

St. Mary Protection of the Theotokos Parish

Pokrova-allentown.org 1031 Fullerton Ave, Allentown PA 18102
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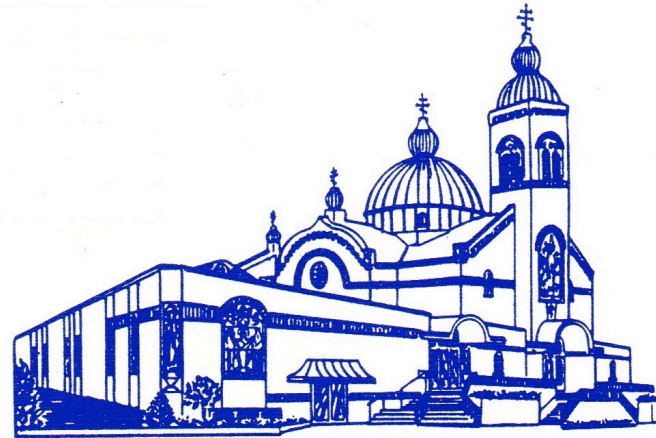
GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

GLORY FOREVER TO GOD!

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СЛАВА ІСУСУ ХРИСТУ!

СЛАВА НАВІКИ БОГУ!



Welcome to the God-loving and God-protected Orthodox Christian parish of *Pokrova* (Protection of the Holy Theotokos or “St. Mary’s”)!

It is a blessing to have you with us today and we encourage you to come back as often as you are able. Like us, you may find that you have found your spiritual home here!

We are a parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA under the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and our doors and hearts are open to you and your family!

Please visit our website: pokrova-allentown.org and help yourself to the many pamphlets located on the literature racks outside the church. Fr. Anthony would love answering your questions; you can reach him at 484-232-9423, father.anthony@yahoo.com, on Facebook (Douglas Anthony Perkins or facebook.com/pokrova.allentown), or face to face after services.

Handicap parking is available behind the church; regular parking is available on the street and (on Sundays) at Kohut Funeral Home.

Upcoming Services

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|------------------|------|---------|--|
| Sunday | 1/10 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy; Coffee, School, Spiritually Speaking |
| Wednesday | 1/13 | 7:00PM | Parish Vigil – Circumcision of Christ (CHAPEL) |
| Thursday | 1/14 | 9:00AM | Festal Divine Liturgy (CHAPEL) |
| Saturday | 1/16 | 9:00AM | Div. Liturgy – Forefeast of Jordan (CHAPEL) |
| | | 6:00PM | Great Vespers w/Litya (CHAPEL) |
| Sunday | 1/17 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy; Coffee, School, |
| Monday | 1/18 | 9:00AM | Royal Hours of Theophany/Jordan (CHAPEL) |
| | | 10:30AM | Vesperal Liturgy of Theophany (CHAPEL) |
| | | 7:00PM | Great Vigil w/Blessing of Water (CHURCH) |
| Tuesday | 1/19 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy–Theophany/Jordan (CHURCH) |
| Wednesday | 1/20 | | ** NO SERVICE ** |
| Friday | 1/22 | | ** HOUSE BLESSINGS BEGIN** |
| | | | (I’ll have a sign-up sheet out starting on Theophany) |
| Saturday | 1/23 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy (CHAPEL) |
| | | 6:00PM | Great Vespers w/Litya |
| Sunday | 1/24 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy; Coffee, School, Spiritually Speaking |
| | | 3:00PM | Pan-Orthodox Water Blessing at Jordan Park (6 th and Sumner in Allentown) |
| Wednesday | 1/27 | 7:00PM | Akathyst (CHURCH) |
| Saturday | 1/30 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy - St. Anthony (CHAPEL) |
| | | 6:00PM | Great Vespers w/Litya (CHAPEL) |
| Sunday | 1/31 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy; Coffee, Church School |
| Wednesday | 2/3 | 7:00PM | Akathyst (CHURCH) |
| Saturday | 2/6 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy - St. Anthony (CHAPEL) |
| | | 6:00PM | Great Vespers w/Litya (CHAPEL) |
| Sunday | 2/7 | 9:00AM | Divine Liturgy; Coffee, Church School Spiritually Speaking |

Check our website for the full listing of services & activities!!

