

Magnificat

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News from
HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE
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Society of Saint John
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Advent
2019

Adorn yourself, O cave of Bethlehem,
for the Mother comes, who bears Christ in her womb.
O manger, receive the Word, who destroys the sins of mankind.
O shepherds, keep watch and bear witness to the awesome wonder.
O Magi, come from Persia and bring to the King
your gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
For the Lord has manifested Himself from the Virgin Mother.
Worshipping Him, whom she held in her arms,
she greeted Him within her heart, saying:
How were You conceived in me, how did you grow in me,
O my God and my Savior?

From Vespers
for St. Nicholas of Myra

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparch 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.

Presentiments of Christmas

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

The principal celebration of the Christian faith is Pascha, the solemn remembrance of the sacrificial suffering and death of Jesus Christ, and the glorious proclamation of His triumph over death. During Holy Week we relive these salvific events through the eyes of the Evangelists, culminating with St. Matthew's account of the Resurrection (Mt. 28: 1-20) during the Vespertine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on the night of Holy Saturday.

At the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom on Easter Sunday morning, we begin St. John's gospel, which we will continue to read throughout the ensuing fifty days until Pentecost.

Coming immediately after the exuberance of Resurrection Matins, it would seem somewhat of an anomaly that we do not hear at Divine Liturgy a scriptural account of the paschal event. But Easter is the pivot of the liturgical year, and now all things begin anew. We will hear Resurrection Gospel readings at Sunday Matins throughout the year. St. John's lofty theology gives him pride of place in the yearly cycle of readings for Divine Liturgy. Thus, we begin, significantly, with his account of the Incarnation, the mystery manifested in the events we celebrate at Christmas and Theophany.

St. John Chrysostom rightly called Christmas *the mother of all feasts for from the Nativity of Christ, all the other feasts flow like streams from the same source.* Were not Jesus Christ God-made-flesh,

His teaching would have little import, His suffering and death would have no more power to save than that of any other man, and His Resurrection would be impossible. But, as Christians, we affirm that in Jesus Christ the fulness of divinity dwelt in bodily form, and we celebrate His physical entrance into our world and the manifestation of His divinity with the utmost joy.

To enhance our joy, and to dispose to a more worthy and mindful celebration of the mystery, the Church typically proposes periods of fasting before her major feasts. Thus, in addition to the great forty-day Lenten fast prior to Holy Week, we fast from the Sunday after

Pentecost to the Feast of the Prime Apostles Peter and Paul, for two weeks prior to the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin, and from mid-November until Christmas. Unlike Lent, these lesser fasts do not represent formal liturgical seasons, but, rather, times of personal preparation for the upcoming Feasts, with the liturgical preparation comprising only one or two pre-festive days.

As befits their importance in the economy of salvation, Christmas and Theophany possess a more developed environment, with special readings and texts prescribed for the preceding Sundays, as well as proper Services on the vigils of the feasts. Moreover, the birth of Christ is specifically referenced on several preceding feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

It is because of what she believes about Christ, that the Church holds the Virgin Mary in such high esteem. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. As God He is always existing and ever the same, unchangeable, and incapable of suffering and death. Only as man can he suffer and die, in the flesh offering Himself in sacrifice for

Your birth, O Virgin Mother of God,
proclaimed joy to all the world;
for from you has shone forth
the Sun of Justice,
Christ our God,
who has freed us from the curse
and bestowed His blessing:
Having abolished death,
He grants us eternal life.

*Troparion
for the Nativity of the Theotokos*

Η ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΣ

ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ



the sins of us all. This flesh, in which He came to dwell among us, in which He shared all our infirmities, save sin, and which He offered up for our salvation, He received from His mother.

That a mere human being should be so privileged is astounding and leads us to declare her to be *more honorable than the Cherubim and, beyond compare, more glorious than the Seraphim*. That He, whom the whole world could not contain, should deign to be confined within her womb is beyond comprehension; thus, we see her womb as *more spacious than the heavens*, and the Virgin herself as *the very temple of God*. Since she alone brought Christ into the world, we herald her as the *source of our salvation*.

This extravagance of language is not an attempt to hold the Virgin as some sort of goddess or superhuman being. She remains forever the *handmaid of the Lord*. Rather, it is expressive of our overwhelming wonder and gratitude before the mystery of the Incarnation, and our acknowledgement of the very humanity of her part in it.

