ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA ORTHODOX CHURCH

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December 21, 2025
Sunday Before the Nativity; Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ

We rejoice today in the Chrismation of our new sister in Christ, Stephanie. Please join us after the Divine Liturgy for a Lenten reception. On this day, we will include hymns to the Martyr Stephanida of Damascus, her patron saint.

Schedule

Sat Dec 20, 4pm – Great Vespers & Confessions
Sun Dec 21, 9am – Divine Liturgy with the Chrismation of Stephanie Selis
Parish Council during Coffee Hour.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Tues Dec 23, 4pm – Vespers & Prefeast Canon @ Ss Constantine & Helen
Wed Dec 24, 9am – Royal Hours of the Nativity. *Final confessions.**
Wed Dec 24, 6pm – NATIVITY VIGIL
Thurs Dec 25, 9am – Divine Liturgy of the Nativity
Sat Dec 27, 10am – Divine Liturgy for the First-martyr Stephen, at St Stephen's Cathedral, 8598 Verree Road, Philadelphia

** Please do not wait until Christmas Eve for confession. There will not be enough time for everyone.*

Sat Dec 27 – NO VESPERS
Sun Dec 28, 9am – Divine Liturgy

Wed Dec 31, 5pm – Great Vespers for St Basil @ Ss Constantine & Helen
Thurs Jan 1, 8:30am – Matins & Divine Liturgy @ Ss C&H

Hymns of the Day

Troparion for Sunday (Tone 3)

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal, / Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead. / And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, / all the powers of heaven cried out: // "O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!"

Troparion for the Holy Fathers (Tone 2)

Great are the accomplishments of faith, / for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though in the waters of rest; / and the Prophet Daniel appeared / a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. // So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Prefeast of the Nativity (Tone 4)

Prepare, O Bethlehem, / for Eden has been opened to all! / Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, / for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave! / Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit; / if we eat of It, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. // Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning!

Troparion for the Martyr Stephanida (Tone 4)

Your holy martyr Stephanida, O Lord, / through her sufferings has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God. / For having Your strength, she laid low her adversaries, / and shattered the powerless boldness of demons. / Through her intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion for the Martyr Stephanida (Tone 2)

You appeared as a bright star announcing Christ with your radiance, / which is repulsive to this world, O Martyr Stephanida; / extinguishing the allure of false gods, / you enlighten the faithful, // always interceding for us all.

***Glory** ... for the Holy Fathers (Tone 1)*

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha! / The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in her womb. / The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him, // and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

***Now & ever** ... Forefeast of the Nativity (Tone 2)*

He Who holds the earth in the hollow of His hand / now is beheld in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling bands. / We offer prefestal hymns to his Mother, who maternally rejoices // having held to her bosom the Son of God.

Prayers

For the repose of: Archpriest Paul Pyrch (12/2). Rebecca Ream (11/3). Abp. Kiprian (12/14/1980). Abp Job (12/18/2009).

For the health of: Archbishop Nathaniel, Abp. Alexander, Abp. Benjamin, Bernard Kusior, Nina Fatula, John Bohlin. ***For those who are grieving:*** *(For Rebecca)* Pani Anna Marie Slovesko, David Ream, Jesika & Justin Wilhelm, Justin & Danielle Ream. ***For our catechumens:*** Bradley Bosch.

Today's Scripture

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Giving Opportunities

Please check with Fr John before donating, to avoid duplicates.

We are seeking the following donations: *More urgent:* Sacramental Wine $215, Incense $50. *And the following 4 Icons, $65 each:* Publican & Pharisee, Prodigal Son, Restoration of Icons, St Gregory Palamas.

Other Announcements

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS: Please consider offering a Poinsettia in memory of a loved one, or with prayers for health or thanksgiving. Suggested donation $10-15. *Please write YOUR NAME, "Christmas Flowers", and whom the prayer is for, on any blank envelope. Thank you!*

Our Advent Collection basket for International Orthodox Christian Charities will remain on the center table throughout the Nativity Fast.

We are now collecting food donations year-round for Helping Harvest. Their most-needed items are shelf-stable cereals, PB, grains & pasta, canned goods, and fruit juices. *Please no glass jars.*

Attendance

Sun Nov 23 Liturgy: 23 adults, 2 children (Communion: 14 adults, 1 children)
Sun Nov 30 Liturgy: 19 adults, 1 children (Communion: 10 adults, 1 children)
St Nicholas (Eve), Dec 5 Vespers: 6
Sun Dec 7 Liturgy: 28 adults, 2 children (Communion: 16 adults, 1 children)
Dec 12/13, St Herman's Feast: Vespers 11, Liturgy 29, Communion 24
Sun Dec 14 Liturgy: 10 adults, 1 children (Communion: 8 adults, 1 children)

Welcome to all visitors who have prayed and celebrated the Divine Liturgy with us this morning! We invite all of you downstairs for fellowship after the conclusion of the Liturgy. If you have any questions, please reach out to Fr. John at any time. *We love you and hope to see you again!*

Please note: In the Orthodox Church, the receiving of Holy Communion is the sign of one's ***full participation in the mystery of the Faith****, and all Orthodox Christians should receive it frequently.*

For this reason, Communion is offered only to Orthodox Christians who are ***prepared*** *to receive it (through* ***prayer****,* ***fasting****, and a recent* ***confession****) and are* ***at peace with each other****. Those who partake of the Eucharist normally fast from food and drink in the morning before the Divine Liturgy, if they are able.*

Martyr Stephanida of Damascus

Saint Stephanida witnessed the martyrdom at Damascus of the Holy Martyr Victor, a soldier, during the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius the Philosopher (161-180). He was tortured, but he came through all the torments unharmed. By the power of prayer he was victorious over a sorcerer, who from that point gave up give sorcery and became a Christian.

Through Saint Victor's prayers, blind soldiers suddenly received their sight. Witnessing the miracle worked by the Lord through Saint Victor, Stephanida, the young Christian wife of one of the torturers, openly glorified Christ, for which she was condemned to a cruel death. She was tied to two palm trees bent to the ground, which when released, sprung back and tore her apart. She was fifteen years old.

The martyrs suffered in the second century at Damascus, where their venerable relics were buried.

Faith and Expectation: The Two Sundays Before Christmas

One could say the central theme of the two Sundays before Christmas is yearning for God. One saint in particular represents this longing of the Church: Simeon, the Receiver of God (feast day: February 3). He is truly a symbol of the Church, both of the Old Testament in its anticipation of the Messiah, and of the New in its joy in the Incarnate Christ....

Simeon waited his whole long life to see the Christ. And as he waited, he surely yearned for that promise, wondered how it would transpire; perhaps he even doubted that it would ever come to pass. And now the promise is fulfilled, and the Son of God comes to him-not with fire and brimstone, not in storms and tempests; but in the form of a baby-in tranquility and gentleness. And his response to this realization of God's pledge is "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

The reaction of many to the "baby Jesus" is the sentimental response of an audience at a Nativity play. But the response of the Church is that of the Righteous Simeon: a peace and fulfillment beyond words; the joyful proclamation of God's greatness; the announcement of our salvation; and, above all, our due worship of Him as King and God.

– Fr Vassilios Papavassiliou, *Meditations for Advent: Preparing for Christ's Birth* (Ancient Faith Publishing, 2013), 54-56.