

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF SAINT ELIZABETH THE NEW-MARTYR

Volume XXI

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THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES THIS WEEK

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS (Tone 3)

Saturday, 28 December (15 December, o.s.)

6:00 PM Vigil Service;
Confessions

Sunday, 29 December (16 December, o.s.)

8:30 AM Baptism of Christopher Titus
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy;
Trapeza (coffee hour)

SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY (Tone 4)

Sunday of the Fathers

Saturday, 4 January 22 December, o.s.)

6:00 PM Vigil Service;
Confessions

Sunday, 5 January (23 December, o.s.)

9:10 AM Third and Sixth Hours
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy;
Trapeza (coffee hour)
12:30 PM Parish Council Meeting

<i>Monday</i>	30 December (17 Dec, o.s.)	Prophet Daniel & the 3 Youths Fast: wine & oil permitted
<i>Tuesday</i>	31 December (18 Dec, o.s.)	Martyr Sebastian & Companions Fast: wine & oil permitted
<i>Wednesday</i>	1 January (19 Dec, o.s.)	Martyr Boniface of Tarsus Xerophagy (<i>No oil</i>)
<i>Thursday</i>	2 January (20 Dec, o.s.)	St Ignatius; St John of Kronstadt Fast: wine & oil permitted
<i>Friday</i>	3 January (21 Dec, o.s.)	Virgin-martyr Juliana Xerophagy (<i>No Oil</i>)
<i>Saturday</i>	4 January (22 Dec, o.s.)	Great-martyr Anastasia Fast: wine & oil permitted
<i>Sunday</i>	5 January (23 Dec, o.s.)	Ten Martyrs of Crete Fast: wine & oil permitted

THIS WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

This is the final Sunday for the special collection for the St Herman's Youth Conference. If you have already donated may the Lord bless you. If you have not, please consider giving today.

If you have not gone to Confession and received Holy Communion during the course of the Nativity Fast, it is important to make the spiritual effort to participate in the Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion during this Lenten season. The best time to go to Confession is during or following the Vigil Service on Saturday evenings and the Eve of Feasts. It is also always possible to make your Confession to a priest outside the time of the Divine Services by prior appointment. Going to Confession on a Sunday or Feast Day morning is difficult for the priest, who is very busy serving the Proskomedion, and inconsiderate of fellow parishioners, as it often delays the beginning of the Liturgy. Nevertheless there is usually time for three or four short Confessions during the Third and Sixth Hours prior to Liturgy. Those with good reason to come to Confession in the morning rather than the evening before should arrange in advance with Father to come before Liturgy begins, but they need to remember that the Confession should be as concise as possible.

During the last five days of the Nativity Fast, from the Forefast of the Nativity of Christ (2 January, n.s.) through the Eve of the Feast (6 January, n.s.), the Fast becomes a bit stricter. Weekday fasting rules are the same as during the rest of the Nativity Fast, but Fish is no longer permitted on Saturdays and Sundays, only wine and oil.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Week of 29 December

<i>Su</i>	Sunday of the Holy Forefathers	
	<i>6th Resurrectional Matins Gospel:</i> Luke §114 (24:36-53)	
	Col. §257 (3:4-11)	Luke §76 (14:16-24)
29TH WEEK after PENTECOST		
<i>M</i>	Heb. §308 (3:5-11, 17-19)	Mark §42 (9:42-10:1)
<i>Tu</i>	Heb. §310 (4:1-13)	Mark §43 (10:2-12)
<i>W</i>	Heb. §312 (5:11-6:8)	Mark §44 (10:11b-16)
<i>Th</i>	Heb. §315 (7:1-6)	Mark §45 (10:17-27)
<i>F</i>	Heb. §317 (7:18-25)	Mark §46 (10:23b-32a)
<i>Sa</i>	Saturday before the Nativity of the Lord	
	Gal. §205 (3:8-12)	Luke §72 (18:13-29)
<i>Su</i>	Sunday before the Nativity: the Holy Fathers	
	<i>Vespers Paramia:</i> (1) Genesis 14:14-20 •	
	(2) Deuteronomy 1:8-11, 15-17 • (3) Deuteronomy 10:14-21	
	Heb. §328 (11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40)	Mt §1 (1:1-25)

FASTING DAYS

Week of 29 December

Day of Week	Date	Commemoration and Type of Fast
<i>Sunday</i>	29 December (16 Dec, o.s.)	Prophet Haggai Fast: fish, wine & oil permitted

St Elizabeth's Annual Christmas Party will take place on the Sunday after the Nativity (13 January), after the Divine Liturgy. All parishioners are urged to attend and bring dishes of food to share. Please mark your calendar.

WHO ARE THE HOLY FOREFATHERS, AND WHY DO WE COMMEMORATE THEM BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST?

