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# ST. MARK'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

452 DURHAM ROAD, WRIGHTSTOWN, PA, 18940

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DECEMBER 18TH, 2022 — 27TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Tone 2— Sunday before the Nativity.

Martyr Sebastian at Rome and his companions:  
 Martyrs Nicostratus, Zoë, Castorius, Tranquillinus,  
 Marcellinus, Mark, Claudius, Symphorian,  
 Victorinus, Tiburtius and Castles (ca. 287). St.  
 Modestus, Archbishop of Jerusalem (633-4). St.  
 Florus, Bishop of Amisus (7th c.). St. Michael the  
 Confessor at Constantinople (ca. 845). Ven.  
 Sebastian, Abbot of Poshekhónsk Monastery  
 (Vologdá — ca. 1500). Righteous Simeon,  
 Wonderworker of Verkhotúr'e (1694).

**Epistle:** Heb. 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

**Gospel:** Matt. 1:1-25



## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>Sunday, Dec. 18th:</b>	Hours & Divine Liturgy — 9:10 AM Litya for George Ristvey (2nd anniversary; requested by Margaret, Stephanie and Valerie Ristvey) Church School Nativity Program & Coffee Hour
<b>Monday, Dec. 19th:</b>	Preschool Church School — 10:45 AM
<b>Wednesday, Dec. 21st:</b>	Akathist w/ Litya — 9:10 AM
<b>Friday, Dec. 23rd:</b>	Royal Hours of Nativity Eve — 9:15 AM
<b>Saturday, Dec. 24th:</b>	Hours, Divine Liturgy, and Great Vespers of Nativity — 9:15 AM Nativity Vigil (Great Compline + Matins) — 7 PM
<b>Sunday, Dec. 25th:</b>	Hours & Divine Liturgy of the Nativity — 9:10 AM Coffee Hour

The 2023 St. Tikhon's calendars are now available in the narthex. Please take one per family.

The Wrightstown Food Cupboard needs coffee, tea and juices. The Cupboard is a 501(c)3 charitable organization.



Name Days: Sebastian Karaffa, Anastasia Killough

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Diocese of Alaska. Last Sunday, we collected \$464. If you wish to mail a donation separately, it may be sent to The Diocese of Sitka & Alaska, PO Box 210569, Anchorage, AK 99521.

Secret Santa: A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who donated towards the Woods Services Secret Santa project. We collected \$820 in monetary donations; several parishioners also donated items on the wish list directly, including an insulated mug and Dunkin' Donuts gift cards. St. Mark's purchased the remaining items for \$543.48, leaving a balance of \$276.52. Combined with the \$22.78 left over from last year's Secret Santa program, we now have \$299.30 to use for birthday gifts for some of the Woods residents.

#### UPCOMING NATIVITY/THEOPHANY EVENTS

<b>Friday, Dec. 23rd</b>	Royal Hours of Nativity — 9:15 AM
<b>Saturday, Dec. 24th</b>	Hours, Divine Liturgy & Great Vespers for the Eve of Nativity — 9:15 AM Nativity Vigil — 7 PM
<b>Sunday, Dec. 25th</b>	Hours & Divine Liturgy for Nativity — 9:10 AM
<b>Monday, Dec. 26th</b>	Hours & Divine Liturgy for the Synaxis of the Theotokos — 9:15 AM
<b>Thursday, Jan. 5th</b>	Hours/Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil/Great Blessing of Waters — 9:15 AM Vigil for Holy Theophany — 7 PM
<b>Friday, Jan. 6th</b>	Hours/Divine Liturgy/Great Blessing of Water — 9:15 AM

#### PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

##### **LIVING**

**Captive Hierarchs** PAUL and JOHN

**All those, everywhere, who care for the sick, the suffering and the vulnerable.**

**Ill-afflicted Clergy Archbishop +MELCHIZEDEK, Archpriests James, Stephen, Daniel and Michael**

**Matushki** Elena, Laryssa, Lisa, Priscilla, Myra, Suzanne, and Jennifer

**Servants of God** Monk Nicodemos, Charlotte, infant Luke, Larissa, Nicholas, Peter, Stephanie, Samuel, Sergei, Anna, Raymond, Andrew, Valerie, Charles, Margaret, Elena, Ayla, Sandra, Anatole, Maria, Julia, infant Jacob, Michael, Nancy, Eileen, Steven, Constance, Angela, Hunter, Jon Smith, Anselmo Pappas Scandalis

##### **DEPARTED**

**Newly departed:** Nicholai, Mat. Emily, Mat. Mary, Richard, Pdn. Paul

**Departed:** Ivan, Met. +HERMAN, Thomas, Michael, Venus, Helen, Anthony, All those who have died in service to their country, Archpriests Stephen and Vladimir, Mat. Mary, Priest George, Archpriest Paul, Kh. Shirley

