

# *The Scroll*

*November-December 2023*



*St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church  
Wichita, Kansas*

# The Scroll

## Sunday Services

Matins.....9:00 a.m.  
Church School .....9:00 a.m.  
Divine Liturgy .....10:00 a.m.

## Saturday Services

Confession.....4:30 p.m.  
Great Vespers.....5:00 p.m.

## Church Contacts

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and Pieces**

**St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church**  
**344 S. Martinson, Wichita, KS 67213**  
**Very Rev. Fr. Aaron Warwick**  
**Website: [www.stmarywichita.org](http://www.stmarywichita.org)**

From Father Aaron

## THE ORIGIN OF THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS

by **Father Antony Bassoline**

The celebration of the birth of Christ has become the most obvious religious-based public festival of American life. Its arrival in December is prepared for months in advance. It is the one event which generates the most anticipation and to which the most tradition and custom have attached themselves. Individual homes and whole cities dress up for Christmas. In popular sentiment it has eclipsed the greater feast of the Resurrection, and has completely dwarfed its twin festival, the Epiphany.

But how did we get a feast of Christmas? What was its original purpose? How does it actually fit into the life of the Orthodox Christian Church?

The Christian Church in the first three centuries of its existence knew of only one great festival, Pentecost (by Pentecost is here meant the complete celebration of the Christian Passover from the cross and resurrection to the 50th day commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit). Every Sunday was considered a feast in that it was a gathering to proclaim the mighty redemption brought by the death and resurrection of Christ. This festival of redemption was realized weekly by the Holy Eucharist, the presence of the victorious Risen Christ in the midst of the assembly. It was realized yearly in the great Paschal Feast in the administration of baptism. We see that in this ancient period the interest and emphasis was not at all on the historical facts concerning what happened to Jesus, but rather how what happened to Jesus now happens to those who join His Church; how the new believer dies and rises to new life in Christ through baptism and how in the Eucharist the believer participates directly in the sacrifice of Christ.

In time the celebration of martyrs' days, that is, the yearly anniversary of a martyr's death, came to be celebrated. But these festivals were local and usually conducted at the martyr's tomb.

It is not until the Fourth Century that the idea of celebrating occasions in the earthly life of our Lord started to become popular. Much of this is due to the Church of Jerusalem. Special celebrations which were devised on the actual or supposed sites of the events of the life of Christ lent themselves particularly well to the celebration of historical remembrances. Thus interest developed in where Jesus was born, where He grew up, where He performed His miracles, etc.

It is to the Church of Rome, however, that we must give the credit for the origins of the feast of the birth of Christ. But on what was this feast based and why was December 25th chosen as the day for its celebration?

The actual historical facts surrounding the birth of Christ are clouded in mystery. No one really knows when Jesus was born. Only certain facts can be deduced from the biblical account and from history. For one thing, Jesus was definitely born in B.C. (Before Christ!). This is known because Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., and Herod figures in the account of the Nativity given by St. Matthew. Jesus was definitely not born in winter. St. Luke mentions that the shepherds were staying out in the pasture land with their flocks, an event that does not take place in winter. We must look elsewhere for the origin of the late December celebration of the Nativity.

We find the origin of the winter feast of the Nativity not in the historical facts available concerning the birth of Christ, but in a curious astronomical phenomenon. In late December we reach the shortest day of the year with more hours of darkness than daylight. From this point the hours of daylight become gradually longer. This observable phenomenon was given a religious signifi-

cance in the pagan Roman world. It became the feast of Sol Invictus (the Unconquerable Sun). It was popularly celebrated in Rome during the last two weeks of December as Saturnalia. What better time for the Christians to celebrate the coming of the true unconquered "Sun"? Thus the feast of Christmas was born; the celebration of the dawning on the world of the Sun of Righteousness.

The feast was not originally called Christmas or Nativity, but Epiphany or "Manifestation." It celebrated the idea of Christ's coming and manifesting Himself through several events of the New Testament and its timing was based on the feast of the Unconquered Sun. In the East this feast of "coming" was generally kept on January 6th and in the West on December 25th. It did not originally concentrate exclusively on the birth of our Lord, but celebrated several aspects of His manifestation: the birth in the cave, the adoration of the Magi, the baptism in the Jordan, and the first miracle at Cana in Galilee. All of these themes came in one way or another to be associated with the feast of the Epiphany. The East celebrated all of this on January 6th and knew of no feast on December 25th. (The Armenian Church to this day still celebrates the nativity and the baptism together on January 6th with no celebration whatsoever on December 25th.) Egeria, a nun from Spain, traveling in Palestine at the end of the 4th century mentions a great celebration of our Lord's coming. Thus it was only later that the East and the West came to share both December 25th and January 6th. The East separated the Nativity from the Baptism, leaving the January date as the feast of the Baptism of Christ and accepting the December date as the feast of the Nativity. The West in turn added January 6th to its "Manifestation" celebration as the commemoration of the Adoration of the Magi.

