

December 16th : Third Sunday of Advent

Opening Censing, “Blessed is the Kingdom”, Great Litany, First Antiphon, Little Litany, Second Antiphon, Little Litany, Beatitudes and Little Entrance.

Tone 4 Tropar (Resurrection)

When the women Disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of the Resurrection, / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles: / “Death is overthrown! / Christ God is risen, // granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 4 Tropar (for the Pokrova/Temple)

O Mother of God, sheltered by thy coming / we faithful people today keep feast in joy, / and looking at thy most pure image, / moved to the depths of our hearts, we say: / “Protect us with thy precious veil / and deliver us from every ill, / by entreating Christ, thy Son and our God, // to save our souls.

Tone 4 Kondak (Resurrection)

My Savior and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains. / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, // He has risen on the third day!

Tone 2 Kondak (for the Pokrova/Temple)

The Choirs of Saints and the Virgin / stand in church praying to God for us. / Angels and hierarchs bow in adoration, / Apostles and Prophets all rejoice / in thee, O Mother of God, // who for us prays to God Eternal.

Prokimen Tone 4 (Resurrection; Psalm 103:24,1)

O Lord, how manifold are Your works; in wisdom have You made them all.

Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:15-17. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia (Resurrection; Psalm 44:5,8)

v. Go forth, prosper and reign, for the sake of meekness, righteousness and truth!
v. For You love righteousness, and hate iniquity.

Gospel: St. Luke 18:18-27. And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said, “All these I have observed from my youth.” And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looking at him said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” But he said, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

Litany of Fervent Supplication. Litany for the Catachumens.

First and Second Litanies of the Faithful.

Cherubic Hymn and the Great Entrance.

Litany of the Offering. Kiss of Peace. The Creed (“I believe”).

The Anaphora (Prayers of Changing the Bread and Wine).

Litany of the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's Prayer (“Our Father”).

Holy Communion. Final Litany. Prayer at the Amvon. Dismissal.

*** Please join us in the hall for coffee and fellowship after the service. ***



see: <http://www.uocyouth.org/uoccollegemission.html> for details.

Fr. Andrew Damick Rants on the (non)Pagan Roots of Christmas

Well, it's time for a good Christmas rant. This requires a rant, because every year, we see the same ignorant silliness. (Sorry, but it's just true.) Supposedly, Christmas is secretly pagan, secretly syncretist, secretly a co-opting of pagan stuff and ignorantly claiming it to be Christian. But the truth about these things is so available that it's literally staring out at you even from Wikipedia.

Is this about the Christmas tree, mistletoe, or Yule logs?

It's not like pagans invented trees or even invented cutting them down and bringing them inside. Are you really saying that pagans own trees? And mistletoe? Really? You think that Christmas hangs upon mistletoe? So provincial, you guys. So, yes, you can have Christmas without Christmas trees (or mistletoe). Most Christians always have. And do you really expect me to believe that burning a (Yule) log in a fireplace has some unbreakable pagan connection that Christians just shouldn't do? Yes, there was Germanic pagan Yule stuff. But Christmas has as much to do with pagan Yule stuff as the Fourth of July has to do with the deified Julius Caesar (for whom July is named). So, yes, you can have Christmas without anything to do with "Yule." Most Christians always have.

But what about the date of Christmas?

This is the worst. Did you know that the original Christmas festival was a holiday celebrated together with Christ's baptism on January 6? No *Sol Invictus* (Roman pagan feast of the Invincible Sun) there, I'm afraid, so that can't be the origin of Christmas. And even when Christmas did get moved to December 25 (getting separated out from the baptism feast), it was not about *Sol Invictus*, which actually post-dates (you read that right!) the association of Christ's birth with December 25, being introduced by the emperor Aurelian only in AD 274. Meanwhile, St. Hippolytus said in his commentary on Daniel (written ca. AD 202-211) that Jesus' birthdate is December 25. (Maybe the pagans stole it from the Christians!) Nor was it a cooptation of Saturnalia (17-23 December), unless you are willing to say that, if your birthday falls around the first weekend of September, you must belong to the organized labor movement because your birthday is near Labor Day. Facepalm, folks. Nor is it's possible connection with the Winter Solstice problematic: before the introduction of *Sol Invictus* in AD 274, there were no pagan solstice celebrations going on near where Christians were. (True story.) Besides, pagans do not have exclusive rights to organizing feasts around the rhythms of the natural world!

But isn't Christmas really about [insert any other symbol or custom that has been associated at some point with some pagan religion]?

You might well be right that that thing was once upon a time associated with some pagan religion. But we Christians are all about baptizing people (and, metaphorically, other thing

- continued below

Announcements

Today after Liturgy our children will be presenting our St. Nicholas program; please stay and join us!

On 12/30 after Divine Liturgy we will be "**Greening the Church**", putting up our wreaths and the like. Please see Vera if you would like to help.

Dear Parishioners: **the Jr UOL is having a food drive from now to February 3, 2018** which is also the date of the Super Bowl of Caring. Please contribute to these great events with your donations of non perishable food items and Contribution of your favorite soup to support this great cause.

Our next **DINNER & WINE TASTING** is scheduled for 2/9 @6PM. Let's invite all our friends!

Our **St Mary's Seniors**: Next meeting – 1/8. Hoagies 1/23. Join us!

We are offering **special one-time "Surviving the Holiday" sessions** to help people who are dealing with the loss of loved ones deal with the special grief that comes during the holidays: 12/17 at 10AM, 12/18 at 6:30PM, & 12/31 at 10AM.

