

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

Sunday, December 12, 2021
Choir Director: Wash King

25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – TONE 8 (12th of Luke).
Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. St. Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of
Tremithus (ca. 348).

Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

Glory Be Forever!

Services:

Sunday, December 12	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy – Holy Forefathers
Sunday, December 19	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy – Sunday before the Nativity
Saturday, December 25	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy – Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ
Sunday, December 26	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy – Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Followed by Paratas
Sunday, January 2	9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy – followed by Rescheduled Annual Parish Meeting First Announcement

Prayer List:

Matushka Lovey Ropitsky, Matushka Lisa Weremedic,
Andrew Balliet, Dr. Ronald Berezniak, Michael Birosik, Clark Andrew Bogosh, Theodore Bogosh,
Emmalyn Naomi Buchanan, Evanna Jane Buchanan, Stephanie Chmel, Irene Davis, Ilene Devine, Julia
Forte, Karen Harkins, John King, Michael Kulick, John & Olga Kushnir, Nancy Lorchak, MaryAnn &
Paul Macenka, Mary Maholick, Mildred O'Shura, Anna Pisko, Melissa Schmitt, Althea Shellock, Olga
Sidoriak, Mary Simone, Martha Stafiniak, Martha Teno, Michael Teno, Elizabeth Warcholak, Russell
Wishousky, Russell Yallas, & Marie Yurchak.

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 12)

7-Day Vigils/Altar... In memory of **John P. O'Shura** offered by Millie O'Shura
Altar Candles... In memory of **Aunt Olga Hebda** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak

Eternal Lamp... In memory of **Mother, Mary Lutash** offered by Raymond & Mary Jo Danchak
Vigil Crosses... For the Health of **Marie Skripnek** offered by Ted Bogosh
7-Day Vigils/Tetrapod... For the Health of **Helen Sheers** offered by Ted Bogosh
Decorated Candles/Tetrapod- In memory of **Andrew & Mary Bybel Family** offered by Family Members

December Birthdays: 9- Odess Remington, 11- Stephanie Chmel (101), 16- Sbdn James Weremedic,
22- Karoline Vavra, 28- Sophia James

Financials 12/5-6/21: *Operating Acct:* Candles 67 - Altar Candles 30 - Offerings 1,826 – Non-Envelope 0 - Holy Days 340 – Donations 100 = Total \$2,363.00. – Building Fund 5, Poinsettias 35. Please continue to keep filling your church envelopes. – Thank you!

Since no copper had to be replaced, the final cost of the roof repairs was \$6,260.00. Donations so far for roof repairs is \$2,810.00. Thank you very much for all the donations towards this project. Names of donors are on file. In the Spring, sections of the brick wall on the church will need to be sealed to prevent water leakage.

CONFESSION

Confessions have resumed with minor modifications. Please call the rectory at 570-645-2772 and talk to Father James for a reservation. Call between 9:30 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Individual schedule times will be spread out during the week. Husband and wife can be scheduled together. Anyone wanting to have a confession, but has concerns of COVID-19, should contact Father James to make the appropriate accommodations.

In accordance with Archbishop Mark's instructions on 12-06-2021, the annual parish meeting needs to be rescheduled. The meeting will be held on January 2, 2022 in the church hall after Divine Liturgy.

Please use Amazon Smile when ordering from Amazon.

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.

AN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

PROPHET DANIEL remains to this day one of the most fascinating figures from ancient Israel. He was one of the multitude of persons taken to Babylon some six hundred years before Christ. That period when the Israelites were taken by the Chaldeans from the "land of milk and honey" is known as the Babylonian Captivity.

Daniel became one of the leaders of the people in exile. He became, in fact, one of the chief advisors to the king. But the kingdom was pagan, and Daniel and God's people would not bow down and pray to false gods. This led to difficulties. The Book of Daniel tells about three young men who were thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to worship an idol. They walked in the fire unharmed as the Angel of the Lord protected them from the flames.

During the reign of King Darius, some of the native princes became overly jealous of Daniel, who occupied an important position. They found a way to trap him. They got the king to decree that anyone who made a request to any god or man, other than the king, was to be thrown into a den of lions. Thus the king was deemed divine. Daniel knelt as usual praying three times a day by his window open towards Jerusalem. There the enemy princes found him praying to God, and reported him to Darius. The ruler was troubled, but consigned Daniel to the lion's den. Our Lord saved him and Daniel was restored to position and favor of the king. His spiritual strength had protected this man of God.

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.

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.'"

Sunday of the Forefathers

Troparion — Tone 2: By faith You justified the Forefathers, / when through them You betrothed Yourself beforehand to the Church of the Gentiles. / The saints boast in glory, / that from their seed there is a glorious fruit: / she who bore You without seed. / By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.