Once this double feast, Christmas-Epiphany, entered the life of the Church it became, like Easter-Pentecost, an occasion for the celebration of baptism. The feast of Christ's coming was seen to be appropriate for the administration of the sacrament by which Christ would come to the new believer. Several relics in our present liturgical practice hint at the baptismal connections of Christmas and Epiphany, as the long list of readings of the vigil of both days (meant to cover the time of actual baptizing), and the singing of the baptismal verse "As many as have been baptized into Christ" in place of the Trisagion. The strange notation in the liturgical books: "Nativity of our Lord ... Three days Passover" and "Epiphany of our Lord ... Three days Passover" can only be explained in connection with the sacrament of baptism.

The hymns of both Christmas and Epiphany reveal the origin of these days in the old winter festival of the Unconquered Sun. Note how many astronomical references we find in the Nativity Troparion: Christ is described as the "**Sun**" of Righteousness, who **illumines** those who worshipped **stars** (of which the physical sun is one). Jesus has come as the **dawning from the East** (as the sun does).

The Matins exapostilarion hymn speaks of: A newly **risen day**. Our Savior is the **Dayspring from the East**. Those who were in **darkness** and **shadow** found the **Light**.

Epiphany is still known as "ton Foton" (feast of **Lights**). Its hymns also concentrate on astronomical themes. In Vespers Christ is described as "**Bestower of light**," who desires to give **light** to those in **darkness**. In the Matins of the feast we find: "With Thy **light** that never **sets**, **shine** forth, O Christ."

Unfortunately most of society has reverted to celebrating the pagan winter holiday under the excuse of celebrating the birth of Christ. The Romans had their Saturnalia, but modern man has his Santa, reindeer, drinking parties and materialism to highlight his feast. In spite of all of this Christians are still called to celebrate joyfully in the Spirit, the coming of the Messiah. As the

Christians of old celebrated under the guise of Saturnalia, so the modern Christian must still celebrate the true feast as the rest of our society keeps its pagan winter holiday. The Church at one time conquered and transformed that pagan holiday into the sublime celebration of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness. She still is challenged to transform and transfigure and to proclaim that coming and to lead men beyond tinsel and cheap lights to the true meaning of this holiday: the glorification of the true Gladsome Light of the Holy Glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ.

From [Word Magazine](#)

Publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

December 1979

# Orthodox News

## PATRIARCH JOHN LEADS THANKSGIVING PRAYER IN HONOR OF NEWLY GLORIFIED SAINTS

Damascus, November 7, 2023

<https://orthochristian.com/157189.html>



His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East led a thanksgiving prayer on the occasion of the glorification of the two hieromartyrs, Frs. Nicholas and Habib Khasha, at the Church of the Holy Cross in Al-Qassaa, Damascus on Saturday, November 4, reports the [Patriarchate of Antioch](#).

The saints, a father and son pair, martyred in 1916 and 1948 respectively, were canonized by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch on [October 19](#).

On Saturday, the Antiochian Patriarch led a procession across the church courtyard with the icon of the new saints. During the service of thanksgiving, the text of the Holy Synod's declaration of glorification of the two hieromartyrs was read out.

Following the service, His Beatitude gave homily on the importance of the Church of Antioch and the lives of the new saints.

“Antioch is the mother Church that introduced the word ‘Christians’ to the world, since the disciples were first called Christians here; it gave this name to the whole world and made it dance with joy on people’s lips. Antioch is the Church that gave the whole world great men, male and female saints, who showed benevolence and virtue,” the Patriarch said.

Regarding the lives of Sts. Nicholas and Habib Khasha, His Beatitude stressed two points:

1. “That holiness is the path of every believer, and not “exclusively” for monks and nuns. Holiness is the path of every good human being, which is to forget what is behind, that is, darkness, murder, and vice, and to extend forward, to the Master and to virtue.

2. About the importance of family. St. Nicholas and St. Habib, were both born into a family and raised one, so let us preserve our families and our children. His Beatitude pointed out that the words father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, and sister are sacred words that we must preserve. We must raise our children according to the Holy Bible.”