January 10th: Gone 7: After Nativity

Tropar (Tone 7, Resurrection)

By Your Cross You destroyed death. / To the thief You opened Paradise. / For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy. / And You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God, / to proclaim that You are risen, // granting the world great mercy.

Tropar (Tone 4, of the Nativity)

Your Nativity, O Christ our God, / has shone to the world the light of wisdom! / For by it, those who worshipped the stars, / were taught by a star to adore You, / the Sun of righteousness, / and to know You, the Orient from on high. // O Lord, glory to You!

Tropar (Tone 2, of the Righteous Ones)

Proclaim the wonder, O Joseph, / to David, the ancestor of God; / you saw a Virgin great with child; / you gave glory with the shepherds; / you worshipped with the Magi; / you received the news from the Angel. / Pray to Christ God to save our souls!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Kondak (Tone 3, of the Righteous Ones)

Today godly David is filled with joy; / Joseph and James offer praise. / The glorious crown of their kinship with Christ fills them with great joy. / They sing praises to the One ineffably born on earth, // and they cry out: "O Compassionate One, save those who honor You!"

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kondak (Tone 3, of the Feast)

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, / and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One. / Angels with shepherds glorify Him; / the Wise Men journey with the star, // since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child!

Prokimen (Tone 7; Psalm 28:11,1)

The Lord shall give strength to His people. The Lord shall bless His people with peace.

v: Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!

(Tone 4; Psalm 67:35) God is wonderful in His saints, the God of Israel.

Epistle. Galatians 1:11-19. Summary: St. Paul gave up a lot to become Christian!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! (Tone 7; Psalms 91:1,2; 131:1)

v: It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Your Name, O Most High.

v: To declare Your mercy in the morning, and Your truth by night.

v: Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness!

Gospel. St. Matthew 2:13-23. Summary: Herod tried to kill Christ... it didn't work!

Homily: How do WE respond to the Nativity?

Summary of today's Gospel:

God humbles Himself to save mankind, leaving His rightful inheritance as God and becoming man; being born as a baby in Bethlehem. And how does the world He has come to save greet Him? Is He born in a temple? In a palace? These would have been more fitting than what it gave Him: a manger in a stable. Worse yet, when the leaders of the day learned of His birth from the wise men – what was their reaction? Did they submit to the Ruler of All Ages? Did they nurture, serve, and protect Him so that He could grow into manhood as their prophet, priest, and king? No. In today's Gospel, we hear how the Holy Family had to flee the Holy Land into Egypt in order to avoid assassination. The Holy One, the Savior, had come into the world and it tried to kill Him, with the murder of "Rachel's children" as the sacrifice on the altar of their own selfish rage. It is a shameful tale, and it serves as a warning to us all. **As always, it is less useful for us to see ourselves in the place of the angels, or the wise men, or the shepherds in this bit of history** – not when we are so often the very people who humble Christ, persecute Him, and drive Him out of our lives.

Re-summarizing the Gospel

Yes, just as Christ humbled Himself to become a child in Bethlehem so that He could transform the world; so to has He humbled Himself to be into our midst – entering into the temple of our hearts – in order to transform us. And unfortunately the parallel between these two stories continues: how is the heart into which He comes? Is it a place befitting the Ruler of the Ages? Or is it more like an animal's trough in a forgotten section of our lives, our own equivalent of the stable manger? And having learned that God is within us, how do we react? Do we center our lives on this reality, or do we persecute Him and drive Him out of our minds, out of our thoughts, out of our plans, and out of our lives?

Gnosticism – we need no king but (our divine) ego!

Scholars of American religious history have noted that the dominant religion is not and has never been Christianity – it is instead a form of Gnosticism. At its core is the belief that we are in union with the divine, that the divine light of immortal wisdom burns within us and is at the core of who we are. These scholars note that, to the extent we look Christian, it is because we use Christian words to describe this belief. So when we hear – as we have today – that Christ has come to dwell within our hearts, what we hear is a validation of what we already believe to be true: that we are divine.