Kontakion — Tone 6: You did not worship the graven image, / O thrice-blessed youths, / but shielded by the ineffable Essence, / you were glorified in your trial by fire. / In the midst of the unbearable fire you called upon God, crying: / "Hasten, O compassionate One. / and in Your mercy, come to our aid, / for You can do so if You will."¹

The Sunday that falls between December 11-17 is known as the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. These are the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, who lived before the Law and under the Law, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God said, "In thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, 22:18).

Saint Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus

Saint Spyridon of Tremithus was born towards the end of the third century on the island of Cyprus. He was a shepherd, and had a wife and children. He used all his substance for the needs of his neighbors and the

homeless, for which the Lord rewarded him with a gift of wonderworking. He healed those who were incurably sick, and cast out demons.

After the death of his wife, during the reign of Constantine the Great (306-337), he was made Bishop of Tremithus, Cyprus. As a bishop, the saint did not alter his manner of life, but combined pastoral service with deeds of charity.

According to the witness of Church historians, Saint Spyridon participated in the sessions of the First Ecumenical Council in the year 325. At the Council, the saint entered into a dispute with a Greek philosopher who was defending the Arian heresy. The power of Saint Spyridon's plain, direct speech showed everyone the importance of God's wisdom before human wisdom: "Listen, philosopher, to what I tell you. There is one God Who created man from dust. He has ordered all things, both visible and invisible, by His Word and His Spirit. The Word is the Son of God, Who, came down upon the earth on account of our sins. He was born of a Virgin, He lived among men, and suffered and died for our salvation, and then He arose from the dead, and He has resurrected the human race with Him. We believe that He is one in essence (consubstantial) with the Father, and equal to Him in authority and honor. We believe this without any sly rationalizations, for it is impossible to grasp this mystery by human reason."

As a result of their discussion, the opponent of Christianity became the saint's zealous defender and later received holy Baptism. After his conversation with Saint Spyridon, the philosopher turned to his companions and said, "Listen! Until now my rivals have presented their arguments, and I was able to refute their proofs with other proofs. But instead of proofs from reason, the words of this Elder are filled with some sort of special power, and no one can refute them, since it is impossible for man to oppose God. If any of you thinks as I do now, let him believe in Christ and join me in following this man, for God Himself speaks through his lips."

At this Council, Saint Spyridon displayed the unity of the Holy Trinity in a remarkable way. He took a brick in his hand and squeezed it. At that instant fire shot up from it, water dripped on the ground, and only dust remained in the hands of the wonderworker. "There was only one brick," Saint Spyridon said, "but it was composed of three elements. In the Holy Trinity there are three Persons, but only one God."

The saint cared for his flock with great love. Through his prayers, drought was replaced by abundant rains, and incessant rains were replaced by fair weather. Through his prayers the sick were healed and demons cast out. A woman once came up to him with a dead child in her arms, imploring the intercession of the saint. He prayed, and the infant was restored to life. The mother, overcome with joy, collapsed lifeless. Through the prayers of the saint of God, the mother was restored to life.

Another time, hastening to save his friend, who had been falsely accused and sentenced to death, the saint was hindered on his way by the unanticipated flooding of a stream. The saint commanded the water: "Halt! For the Lord of all the world commands that you permit me to cross so that a man may be saved." The will of the saint was fulfilled, and he crossed over happily to the other shore. The judge, apprised of the miracle that had occurred, received Saint Spyridon with esteem and set his friend free.

Similar instances are known from the life of the saint. Once, he went into an empty church, and ordered that the lampadas and candles be lit, and then he began the service. When he said, "Peace be unto all," both he and the deacon heard from above the resounding of a great multitude of voices saying, "And with thy spirit." This choir was majestic and more sweetly melodious than any human choir. To each petition of the litanies, the invisible choir sang, "Lord, have mercy." Attracted by the church singing, the people who lived nearby hastened towards it. As they got closer and closer to the church, the wondrous singing filled their ears and gladdened their hearts. But when they entered into the church, they saw no one but the bishop and several church servers, and they no longer heard the singing which had greatly astonished them.

Saint Simeon Metaphrastes (November 9), the author of his Life, likened Saint Spyridon to the Patriarch Abraham in his hospitality. Sozomen, in his *Church History*, offers an amazing example from the life of the saint of how he received strangers. One time, at the start of the Forty-day Fast, a stranger knocked at his door. Seeing that the traveler was very exhausted, Saint Spyridon said to his daughter, "Wash the feet of this man, so he may recline to dine." But since it was Lent there were none of the necessary provisions, for the saint "partook of food only on certain days, and on other days he went without food." His daughter replied that there was no bread or flour in the house. Then Saint Spyridon, apologizing to his guest, ordered his daughter to cook a salted ham from their larder. After seating the stranger at table, he began to eat, urging that man to do the same. When the latter refused, calling himself a Christian, the saint rejoined, "It is not proper to refuse this, for the Word of God proclaims, 'Unto the pure all things are pure'" (Titus 1:15). Another historical detail reported by Sozomen, was characteristic of the saint. It was his custom to distribute one part of the gathered harvest to the destitute, and another portion to those having need while in debt. He did not take a portion for himself.

but simply showed them the entrance to his storeroom, where each could take as much as was needed, and could later pay it back in the same way, without records or accountings.