Following the prayer service, the faithful participated in another procession with the icon of the hieromartyrs. Booklets containing their lives and copies of their icon were distributed to them as well.

## FROM THE MINISTRY TEAMS



### THE SCROLL

#### Next Issue

Will Cover -- November/December

Deadline to Submit -- December 22

On Website -- December 29

Available in Foyer -- December 31



#### Our Mission

*Family Promise of Greater Wichita unites hearts and hands to provide compassionate hospitality and empower homeless families with children to achieve sustainable independence.*

*Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was in prison and you came to Me"*

St. Mary Parish participates by hosting families in the program four times a year in our church building. Families arrive at St. Mary on Sunday in time for the evening meal. Parishioners volunteer their time by driving families to and from the day house, setting up the rooms, and sleeping overnight at the church. Evening meals, food for breakfast, and snacks are all provided by St. Mary parishioners. The families eat their evening meal and spend the night at the church. Lunches are made and snacks packed before heading to their rooms for the night. They get up and leave the church by 6:15 each morning and are transported to the day house. During the day they work, attend classes, shower, do laundry, and a multitude of other tasks before returning to the church in time for the evening meal. Both the families and parishioners are encouraged and blessed by the interactions throughout the week. Although approximately fifty parishioners will have participated so far this year, there is still a need for more to participate in this significant ministry by providing hospitality and shelter. Our next week to host families is December 24-30 Contact Vicki Jones at 650-0658 or [vawj55@gmail.com](mailto:vawj55@gmail.com) for more information.



#### GREETER MINISTRY TEAM

The primary purpose of the Greeter Ministry Team is to make all of our visitors to St. Mary feel welcome in our parish home. To welcome the stranger is not just a nice or courteous thing to do, but is in fact one of the things mentioned by our Lord by which we will be judged: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." To welcome the stranger is a great blessing to them and to us; the Greeter Ministry Team strives to fulfill this scriptural command together with our parish family. One responsibility of greeters is to greet visitors before Liturgy. This includes giving them a bulletin and visitor packet, asking them to sign the visitor book, and invite them to coffee hour. After Liturgy, greeters will seek out the visitors and introduce to at least one other person in church, introduce them to Fr. Aaron and offer to give a tour of the facility, and show them the rack of educational pamphlets in the foyer. During the following week, the greeter will complete a New Visitor Note Card that will be mailed to the visitor. There are currently six active members of the Greeters Team. There is a need for more members of the team. If you wish more information on this Ministry Team, contact DeeAnn Bragg at [dee.ann.stults@gmail.com](mailto:dee.ann.stults@gmail.com).



## MEAL TRAIN



The St Mary Meal Train ministry was formed in 2016 to serve the families in our parish immediately following the birth of a child. After the birth of a child, what to eat for dinner is not usually at the forefront of new parents' minds. Instead, new parents are focused on the new life they have created and finding their new normal between dirty diapers, seemingly near-constant cries, and many feedings. Our goal is to provide the evening meal every day for a week. The meals have been a mixture of home cooked, frozen, and store-bought meals as well as restaurant gift cards. We also provide a supply of paper products such as plates, napkins, cutlery, and cups to reduce the workload of the family. Being part of this ministry does not mean that you have to be involved every time a request is sent out. Each of us has our own commitments and are sometimes unable to help. Any help at all is much appreciated by the families we are serving. If you would like to be part of this ministry, please contact Jessica Lessman (Miriam121406@live.com) to get on the mailing list.



### THE LORD'S DINER

The Lord's Diner exists to combat hunger in the community. The Diner's singular mission is to serve a nutritious meal with dignity and respect to anyone who is hungry. The Lord's Diner serves an evening meal 365 days a year. The Lord's Diner serves an average of 2,500 meals nightly at two dining facilities (one in downtown Wichita and one in south Wichita) and three food trucks (one in northwest Wichita, and one in southeast Wichita, and one in northeast Wichita) to any guest who needs a nutritious meal, 60 percent of which are families. St. Mary volunteers serve at The Lord's Diner on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. We gather at the downtown location, Central and Broadway, at 5:15 p.m. We are usually finished by 8:00 p.m., so come join us. This important ministry is in need of a new Team Leader. Contact Vicki Jones, 316-650-0658, if you need information about the duties of the leader.

