



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

PARISH OF ST. VASILIOS - BRUNSWICK

ΕΝΟΠΙΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΥ

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GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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PROGRAM FOR CHRISTMAS HOLY SERVICES

Friday	22 DECEMBER	7.00am— Orthros, Royal Hours
Saturday	23 DECEMBER	7.00-9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy 3.30pm— Vespers
Sunday	24 DECEMBER	7.30-11.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy 5.00pm— Vespers
Monday	25 DECEMBER	NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST 5.00—8.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
Tuesday	26 DECEMBER	Synaxis of the Theotokos 7.00-9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
Wednesday	27 DECEMBER	Protomartyr St Stephen 7.00-9.30am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy
Sunday	31 DECEMBER	7.30-11.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy 7.00pm Great Festal Vespers presided by His Grace Bishop Iakovos, of Militopolis
Monday	1 JANUARY 2018	7.30am Archieratical Divine Liturgy of St Vasilios officiated by His Grace Bishop Ezekiel of Dervis and Bishop Iakovos of Militopolis
Friday	5 JANUARY 2018	7.00—11.00am Orthros, Hours, Vespers and Divine Liturgy followed by Great Agiasmos Service (Strict Fast)
Saturday	6 JANUARY 2018	HOLY EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST 7.00—11.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy followed by Great Agiasmos Service
Sunday	7 JANUARY 2018	Synaxis of St John the Forerunner and Baptist 7.30-11.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

Fr Ephraim and Fr Athanasios, The Church Committee, the Ladies' Philoptohos Group,
the Sunday School Teachers and Christian Youth Group of our Church

Wish all the community

A JOYOUS, HOLY CHRISTMAS

AND BLESSED NEW YEAR 2018.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST: THE FEAST OF RENEWAL

by St. John of Kronstadt

We are approaching, beloved brethren, the world-saving feast of the birth in the flesh of our Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. For several days before the feast, the holy Church will celebrate this wondrous mystery in the spiritual hymns of her daily services. These hymns remind us of our divine birthright, and the squandering of our sonship through sin; of its restoration through repentance of our common spiritual kinship and of the spirit of love and care for one another.

In order that we celebrate this feast of God's limitless love and His extreme condescension, not in a worldly but, in a spiritual manner, let us briefly consider the following: Why did God become man while remaining God? And what does God's incarnation require of us?

Having set forth these two questions, I shall answer the first one with the words of the Archangel to Joseph, the betrothed of the Holy Virgin: God became man to save His people from their sin. (Mt 1:21). For this reason He is called Jesus, which means Saviour. And so, it was for our salvation that the Lord came to earth and became man, for the regeneration in us of the image of God which had fallen. The Son of God became the Son of Man in order to make us sons of God who were the children of wrath and eternal damnation. In the words of the Holy Apostle John the Theologian: that we should be called the sons of God (1 Jn 3:1); Now God became man, that He may make Adam a god. (Stichera for lauds of Annunciation).

O the unutterable love of God! O the unspeakable compassion of the Lord! And He, the Most Holy, did this: He deified mankind in His chosen ones, cleansed them from all evil both of soul and body, sanctified, glorified, led them from corruption to everlasting life, made them worthy to stand in blessedness before the terrible throne of His glory. And He deified us also, brothers and sisters;

He gave us a new birth through water and the Holy Spirit, sanctified us, made us His sons, gave us the promise of eternal life and eternal blessings, surpassing all telling and imagining. And in confirmation, as a surety of the future blessings, He gave to us, still here on earth, the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts: God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Gal 4:6) writes the Apostle.

And so, my brothers, the feast of the Nativity of Christ reminds us that we are born of God, that we are sons of God, that we have been saved from sin and that we must live for God and not sin; not for flesh and blood, not for the whole world which lies in evil and wickedness (1 Jn 5:19), not for earthly corruption. We must live for an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Pet 1:4), and for which the Lord Himself will give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. (Isa 7:14).

You who are preparing yourselves to meet the feast of Christ's Nativity, ask yourselves: Have you preserved that spiritual birth from God which we each received in baptism? Are you always heedful of your Divine sonship and the sacred treasure of the Spirit which you acquired in baptism? Have you grown closer to God through faith and love, like His beloved children?

Have you loved one another as befits children of God? Have you despised ugly, evil and all-destructive sin? Have you loved truth and every virtue? Have you loved immortal and eternal life prepared in a land which will not pass away and to which we are called by Him Who now has come to our corrupt earth? These are questions which we must ask ourselves now and decide; our decisions cannot be only with our minds, but above all, with our hearts and with our very deeds.

In general, we should not allow ourselves to celebrate any Christian feast without seriously considering: What is its meaning and what is its purpose?

What is our responsibility towards it? We must know the Christian meaning behind every feast. Then the feast will become profitable for our soul's salvation. Otherwise, the enemy of our salvation will snatch us and turn the feast of God into a feast of the flesh, of lawlessness, as so often happens.

Having resolved the first question on "why did God become man?" we came also to the resolution of the second: What does the Incarnation of the Son of God require of us? It requires of us to remember and hold in sacred honour the fact that we are born of God, and if we have sullied and trampled upon this birthright with our sins, we must restore it by washing it with tears of repentance; we must restore and renew within us the image of God which has fallen and the union with God of blessedness, truth and holiness which has been destroyed.

The incarnation of the Son of God requires from us, above all, mutual love, humility, that we help and serve one another; for how can we not love one another when we see the love that God has towards us? How can we not be humble, seeing such humility, such voluntary condescension for our sake of the Son of God? How can we not help one another in every way possible, when the Son of God Himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many? (Mt 20:28).

Like the wise men, let us, brothers, also prepare gifts for the new-born King. Instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh, let us bring Him the gifts of faith, hope, and love. Amen.