



# SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America  
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## Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to God for All Things!

December 11, 2011 Sunday of the Forefathers of the Lord Divine Liturgy 9:30 am

Adam, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Blessed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Twelve Patriarchs: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphthali, Gad and Asher: Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Three Holy Youths Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego (or Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah): the Twelve Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: Elijah, Elisha, Zachariah, and John the Baptist and others.

December 17 Saturday

Great Vespers 4:00 pm

December 18 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday. Sunday of the Fathers of the Lord

Divine Liturgy 9:30 am

**Please remember in your prayers:** Nettie, Maria, Michael, Mother Raphaela, John, Hilda, James, JoAnne, Ada, Priest Sergius, Louellen, Nancy, Rea, Archpriest Jason, Susan, Daniel, Aaron, Mark, Jennifer, Nina, Nadine, Michael, Anna, Gregory, Jim, Marianna, Mykola, Helen, Isaiah, Archpriest Vincent, Albert, Kevin, Robert, Robert, Andrew, David, Warren, Archimandrites Alexander, Athanasy, Isidore, Nectarios, Pachomy.

**God Grant Many Years!** Prayers for the health of Drew Dudek, Bishop SERAPHIM and Alexander Ressetar were offered today at Liturgy and Moleben at the request of Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of John and Apollonia Bobyk were offered at Liturgy and Litiya December 4, at the request of Irene Ptasznik.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of the souls of Father Alexander Schmemann and Archbishop KIPRIAN, were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today at the request of Father John Udics.

**Memory Eternal.** Prayers for the repose of Stephen and Mary Steciak, Mary Pupchek, John Popka, Anna Rinko, Steven Polansky, Theresa Polansky, Wasyl Pytel, Andrew Andriadis, Glen Cooley, Walter Jovorosky Jr and Walter Jovorosky, were offered at Liturgy and Litiya today.

### Modern Day Saint Nicholas' Day Miracles

On 20 December 1907, *The New York Times* front page reported details of a mining disaster in Pennsylvania. Although hundreds of coal miners had lost their lives, the newspaper carried the unusual headline of *The Pittsburgh Press*: 'St Nicholas Feast Saves the Russians'. And other headline captions at the time included: *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*: "Majority of Victims Americans - Foreign Workers Lay Off to Go to Church and Escape Death"; *Pittsburgh Dispatch*: "Many of the victims are English-speaking men. Foreigners escape owing to religious holiday." What was the story behind these headlines?

On 19 December 1907, at least 239 coal miners were killed in an explosion at the Darr Mine in Van Meter, in south-western Pennsylvania. This remains the fourth worst coal mining disaster in U.S. history and everyone inside the mine was killed. However, it could have been much worse - the number of victims could have been double. The death toll was not some 500, because 19 December is Saint Nicholas' Day [Old Calendar] and some 250 faithful Carpatho-Russian immigrant coal miners had taken an unpaid day off work to celebrate his memory. For even the greedy coal mine owners, who otherwise had virtually complete control over the miners with their threats of dismissal, knew that they could not force Carpatho-Russians to work on 19 December, Saint Nicholas Day. For Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of shepherds, one reason why he has been the Carpatho-Russian patron saint for centuries, and thanks to his intercession, men and boys, some perhaps as young as ten, survived to become fathers of hundreds and grandfathers of thousands. Had it not been for this miracle, more than 1000 would have been widowed and orphaned, which in 1907 would have meant financial destitution, for there would have been no assistance from companies or government agencies in those days.

Newspaper reports of the 11:30 am explosion that took place in the middle of the church service record that there was a terrible noise and the ground shook, as if there were an earthquake. Immediately everyone realized that there had been an explosion in the mine and they rushed to help find survivors. Although it was against the few regulations that did exist at the time, the mining company had allegedly interconnected more than one mine, which devastated a large area of the mine on both sides of the river. In the end, many bodies could not be identified and were placed in a mass grave, and although probably higher, the official death toll was 239.

Life was very harsh for the Carpatho-Russian miners. They were worked like animals in the bowels of the earth, exploited by 'the English' - Anglophone American businessmen and coal barons, and often worked seven days a week. At that time the Carpatho-Russians were supported in their labour struggles by a priest, Father (now Saint) Alexis Toth (1854-1909). Father Alexis not only supported every labour struggle and won the respect of the people, but supported the immigrants in other ways too. For, having been forced into outward Uniatism in their homeland by the threat of starvation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from the 1880s on the Carpatho-Russians had been forced into emigrating by the cruel Hungarian Roman Catholic

authorities in their homeland. In America they struggled to retain their identity and traditions. However, as a result of the religious freedom they found in North America, many of their priests and tens of thousands of people had since 1892 been returning to Orthodoxy to become part of the Orthodox Church in North America. And it had been Saint Alexis who had led the way. Indeed, the Roman Catholic Uniat were as a rule anti-labour and supported their Irish masters. The Carpatho-Russian miners remained close to the Church and many later revered the memory of the Russian Tsar-Martyr, Nicholas II, under whom all Orthodox in North America had been united.