## **VIGIL LIGHTS**

### **FROM IRENE ARHIPOV**

**FOR THE HEALTH OF:** SERGEI, STEPHANIE, PETER, ALEXANDRA, ALEXANDRA, ANNA

**IN MEMORY OF:** BORIS, NEWLY-DEPARTED RUTH, JOSEPH, VICTOR, NIKOLAI

### **FROM THE RISTVEY FAMILY**

**FOR THE HEALTH OF:** EILEEN, VALERIE, DELORES, NANCY, MICHAEL, MATTHEW, CHARLOTTE

**IN MEMORY OF:** GEORGE, PETER, NEWLY-DEPARTED RUTH

### **FROM LUCY ZNAK**

**FOR THE HEALTH OF:** LUCY CATE (6TH "B"), MICHAEL, MICHELLE, AMANDA, LUCAS, JOHN, MYLOSLAW

**IN MEMORY OF:** THEODORE, ALEXANDRA, EUGENE, ALLA, WASYL, MYLOSLAWA, LENARD

## **CHORAL CORNER**

**Q: Why does the choir always sing different different hymns during clergy Communion? It seems like the selection changes every week.**

**A:** It does change every week. Clergy Communion is the only point in any Orthodox service where the choir director has a large degree of freedom in music selection. At St. Mark's, we always begin with "What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me?". It's a short reflection on gratitude to God, excerpted from Psalm 116, that is appropriate in every circumstance. After that, we usually sing some of the *stichera* (verses) for the saint(s) of the day, taken from the hymns sung the previous night at Vespers (or Vigil, if it's a major feast).

In the Orthodox Church, the liturgical day *begins* with Vespers, so if you attend Great Vespers on Saturday night, liturgically speaking, you're at a Resurrection (Sunday) service; that's why these hymns are appropriate choices for clergy Communion. On one of the 12 Great Feasts, such as Nativity, we typically sing a portion of the Canon(s) instead of stichera from Vespers. The Canon(s) is/are the centerpiece of the Matins service, which is always part of the festal Vigil.

The hymns of Vespers, Grand Compline and Matins hold a treasury of theology within them, and this is our only opportunity to hear them during the Divine Liturgy. Listening to the words — *intently listening*, not merely to hear but to understand — informs our prayers and reveals more of the Holy Spirit's activity throughout every time and place. Let us attend!

**Question for next week:** *What is a kontakion?*

**Note:** You can find previous Choral Corner entries posted at <https://www.dariacortese.com/my-blog>.

### **FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

St. Mark's now has an Amazon Smile wishlist, which will allow donors to purchase needed supplies such as paper towels and have them shipped directly to the parish. The list may be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/2s4fc5zp>. Purchasing an item from this list will generate a receipt from Amazon you may use for tax purposes. **If you want your donation to appear on your parish contribution statement, please submit your receipt to Andy Skordinski.**

### **12/11 Counting**

General — \$3,214

Candles — \$128

Church Store — \$20

Education — \$2,500

Alaska — \$464

Parish Development — \$100

Secret Santa — \$150

**Total — \$6,576**

### **Online Giving (11/28-12/4)**

General — \$2,564

Parish Development — \$300

Alaska — \$50

**Total — \$2,914**

**GRAND TOTAL: \$9,490**

St. Mark's has been using a web-based suite of applications for several years now to track the parish finances and contributions as well as member demographic data. One of the features of this set of applications is the ability for individuals and their families to access their personal contributions and demographic information and to provide updates and download their own contribution statements called My Own Church. Here is how to create or access your account:

**The URL is <https://oca.parishsoftfamilysuite.com/>**

1. Then click on the New User link highlighted below and follow the directions to request access. Fill in all of the fields marked with a red \* and then click Submit.
2. Once you submit your request, and if all of the information you supplied matches what is in the system, you will be sent an email with a temporary password which you should change after you login for the first time.
3. If the system cannot match your data, the system administrator will be notified to review the information and approve your account.

