

Parish Prayer List (Living)

Alexandra	Rachael	Jessilyn	Reader Mark
Andrea	Amanda	Sherry	Joretta
Fr. Michael	Barry	Sean	Susan Mary
James	Nicholas B.	Karin	Andrea & Kirby
Lawrence	Emil	Seraphim	Evdokia
Michael	Helen	Susan K	Bob Wedder
Anna	Brian	Carolyn	Monk Nicholas
Evan Daniel	Kathy Tanner	Anthony	Pauline
Olga	Marina	Salvatore	Josephine

Parish Prayer List (Fallen Asleep)

Betty Pilja (+12/6)

Josephine Urban (+12/15)

Mary Louise Blomeley (+12/10)

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Words from the Fathers

Come ye feast-lovers, let us extol with hymns the assembly of the forefathers, Adam the first father, Enoch, Noah, and Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and those after the law - Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Samuel; and with them Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve Prophets, with Elijah and Elisha, and all the rest; and Zachariah, the Baptist and those who preached Christ, the Life and Resurrection of our race.

Glory on the Aposticha at the Great Vespers of the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers

Sons of men,
do you truly speak of justice?
Dwellers on the earth,
do you truly judge with fairness?
We confess with unshakable faith
God, who was made man
and who was given birth by a Virgin.
Before all time he was begotten
of an immeasurable Father;
now we adore him who became incarnate
in a Virgin's womb.
He is the creator of all,
himself remaining invisible and distinct from creation.

So we are able to say:
in you, Lord, is mercy; glory be to you.
Holy God!
you have deigned to be born, a tiny child, from a Virgin.
Holy Mighty!
you have willed to rest in the arms of Mary.
Holy Immortal One!
you have come to rescue Adam from hell.
O immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, full of grace,
Emmanuel, whom you have carried,
is the fruit of your womb.
In your maternal bosom you have nourished all men.
You are above all praise and all glory.
Hail, Mother of God, joy of the angels!
The fullness of grace in you
goes beyond what the prophets foretold.
The Lord is with you,
for you have given birth
to the Savior of the world.
ancient eastern hymn on the Nativity

Since the Word of God though His descent to us has brought the kingdom of heaven close to us, let us not distance ourselves from it by leading an unrepentant life. Let us rather flee the wretchedness of those who sit `in darkness and the shadow of death' (Isa. 9:2). Let us acquire the fruits of repentance: a humble disposition, compunction and spiritual grief, a gentle and merciful heart that loves righteousness and pursues purity, peaceful, peace-making, patient in toil, glad to endure persecution, loss outrage, slander and suffering for the sake of truth and righteousness. For the kingdom of heaven or, rather, the King of heaven - ineffable in His generosity - is within us (cf. Luke 17:21); and to Him we should cleave through acts of repentance and patient endurance, loving as much as we can Him Who so dearly has loved us.

St. Gregory Palamas

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Orthodoxy and Western Christmas Carols

By Fr. Geoffrey Korz

For Orthodox Christians in the western world, Christmas can create something of an identity crisis. While it is difficult enough to extricate a personal schedule from multiple pilgrimages to the shopping mall (a distinctly un-Christian aspect of modern Christmas), it is sometimes far more difficult to know what to make of Christmas carols and songs, and their appropriate place in the life of an Orthodox Christian.

None of us live in a vacuum. As such, the varied music of our culture almost inevitably finds its way into our lives, our memory, and our heart. Orthodox liturgical music represents the central place of music in the life of any faithful Orthodox Christian: it is music suited for the right worship of God, and comes to us through the life and experience of the countless holy ones that make up the communion of saints.

For this reason, Christmas carols and songs certainly do not have a place in the liturgical life of the Church: most are not dogmatically helpful or clear, and they have never formed a part of the hymnody used by the saints of the Church, as it has been given to the faithful.

The question for Orthodox Christians is, what is the place of Christmas music in life outside liturgical services? Since most people – including most Orthodox Christians – listen to, sing, or play some type of music beyond liturgical music, this becomes a question of which carols are appropriate.

Most of the Christmas carols that have come to us in the English language date from the 1700s and 1800s, and offer narratives of the Gospel accounts of the Nativity of Christ. While these usually use archaic English in a creative way, they are certainly faithful witnesses to the Gospel. We can think of favourites such as *Angels We Have Heard on High*, *Away in a Manger*, or *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen*, which raise little question in their suitability for an after-supper carol sing in an Orthodox home. Other traditional carols convey the story of events close to the Nativity of the Lord: the traditional Advent Latin melody *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* dates to near pre-Schism times (the early 12th century, in this case), and can almost be described as a song from an Orthodox culture. *The Coventry Carol* tells the tragic tale of the massacre of the innocents described in the second chapter of Saint Matthew. *The Twelve Days of Christmas* provides a catechism of Roman Catholic origin that counters iconoclasm during the Protestant era in England. The symbolism of the carol is still useful today to teach Orthodox children (and adults) about, for example, the four "calling birds" of the Evangelists.

Some carols offer poetic allusions to Gospel or other Scriptures. Songs such as *Ding Dong Merrily on High*, *We Three Kings*, *Joy to the World*, and *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night*, are artistic folk songs of their time, and warmly tell parts of the Nativity story. Although not written by an Orthodox Christian, *The Holly and the Ivy* offers a Christian understanding of pagan symbols that would be familiar to many Slavic Orthodox. Even the famous carol, *Hark The Herald Angels Sing* by the Protestant preacher Charles Wesley, provides poetry relating to the Gospel in a way that does not contradict an Orthodox understanding.

Historical fiction such as *The Little Drummer Boy* offers a creative expression of a simple encounter with Christ. Similarly, Christmastime tales of the life of an Orthodox saint like *Good King Wenceslas* (who died as a martyr at the hands of his pagan brother Boleslaus) provide a small sample of the lives of the saints which faithful Orthodox Christians should read each day.

Some carols have become popular because of a certain sentimentality they elicit, rather than their doctrinal helpfulness. Songs such as *O Holy Night*, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, *Silent Night*, and *"What Child Is This?"* may not have much content that could be questioned by Orthodox Christians, yet their sentimental tone seems to lack something of an Orthodox spirit. The enjoyment of Christmas carols certainly must go beyond mere musical critique, however, carols like these were clearly born out a very emotional world quite foreign to the world of the Orthodox Church.

In his letter to the Philippians (4:8), Saint Paul tells us to hold to everything that is good. A wonderful variety of Christmas carols that affirm the truth of the Gospel, and the Nativity of Christ, have come down to us in the English language, and are entirely suitable for use in the homes of Orthodox Christians. At the same time, silly songs or those that teach false things, should not really be confused with Christmas, a feast that celebrates God's great gift to the world, in the incarnation of His Son.

Apart from the Resurrection, this is the single greatest event in human history, and it gives us our very identity as Christians – and identity which solves any identity crisis we might ever face in our lives. We should celebrate it at every opportunity.