There is also the tale by Socrates Scholasticus about how robbers planned to steal the sheep of Saint Spyridon. They broke into the sheepfold at night, but here they found themselves all tied up by some invisible power. When morning came the saint went to his flock, and seeing the tied-up robbers, he prayed and released them. For a long while he advised them to leave their path of iniquity and earn their livelihood by respectable work. Then he made them a gift of a sheep and sending them off, the saint said kindly, "Take this for your trouble, so that you did not spend a sleepless night in vain."

All the Lives of the saint speak of the amazing simplicity and the gift of wonderworking granted him by God. Through a word of the saint the dead were awakened, the elements of nature tamed, the idols smashed. At one point, a Council had been convened at Alexandria by the Patriarch to discuss what to do about the idols and pagan temples there. Through the prayers of the Fathers of the Council all the idols fell down except one, which was very much revered. It was revealed to the Patriarch in a vision that this idol had to be shattered by Saint Spyridon of Tremithus. Invited by the Council, the saint set sail on a ship, and at the moment the ship touched shore and the saint stepped out on land, the idol in Alexandria with all its offerings turned to dust, which then was reported to the Patriarch and all the bishops.

Saint Spyridon lived his earthly life in righteousness and sanctity, and prayerfully surrendered his soul to the Lord. His relics repose on the island of Corfu (Kerkyra), in a church named after him (His right hand, however, is located in Rome).

Righteous Priest Aaron

Commemorated on December 12

The Righteous Aaron was the son of Amram and Jochebed, and the elder brother of the Prophet Moses the God-seer, and also of Miriam. He was a direct descendent of Levi by both parents. God called him "the Levite" in Exodus 4:14, when He appointed Aaron to be the spokesman for Moses, who was "slow of speech," before the people. Later, he would also speak on behalf of Moses before Pharaoh in Egypt (Ex. 4:30; 7:2). Aaron was married to Elisheba, the daughter of the Prince of Judah (Ex. 6:23), who bore him four sons.

Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh and asked that the Hebrews be released from their slavery. The Lord told Moses that Pharaoh would ask them for a miracle, and that Aaron should throw down his rod before him, and it would become a serpent (Ex. 7:9). When Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt, God told Moses to have Aaron stretch forth his rod over the Nile River, and it would turn to blood.

Following a succession of plagues, Pharaoh relented and let the people go, then Moses led them on their long journey to the Promised Land. In Chapter 17 of Exodus, the Hebrews fought Amalek in a battle at Rephidim. Moses stood atop a hill with the rod of God in his hand. As long as he raised his hand, the Hebrews prevailed, but when he became tired and lowered it, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur sat Moses on a rock and held up his hands, one on each side. This was a prefiguration of the suffering of Christ, because the arms of Moses formed a cross. In the Greek Septuagint, the names Aaron and Hur begin with the letters Alpha and Omega, another reference to Christ (Revelation 1:8).

Aaron and his sons were anointed and sanctified to serve God as priests (Exodus chapter 29). In chapter 32, Aaron fell into temptation when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Commandments. Since Moses was taking a long time, the people grew restless and asked Aaron to make them a golden idol in the form of a calf so that they could offer sacrifices. He gave into them, and Moses was angry when he returned and saw them dancing and singing before the calf. He threw down the tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments, and then he burned the golden calf and ground it to powder. He scattered the powder on the water, and he made the people drink it. When Moses asked those who were on the Lord's side to gather around him, the Levites came to him. He ordered them to take their swords and slay their sons, companions, and neighbors. About three thousand people were killed that day.

Later, Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses for marrying a Cushite woman (Num. 12:1). God was angry with them, so He punished Miriam with leprosy. She was healed by God seven days after Moses interceded for her. In chapter 17 of Numbers, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron, so God commanded that the leaders of the twelve tribes should have their names inscribed on their rods and placed in the tent of testimony. God would reveal His choice to make the people cease their grumbling against Moses and his brother. Aaron's rod bloomed miraculously in the tent of the testimony, to show that he had been chosen for this purpose. Aaron reposed atop Mount Hor when he was one hundred and twenty-three years old. One of his descendants was Saint Elizabeth, the mother of Saint John the Baptist (Luke 1:5).