.

By the 1970s, churches and community organizations increasingly included animals in nativity pageants. Since then, automobile-accessible "drive-through" scenes with sheep and donkeys have become popular.

Editor's Note: The article continues with descriptions of various Nativity Scenes in various parts of the world. Here are a couple you may find interesting:

Szopka in Kraków

Szopka are traditional Polish nativity scenes dating to 19th century Kraków, Poland. Their modern construction incorporates elements of Kraków's historic architecture including Gothic spires, Renaissance facades, and Baroque domes, and utilizes everyday materials such as colored tinfoils, cardboard, and wood. Some are mechanized. Prizes are awarded for the most elaborately designed and decorated pieces in an annual competition held in Kraków's main square beside the statue of Adam Mickiewicz. Some of the best are then displayed in Kraków's Museum of History. Szopka were traditionally carried from door-to-door in the nativity plays (Jaselka) by performing groups.

A similar tradition, called "betlehemezés" and involving schoolchildren carrying portable folk-art nativity scenes door-to-door, chanting traditional texts, is part of Hungarian folk culture, and has enjoyed a renaissance in recent years. An example of such a portable wooden nativity scene is on display at the Nativity Museum in Bethlehem.

Editor's Note: The above descriptions of portable Nativity Scenes, carried by carolers from house to house, show similarities to the Carpatho-Russian tradition of the Jasličskari who carry the Viflejem

or Bethlehem (a model of the parish church with a Crèche inside it.

In the United States

Perhaps the best known nativity scene in America is the Neapolitan Baroque Crèche displayed annually in the Medieval Sculpture Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Its backdrop is a 1763 choir screen from the Cathedral of Valladolid and a twenty-foot blue spruce decorated with a host of 18th-century angels. The nativity figures are placed at the tree's base. The crèche was the gift of Loretta Hines Howard in 1964, and the choir screen was the gift of The William Randolph Hearst Foundation in 1956. Both this *presepio* and the one displayed in Pittsburgh originated from the collection of Eugenio Catello.

Each holiday season, from Light Up Night in November through Epiphany in January, the Pittsburgh Crèche delights visitors to downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh Crèche, a larger-than-life nativity scene, is the world's only authorized replica of the Vatican's Christmas crèche on display in St. Peter's Square in Rome. Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art also displays a Neapolitan *presepio*. Handcrafted between 1700 and 1830, the *presepio* has lifelike figures and colorful details that re-create the Nativity within a vibrant and detailed panorama of 18th-century Italian village life. More than 100 superbly modeled human and angelic figures, along with animals, accessories, and architectural elements, cover 250 square feet and create a memorable depiction of the Nativity as seen through the eyes of Neapolitan artisans and collectors. (*You KNOW I just had to keep this part of the article*).

SYNAXIS OF HOLY MARY THEOTOKOS

December 26/January 8. *From oca.org*

On the second day of the feast, the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated. Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity—concretely and historically—is the humanity He received from Mary. His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.

Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these

days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

- *Father Alexander Schmemmann, The Services of Christmas (1981)*

PROTOMARTYR AND ARCHDEACON STEPHEN

December 27/January 9. *From oca.org*

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called "archdeacon." He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was "the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel."

Filled with the Holy Spirit, St Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned St Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. St Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, St Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death St Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

St Stephen is also commemorated on August 2 (Translation of his relics) and on September 15 (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415).