[Priest Andrei Chizhenko](#)

The two last Sundays before the Nativity of Christ are called the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers and the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. The Holy Forefathers and Fathers are the Old Testament relatives according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, beginning with the holy ancestors [Adam and Eve](#), Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and his sons, the holy patriarch Abraham, and so on up to the glorious Nativity of Christ.

We honor all the [righteous of the Old Testament](#), including those who became the Savior's ancestors according to the flesh, because these people burned like candles of God in the darkness of paganism, and lived in the hope of the coming of the Messiah and mankind's deliverance from slavery to the devil, sin, and death. They lived by this hope, led by it as by a certain inner ray of the heart, which cut through the darkness of pagan religion and gave them the anticipation, the prescience of Christ, the joy of communion with God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the foretaste of paradise, where human feet had not stepped for many thousands of years but where (O, they believed in this!) the gates would unfailingly open; because into the world would come the One Whom these forefathers and fathers loved above all else, loved more than life itself, and for Whose sake were ready for anything—even death. Into the world would come our Lord Jesus Christ, Who would save them. And he will save all of us!

It is precisely for this reason that on the final Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, at the Liturgy is read the first synoptic Gospel, the first in order according to the Gospel of Matthew, where the [genealogy](#) of the Lord God, our Savior Jesus Christ is recounted. On the one hand, this was established by the Church in order that we would know and be interested in the lives of these Old Testament righteous ones, finding much that is fascinating and, especially, instructive in them. On the other hand, this established order is testimony to the fact that Christ is a real, [historical person](#)—and not just an historical person, but God incarnate in human

nature, become a real Man, Who took on our sins, healed us with His redeeming podvig, and Who ascended with human nature to the right hand of God the Father. Every man has ancestors and the Savior also had them, which is what the Gospel retells with utmost clarity.

Furthermore, brothers and sisters, we would like to direct your attention to the podvig of the holy forefathers and fathers from the historical point of view. We live in a society that is penetrated and drenched with Christian morality, as the earth is penetrated with air and drenched with water. But at that time, among the ancient Greeks flourished homosexuality, the Canaanite peoples made sacrifices of their own nursing children to Moloch, the Scythians drank the blood of their enemies, and among many nations [drunkenness](#) and [fornication](#) were glorified by their [pagan religions](#) and exalted to the level of religious ritual.

Cruelty and [slavery](#) were the norm then. Human life was cheap. Anyone could break into another man's house during war and take him into slavery, to make of him a "talking thing" with absolutely no rights.

And it seems to me that in those times it must have been very easy to lose the guiding star of the true faith, but the holy forefathers and father did not lose it; to the contrary they preserved it as a flaming, fiery tradition, like a burning candle, which we also must pass on (still burning!) to our own descendants. The world is still standing because of this.

There is a reason why this year at the Liturgy on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers the Gospel parable of the wedding feast of the king's son is read (Lk. 14:16-24). The powerful of that world rejected Christ, but the lame on the wayside accepted Him and were triumphantly led to the wedding feast. Who are "the maimed, the halt, and the blind" in the Gospel, who were called to the feast of faith? Of course they are, first of all, the holy forefathers and fathers, and after them all Christians who sincerely consider themselves spiritually sick—sick with sin, and therefore do they weep and lament over their sins and seek their most important Doctor, God. They seek and find Him.

The central liturgical theme on the Sundays of the Holy Forefathers and Fathers is the theme of the [three holy friends of Prophet Daniel](#), Sts. Ananias, Azarius, and Misael, whom the king had thrown into the Babylonian furnace because they did not bow down to the pagan idol. The holy youths did not burn, as an angel protected them. Their being "in a fiery furnace" became a prefiguring of the Nativity of Christ: Just as the three youths were not harmed by the flames of the

furnace, so also Christ's Nativity did not scorch (did not harm) the "Virgin Womb".

At the threshold of the [Nativity of Christ](#), we would like to wish that all of us, dear brothers and sisters, would have within ourselves, veritably like a heavenly fire, that feeling of the living God, Who appears One and the Same for them, the holy forefathers and fathers, and for the holy apostles, and for us.

In fact, just as the Most High conversed with the holy foreparents Adam and Eve in paradise and abode with them, so does He converse with our souls; although because of our sinfulness we cannot perceive this in full measure as did the first people in paradise. But this happens, nevertheless.

And perhaps one of the most important feelings or thoughts that unites the holy forefathers, the fathers, the apostles, and in general all the saints of all generations is the understanding that the Lord, just as before so also now, like a thousand years ago, and in the coming year, is amidst us, and walks beside us through life. This feeling of the living God is what makes us Orthodox Christians.

Holy Forefathers and Fathers, pray to God for us!

May the Lord be with you always in the new year!

[Priest Andrei Chizhenko](#)

Translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees)

Pravlife.org

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See also