

CHURCH BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH "ST. VLADIMIR", HOUSTON
JANUARY 7TH, 2009



Christ is born! Glorify Him!



Troparion, Tone IV

Thy nativity, O Christ our God,/ Hath shone forth the light of knowledge upon the world;/ For therein those who worship the stars/ Have been taught by a star to worship Thee,/ The Sun of righteousness,/ And to know Thee the Orient from on high.// O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Kontakion, Tone III

Today the Virgin giveth birth unto the Transcendent One,/ And the earth offereth a cave to the unapproachable One./ Angels and shepherds give glory,/ The magi journey with the star.// For unto us a Child is born, the preeternal God.



MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR OF OUR PARISH FATHER LUBOMIR

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Dear beloved brothers and sisters of St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church in Houston, we wholeheartedly greet you with this bright and great Holiday of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We invite you to put aside all of your daily worries and problems, and to join us in this triumphant celebration.

Let Jesus, the Divine Child who was incarnated for our sake, bring enlightenment of His Divine Love, and bless all of you faithful members of the Russian Orthodox Church with His heavenly peace and Comfort.

May the Joy of this bright Holiday of Christ's Nativity remain with you always!

With Love in Christ,

Fr. Lubomir & family, Parish Council and Sisterhood.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2009

Schedule of Services for Nativity

Tuesday: January 6th - Vigil at 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: January 7th - D. Liturgy at 10:00 A.M.

Христос Рождается – Славите!

Сердечно поздравляем вас, возлюбленные о Господе братья и сестры, с великим и светлым праздником Рождества Христова. От всей души молитвенно желаем вам, отрешившись умом и сердцем от всей окружающей нас мирской суеты, во всей полноте приобщиться дивной радости этого нашего величайшего торжества.

Нас ради воплотившийся ныне Христос Богомладенец, да возжет и в вас спасительный огонь Божественной любви Своей, и да благословит вас, верные чада Русской Православной Церкви, Своим Божественным благословением!

Настоятель о.Любомир с семьей, церковный комитет и сестричество.

С Рождеством Христовым и Новым 2009-ым Годом

Расписание Богослужений

Вторник 6 - го января: Великое повечерие 5:00 вечера

Среда 7- го января: Б. Литургия в 10:00 утра



On the Night of Nativity
St. Ephraim the Syrian

Pure is the present night, in which the Pure One appeared, Who came to purify us! Let our hearing be pure, and the sight of our eyes chaste, and the feeling of the heart holy, and the speech of the mouth sincere!

The present night is the night of reconciliation; therefore, let no one be angry against his brother and offend him!

This night gave peace to the whole world, and so, let no one threaten. This is the night of the Most Meek 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 take revenge for offences! Now is the day of good will; let us not be harsh. On this day of tranquility, let us not become agitated by anger!

Today God came unto sinners; let not the righteous exalt himself over sinners!

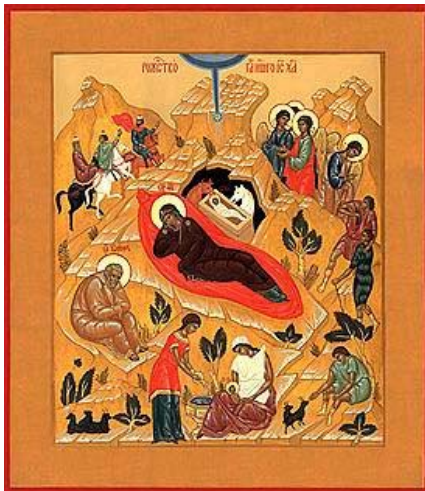
Today the Most Rich One became poor for our sake; let the rich man invite the poor to his table!

Today we received a gift which we did not ask for; let us bestow alms to those who cry out to us and beg!

The present day has opened the door of heaven to our prayers; let us also open our door to those who ask of us forgiveness!

Today the Godhead placed upon Himself the seal of humanity, and humanity has been adorned with the seal of the Godhead!