## **ANNOUNCING A NEW PART-TIME VICTIM ADVOCATE POSITION**

Grant funded position through the Kansas Attorney General's office has been received to hire a part-time victims advocate to serve and support victims of impaired driving crashes and their families. This will include Criminal Justice Advocacy, support groups, victim panels for offenders and other services as needed and determined to support victims.

Pay:

- \$23,000 - \$26,000 per year / approximately 25 hours a week

Work Environment includes:

- Modern office setting
- Work-from home days
- Flexible working hours
- On-the-job training
- Growth opportunities

Benefits:

- Flexible schedule
- Paid time off
- Professional development assistance

Schedule:

- Monday to Friday

Language:

- Spanish/English (Preferred)

**For further information or to apply for this position, please contact the DUI Victims Center of Kansas at 316-768-2096 or contact Heather Plaza, Executive Director at [director@duivictimscenterofkansasceneterofkansas.com](mailto:director@duivictimscenterofkansasceneterofkansas.com).**

**Connect with us:**

313 N. Seneca, Suite 103, Wichita KS 67203    [www.duivictimscenterofkansas.com](http://www.duivictimscenterofkansas.com)    (316) 768-2096

*The DUI Victims Center of Kansas provides services to victims, survivors, and their families and increases awareness of the traumatic human consequences of the choice to drive impaired.*





## Mediterranean Festival 2024

Now that the busy Nativity season is behind us, it is time to start focusing on our 2024 Med-Fest. Preparations have been underway ever since we closed the books on our 2023 festival! Here are the details:

**The date** is May 18, 2024

**The time** is 11 am to 7 pm.

**We will offer a one plate option.** That option will include salad, green beans & rice, cabbage rolls, kibbee, talamee and baklawa.

**The price** remains the same as last year at \$20 per plate

**The Market** is a huge part of our financial success and will be open to our guests for shopping

**Back by popular demand:** Indoor seating. Guests will still go through the line to receive their food and have the option to carry out or dine in. We will not be serving food at the tables.

**Drive-thru & carry out** will remain the same. We encourage our guests to come inside to shop in the Market, but drive-thru is always an option.

There will be more information coming about other events that day, including the Bookstore, Church Tours, etc. it is not too early to start telling your friends and co-workers about this awesome event!

Now to the really important stuff!! **WE NEED YOU!** In order to make food to serve our estimated 1400 guests, we need everyone's help starting now! *Cooking dates will be sent out via Sign Up Genius. Please sign up for as many of our available dates as possible. Please start baking for the Market! Talk to Robbie Namee for more information about what the Market needs.*

**Tickets!** Tickets will be available in the coming months. Did you know that when you sell tickets for the festival, it is guaranteed income for the church? We encourage you to please take at least 5-10 tickets and sell them. If you have questions about ticket sales, please see Paula Zarich.

**Our charity for 2024:** This year's charity recipient is the DUI Victim Center. They will receive 10% of our net proceeds from our festival. The more we bring in, the more we can give away.

Not only is this our church's biggest fundraiser, it offers an incredibly wonderful opportunity to spend time together cooking, serving, laughing and learning about one another. The saying is true—"Many hands make light work." But, even more important, when we come together, we are truly a family. And, what a blessed St. Mary family we have!

# Cook's Corner

## Borscht

- 3 medium beets, peeled and grated
- 4 Tbsp [olive oil](#), divided
- 8 cups [chicken broth](#), + 2 cups water
  
- 3 medium yukon potatoes, peeled and sliced into bite-sized pieces
- 2 carrots, peeled and thinly sliced



Peel, grate and/or slice all vegetables (keeping sliced potatoes in cold water to prevent browning until ready to use then

•

Heat a large soup pot (5 1/2 Qt or larger) over medium/high heat and add 2 Tbsp olive oil. Add grated beets and sauté 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until beets are softened.

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Add 8 cups broth and 2 cups water. Add sliced potatoes and sliced carrots then cook for 10-15 minutes or until easily pierced with a fork.

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While potatoes are cooking, place a large skillet over medium/high heat and add 2 Tbsp oil. Add chopped onion, celery and bell pepper. Saute stirring occasionally until softened and lightly golden (7-8 minutes). Add 4 Tbsp Ketchup and stir fry 30 seconds then transfer to the soup pot to continue cooking with the potatoes.

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When potatoes and carrots reach desired softness, add 1 can of beans with their juice, 2 bay leaves, 2-3 Tbsp white vinegar, 1 tsp salt, 1/4 tsp black pepper, 1 pressed garlic clove, and 3 Tbsp chopped dill. Simmer for an additional 2-3 minutes and add more salt and vinegar to taste.

