

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1118 EAST UNION BOWER ROAD IRVING, TEXAS 75061 972-438-5644



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
December 25, 2011

Very Reverend Father Eugene P. Yackanich
Administrator of the Archeparchy
www.archeparchy.org

Fr. Daniel Forsythe
Pastor
fr.daniel@stbasilsinirving.org
www.stbasilsinirving.org

Schedule of Divine Services

Sunday, December 25, 2011

Feast of the Nativity of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Reader: Please see Lead Cantor
Gospel Bearer: Brian Norrell
Prospora Baker: Clare Ellis

Monday, December 26, 2011

Synaxis of the Theotokos and the Commemoration of David, Joseph and James
7:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy

Tuesday, December 27, 2011

Protomartyr and Apostle Stephen
7:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 27, 2011

*Eve of the Feast of St. Basil the Great and
the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord in the Flesh*
5:00 p.m. Great Vespers

Sunday, January 1, 2012

*Feast of St. Basil the Great and
the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord in the Flesh*
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy

Reader: Please see Lead Cantor
Gospel Bearer: Victoria Robinson
Prospora Baker: Rita Miller

Wednesday, January 4, 2012

Pre-feast of the Theophany of Our Lord
7:00 p.m. Royal Hours of Theophany

Thursday, January 5, 2012

Eve of the Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ
7:00 p.m. Vespers Divine Liturgy of St. Basil and the
Great Blessing of Water
9:00 p.m. – ish All Night Vigil for the Feast of Theophany

Sunday, January 8, 2012

Sunday After Theophany
9:30 a.m. Third Hour
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy

*PLEASE NOTE: There are no services at St. Basil's on January 6 and
Great Vespers on January 7, 2012 has been cancelled.*

Please pray for... all of the priests who have served our parish, for the administrator of our Archeparchy Fr. Eugene, for any who are ailing in our parish, for all pregnant mothers in our parish, for Alex Petrilak, Kristin Morgan, Jan Arnold, Diana Morgenstern, Robert Doucette, Kamila Sarsan, Margaret Heitzenrater, Jen Burgess-Thompson, Sr. Therese Gendron PSSF, Sissy Stuckey, Eloise Cox, Mary Hudson, Judy Sockwell, Alice Stafford, Patricia Waschka, Colette Johnstone, Fran Badger, for an increase in vocations to priesthood, the diaconate and religious life and for guidance and assistance in our efforts to promote dignity and value of all human life. Eternal Memory to +Bishop Andrew Pataki, retired Bishop of Passaic, +Fr. Francis Gabryl, +M. L. Cox, +Susan Loiselle, +Mark Deitz, +Earlene Sandefur, and prayers for their families. To add to these prayer requests, please e-mail Missy Norrell at secretary@stbasilsinirving.org.

Christmas Fundraiser If you have not yet picked up your kolači or kolbasi orders, please do so. Also, make sure to pay Carol Roman or Alexis Whitley if you have not yet paid for your order. Many thanks to all who volunteered to help make these Christmas goodies! Also, many thanks to all who helped make the Christmas Eve pirohi!

Join Us this Saturday Night for Great Vespers! It's the Feast of our Patron: St. Basil the Great!!!

"The holy chrism of grace was poured out upon you, O God-inspired Basil, and anointed you as a minister of the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven. You were the sweet fragrance of Christ; you filled the earth with the fragrance of his knowledge. Graciously hear the voices of your servants and ask abundant mercy for us who honor you."
- from the Litija Hymns of Vespers

Children's Posada - Wednesday, December 28th 3:30 – 5:00 pm There will be a Children's Posada on Wednesday night beginning at the Neris' home at 3.30pm. The children, dressed as angels, shepherds and the Holy Family, will process to various houses in the neighborhood looking for lodging for the Christ-child. The procession will conclude at St. Basil's for the singing of carols and a light meal. If you are interested in bringing your children to this fun event, please contact Lara Neri for more information: 214-422-5060. The Neris live less than 5 minutes from that church, at 1221 N. Irving Heights Drive, Irving.

Our Gifts to God

	Collection	Candles	Poor Box	Building Fund	Other Donations	Total	Attendance
12/18/11	\$1,841.00	\$37.00	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -	\$1,978.00	72
Necessary weekly budget for the operations of the parish						\$1,200.00	
Deficit of						- 0 -	

Please remember the poor!