(Source: www.orthodox.net)



The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus is one of the most joyful days of the Orthodox Church. It ranks next to the greatest holiday, the Resurrection of Jesus. The Feast of the Birth of Jesus is also known as the "Incarnation of Christ." This means that Jesus became a man and came into the world to save us. We also refer to this joyous feast as Christmas.

Biblical Story

The story of the Nativity of Christ is beautifully told in the Holy Scriptures. The story is found in Matthew 1:18-25 and in Luke 2:1-20. No matter how often the Birth of Jesus is told, we realize that it is an important event.

As the story is told by the Apostles, the Roman Empire was powerful. The Romans had conquered much of the then known world. Judea and Samaria, what we know today as Israel, were included in their conquests. Emperor Augustus ordered that a census be taken in all his lands. He needed to know how many people lived in the empire so he could tax them. Everyone had to go to the town of their family's origin to register for the census. This meant that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. They were descendants of King David and Bethlehem was the City of David.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was a great distance from Bethlehem. It was about 100 miles over very rugged roads. Moreover, Mary was expecting the baby and it was almost time for her to give birth. Bethlehem was a small town and there were many descendants of David who had come to register for the census. By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them to stay. Joseph tried very hard to find a place to sleep that evening. There was no room at the inn. Finally, Joseph found a cave-like place where they could rest. This place was used by shepherds to protect their sheep in stormy weather. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus. The baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the straw in the manger.

Now, that night the shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep. Suddenly, there was a bright light which startled the shepherds. The light was so bright that it turned the night into daylight. Of course, the shepherds were frightened. Nothing such as this had ever happened. Soon an angel appeared and calmed them. The angel said:

"Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior; which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12).

Then a larger group of angels appeared. They praised and glorified God and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14). When the angels finished singing, they disappeared and the light began to fade. It became dimmer and dimmer until it was dark again. The shepherds were awed. They didn't know what to do. Finally, they decided to leave their flocks of sheep and go to Bethlehem. They decided that they wanted to see for themselves what the angels had told them. When they got there they found Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. They fell to their knees and adored Jesus.

Some Wise Men came from the East for they knew of the coming of Jesus. They had seen a star that told them that a new king had been born to the Jews. They followed the star and were looking for the child. At this time the governor of Judea was King Herod. He was a wicked man and was feared and hated by the people. When Herod heard about the Wise Men looking for the child, he invited them to his palace. Herod asked the Wise Men to find the child so that he, too, could worship Him. But Herod was lying. He did not want anyone to take his place. The Wise Men went on to look for Jesus. The Star led them to Jesus and Mary. When the Wise Men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Wise Men left but did not return to Herod. They had a dream that warned them that Herod wanted to harm Jesus. Instead, they returned to their native country by a different route.



Chronicles from our parishioners:

Рождественская история

Во Имя Отца И Сына И Святого Духа

Дороге дети и родители!

Дождались мы светлых дней Рождества Христова: давайте же порадуемся! Все мы преисполнены любви ко Господу Богу нашему, Иисусу Христу, Спасителю мира!

Место его рождения - устанный соломой вертеп, где от стужи укрывались быки и овцы - убежище, лишённое величия.

Не только ангелы, пастухи и волхвы свидетельствовали чудо рождения Богочеловека, но и простые животные, что находились в вертепе рядом с младенцем Христом.

Господь сотворил все живое на земле; все существует по Его повелению. Вышло повеление, следовавшее по порядку, и земля получила свойственное ей украшение в виде всего произрастающего и тварного. И рече Бог: да изведет земля душу живу по роду четвероногая и гиды, и звери земли по роду: и бысть тако... да изведут воды птицы летающая по земли, по тверди небесной (Быт. 1, 24).

Когда-то давно Господь создал первых людей — Адама и Еву, они жили в райском саду среди великолепных деревьев и трав. Рядом с ними жили звери. Люди и звери жили дружно, понимали язык друг друга. Но люди ослушались Бога, и этот порядок нарушился. Не стало в душе человека мира — и животные перестали любить и слушаться его. Разбежались они от человека. Сильные звери враждуют с ним, а слабые — убегают и прячутся. Только домашние животные по-прежнему повинуются человеку.

