

Magnificat

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News from
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Advent
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How can I recount this great mystery?
He who is bodiless becomes incarnate;
the Word is made flesh;
the Invisible is seen;
the Intangible is touched;
and He who knows no beginning
begins to be.

The Son of God becomes the Son of Man:
Jesus Christ,
the same yesterday, today, and forever.

From Vespers of December 26,
Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropolis in the United States of America, which is in union with the Pope of Rome, supreme pastor of the universal Church. We embrace Evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability of life, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the traditions of the Christian East. In our skete at Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, we devote ourselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.



Restoration

The practice of celebrating Christmas, or, more properly, **the Feast of the Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ**, on December 25 originated at Rome early in the Fourth Century and soon made its way to the East where the Church was already celebrating the Lord's birth on January 6. This primordial feast was known as Epiphany, meaning *manifestation* or *shining forth*. Its principal focus was the Savior's baptism by John in the Jordan, but it also commemorated His birth, the visit of the Magi, and the working of His first miracle at Cana: all events that manifested Christ to the world. The Armenian Apostolic Church preserves the feast in this primitive form even today.

Understandably, there seems to have been some initial hesitation at accepting the new feast celebrated on December 25. Exhorting his flock in Antioch in the late Fourth Century, St. John Chrysostom described Christmas as *the mother of all feasts*, for from *the Nativity of Christ, all the other feasts flow like different streams from the same source*.

This feast justly occupies first place not only because of this, but also because the event which this day commemorates is, of all events, the most worthy of wonder. By the century's end, we find celebration of Lord's birth on December 25 almost universal in the East; the earlier feast, now devoted exclusively to His baptism with its significance and ramifications, came to be known as Theophany – *manifestation of God*.

By way of mutual enrichment and holy exchange, Epiphany was soon introduced into the West, where the visit of the Magi – seen as representatives of the Gentile nations – served to exemplify Christ's manifestation to the world. In the East, however, the Magi and their guiding

star remained central to the celebration of the Lord's birth. Indeed, all the events of His early years as recorded in the first and second chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke receive commemoration during Christmas and its post-festive days, with His encounter with the elders, Anna and Simeon (Lk. 2:22-40), being reserved for February 2, the fortieth day after Christmas and the close of the season. The hymns and poetic texts that accompany the Scriptural accounts expound and elucidate their significance in the clarity of Byzantine light.

Christ our God,
begotten of the Father
before the morning star,
like the dew,
has come in the flesh;
He who rules over angelic powers
is laid in a manger of dumb beasts;
and He who looses
the twisted bonds of sin
is wrapped and bound
in swaddling clothes.

From Matins of Christmas

The Eastern theological perspective tends to see things in a holistic manner. The true significance of Christ's birth can only be understood in the light of His teaching, of His suffering and death, and of His resurrection and ascension in glory. The Church beautifully manifests this perspective in sound through the singing of poetic texts during its Services, and in form and color through its icons.

Thus, the rocks surrounding the cave of the Nativity icon closely resemble those surmounting the tomb in the Resurrection icon of the Angel seated upon the stone, the manger is nearly identical to the tomb itself, and the same bands that served as swaddling clothes for the Infant now portray the abandoned shroud of the risen Lord. The meaning and purpose of the Savior's coming among us are made clear in the light of his death and resurrection.

The Scriptures themselves provide similar parallels. Worldly powers oppose and persecute Jesus from the beginning; what is foreshadowed by Herod's massacre of the Innocents is fulfilled in Jesus' death under the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate. He who as a newborn is laid in a bed bor-

rowed from dumb animals is laid in burial in a borrowed tomb, and the three days His parents searched for the Child Jesus intimate His three days in the grave.

Salvation history is one story from the Creation to the Second Coming. In meditating on the Nativity of Christ we ponder the totality of its significance. We recall the circumstances and consequences of our fall, and we look toward our ultimate destination of glory.

The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is both the creator and restorer of mankind. The first chapter of the Book of Genesis tells us that He created man in His own *image and likeness*. However, man, in a perverse exercise of his God-given free will, was disobedient and estranged himself from his creator, falling from communion with God. The divine image within him was thereby obscured, though not destroyed, and man was no longer capable of attaining the union with God for which he had been originally destined.

Through the incarnation of the Logos, God the Son, in the person of Jesus Christ, human nature is joined with the Divine. By the saving events of His life, death, and resurrection, the curse of Adam's disobedience is wiped out, the divine image within us is restored, and we are again capable of attaining our original destination of eternal glory. Divine and human nature having been joined in Christ, we, insofar as we remain in Him, through the workings of the Holy Spirit, may share of His divinity.