DECEMBER 25TH: BIRTH OF CHRIST OR PAGAN HOLIDAY?



At this time of year, you're more than likely to hear something about the historical origins of the Feast of Christmas - especially about the date of December 25th as the day selected to celebrate the birth of Christ. People who consider themselves "in the know" often like to reveal to their admiring listeners the shocking news that Jesus was not really born on December 25th. (This shocking tidbit of fact is then sometimes followed by a dramatic pause to allow for the full implications of this information to produce the desired effect.) One is then subjected to a tiresome explanation of the ancient Roman celebration of *Sol invictus* - the feast of the unconquered sun. And then we are told that the Feast of Christmas was invented to replace this more ancient Roman celebration and that furthermore Christian practices on Christmas are really just remnants of this ancient pagan feast. (Interestingly enough, some fundamentalist Christians also frequently talk about this and give it as a reason to *not* celebrate Christmas because it has "pagan roots" and we are not told by the Bible to celebrate the day.)

Now, my guess is that if you have ever had one of these conversations, it didn't make much of an impression on you. (It usually doesn't on most people.) All the same, it can be a bit annoying and if you do end up in one of these conversations, I'd like to provide a little historical background to the origins of the Feast of Christmas, which you might find helpful.

Was Jesus born on December 25th? Probably not. So, did the Church decide to celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25th just to replace the pagan holiday of the Unconquered Sun? Probably not. Historically speaking, the Feast of Christmas developed rather late among Christians. One of the first feasts to develop was the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25th). The Annunciation celebrates the Virgin Mary conceiving the Incarnate Christ in her womb after the visit from the Archangel Gabriel. We are told in Luke's Gospel that Gabriel appeared to Mary "in the sixth month" which would have been the month of Nisan on the Jewish Calendar. Nisan corresponds roughly to our month of March. St. Ephrem the Syrian taught that the Annunciation happened on the 10th day of Nisan (which was the day that the Lamb that was to be sacrificed for the Passover was selected from the rest of the flock.) On some years, the 10th of Nisan fell on March 25th and that is most likely the origin of the date for that feast. If one counts exactly 9 months (the length of a human pregnancy) from March 25th, you come to December 25th - the date of Christmas.

Nevertheless, Christmas was not celebrated by the early church. The bigger and more important feast in those times was the Feast of Theophany (January 6th). Theophany means "the Appearance/Manifestation of God" and it celebrates (primarily) the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. Originally, Theophany was the celebration of a variety of events in which the Incarnate Son of God was "manifested" to the world: his birth, the visit of the Magi and his Baptism in the Jordan. All three events were celebrated together on January 6th, but the emphasis was on his Baptism. (Interestingly enough, the earliest gospel, the Gospel of Mark, begins, not with Jesus' birth, but his baptism.)

As time went on, Christians also began to celebrate Jesus' birth in a more prominent way and the Feast of Theophany split into two feasts: a celebration of Jesus' birth *and* his baptism. The commemoration of his birth was moved back to December 25th (because of its position exactly 9 months from the Annunciation). In the Western Church, the Feast of Theophany became known as the Epiphany and the primary focus on the Baptism of Jesus receded into the background and the commemoration of the visit of the Magi became the focus of the feast.

Now, it is true that various elements of pagan holidays entered into the Christian celebrations of the Birth of Christ. However, this likely has more to do with culture than it has to do with a conscious decision to preempt a pagan holiday. People living in the cultural context of the Roman Empire did certain things in the winter - such as celebrating light. Then again, so did the Jews (at Hanukkah) and so did other cultures. It's no great surprise that Christians, coming from this culture and living in this culture, would not do the same and incorporate elements of those celebrations into their own celebrations of Christ's birth.

Because the Feast of Theophany has been essentially lost to the Christian West, December 25th has become the most important day on the calendar at this time of year. And all pseudo-historical speculation about the origins of the celebration of Christmas hinge on that date. As Eastern Christians, we have not forgotten the important link between Christmas and the great Feast of Theophany - the manifestation of God's presence in the world. And this, no matter how we culturally celebrate these holy days, is the primary focus of our celebrations: God has become a human being for our salvation and for the life of the world.