С того времени только некоторые святые, стяжавшие всей своей праведной жизнью много благодати Господней, смогли заново подружиться с дикими зверями. Из житий святых знаем, что их слушались дикие звери и птицы, а также святые помогали зверям, а звери — им.

Чудотворец преподобный Серафим Саровский дарил свою любовь каждому живому существу, будь то человек или животное. *«Радость моя»*, — так обращался он ко всякому, кто приходил к нему. Часто в лесную «пустыньку» святого наведывался медведь. Он приходил, принимал угощение, подставляя огромную голову для ласки и, довольный, ложился у ног старца, как верный пес. — *Вот послал мне Господь зверя в утешение*, — говорил святой Серафим, поглаживая медведя по лохматой шкуре.

Также мы знаем, что по молитвам ко святым и человек, и всякая тварь может вспоможение и утешение получить.

Это рассказ о том, что приключилось со мной в дни, когда мы праздновали Святого Божиюго угодника Николая — Чудотворца. В самый праздник, 19 декабря, и на

следующий день было очень тепло и душно в городе, а вот в ночь с 20-го на 21-е декабря наступало резкое похолодание: обещали даже заморозки ночью в Хьюстоне. Люди укрывали растения во дворах своих домов, чтобы не замерзли. И включали отопление дома, чтобы согреться самим и своим домашним животным.

У меня дома живет птичка - малый какаду, величиной с голубя. У него большие белые крылья, как у ангела. Он всегда радостный и никогда не унывает. Таким его создал Господь, будто нам в назидание, чтобы и мы радовались Богу и созданиям Его.

Святитель Василий Великий посвятил птицам целую главу (беседа номер 8, “О птицах”) в своих “Беседах на Шестиднев”. Он описывает множество разных видов птиц, “возбуждающих удивление к создателю”: “Сколько различий предусмотрел Он в птицах! Как отличил между собою одинаковых породю! Как снабдил каждую птицу отличительными свойствами! Недостанет мне дня, чтобы пересказать вам воздушные чудеса”. Святитель приводит много примеров из жизни и поведения птиц, данных нам Господом в назидание: “Все сие многообразие узаконено промыслиением Божиим о бессловесных в научение тебе, чтобы ты просил у Него нужного ко спасению. Какие чудеса не совершатся для тебя, созданного по образу Божию, когда Бог для такой малой птицы (здесь пример о птице зимородке) удерживает великое и страшное море, повелев ему быть тихим среди самой зимы?”

Мне же было уготовано такое назидание.

В тот последний перед похолоданием вечер я вернулась домой с покупками очень поздно, и... допустила оплошность: по неосторожности оставила входную дверь открытой, а дверь птичьей клетки автоматически успела открыться. Не успела я опомниться, как мимо меня, с шумным хлопаньем белых крыльев, мой попугай вылетел из дома в ночную тьму! Я в ужасе закричала - да поздно! Его и след простыл! Тщетно я час за часом обходила все улочки и осматривала высоченные деревья с фонариком: не сидит ли там моя белая птичка-попугай?... Ко мне уже и друзья устремились с желанием помочь в поисках... но я-то знала, что человеческая помощь здесь бессильна... Домашняя птица-попугай, если улетит, то обратно не возвращается: у птиц отсутствует чувство запаха, которое могло бы помочь на обратном пути к дому. В природе птицы прекрасно ориентируются, но “домашние” не умеют, т. к. не знают, как дом выглядит снаружи, да и еще в потьмах.

А обещанный ночной холод-то надвигается. Очень мне было горько, что я потеряла птицу, да еще, быть может, обрекла несчастного попугая на верную гибель, если не от холода, то от другого зверья: кошки или собаки.