In response to the return to Orthodoxy of the exploited and misled Carpatho-Russians, in 1907 the Pope of Rome was so worried that he appointed a Bishop Soter Ortinsky as 'Greek Catholic' bishop for America. It is notable that Rome had never made any similar effort to provide for a specific nationality that had emigrated to America. However, Ortinsky was not even Carpatho-Russian, but a Polish Galician, and he had virtually no authority. In reality, relatively few Uniat churches and priests remained under the authority of their local Roman Catholic bishop, who typically had limited knowledge of the Orthodox rite, let alone Orthodox teaching, and refused to recognize married priests. The 1907 miracle in Pennsylvania, which took place according to the Orthodox [Julian] calendar date of Saint Nicholas Day, only served to hearten the exploited Carpatho-Russian immigrants who had returned to Orthodoxy, confirming them in their choice of Faith and encouraging others to do likewise in later years.

19 December 2007, was the centenary of the Miracle of Saint Nicholas at the Darr Mine and at 7 pm an Akathist to Saint Nicholas was celebrated at the Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church at Jacobs Creek close by. A new troparion and kontakion were composed for the occasion and new content describing the miracle of the saving of the coal miners were added to the service.

**This was the second miracle of Saint Nicholas and miners in 1907!** Earlier on December 6, Nicholas' feast day in the Gregorian Calendar, the worst mining disaster in United States history took place in Monongah, West Virginia. Nearly 400 men lost their lives that day. However, 60–100 Italian Roman Catholic and Carpatho-Rusyn Greek Catholic miners were spared as they attended a Roman Catholic Saint Nicholas feast day observance. American mines were more dangerous than European mines. Practices outlawed in Europe were still allowed in the US where minors were three to four times more likely to die on the job.

### **December 11, Sunday of the Holy Forefathers**

The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers occurs between the 11th and the 17th of December. This Sunday commemorates all the ancestors of the people of God, the holy patriarchs living up to the law, given on Sinai, and under the law, - from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed; together with them are commemorated «those who preached Christ» the holy prophets - from Samuel to Zechariah and to John the Baptist, and all the Old Testament righteous men, who were righteous in the faith in the coming of the Messiah. Especially in the service for this day are praised «the pious youths» Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, who «in faith were thrown into the fiery furnace» and «who in the middle of the flames were cooled by the dew of the Spirit and who walked about rejoicing, are mystically a prototype of the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ» from the Virgin, who after giving birth remained a virgin. With these holy youths are commemorated also "the righteous Daniel and the wonderful prophets", who, clearly revealing the divine second coming, saw Christ, "coming to all nations as Judge", and who, "your mind illumined by divine radiance", "that clearly the Virgin would give birth represented in mystical images".

"Today as we celebrate the Forefathers' memory", the holy Church exclaims: "let us offer praise to the fathers, who shone forth before and during the law, with righteous minds they served the Lord and Master who shone forth from the Virgin, now they delight in the unending light." "Let us offer songs of praise to the prophets of God". "Let us honor the holy youths, for they quenched the flaming furnace, together with the prophet Daniel, and all the righteous ones who shone forth before the law, together with those who served the Master under the law." By accomplishing "now the honor of the memory of the forefathers", the holy Church edifies us, that we, in the expectation of the great and light-bearing day of the Nativity of Christ, is reflected by the faith and life of the holy Forefathers and, through them, has prepared ourselves, by their example, to the worthy meeting of the Lord Who came from Heaven, who has adorned their soul with virtues beforehand to be ready for the great and light-bearing day of the Nativity of our Savior worthily to meet Him with the lamp of faith and with the oil of charitable deeds, with the firm hope of life everlasting, with the light of both the joyful face of cleanliness and purity.

Together with them the holy Church on the present day, that its appeal be not in vain, places in the Gospel reading by the clergy about those called in Vespers, inspiring us, that we can be distracted from worthily meeting the Lord by the predominance of flesh over spirit, the attachment to the terrestrial, the blinding by gleam of worldly goods, the predilection for vanity, the unwillingness to deny one's self-love and pride everyday, the enslavement to passions and covetousness, and in the Epistle reading directly commands us to destroy our earthly members: fornication, impurity, passion, evil lust and cupidity, to lay aside anger, evil, blaspheming, slander, lies, and in general to take off the old man and put on the new in the image of the Creator (Col. 3:4-11).

**FOR YOUR CALENDARS:** January 1: **Sunday Breakfast** at Coffee Hour (not held on Christmas Day)

January 15: Parish Council Meeting (third Sunday of the month)

January 22: Annual Parish Meeting and Election of Officers.

**End of the Year – Annual Report:** Please submit your reports before January 8, after which we will compile the annual report document, to be printed and ready before the annual meeting proposed for January 22, 2012.