The problem is that it isn't true. God is God and we are not. And while it is His desire to transform us into something more (this is the whole point of the Nativity, after all), **when we claim divinity we are doing the same thing Herod did: setting ourselves**

up on the throne and driving Christ into the margins of our lives. Think about it: why did Herod seek to kill the Christ child? He was following His instinct for self-preservation. Christ was a threat so He had to be dealt with in the same way all rivals must be dealt with. If we are not careful, we will do the same. And in the reality we construct around our selfishness, we will be the good guy (the good god!). We will believe that God is working through us, that he is our guiding light. Our powers of self-delusion (*prelest*) will be so strong that we will claim to have created the greatest temple to God within the best part of our hearts – when all we have done is ratify the continuing worship of our own pride.

The danger of delusion

Christ really has been born within us. He lives in the center of our souls. But our souls are so clouded by our thoughts and our feelings that we do not even notice. If we are not very careful, if we do not work against our fallen natures, instead of nurturing the Christ within us, we will nurture our own pride and call it “God”. But this artificial god of our own creation is a pale shadow of the true God – it is believable enough to delude us, but not enough to save us.

Ego or Christ; Pride or Agape – how do we know?

This has all been a bit abstract, so let me put it in terms that are easy to understand; let me provide a means of evaluation to determine who really sits in the temple of our lives. As we were reminded in today’s scripture readings, the Messiah did not live for Himself – every action, everything He did (His very life!), was done in sacrificial service to others. And not just to others, but to others who were not like Him and who rarely understood or appreciated what He was doing. Moreover, He did these things not out of fear of damnation or hope of a reward (eternal or otherwise), but because He was truly devoted to others – He was love incarnate. **If our lives really are characterized by this kind of selfless action – then there is no doubt that Christ is growing within our hearts.** But it’s hard for us to gauge our own intentions: the god of our pride is the master of illusions. It will attempt to convince us that we are more generous with ourselves than we really are. The practical test is this: are we willing to live outside our comfort zones, deny ourselves (take up the cross, St. Matthew 16:24), and do things for others without the slightest hope or expectation of receiving something in return (St. Matthew 5:43-48)? Because this is love of Christ, and it is this kind of attitude that is the sign of the real Christian (St. John 13:34-35).

Perhaps I am still being too obtuse. Let me get specific. In America, there is one area of our lives that is more like to show us how this inner-dialogue of self-justification goes than any other: what is our attitude towards sacrificial giving and tithing? How do we feel about the idea of secretly giving up a substantial proportion of our income – at least as much as we spend on vacations - to the church (even if others who could give much

more give less or nothing)? How much time are we willing to give up each day to get down on our knees and pray for the healing of those in need? What does our prayer rule look like? Did we say our communion prayers before coming to church? Are we willing to take vacation for Feast Days and charitable work? How much effort are we willing to spend building healing connections with the broken people in our families, our parish, and our communities?

If we are like most people, when challenged to actually do something selfless, our egos will stand up on their thrones and begin making excuses. Christ never made an excuse a day in His life. He rolled up His sleeves and did what needed to be done – He got it done.

Christ is Born! And He has made His home within the manger of our souls. The rest is up to us. Through Him, we can get it done, too!

Parish News and Events

What a beautiful Nativity Feast – God bless everyone who contributed and attended!

It’s Caroling Season! We will be joining other groups to carol for His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony next Saturday at 1:00 PM in South Bound Brook!

Spiritually Speaking (every other Sunday after Coffee Hour in the Social Hall): This Sunday: “Orthodoxy and the Paranormal!” Bring your ghost stories!

St. Mary’s Seniors

1/11 at 12:30PM: Seniors’ Meeting; 1/27 at 8:00AM: Hoagie Sale

St. Mary’s Ukrainian Dance Group: Every Wednesday @6:30 in the Social Hall

Educational Series: Saturdays, 12/5-1/2 @ 5:00 in the Chapel (before Vespers)

Reading and Greeter Schedule

Today’s Epistle Reader: Robin Bodner; Next Week: Dennis Ritter

Today’s Communion Prayers: Joseph Hutzayluk.; Next Week: Marianne Schrantz

Today’s Greeters: Judy Miller & Vera Muzychka;

Next Week: Richard Rosko

In Orthodoxy, communion is reserved for those who are members of an Orthodox parish and who have prepared themselves through prayer and fasting. We would love to have you as a member and communicant here at St. Mary’s - See Fr. Anthony if you would like to join our parish!