Уж я и не помню, в каком месте нашего района я оказалась. Я почти потеряла надежду, но, помятуя о том, что только что был праздник святого, я взмолилась Николаю Угоднику: *“Милый-милый чудотворец! Помоги, Христа ради, найти мне это существо, по ошибке моей брошенное на погибель! Сколько чудес ты творишь и скольким людям являешь ты свою скорую помощь! Сотвори еще одно малое чудо: помоги мне спасти мою птицу - белого попугая!”* И в последний раз я громко позвала своего попугая по имени!!!...

И вдруг... дверь в незнакомом доме на темной неизвестной улице открывается, и в проеме показывается человек с белой бородой (!) и спрашивает меня: “Maam, what are you looking and screaming for?” – “I lost my parrot, white small cockatoo!” А он и

говорит: “Do not worry. Come – it is in our house, come and see”. Неверя своим ушам, я вошла в его дом, где на полу сидел мой попугай - белая-пребелая птица! Хозяин рассказал, что поздно ночью к нему в дверь постучал сосед и спросил, не их ли это белый какаду сидит посередине дороги? Хозяева очень удивдились; подозвали попугая к себе, который, не испугавшись, пошел к незнакомым людям в дом. Хозяева стали думать, что им с птицей делать. И только хозяйка пошла искать клетку по соседям, как хозяин услышал мои крики на улице. Птица-попугай был спасен незнакомыми людьми спустя всего несколько минут как я попросила помощи у святого!

“Возбранный Чудотворче и изрядный угодниче Христов, миру всему источаяй многоценное милости миро, и неисчерпаемое чудес море, восхваляю тя любовью, Святителю Николае: ты же яко имеяй дерзновение ко Господу, от всяких мя бед свободи, да зову ти: Радуйся, Николае, великий Чудотворче.”

Дорогие дети, вы наверно часто просите у своих родителей то собачку, то котенка, то маленького попугайчика. Мой рассказ - еще одно напоминание всем нам, как ответственно надо относиться к своим делам, в том числе и к решению обзавестись домашним животным. В наше время люди уже не нуждаются в животных – помощниках в физическом труде или в битве с врагом на войне. Но если семья решила приобрести домашнее животное или птицу для дружбы, не забывайте, что важна ответственность, а не только игра. И главное: во всем изучив премудрость Божию, не преставайте никогда удивляться, и во всякой твари славить Творца.

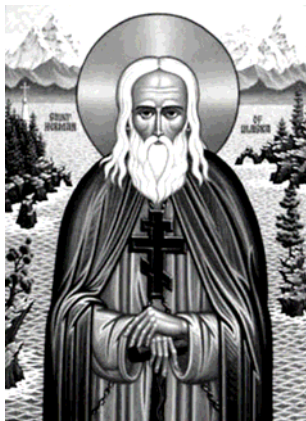
Исполнивший же все Своею тварью и во всем оставивши нам явственные памятники чудес Своих да исполнит сердца ваши всяким веселием духовным о Христе Иисусе Господе нашем, Которому слава и держава во веки веков. Аминь.

Христос рождается – славите!

Т.Ш.



Saints of December



SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA
Commemorated December 13 and August 9th

SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA, the first "American" saint, was the first to bring Orthodoxy to this continent. He came to America as a young monk in 1794 as part of the original Russian Orthodox mission to Alaska. He lived there until his repose, and for more than four decades taught the natives by word and example. With his own severe asceticism a secret, he ministered to both physical and spiritual needs of the people. And his memory is preserved, fresh and personal, among their descendents to this day. Ironically, however, he is unknown to so many other Americans. By his prayers may we, also, truly receive the Gospel he brought and follow the way that he taught.

St. Herman of Alaska (born 1756 or 1760 in Serpukhov, Russia – died November 15, 1837 on Spruce Island, Alaska) was one of the first Orthodox missionaries to the new world, and is considered by Orthodox to be the patron saint of the Americas.