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# Celebrations



## BIRTHDAYS

### NOVEMBER

4 Maren Kingery  
4 Brett Parrott  
5 Sophia Tiemeyer  
8 Adrian Warwick  
9 Ashley Abdayem  
10 John Dannenberg  
13 Tanya Hussleman  
19 Jeremy Wagner  
20 Theodora Kambiotis  
20 Dick Zarich  
22 Micheline Abdayem  
23 Susan Clark  
29 Josiah Oller

### DECEMBER

5 Markus Kosjer  
9 Don DeBolt  
11 Robbie Namee  
12 Frank Morris  
14 Miriam Lessman  
18 Alex Lessman  
19 Shirley Zarich  
21 Yevgeny Novikov  
21 Valerie Lehl  
26 Samuel Lessman  
29 Fr. John Baize  
31 Vicki Jones

## ANNIVERSARIES



### November

November 12 Darren and Amy Minks

### December

December 17 Anthony and Keri Jacobs  
December 22 Kirby and Cheryl Jantz  
December 27 Gabriel and Susan Hernandez  
December 27 Frank and Cathy Morris  
December 28 Mark and Vicki Jones  
December 28 Jerry and Helen Stitt



# Bits and Pieces

*Noah Michael Parrott was baptized on September 23rd,*

*Congratulations and many years!*



# Bits and Pieces

St. Mary's Annual Fall Festival



# Bits and Pieces





# Bits and Pieces

Churching of Randa-Marie Kambiotis on  
11/05/2023





Photo By: Blaise Webster

# 2024 Fellowship Groups

Beloved in Christ,

As most of you are aware, we began monthly fellowship groups in 2023. We took a break from these groups during the busy holiday season, but I plan to start them up again for January 2024. As a refresher, or for those newer to our church: the fellowship groups meet once per month. Each month, those participating in the groups will be assigned a group for the month. One person will be assigned as the group leader. The group leader makes sure the group decides on a date and time to meet that month. The purpose of the groups is to meet other parishioners and to get to know them better. Most of those who participated throughout 2023 really enjoyed these groups and meeting other people in the parish.

I will be assigning the January fellowship groups in the next couple of weeks.

***Please contact me:***

- If you are new to our parish and have yet to be assigned a group, but wish to participate; OR
- If you opted out of these groups last year and you wish to be included for 2024; OR
- If you participated in 2023, but you cannot participate in January.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Aaron

## **The Scroll Production Schedule – 2024**

**Issue: January/February, 2024**

**Deadline: February 17**

On Website – February 24

In Foyer – February 26

**Issue: March/April, 2024**

**Deadline: April 22**

On Website – April 28

In Foyer – April 30

**Issue: May/June, 2024**

**Deadline: June 17**

On Website – June 23

In Foyer – June 25

**Issue: July/August, 2024**

**Deadline: August 19**

On Website – August 25

In Foyer – August 27

**Issue: September/October, 2024**

**Deadline: October 21**

On Website – October 27

In Foyer – October 29

**Issue: November/December, 2024**

**Deadline: December 22**

On Website – December 29

In Foyer – December 31

**Send news to:** [parrott.brett.117@gmail.com](mailto:parrott.brett.117@gmail.com)

***About The Scroll***

**The Scroll** is the news magazine of St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church, 344 S. Martinson, KS, 67213. It was first published in March of 1974 as a newsletter and has evolved to its present magazine-style format. **The Scroll** includes information about our Orthodox Christian faith as well as news of our parish community. Deadline dates for publication are listed in each issue of **The Scroll** and also in the weekly church bulletins. Inquiries and news items should be sent to parrobre7014@yahoo.com or to the above church address C/O **The Scroll**.

*All news must be received by the announced deadline dates. Submitted material may be edited for content and space limitations. All submitted items should include the name of the person sending the material as well as identifying the original source of previously published pieces.*

**The Scroll Ministry Team**

Deacon James  
Ro Kallail  
Amy Minks  
Brett Parrott



## LOOKING AHEAD

January 1st  
The Circumcision of our Lord

January 2nd  
St. Seraphim of Sarov

January 6th  
Theophany

February 2nd  
The Meeting of our Lord in the Temple

February 27th  
Repose of Raphael of Brooklyn

March 10th  
Meat Fare Sunday

March 17th  
Cheese Fare Sunday

March 24th  
First Sunday of Great Lent

May 5th  
Pascha