The Eastern Fathers state it quite bluntly: **God became man, that man might become God.**

This sharing in divinity, this becoming God, is not, of course, a union of essence; our ultimate goal is not absorption into the Godhead. Rather, it is a union by way of adoption and similitude. Through co-operation with the graces of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives, we gradually attain to holiness and perfection, becoming Godlike in our acts and intentions. The likeness to God we had lost in the beginning is restored and surpassed through the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus.

O Christ,
 You made Yourself
 a creature of earthly clay;
 sharing our human nature,
 You made us partakers
 of the divine.
 You became a mortal man,
 yet still You are God.
 You have lifted us up
 from our fallen state.
 Holy are You, O Lord.

From Matins of Christmas

Lovingly and repeatedly recounting the details of the Christmas Event, the Church of the Byzantine tradition meditates on just who it is that is born in Bethlehem. She also keeps before us the purpose of it all: Christ has come amongst us to restore the divine image within us and make us sharers in His own divine life. She bids us fall down in awe and gratitude to the One who so wondrously extends His mercy to raise us up from our fall.

Entering once again upon the celebration of the Lord's birth, let us be truly mindful of just what it is we are celebrating; let us strive by our words and deeds to be worthy of so great a love. Let us open ourselves to the wonder and stand in awe before the mystery of God's assuming our flesh. With the whole Church, and from the depths of our hearts, let us sing:

**He who holds the whole creation
 in the hollow of His hand is born
 of the Virgin... We bow down and
 worship Your Nativity, O Christ!**

From the Ninth Royal Hour
 Paramony of Christmas



Services, Christmas 2014

Sunday, 21 December 2014 -- Sunday Before Christmas

5:30 pm (Saturday)	Great Vespers	1) Genesis 14:14-20; 2) Deuteronomy 1:8-11.15-17; 3) Deuteronomy 10:14-21
10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Hebrews 11:9-10.17-23.32-40; 2) Mt. 1:1-25

Wednesday, 24 December 2014 -- Vigil of Christmas

5:00 am	Matins and First Hour Pss: 5, 44(45), 45(46)	1) Micah 5:2-4; 2) Hebrews 1:1-12; 3) Matthew 1:18-25
9:00 am	Third Hour Pss: 66(67), 86(87), 50(51)	1) Baruch 3:36-4:4; 2) Galatians 3:23-4:5; 3) Luke 2:1-20
11:00 am	Sixth Hour Pss: 71(72), 131(132), 90(91)	1) Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 8-10; 2) Hebrews 1:10-2:3; 3) Matthew 2:1-12
1:30 pm	Ninth Hour Pss: 109(110), 110(111), 85(86)	1) Isaiah 9:6-7; 2) Hebrews 2:11-18; 3) Matthew 2:13-23
4:30 pm	Solemn Vespers and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great	1) Genesis 1:1-13; 2) Numbers 24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18; 3) Micah 4:6-7, 5:2-4; 4) Isaiah 11:1-10; 5) Baruch 3:35-4:4; 6) Daniel 2:31-36, 44-45; 7) Isaiah 9:6-7; 8) Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 9-10; 9) Hebrews 1:1-12; 10) Luke 2:1-20
9:00 pm	Great Compline and Solemn Matins Pss: 134(135), 109(110), 110(111)	1) Matthew 1:18-25

Thursday, 25 December 2014 -- Christmas Day

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy (Chrysostom)	1) Galatians 4:4-7; 2) Matthew 2:1-12
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Sunday, 28 December 2014 -- Sunday after Christmas

5:30 pm (Saturday)	Great Vespers	1) Genesis 25:21-34; 2) Sirach 7:1-28; 3) Zechariah 8:3-11
10:00 am	Divine Liturgy (Chrysostom)	1) Galatians 1:11-19; 2) Matthew 2:13-23

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



Winter's Peace

It was a common opening for conversation across the Jampot counter throughout the season: *How was your winter?* or, *I hear you had a tough winter*, or, as fall progressed, *Do you think next winter will be as hard as the last one?* In the end, we had taken to replying: *Well, whatever it is, we will survive it – we always do – and it will give us plenty to talk about in the spring!*

In the beginning, of course, there was, indeed, some question. When we first came into this strikingly beautiful land and would tell year round residents of our intent to build a monastery here and of all we hoped to do, they would listen politely and then make no comment but to ask: *Have you ever spent a winter here?* With hindsight we understand their skepticism.