St. Herman was born in the town of Serpukhov in the Moscow Diocese around 1756. Herman is his name in monasticism; his birth name is unknown. At 16, he entered the monastic life at the Trinity-St. Sergius Hermitage near St. Petersburg. There, while still a novice, he developed a severe throat infection or abscess. After fervent prayer before an icon of the Theotokos, he collapsed into a deep sleep. During this sleep, he saw a vision in which he was greeted by the Virgin Mary and healed. Upon waking the next day, there was no trace of the past infirmity. Approximately five years later he transferred from Trinity - St. Sergius Hermitage to Valaam Monastery. Eventually he was tonsured a monk, though he was never ordained to the priesthood. While at Valaam, he was under the spiritual guidance of Abbot Nazarius who had played a significant role in the revitalization of spiritual life in Russia. During this time, the head of the Golikov Shelikov Company, Gregory Shelikov, visited Valaam and made a request for several monks to begin a mission into the Alaskan territory. Father Herman was selected, along with seven other monks. Father Herman and the other monks arrived on Kodiak Island on September 24, 1794, aboard a ship named The Three Hierarchs. The monks educated and converted the native Aleuts, and as time progressed they found themselves protecting the natives from exploitation and abuse. Because of this moral stance the monks themselves were abused, arrested and physically threatened. In time, enduring hardship, inclement weather, illness and more, Father Herman stood as the only remainder from the original band of missionaries, the others either being martyred for their faith, dying of natural causes or returning to Russia. Father Herman felt it his duty to protect the Aleuts from exploitation. He defended them against the often cruel treatment of those who controlled the colony. His concern for their needs have been documented, expressed in letters sent to the former administrator of the colony, Simeon Ivanovich Yanovsky. Father Herman also would intercede before the governors on behalf of the oppressed. He helped the needy in whatever way he could. Between the years of 1808 and 1818, Father Herman lived on Spruce Island. Spruce Island is almost completely covered by forest and is separated by a strait about a mile and a quarter wide from Kodiak Island. Selecting this island for the location of his hermitage he called the land there "New Valaam" after the monastery from which he had left to come to America. He dug a cave in the ground and lived out his first full summer there. It was in this cave that he was later buried. To endure the harsh winters he constructed a cell in which he lived for more than forty years. A small chapel was built as well, along with a school and guest house. The local people would visit him often. Food was produced from an experimental garden he planted for himself and the

orphans of the land. He devoted his life to prayer and to performing those services he could do as a simple monk who had not been ordained to the priesthood. His love for the people of Alaska was sincere and he found happiness in being around the children. An epidemic plagued Alaskans when an American ship made land at Kodiak. Fr. Herman remained with the ill and dying, offering them constant comfort and ceaseless prayer. It is said that his love was so genuine that he could see into the hearts of his spiritual children and help them. The natives regarded him as their intercessor before God. When there was a tidal wave on the Island, Fr. Herman took an icon of the Theotokos, placed it on the beach and assured the people that the water would not rise beyond the place where the icon was, and it did not. When there was a great fire on the island, it is said that he dug a trench and stayed the flames. Prior to his death he foretold that there would be no priest to bury him and that he would be forgotten for 30 years. He died on November 15, 1837, but was not buried until December 13 because a priest could not come to serve the funeral, and was forgotten until the first investigation of his life in 1867 by Bishop Peter of Alaska.

ON LOVE FOR GOD

From the Life of St. Herman

Love Of God

Once the Elder was invited on board a frigate that had come from St. Petersburg. The captain of the frigate was a man quite learned, highly educated; he had been sent to America by Imperial command to inspect all the colonies. With the captain were some 25 officers, likewise educated men. In this company there sat a desert-dwelling monk of small stature, in an old garment, who by his wise conversation brought all his listeners to such a state that they did not know how to answer him. The captain himself related: "We were speechless fools before him!"