Intimately bound up in our understanding of Christ as God and man, the Virgin and her unique role in the Incarnation are never far from our worship as Byzantine Christians. She is commemorated numerous times in our daily Services, and she is the subject of several special feasts, as well.

Thus, in addition to Feast of the Annunciation (cf. Lk. 1: 26-38) on March 25, the Church, with colorful and moving details drawn from Holy Tradition, celebrates the Virgin's birth on September 8, her conception in the womb of her mother on December 9, and her departure from earthly life on August 15. Since she not only

gave birth to Christ, but would have presided over His human growth from infancy through childhood and adolescence to manhood, there is also a feast – her Entrance into the Temple, on November 21 – commemorating the spiritual formation she received in early life to enable her to carry out this critical task.

The burden of all these celebrations is to emphasize the purpose of her life: to be the vehicle of the Incarnation, to bring Christ into the world. Many of their poetic texts, therefore, reflect the themes and imagery of Christmas and Theophany and anticipate the arrival of these great feasts of God's manifestation in the

flesh. Through them, and through its constant reflection on the Incarnation, the entire Byzantine liturgical year may be seen as a sort of continuous Advent, a longing anticipation of the Lord's coming amongst us.

Beginning with the Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra on December 6, however, the presentiments of Christmas reach a new intensity. The imagery of Christmas is

brought intensely before us, the cave, the manger, the shepherds, the Magi, and, midway through the fast, we are forcefully reminded of our true purpose.

Like them, we are to adorn ourselves with prayer and good works and prepare to receive the Incarnate Word of God in our hearts for the forgiveness of our sins. Bowing in humble worship before the great and joyful mystery, we are to bear witness to the awesome wonder, which we hold in faith, but cannot begin to understand:

In the flesh of a newborn Babe, Divinity has broken into our world, and all things are now made new.

In the womb of Anne
a new heaven is fashioned
by the hand of God, the Creator.
From it will shine the Unsetting Sun
to illumine the whole world
with the rays of Divinity,
in the abundant mercy
of His love for mankind.

From Matins
for the conception of the Virgin
in the womb of St. Anne

Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker⁵

Of all the holy men and women of every time and place who plead for us before the throne of God, few have had a popularity as enduring and widespread as St. Nicholas of Myra.

This may seem surprising in that we know almost nothing about him. That he was Bishop of Myra in what is now Turkey during the middle of the fourth century is about all we can say of him with any degree of historical certainty. The earliest known account of his life dates from about five hundred years after his death and seems to consist mostly of pious legend. Still, a millennium and a half of continuous devotion must count for something; we cannot totally discount what in our limited understanding may seem merely legendary.

It is recounted that St. Nicholas was born at Patara in the region of Lycia and that he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in his youth. In prayer at Bethlehem he discerned a call to holy orders; shortly after his return he was elected Bishop of Myra. As the leader of Christians in the area, he suffered imprisonment during the final persecutions under the Emperor Diocletian; Constantine the Great's end to the persecutions brought about his release. Although we find his name on none of the surviving lists, he is said to have attended the Council of Nicaea, where he vigorously opposed the Arian heresy.

Having come into a large inheritance at an early age, he is said to have resolved to devote his fortune to works of charity and was particularly known for his great generosity. It is recounted

that he anonymously supplied sizable dowries for three young women whose father had fallen on hard times, thereby saving them from lives of ill-repute. Many other stories serve to illustrate his great kindness and generosity.

But it was his fame as a wonder-worker that won St. Nicholas the devotion of so many. During his lifetime, he is said to have miraculously intervened on several occasions to secure the freedom of people unjustly imprisoned. He is likewise said to have appeared to storm-tossed sailors who had invoked his aid and to have guided them safely into port. Another legend recounts how he restored to life three children who had been murdered.

As his legend grew over the centuries, he came to be regarded as a special protector by many different groups of people. Thus, his intercession is often sought by those in prison. He was considered the patron of mariners in the Greek speaking East where sailors would often wish one another a safe voyage by saying, May St. Nicholas hold the tiller. In Slavic lands his protection of mariners was often extended toward all those who were endangered by the elements. In the West, particularly in northern Europe, he was commonly revered as patron and protector of children.