Lord willing, we will resume our Bible Study journey through the Old Testament in early February.

We have two regular Grief Share groups: Mondays at 10AM and Tuesday at 6:30PM. Both meet in the Library. See Joe Truchan for details.

For more information on the "**Cloud of Witnesses" Pan-Orthodox Young Adult Group**, see the group's Facebook page (Cloud of Witnesses (Lehigh Valley)), e-mail ambermetz92@gmail.com, or talk to Stephanie or Roman Milan!

Fr. Anthony will be traveling to Georgia for Western Christmas (on vacation to visit family) and to Romania between our Nativity and Theophany (to represent our seminary and present a paper at a theological conference). This has necessitated a change from the normal Holiday schedule. Thank you for your support!

Reader Schedule

12/16 Nik Fartuch, 12/23 Rdr. James, 12/30 John Sokalsky.

Greeter Schedule

12/16 Judy Miller & Vera Muzychka, 12/23 Perkins family, 12/30 Eleanor Fox.

Advent, Nativity, and Theophany Schedule (also see our website)

Sunday	12/16	9AM	Divine Liturgy & St. Nicholas Program
Wednesday	12/19	10AM	Divine Liturgy – St. Nicholas!
Saturday	12/22	10AM 6PM	Liturgy – Conception of St. Anna Great Vespers (NOTE TIME CHANGE)
Sunday	12/23	9AM	Divine Liturgy
Sunday	12/30	9AM	Divine Liturgy (Fr. Jim Cairns serving) Greening the Church!!!
Saturday	1/5	10AM 4PM	Royal Hours of the Nativity Vespers of Christmas Eve
Sunday	1/6	9AM 5PM 7PM	Divine Liturgy (Christmas Eve!) Holy Supper (in Hall) Grand Compline of the Nativity
Monday	1/7	10AM	Festal Divine Liturgy of the Nativity
Sunday	1/13	9AM	Deacon's Typika (Dn. Michael Abrahamson serving)
Saturday	1/19	10AM	Theophany: Divine Liturgy, Blessing of Waters, Blessing of Houses
Sunday	1/20	9AM	Divine Liturgy, Blessing of Houses
Saturday	1/26	4PM	Great Vespers w/ Litya
Sunday	1/27	9AM	Divine Liturgy
Saturday	2/2	4PM	Great Vespers w/ Litya
Sunday	2/3	9AM	Divine Liturgy
Thursday	2/7	6:30PM	Akathist to the Pokrova
Saturday	2/9	4PM	Great Vespers w/ Litya
Sunday	2/10	9AM	Divine Liturgy (Zacchaeus Sunday)
Thursday	2/14	5:30PM	Parish Vigil of the Meeting (40 th Day)
Friday	2/15	10AM	Divine Liturgy – Meeting (40 th Day)
Saturday	2/16	4PM	Great Vespers w/ Litya
Sunday	2/17	9AM	Divine Liturgy (Publican & Pharisee)
Fast-free Week!			
Thursday	2/21	5:30PM	Akathist to the Pokrova

- rant continued...

and changing them to be Christian. Christianity is the religion that's all about changing stuff and making it Christian. So even if that thing was once pagan in some way, we're taking it and making it not pagan now. So there. That's what we do. BAM. It's not pagan any more, that thing. It's been transformed. So it's Christian now.

Now, even though some custom or other might have once had an association with paganism, the feast of Christmas itself does not have its origins in this practice of baptizing formerly not-Christian stuff. It's not a co-opting and changing of anything, unless you're talking about humanity itself. Christmas is definitely all about reclaiming humanity itself and making it conform to Jesus Christ, and His birth is definitely a big part of that project, because any sanctification of humanity will include this most basic and universal human experience — birth.

So as you can see, my point here is not that there has never been anything that was once associated with paganism that now is used by Christians (though not as many things as are claimed). Rather, those things don't make Christmas pagan, and it's especially silly to make that claim about things that are regional in space and/or time.

Is this about not believing in Jesus Christ?

Look, if you don't believe in Jesus Christ, that He is truly the God-man and the Son of God, that He came into this world to destroy the power of death and make a way for us to resurrection and healing, I get it. But don't claim that this stuff is pagan. When we Christians say that we worship Jesus Christ and celebrate His birth because we welcome His coming into the world, we really mean it. We're not worshiping anyone or anything else.

If you want to be pagan, be pagan. If you want to be an atheist, be an atheist. But if you're a Christian, you can rest easily knowing that Christmas isn't about paganism. It's just not.

And if you are a pagan or an atheist, I'm not going to stop you from being those things, but I definitely do invite you to be baptized into Christ so you can celebrate the real Christmas with the Christians.

Is this about going to church?

Well, you've got me there. It turns out that Christmas is about worshiping Jesus Christ, and you can't do that in a truly Christian way without coming together with other Christians to pray and (for most Christians in history and even now) to celebrate the Holy Eucharist together. So, no, you cannot have Christmas without worship. And most Christians never will.

And those who do, including those who actually cancel church services when December 25 is a Sunday (I wish I were making that up), you have a problem. You are not doing Christmas rightly. You are doing some other thing. Get to church and do Christmas. And then do the eating and whatever else after.

Okay, rant over. Worship Jesus. Have joy in His birth! He's come to destroy death! Kick it.

Welcome to the God-loving and God-protected Orthodox Christian parish of *Pokrova* (“St. Mary 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 (and a wonderful home, it is)!

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, your family, and your friends!

Pokrova-allentown.org | father.anthony@yahoo.com | 484-232-9423