



Η ΑΓΙΑ

ΛΟΥΚΙΑ

DEFENDING HER HONOR AS WELL AS HER FAITH

Countless are the number of believers who suffered persecution and death for the cause of Christ. Among them was **MARTYR LUCIA**, who was born of wealthy and well-known Romans. The family lived in Syracuse, Sicily.

Her father died rather early, and her mother became seriously ill with an issue of blood. This presented somewhat of a dilemma for the young Lucia. But she selflessly took care of her ailing mother, praying as well for her restoration to health. Finally, Lucia took her ill parent to the Sicilian town of Katana, to pray at the tomb of the Martyr Agafia. The sick mother was healed after great petition. The two returned

home, praising God for His mercy and aware that Christianity is the true religion.

Lucia decided then not to marry. Furthermore, she convinced her mother to sell her property and distribute it to the poor. This angered a young man whom she knew and who had wanted to take Lucia in marriage. The suitor denounced her to the governor, and she was promptly arrested for confessing the Christian faith, and brought to trial.

After suffering torments, Lucia steadfastly refused to renounce her faith in Christ, and she was martyred. This valiant woman died by the sword in the year 304. Her relics are said to repose in Venice.

St. Mary's Orthodox Church
217 First Street – Coaldale Pa 18218-1602
Phone.....570-645-2772
OUR WEBSITE...www.stmarysnativity.org

Rector: V. Rev. James Weremedic
Retired Attached: V. Rev Paul Ropitsky
Reader Hours: Gloria Bench

Sunday, December 17, 2023

Choir Director: Wash King
Reader Epistle: Edward Pierson

28th Sunday after Pentecost (13th of Luke) TONE 3
Sunday of the Forefathers. Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths:
Ananias, Azarias, and Misael.

Tone 3 Troparion (Resurrection)

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm. He has trampled down death by death. He has become the first born of the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world // great mercy.

Tone 6 Kontakion (Forefathers)

You did not worship the graven image, O thrice-blessed ones, but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, you were glorified in a trial by fire. From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: "Hasten, O compassionate One! Speedily come to our aid, // for You are merciful and able to do as You will!"

We welcome all our visitors today! We want to let you know that we are so glad you came to pray with us. Please come again; join us after the Divine Liturgy in the parish hall for fellowship. If you do not have a home church, we invite you to become a part of our parish family. Only those Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves may approach the Chalice and receive Holy Communion.

SERVICES:

Sunday, Dec. 17	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy with Oath of Office Church School & Fellowship
Saturday, Dec. 23	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Dec. 24	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Strict Fast , No Coffee Hour...
Sunday, Dec. 24	4:00 PM – Holy Supper in the Parish Hall (Eve of the Nativity)
Sunday, Dec. 24	6:00 PM – Great Compline and Matins (Eve of the Nativity)
Monday, Dec. 25	9:30 PM – Divine Liturgy, The Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ
Saturday, Dec. 30	4:00 PM – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sunday, Dec. 31	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy, Church School & Fellowship

Prayer List*:

Fr. Michael Evans, Fr. James Weremedic, Sbdn. James Weremedic
Stephanie Chmel, Ilene Devine, Julia Forte, Michael & Julia Harahus, Karen & Rose Harkins, Nancy King, Olga Kushnir, Anna Marie Mantey, Dorothy & Joseph Macenka, Anna Pierson, Melissa Schmitt, Helen Sheers, Olga Sidoriak, Martha Stafiniak, Michael Teno, Elizabeth Warcholak, Victoria Weremedic, Marie Yurchak

* Names will cycle off approximately every 30 days. You may request to have your name or the name of a loved one placed back on the list at any time by contacting Fr. James directly.

On December 24, 2023, we will have **our first parish 'Holy Supper'** in our church hall with traditional strict fasting foods. Celebrating as a family of St. Mary's is important to prepare for the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ! **Please sign up on the signup sheet at the candle desk.**

If anyone is in need of a priest, please call Father James Weremedic at 570-645-2772. Visitation of the Sick and Infirm: If you are going into the hospital for any reason, please inform Fr. James at the Rectory. Emergency Calls: Please call the Rectory (570-645-2772) anytime (day or night) in an emergency.