Devotion to St. Nicholas has a long history. As early as the sixth century, the Emperor Justinian I had built a major church dedicated to his honor in Constantinople. The seventh century Jerusalem Canonarium notes his commemoration on December 6, as do the Greek menologies

Rejoice, O saintly Father,
pure temple of the Holy Trinity,
pillar of the Church,
support of the faithful,
and protector of those in peril.
You are a star,
dispelling the darkness
of trouble and sorrow
by the brightness of your prayers,
and a calm haven
for the storm-tossed of life.
O holy Bishop Nicholas,
Beg Christ grant great mercy
to our souls.

From Vespers,
Feast of St. Nicholas

of the ninth century; this date became fixed in Byzantine civil law by decree of the Emperor Manuel Comnen in the twelfth century. The Church, both East and West, celebrates his feast on the sixth day of December to this day.

In Rome, Pope Nicholas I dedicated a church in honor of St. Nicholas in the ninth century. Devotion to the Saint spread to Germany during the tenth century. By the late middle ages there were some two thousand churches dedicated to him in France and Germany alone, with an additional four hundred in England.

It is testimony to his fame at the time that in 1087 a group of Italian merchant sailors stole his remains from their resting place in the cathedral at Myra, which had fallen into Muslim hands, and carried them to Bari, the principal city of Apulia, a region in southern Italy where there was still a large Greek-speaking population. The basilica built to enshrine his relics there remains a center of pilgrimage, particularly for the faithful among the Slavs.

Many regions and nations have claimed St. Nicholas as their special patron. He is held in particular esteem by the Slavic Byzantine Churches, which, in addition to his universal feast on December 6, also celebrate a feast on May 9 commemorating the translation of his relics to Bari. In addition, the Byzantine Churches commemorate him at the various Services each Thursday and at the Proskomedia of every Divine Liturgy. He is the Patron of our cathedral church, of our eparchy, and of the Eastern Catholic Churches in general.

Because of his special patronage of children, it has been the custom in many places to give

gifts to children on his feast day. Having been brought to this land by Dutch settlers, the custom survives here in a largely de-Christianized form. The gifts arrive on Christmas Eve, and the good Saint has been transformed into a jolly old elf named Santa Claus.

We might, perhaps, be justified in decrying this secularization, this turning of a holy man into a quasi-comic character, as typical of the pernicious frivolity of our time and place. In all fairness, however, we must note that, despite the alteration of name and clothing and the change of homeland from the Middle East to the North Pole, he is still very much a saint. He still expends

himself tirelessly in the service of others; his greatest attribute is still his overwhelming generosity.

While not discounting the efficacy of his intercession – after all, all those churches would not have been built in honor of someone who had proved unhelpful – we may find in this the source of the

