

## **Parish Prayer List (Living)**

*(Parish)*

Evangelos	Carolyn	Robert	Subdcn Jason
John B.	Maria	Anamay	Ron
Anthony	Paula	Kathleen	SJ
Beverly	David	Michael	Anastasia
Nina	Walter	Nathan	Mary
Thomas	Gloria	Thecla	Michael
Reader John	Kimberly	Matthew	Baby Henson
Sbdcn Maximus	Emilia	Photini	George S.
Magdalini	Constanka	Emil	George D.
Rita	John D.	Pam	Grace
Olga	Marina	Hesychios	Elizabeth
Sophia	Danny	Reader Mark	Evdokia
Nicholas	Mary	Rachel	Katherine
Lily	Theodora	Elizabeth	Joseph
Justine	David	John R.	Johannah
Christopher	Crystal	Rosa-Jane	Ian
Gabriel	Marcia	John L.	Kay

*(non-Parish)*

Alexandra	Rachael	Thomas Pappas	Lillian Pappas
Christopher	Fr. Michael	Paige and Paul	Jennifer
Gabriella	Josiah	Jacob	Catherine
Hugh	Raymond	Judy	Mike
Ron	Clint	Peter	Maria
Brian	Brian	Sean	Sara
Ruth	Janet H.	Pam	Ana
Roz	Krista	Marty	Margo
Rob	Kera	Vanessa	Emma
Jane	Scott	Torin	Breanne
Jon	Linda		

## **Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)**

Athanasios Malevitis (11/1)

Betty Pilja (+12/6)

Katina Pait (12/9)

Mary Louise Blomeley (+12/09)

Josephine Urban (+12/15)

Dominick LoGalbo (+12/25)

## **Thoughts from the Fathers**

How couldst Thou be the compassionate Creator of the world and not have come down in Thy mercy among us? How couldst Thou, only from a misty and painless distance, have looked on our wretchedness and placed no cool finger on us in the flames nor moved into the den where we are attacked by wild beasts? In truth, Thou hast come down among us even

lower than any sort of earthly love demands. Thou was born in the flesh, to live and save those in the flesh; Thou didst drink of the cup of all Thy creatures' suffering, sharing with none this cup of bitter communion, by Thyself draining it. Thou art therefore our Savior, for Thou has been God among us because Thou was able to be our Savior. Glory to Thee, O Jesus our Emmanuel!

*Saint Nikolai of Zicha*

He lay in a manger, a child newly born: tiny in body, abject in poverty. But in this Child something great lay hidden, of which these, the first-fruits of the Gentiles, had learned, not from earthly rumor, but from heavenly revelation. Hence we have: We have seen His Star in the East. They announce, yet they ask; they believe, and yet they seek to know: as though prefiguring those who walk by faith, yet still desire to see.”

*St. Augustine*

“Saint John Chrysostom stated that ‘human reason has greater difficulty understanding how a God might become man than to explain how a man might become a child of God (Homily 2, 2 on Matthew). ‘We cannot fathom this mystery’ (Praises, tone 4), for ‘the incarnation of the Word is a greater and more profound mystery than that of the creation of the world’ (V. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 156). Over against Arianism, which reduced Christ to the level of a superior man, the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325)—which was confirmed by each of the six subsequent Councils – affirmed Christ’s consubstantiality (homoussios) with the Father. ... Separated from God, the human creature becomes ‘diabolical’ (from the Greek diabolos, ‘that which divides’), an instrument of death and deception, deprived of the self-giving life.”

*Michael Quenot, The Resurrection and the Icon*

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## **Tradition & the Twelve Days of Christmas**

December 4, 2013 by **Fr. Hans Jacobse**

*What happens when we try to secularize Christmas, and why Orthodox Christians need to remain faithful to their traditions.*

In the Christian tradition of both east and west, the twelve days of Christmas refer to the period from Christmas Day to Theophany. The days leading up to Christmas were for preparation; a practice affirmed in the Orthodox tradition by the Christmas fast that runs from November 15 to Christmas day. The celebration of Christmas did not begin until the first of the twelve days.

As our culture became more commercialized, the period of celebration shifted from Thanksgiving to Christmas Day. Christmas celebration increasingly conforms to the shopping cycle while the older tradition falls by the wayside. It's a worrisome shift because as the tradition dims, the knowledge that the period of preparation imparted diminishes with it.

Our Orthodox traditions — from fasting cycles to worship — exist to teach us how to live in Christ. The traditions impart *discipline*. These disciplines are never an end in themselves but neither can life in Christ be sustained apart from them.

The traditions only make sense only when they have the Gospel as their reference. If we forget that these traditions are given to us to help us lay hold of Christ, then they appear to be superfluous and the disciplines they encourage us to do seem to serve no real purpose. We start to evaluate the discipline by the values of the dominant culture — by a cost-benefit calculus, rather than seeing them as ways to morally reorient ourselves towards Christ.

Instead of preparing for the birth of Christ through inward reorientation, we follow the direction of the dominant culture and skip any preparation altogether. We party instead of fast. We get caught up in the commercial energy of the season rather than wait on the Spirit of God.

It's a dangerous path. Our culture is becoming increasingly secularized; the sacred dimension of creation is slipping from view. This loss of this sacred sensibility has grave ramifications for society that are expressed in many different ways such as the vulgarization of popular culture or the reduction of an unborn child

to a commodity. If this view prevails our culture will inevitably view man as nothing more than an animal or a machine.

But man is more than an animal or a machine. The scriptures reveal man is created in the image and likeness of God, a phrase that means that man is not complete unless he partakes of God — God must be part of man's life. This longing — this innate knowledge that man is created for God — never leaves man although a person can bury it if he so chooses.

A secularized mind is blind to the inherent holiness of life. Maintaining our traditions is one way to avoid this debilitating malady. Christmas is not just "Jesus' birthday" (an impoverished notion heard more and more even among Orthodox faithful), but much more.

The birth of Christ and His baptism ought never to be divorced. Both events define the Christmas season. It imparts to the Christian the knowledge that Christ's coming into the world and Christ's sanctification of the waters makes our new life possible — a sonship by adoption accomplished through baptism.

When the link between Christmas and Theophany is broken (and by neglecting the proper preparation we break it), the cultural memory of the promise of new birth expresses itself in weakened and ultimately insufficient cultural forms. These forms function as a new tradition.

Religion is not the product of culture; religion is the source, writes philosopher Russell Kirk.

*"It's from an association in a cult, a body of worshipers, that human community grows...when belief in the cult has been wretchedly enfeebled, the culture will decay swiftly. The material order rests on the spiritual order."*

Orthodox Christianity can contribute to the recovery of the moral foundation of American culture by imparting knowledge that can strengthen and deepen that foundation. It won't happen however, if the Orthodox faithful adopt the practices of the dominant culture in place of their own tradition.