**If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Swan at [kswan353@verizon.net](mailto:kswan353@verizon.net).**

### **MONTHLY CONTRIBUTION TRACKER**

	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	YTD
2022 Total General Contribution	\$20,194.59	\$20,090.00	\$18,668.00	\$15,574.00	\$26,949.00	\$16,942.00	\$18,850.00	\$13,950.00	\$13,911.00	\$17,486.08	\$14,471.00	\$197,085.67
2022 Avg. Per Week Per Unit (\$6)	\$72.12	\$89.69	\$83.34	\$69.53	\$96.25	\$75.63	\$67.32	\$62.28	\$62.10	\$62.45	\$64.60	\$73.17
Change from 2021 (Goal >\$8)	\$5.23	\$40.54	\$12.64	\$9.80	\$42.12	\$28.70	-\$7.99	\$12.63	\$6.78	-\$5.41	\$15.53	\$11.57
2021 Avg. Per Week Per Unit	\$66.89	\$49.15	\$70.70	\$59.73	\$54.13	\$46.94	\$75.31	\$49.65	\$55.32	\$67.86	\$49.07	\$61.60

	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	YTD
Building Fund Contributions	\$13,305.00	\$3,055.00	\$3,505.00	\$3,190.00	\$5,655.00	\$2,855.00	\$2,855.00	\$3,555.00	\$3,305.00	\$3,055.00	\$2,955.00	\$47,290.00
% of Goal Obtained (\$100k)	13.31%	3.06%	3.51%	3.19%	5.66%	2.86%	2.86%	3.56%	3.31%	3.06%	2.96%	47.29%

## **THE NATIVITY MESSAGE FROM HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP MARK**

December 9th, 2022

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Beloved Clergy, Matushki and Faithful,

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, proclaiming the present mystery; for He hath broken the middle wall of partition, and the flaming spear shall turn about, and the cherubim shall admit all to the tree of the life. As for me, I shall return to enjoy the bliss of paradise from which I was driven away before, by reason of iniquity; for the likeness of the Father, and the Person of His eternity, which is impossible to change, hath taken the likeness of a Servant, coming from a Mother who has not known wedlock: free from transubstantiation, since He remained as He was, true God, and took what had not been, having become Man for His love of mankind. Wherefore let us lift up our voices unto Him crying: "O Thou who wast born of the Virgin, O God, have mercy upon us!"

Have a blessed Feast of the Nativity and a joyous New Year. May our Lord bless you with good health, length of days, and a happy and peaceful new year. Thank you for your hospitality over the last year, as well as your generosity.

Yours in Christ,

+MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania



## NATIVITY MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE METROPOLITAN TIKHON 2022



Protocol 12/001

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church  
in America,

My Beloved Children in the Lord,

***Christ is born! Glorify him!***

'But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the Child and his Mother, and go to the land of Israel..." (Mt. 2:19-20)

The protagonist, so to speak, for the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel is the humble and silent man whom we call the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed.

Joseph is called 'just,' that is, he walked according to the commandments of God (Mt. 1:19). And, according to the scriptures, in keeping the commandments, a man may learn true knowledge. As the Psalmist says, 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments' (Ps. 118:66).

We find that this is exceptionally true in the case of St. Joseph. So just, so righteous, was he, that he was worthy to be taught and led by an angel. In an event that is sometimes called the annunciation to St. Joseph, an angel comes to the righteous man in his moment of doubt concerning the pregnancy of his betrothed, telling him not fear.

And this exhortation not to be afraid is no mere formality, for the next words of the angel disclose a dread and fearful task. The angel asks Joseph to serve the most holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary in place of an earthly husband ('take Mary your wife'), and to minister to the Lord Jesus Christ in the place of an earthly father ('you shall call his name Jesus').

This alone—the command to serve as a foster father to the God of all and as a guardian for the Mother of the Light—would be fearful enough. But soon St. Joseph and the holy Mother and Child for whom he is obliged to care are beset by extraordinary circumstances: a murder plot, an escape to a distant land, and a sojourn in that foreign country. We can only assume that, in Egypt, among strangers, away from home and property, the responsibility to provide for his supposed wife and son weighed very heavily upon this righteous man.

But again, the words of an angel, and this time these are words of relief and joy: 'Go the land of Israel.' Return home to your kin; return home to your property; return home to your people and your customs and your land.

Continue on page two



The first time an angel visited the righteous Joseph, he brought a dread order from the Almighty, an order that would have to be carried out under the most trying of circumstances. The second time an angel came, he brought a welcome reprieve.

But in both cases, the just man Joseph was equally obedient to the divine will. When he was commanded to care for Mother and Child, he took up the task without hesitation, no matter what difficulties ensued. And when he was told to return to Israel, he went just as readily.

The same paradoxical way that St. Joseph protected and cared for the omnipotent Master who holds all creation in the palm of his hand, God has given to us, Orthodox Christians, a special charge of sacred stewardship. God needs nothing from us, and yet he delights in allowing us to cooperate with him in the work of preaching the Gospel and sanctifying the world.

We might say that, just like the Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, we are, by divine grace, charged with caring for the newborn Christ. For what is the Church but Christ's Body, growing in this world in wisdom and stature until it reaches the measure of the stature of the fullness in the age to come (Lk. 2:52, Eph. 4:13)? And we all share a responsibility, according to our station in life, to care for the Church through prayer, financial support, sacramental participation, and sharing and teaching the faith.