We arrived in late summer, moved into an un-insulated building with a summer only water system, and set about building a monastery. The first neighbor we met was not very optimistic: *I give you about as much chance*, he said, *as a snowflake in hell. I'll drop by when I return in the spring to see if you're still here – and still alive.* Others were more supportive, though no less blunt. One

elderly woman, on learning that we had spent several days trying to winterize our water system but had not yet secured a supply of firewood, declared: *You can live without running water; you'll die without wood!* One man, who was about to move out of the area, waxed mildly poetic: *Winter is coming*, he said, *and you will be amazed at its force and power. It's a thing of awesome beauty as it comes in, and you'll love it. But you'd better have lots of wood; it'll kill you if you're not prepared.*

When it came, we were hardly prepared. We had secured a modest supply of sub-standard firewood and we hauled our water from a spring a hundred yards away from our house. The old building was tight, however, having once served as a one-room schoolhouse, and, with fires in both the cook stove and the parlor stove, we could make it tolerably warm. But it did not hold its heat, and it was often dangerously cold when we arose in the mornings. The wood supply failed long before winter's end. For a while we went out each day and trimmed dead limbs from nearby oak trees to provide heat for the night. Firewood shared by a generous neighbor finally got us through.



The experience of that first winter has remained with us. We still consider security a big woodpile. And, while subsequent winters have proven less perilous, for a long time we tended to consider the whole year as preparation for winter survival. Even now we view autumn's shortening days with some trepidation, wonder when the permanent snow will arrive, and take special precautions against the pipes freezing in some older parts of the house.

We have never viewed winter as an enemy, however, some sort of implacable monster whose inexorable approach is a cause for flight or despair. Rather, it is an old friend, who demands and deserves the utmost respect and who, if properly prepared for, brings a sense of happiness and peace. Summer's long hours and frantic pace are past: there is more time for contemplation and private prayer, for study, or just relaxing by the fire with a good book. There is also time for catching up on all the deskwork neglected during the busier times, for planning and organization, for accounting, and for revising brochures and publications. Indeed, though our longest season, winter seems no longer long enough for all we hope to accomplish.

Most importantly for our life as monks, winter also encompasses the holy seasons of Christmas and Theophany, of Lent and Holy Week. It affords us the time for proper celebration of these glorious periods. Liturgical celebration is the center and focus of our life; the winter's peace allows it to blossom fully.

But the one character of winter we find most endearing is its sheer beauty. From our first visit here one February nearly thirty-five years ago, we have caught in its sometimes dazzling brightness glimpses of the Divine. Impressive as the power of the storm may be, it is in the luminescence of a peaceful, snowy morning or in the brilliance of a sunny afternoon that we may more clearly see the face of God.



At the Jampot



The mild weather that had characterized the final weeks of August continued well into September, providing us with some of the most pleasant days of the whole season. Autumn arrived rather spectacularly with storms and high winds about mid-month, and the fall colors came earlier than we have seen in recent years, reaching their peak by month's end. The display was intense and brilliant in places, but it was also brief; many inland areas were bare by the end of the first week in October. Still, the usual autumn rain was not overly frequent, and there were many crisp, bright days to enjoy the deep golden hues that lingered on our shore through most of the month.

Jampot remained busy throughout the fall, with waiting lines on most Saturdays and many regular customers buying in quantity for winter rationing. The usual post-Labor Day lull proved not as long or deep as expected, but the period's fruitcake production was sufficient to see us through almost to the end of the season. The final Saturday in September proved the busiest day in **Jampot** history, and the first two in October were not far behind. We found ourselves strug-

gling to keep fresh baked goods on the counter, and confections were at times all but completely missing. Jam remained in good supply, however, with more varieties available through season's end than has been usual in recent years. Though pressed at times seemingly to the limit, we generally managed to keep pace.

We were unexpectedly called away during the

third week of October, and the shop was closed on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of the last week of the season. We returned to work on Friday and began preparing for the last day. Saturday, October 18, proved sunny and mild, and many people came out to enjoy the last of the color, to pick up final orders, or to bid us farewell for the winter. We had spent some hours of the morning baking, so there was a good supply of muffins and cookies to meet customers' needs. But, as the afternoon wore on, one by one the varieties sold out, and the plates came off the counter. By the end of the day, the bars were gone, and only a few bags of cookies remained, along with a dozen or so muffins. We boxed them up for delivery to the Sheriff and distribution to the needy. Warily and happily we headed to the church for Vespers after the busiest closing day **Jampot** had ever seen, a fitting end to its best season ever.

