

# Holy Apostles Newsletter

DIOCESE OF THE WEST

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



Holy Apostles Orthodox Mission

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## From The Holy Fathers

... He comes not as a fierce man of war, threatening all things living with death, but as a newly born babe, bringing the hope of rebirth and life into the entire realm of death; He comes--but the land of destruction does not meet, does not embrace, does not praise, does not even see its Saviour, and does not hear the Word of God keeping silence in a manger. Virtually in vain does the glory which Jesus Christ had with God the Father before the world was (John 17:5) on the lips of the angels, follow Him descending into the world and pursuing Him, attain even unto the earth.

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

## CHRIST IS BORN; GLORIFY HIM!

**T**he Twelve Days of Christmas are a part of the church year often misunderstood among Christians who are not part of an actively liturgical tradition. Contrary to much popular belief, these are not the twelve days before Christmas, but the twelve days from Christmas until Theophany. By starting with the Nativity of Christ and ending with His Baptism, we participate in the reality that by Jesus' birth, His Incarnation in the flesh, the doorway to union with God is opened: "The Son of God became man that man might become God" (St. Athanasius). Our membership in Him, that is our acceptance of His invitation to partake of the divine, is actualized by baptism in the Church, His Body.

In keeping the celebration of Christmas for the twelve days between Nativity and Theophany, we also remind ourselves that our salvation is a process, for we proceed from His invitation (Nativity) to our acceptance (Theophany/baptism) and beyond.

There are many ways, some simple, others elaborate, by which we can make the Twelve Days of Christmas real in our homes. We can draw out the season as a time for festivity and the nurturing of a Christ-centered life for our children, our friends, and ourselves. In simpler times, the theme of this season was unrestrained hospitality. People took time off with their friends and family to simply enjoy and bask in

the light and joy of Christ's birth and His revelation as the Son of God, the Savior of mankind. We too can make this effort in various ways. Perhaps a good place to start would be with a simple tradition in our own homes that keeps us focused and celebratory in our hearts. Sit down with friends or family each evening and write a few (or additional) Christmas cards. Exchange a small gift or good deed each day until Theophany. Or make an effort to open your home for hospitality in the spirit of receiving the Christ-child. In Greece, a fire or smoldering log is kept burning for twelve days to keep evil spirits at bay until the house blessings of Theophany seal the new year's holiness. In Ireland, young people sing home to home each evening, coercing other youths to join them until a final home gives hospitality to them all. In some countries there is a special meal each night, while others focus on an abundance of candles that signify their home is "open" to receive Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. One tradition is to keep torches burning all day and then combine them all into a bonfire each evening around which everyone gathers, drinks, and eats. Slavs emphasize the sauna or

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# Community Forum

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hot baths as a time of daily “cleansing of the soul” and wholesome fellowship. Others spread housecleaning duties (ending with a sweet treat) over the twelve days in preparation for Theophany house-blessings. Theophany is also remembered as the day the Three Magi reached the cave and baby Jesus. In light of this, themes revolve around kingliness, royalty, and journey. Some folks set up their manger scene with the wise men far off and have the children move the wise men a little closer each day until Theophany. Most traditions for this period revolve around hospitality and friendship, light, the giving of gifts, doing of good deeds, and general goodness with which to usher in the new year. Whatever the theme, picking something and having a time for it each of the days between Nativity and Theophany may work well to sanctify the home and prepare the heart for exercises in godliness throughout the coming year. And this is better than any New Year’s resolution!

## CHRISTMAS DETAILS

Friday, Jan 6 - Royal Hours at 9 am

Friday, Jan 6 - Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil at 5 pm (fast from Noon on if you plan to receive Holy Communion)

Sat, Jan 7 - Matins, Divine Liturgy at 7:30, 9:00 am  
No Great Vespers Saturday night (enjoy the evening with your family & friends with Father’s blessing)

Sunday, Jan 8 - Matins, Divine Liturgy at 7:30 am, 9:00 am (no coffee hour)

Sunday, Jan 8 - Nativity party with elephant gift exchange at Domico’s home - immediately after service  
The main dish and paper goods/ware will be provided for the Nativity party. Please bring a side dish according to last name:

A-P - Savory side dish

Q-Z - Dessert

Here is the breakdown by ages for the kids re: games/gifts:

0-5: Parents bring wrapped gift with child’s name on it. No game, the child will just get the gift.

6-12: Bring a wrapped gift for blind exchange game. The gift should be “gender neutral”

13+: white elephant game

## OFFICE HOURS FOR FR. DIMITRI

Beginning in January, Father Dimitri will dedicate Thursdays from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. to office hours at the church. He will be available during this time to meet individually with people, for both confession and/or any individual time that might be needed. He of course continues to be available for confession on Saturday nights after Great Vespers but this day is offered if there is more time needed for whatever reason. While he plans to be at the church on this day, if you know you would like to talk and/or confess, please give him a call and schedule a time to meet, so as to avoid any conflicts. And, lastly, he knows this time will not be convenient for everyone; you can always call him and schedule a time to meet if there is a need for a different day.



## Kitchen Corner

### HOT SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE DIP

1 cup thawed, chopped frozen spinach  
1 1/2 cups thawed, chopped frozen artichoke hearts  
6 ounces cream cheese  
1/4 cup sour cream  
1/4 cup mayonnaise  
1/3 cup grated Parmesan  
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

#### Directions

Boil spinach and artichokes in 1 cup of water until tender and drain. Discard liquid. Heat cream cheese in microwave for 1 minute or until hot and soft. Stir in rest of ingredients and serve hot.