Candles (December 17)

7-day Vigils-Altar... In memory of **Helen Butts** offered by Raymond & MaryJo Danchak
Altar Candles... In memory of parents **Martha & Nick Teno** offered by their children
Eternal Lamp... In memory of deceased **Lorchak family** offered by Barb Teno
7-day Vigils-Tetrapod... In memory of parents, deceased **Teno family members** offered by Barb Teno
Decorated Candles... In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel** offered by family members
Vigil Crosses... In memory of **Kay & Paul Maliniak** offered by family members William Yelsh

December Birthdays: 3- Izrael Bracero, 9- Odess Remington, 11- Stephanie Chmel,
16- James Weremedic, Jr., 18- Kathryn Jupin, 19- Ixsaviar Bracero, 28- Sophie James

Financials 12/10/2023: Operating Acct: Weekly Envelopes \$762, Non-envelope \$255,
Holy Day \$233, Altar Candles \$10, Candles \$74, Donation \$1,550

If you have any Redner receipts, please call or get them to Helen King
Please use your Boyer's card when shopping at Boyers; if you need one call Helen King

Fellowship Hour Hosts:

December 17 Lena & Ron Berezniak December 24 **No Fellowship Hour**

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Please use your Boyer's card when shopping at Boyers; if you need one call Helen King.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 TONE 3 28th Sunday after Pentecost (13th of Luke)
Sunday of the Forefathers. Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths: Ananias, Azarias, and Misael.

Colossians 3:4-11 (Epistle)

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Silent Prayer before the Gospel:

Illumine our hearts, O Master Who lovest mankind, with the pure light of Thy divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Thy gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto Thee. For Thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thy Father, Who is from everlasting, and Thine all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Luke 14:16-24 (Gospel)

Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 'For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

Nativity of Christ

The Orthodox Faith - Volume II - Worship - The Church Year - Nativity of Christ - Orthodox Church in America (oca.org)

The celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord's Resurrection. A fast of forty days precedes the feast, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Saviour. Thus, on Saint Andrew's Day (November 30) and Saint Nicholas Day (December 6) songs are sung to announce the coming birthday of the Lord:

Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger. O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing Christ in her womb (Vesperal Hymn of Saint Nicholas Day).

On the eve of Christmas, the Royal Hours are read and the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil is served with Vespers. At these services the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's birth are chanted, emphasizing the prophecy of Micah which foretells Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Saviour, and the prophecies of Isaiah about the appearance and character of the Messiah:

The Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which translated is, God with us (Is 7.14-15).

God is with us, understand all ye nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us (Is 8.9).

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end (Is 9.6-7).

The Vigil of Christmas begins with Great Compline, highlighted once again by the solemn chanting of God is with us and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah. At Compline there is also the singing of the Troparion and Kontakion of the feast along with the special hymns glorifying the Saviour's birth. There are also the special long litanies of intercession and the solemn blessing of the five loaves of bread together with the wheat and the wine of which the faithful partake and the oil with which they are anointed. This part of the festal vigil, which is done on all great feasts, is called the litya (in Greek, the *artoklasia* or the breaking of the bread).

At the beginning of the Christmas Matins, which together with Compline form the Christmas Vigil, the six matinal psalms begin as usual with the words: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men" (Lk 2.14).

At the Christmas services these words of the angelic song are normally sung with great solemnity rather than being chanted as at the daily service. The Christmas Matins proceed as usual. The gospel reading from Matthew (1.18-25) tells of the birth of Christ, and all of the hymns and verses glorify His appearance on earth:

Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet Him. Christ is on earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For He is glorified (First Ode of the Christmas Canon).

The Christmas Liturgy begins with psalms of glorification and praise. The troparion and kontakion mark the entrance with the Book of the Gospels. The baptismal line from Galatians 3.27 once again replaces the Thrice-Holy. The Epistle reading is from Galatians:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir (Gal 4.4-7).

The Gospel reading is the familiar Christmas story from Matthew (2.1-12), and the liturgy continues in the normal fashion. A specific two-day celebration follows, dedicated to Mary the Theotokos and Saint Stephen, the First Martyr. The period of Christmas rejoicing extends to Epiphany during which time the Christmas songs are sung and fasting and kneeling in prayer are not called for by the Church.

The feast of Christmas is formally entitled the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. At Christmas we celebrate the birth as a man of the Son of God, the one who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is truly God from all eternity. Thus, we sing in the Church.

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 is born as a little child (Kontakion).

The feast of Christmas was not a separate Church feast for the first four centuries of Christian history. It was celebrated with Epiphany in the one great feast of God's appearance on earth in the form of the human Messiah of Israel. The Nativity began to be celebrated as such on the twenty-fifth of December in order to offset the pagan festival of the Invincible Sun which occurred on that day. It was established by the Church quite consciously as an attempt to defeat the false religion of the heathens. Thus, we discover the troparion of the feast making a polemic against the worship of the sun and the stars and calling for the adoration of Christ, the True Sun of Righteousness (Mal 4.2), who is Himself worshiped by all of the elements of nature.

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshiped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness and to know Thee, the Orient from on high [Lk 1.78, translated as Dawn or Day spring]. O Lord, glory to Thee! (Troparion).

Thus, the feast of Christmas is the celebration of the world's salvation through the Son of God who became man for our sake that, through him, we might ourselves become divine, sons of God the Father by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit in us.