Meanwhile, with the lifting of the Stop Work Order at the beginning of September, work had resumed on the storage building off the south corner of the **Jampot** kitchen. Though still miss-



By day's end the vacated areas had been reduced to a pile of rubble and the exposed areas of the remaining kitchen had been closed in with temporary walls. Despite the noise, dust, and heavy equipment, a few determined customers slipped into the sales room in search of jam and bakery. Since the jam and fruitcake had not yet been removed to the warehouse shipping room, we were able to accommodate

ing the dumbwaiter that would make its upper floors convenient for bulk storage, its interior finishes were complete and its heating and refrigeration systems operational by the beginning of October. Opening up some walls in the soon to be abandoned areas of the existing structure, we were able to maneuver a large refrigeration unit from its previous location in the kitchen to the storage building and – with the help of a forklift – move the marble table to the temporary candy room in the climate-controlled area of the new building. By the shop's closing Saturday we had almost completely vacated the old candy room and two small storage areas, stashing their contents – with no great organization or order – in the new building and in various areas of the kitchen; we would sort things out after the chaos to come.

It happened quickly. The masonry contractor arrived with excavation equipment on the morning of Monday, October 20.

some of these latecomers, but those looking for fresh baked goods left disappointed. Tuesday morning we placed a sign in the window announcing the obvious: **Jampot is Closed for the Season!**

By the end of the day the debris had been cleared away and the area for the footings exca-





vated. The contractor set the forms and poured the footings on Wednesday. We left early Thursday morning for a trip to Buffalo, New York, and a tutorial on the operation of the equipment we would be purchasing for the new candy room. When we returned on Monday, October 27, the foundation had been completed and backfilled and the area packed with fine sand in preparation of pouring the slab. The mechanical/electrical contractor having completed his stub-in on Wednesday, Thursday saw the pouring of the floor. The masons completed their work on Friday in the rain; that night – Halloween – it snowed.

And so it goes. Despite sometimes uncooperative weather, the work moves forward. The first snow melted quickly, and Monday,

November 3, was dry enough for the carpenters to snap lines and lay out the wall plates. Soon they were framing walls as they rushed to get the structure closed in before the onset of heavy winter. We pray all goes well, and that the new building will be completed and equipped in time for the beginning of the 2015 season.

For now, the 2014 season is still very much with us. With the construction only a few feet away, sounds of hammer and saw accompany our kitchen work as we labor to produce the jam, fruitcake, and confections for our many mail and online orders. The work has gone well, the early orders have been fulfilled, and we have a good inventory for the timely fulfillment of orders yet to come.

For your gift-giving pleasure or personal enjoyment, we stand ready to quickly supply the fine items listed on the following pages.



HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE
Society of St. John
6559 State Highway M26
Eagle Harbor, Michigan 49950
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Thanksgiving

As we descend into our thirty-second winter on this blessed shore and approach our national holiday of Thanksgiving, we find ourselves immensely grateful for the manifest blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us during this past calendar year.

Certainly the greatest of these has been the thawing of our relations with local government. The resolution of the zoning difficulties first encountered in the spring of 2007 not only makes possible the expansion of **Jampot** facilities noted elsewhere in this issue, it bodes well for the future of this monastery in general. The good will evidenced by the Township boards, commissions, and officials in the contentious matter of growth at the **Jampot** sets a precedent for the smooth realization of the monastery's rightful potential in years to come. We thank God for the newfound flexibility – and especially for the initiative and actions of those that brought it about. Their kindness and understanding help move this great work forward.

We are grateful also for the continued growth of the business, itself. Revenue from shop sales

increased by eleven percent this past season, which favorably impacts the financial stability of the monastery and the potential growth of the monastic community. The crowded sales room and the waiting lines point to the widening popularity of our humble establishment. This is not something we have done; truly, it is the Lord's doing. We struggle to keep up with the blessing.

A larger and better laid out sales room is planned for Phase III of the approved **Jampot** expansion. At best, this is still several years in the future. But the increased efficiency in candy making afforded by the current expansion will make it possible to better provide for those who manage to squeeze in. We thank God for the ability to move the project forward at this time.

Most emphatically and especially we thank Him for you who continue to make it all possible. Through your prayers, patronage, and generosity, the Lord is building this monastery. Thank you from the depths of our hearts. We continue to pray earnestly for you, and we wish you a happy Thanksgiving.