Father Herman gave them all one common question: "What do you, gentlemen, love above all, and what would each of you wish for his happiness?" Diverse answers followed. One desired wealth, one glory, one a beautiful wife, one a fine ship which he should command, and so on in this fashion. "Is it not true," said Father Herman at this, "that all your various desires can be reduced to one - that each of you desires that which, in his understanding, he considers best and most worthy of love?" "Yes, it is so," they all replied. "Well, then, tell me," he continued, "can there be anything better, higher above everything, more surpassing everything and in general more worthy of love, than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who created us, perfectly adorned us, gave life to all, supports all, nourishes and loves all, who Himself is love and more excellent than all men? Should not a person then love God high above all and desire and seek Him more than all else?" All began to say: "Well, yes! That is understood! That speaks for itself!"

"And do you love God?" the Elder then asked. All replied: "Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?" "And I, sinful one, for more than forty years have been

striving to love God, and cannot say that I perfectly love Him," answered Father Herman; then he began to show how a person should love God. "If we love someone," he said, "we always think of him, strive to please him, day and night our heart is occupied with this subject. Is it thus that you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always think of Him, do you always pray to Him, and fulfill His holy commandments?" It had to be acknowledged that they did not! "For our good, for our happiness," concluded the Elder, "at least let us make a promise to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this very moment we shall strive to love God above all, and fulfill His holy will!" Behold what an intelligent, superb conversation Father Herman conducted in society; without doubt this conversation must have imprinted itself on the hearts of his listeners for their whole life!

(Yanovsky, in Life of Monk Herman of Valaam, 1868)



THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR CHILDREN
Letters to God

"Dear Jesus Christ, Our Lord,
I would like You to open my mind up, and give me power to A's all test's.
There is also something I want - a hunting dog, not just a dog, but a Jack
Russell terrier. Peace on Earth."

"Dear Lord,
I wish for the world to be at peace, and ... get a scholarship."

"Dear God,
I want...to do well in school, to have a good friendship with people, and I
want to move things to keep me busy in my spare time.
Love You, God."

"Dear God,
I would like: a very happy year, my brother to be nicer, to be better at some
subjects, and ... a very happy family."

"My God,
I wish for everybody to be healthy!"

"Dear Lord, I would like to get better grades, to be smarter and I wish my brothers would not bother me so much."

"Dear God,
I would like myself to have better grades and lastly I would like peace on Earth."

"Dear God,
I wish I was good at my behavior.
Sometimes I wish if I say "Ba" I would turn into a mustang in the wilderness."

"God,
Bless us all, please!"



Saint Anthony the Great
Do you want true intelligence?

Then book learning isn't enough; you must also have spiritual knowledge. This includes being able to tell the difference between what is good and what is evil. Then you must avoid what is sinful and harmful to your soul and, with thanks to God, carefully keep what is good and what benefits your soul. If you do that, you are truly intelligent.

Saint Theophan the Recluse

Nothing comes without effort. The help of God is always ready and near, but is given only to those who seek and work, and only to those seekers who, after putting all their powers to the test, then cry out with their whole heart: "Lord, help us!"





MISCELLANEOUS

*Dear Sunday school students,

Children Orthodox Photography club has been established in our Sunday school. We encourage all of you to participate and become members. The only condition is to make photos by yourself and from your pilgrimages to monasteries and/or churches not only in USA, but around the world.

The first member is Maria Sharina. Her first exhibition from her recent pilgrimage to the Christian Orthodox Skete “St. Isaac of Syria”, Wisconsin, is going to be held in the school from January 10, to February 10, 2009.

We hope you will enjoy and actively participate! And good luck to all willing to become members!

*All parishioners are asked, (if you have desire for), to submit entries (news, articles, announcements, etc... in English or Russian) for our Church bulletin as early in the month as possible, and no later than the 15th, each month (so your material could be included the very next issue). If at all possible, please submit your material by e-mail to Editor Ekaterina Marinova (senior sister) at marinova@bcm.tmc.edu. Entries also can be dropped off in the church, during scheduled services.

I encourage all of you, please make an effort to participate and contribute to our future newsletters.

*Next Church bulletin will be published in English and Russian as well.

I wish to all of you a blessed Nativity of Christ, Our Lord! Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Ekaterina



Posted by the senior-sister Ekaterina.

(Some sources used from the web)