And then, on another level, we are each charged to care for Christ in our life, in our own heart. St. Paul wrote to the Galatians that he was in travail until Christ be formed in them (Gal. 4:19). Each of us is called to reveal Christ in our life, to become a saint, to become Christ by grace. Through baptism and the Eucharist we have all received Jesus Christ within ourselves, as it were as a newborn Child. By prayer, careful practice of the virtues, attentiveness to our thoughts, and the cultivation of authentic love for God and man, we allow Christ to grow in us, until, we pray, it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

Today, celebrating the Nativity of the Savior in the flesh, may we all take St. Joseph as our example as we seek to foster Christ in the Church and in our own hearts. Let us practice the commandments, discern the will of God, and do his will, even when the circumstances are difficult.

Truly, this world is an Egypt, and caring for Christ and his Church as St. Joseph did always involves obstacles and challenges. But if we sojourn with the Christ-child in Egypt, faithfully attending to him in our lives and our communities, we can be assured that we, like St. Joseph, will one day hear those welcome words: 'Go to the land of Israel'—that is, come, ye righteous, and enter the heavenly mansions the Father has prepared for you from before all ages (Mt. 25:34).

By caring for our infant Savior and Lord in this way, we show our willingness to cooperate with the grace of God, God who so desired to have us as his fellow-workers, his brethren, and his friends that he deigned to be born in a cave and laid in a manger, on a cold night 'while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone' (Wis. 18:14). To him, our newborn God and Lord, be all glory, honor, and adoration, together with his eternal Father and his most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit.

With the blessing of the newborn Messiah, who is Lord and God before the ages, I remain sincerely yours in Christ,



+TIKHON  
Archbishop of Washington,  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada





## SERVICE SCHEDULE

<b>Hours + Divine Liturgy:</b>	9:10 AM (Sundays & feast days)
<b>Great Vespers / Vigil:</b>	6 PM (Saturdays) 7PM (Eve of feast) 6PM (Eve of feast – Sundays)
<b>Confessions:</b>	Saturdays after Vespers & by appointment
<b>Akathist Service:</b>	9:15 AM (Wednesdays)
<b>Panikhidas/Lityas:</b>	as requested

### CLERGY

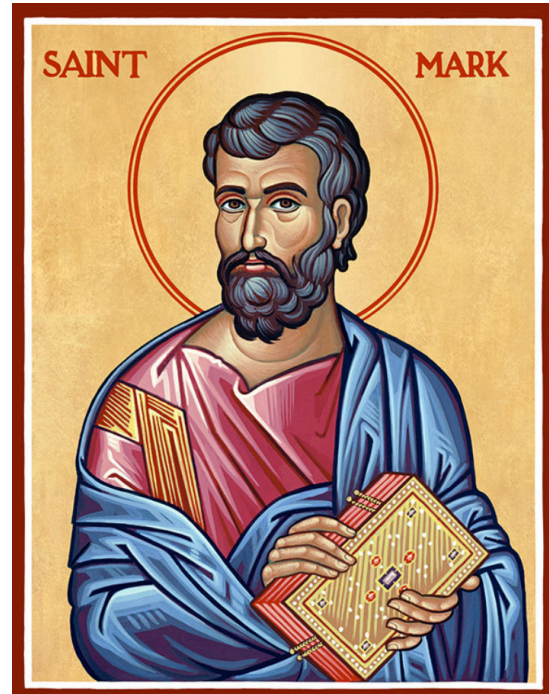
V. Rev. Raymond Martin Browne, *Rector*  
(570) 906-1388 (cell)  
stmarksorthodoxchurch@gmail.com

Protodeacon Gregory Moser, *Attached*  
V. Rev. Michael Sekela (Retired), *Attached*  
Subdeacons: Dustin Joseph Crosby  
Sergei Arhipov  
Readers: G. Peter Bohlender  
Marek Szeliga

### LAY LEADERSHIP

**CHOIR DIRECTORS:** Daria Cortése  
Mat. Martha Moser  
Sbn. Sergei Arhipov (Emeritus)

**CHURCH SCHOOL COORDINATORS:** Mat. Martha Moser  
Julie Stell



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**Baptisms:** Children must have **Orthodox Godparents** who provide a letter from their parish priest. Parents and Godparents are required to attend two preparatory classes. Please make scheduling arrangements by contacting Fr. Martin directly.

**Weddings:** Arrangement should be made **at least six months** prior to the wedding; scheduling is subject to the Church's liturgical calendar. Please speak with Fr. Martin **before making reception arrangements.**