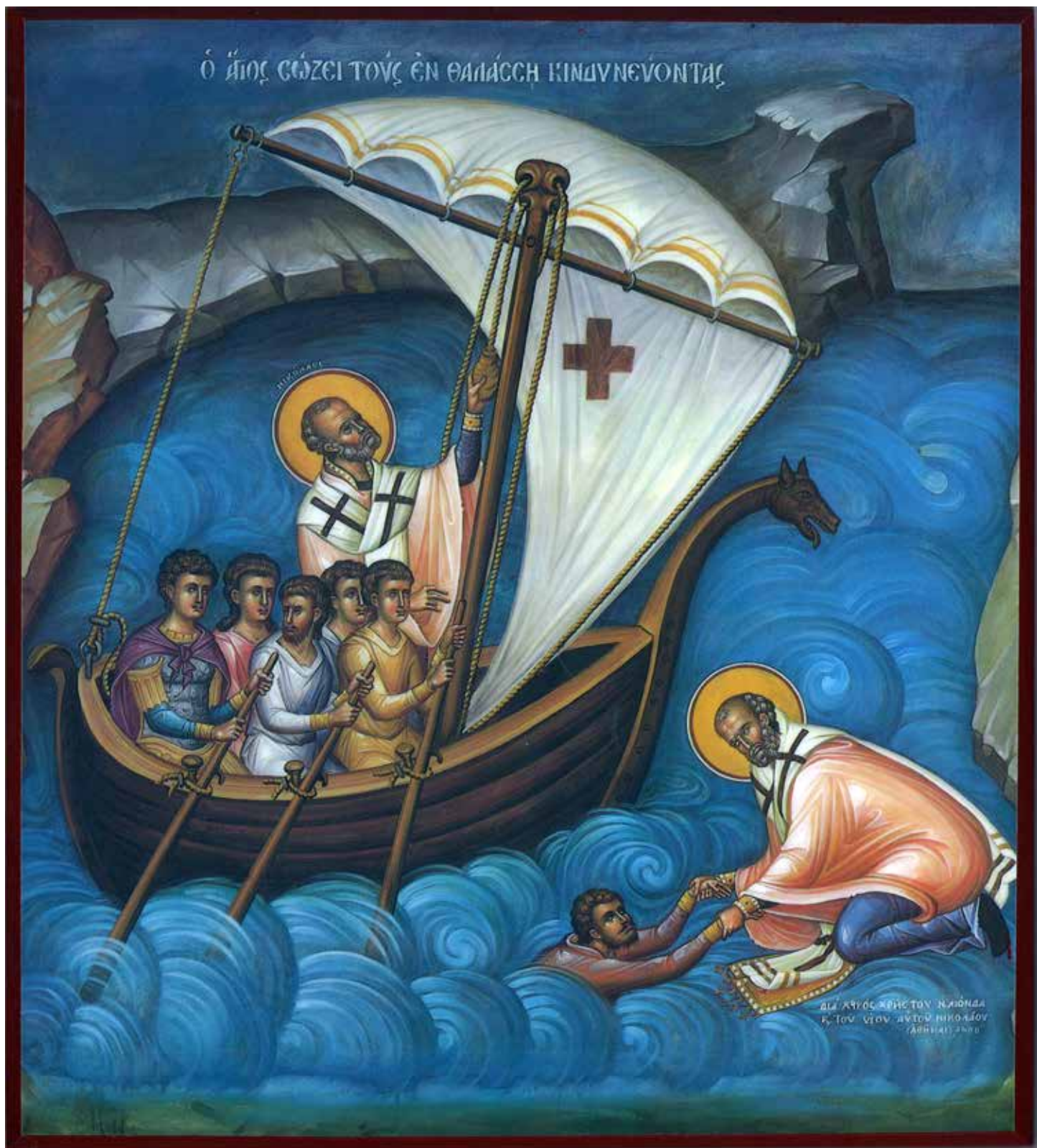
Saint's long-standing veneration. St. Nicholas is an enduring symbol of mercy and sacrificial love. His love of neighbor is universal and all-embracing; he is ready to assist in any need of body or soul. Like the Savior he follows, he unfailingly empties himself in service of those who seek his aid.

Our Holy Father Nicholas remains a powerful intercessor before the throne of God. He is a helper for those in need and a protector of those in trouble. Through his example and prayers may we be brought to a greater generosity and mercy in our dealings with one another, may we truly follow the Lord Jesus whose coming we prepare to celebrate.

O holy Father Nicholas,
blessed preacher of Christ,
mighty intercessor for all in danger,
near or far, on land or at sea,
assembled here we cry out to you:
Pray the Lord that we may be delivered
from all sorrow and distress.

From Vespers
Feast of St. Nicholas

Ὁ ἸΗΣΟΥΣ ΣΩΖΕΙ ΤΟΥΣ ἘΝ ΘΑΛΑΣΣῃ ΚΙΝΔΥΝΕΥΟΝΤΑΣ



ἀπὸ κτύπου κρησίου κλημάδα
κ. τοῦ γίου ἀγίου Νικολάου
(Αἰώνιος) 2000

Services, Christmas 2019

Saturday, 21 December 2019 -- Saturday before Christmas

6:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Galatians 3:8-12; 2) Luke 13:18-29
5:30 pm	Solemn Vespers	1) Genesis 14:14-20; 2) Deut. 1:8-11,15-17; 3) Deut. 10:14-21

Sunday, 22 December 2019 -- Sunday before Christmas

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Hebrews 11:9-10,17-23,32-40; 2) Matthew 1:1-25
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Tuesday, 24 December 2019 -- Vigil of Christmas

6:00 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 3:35-4:4; 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

Wednesday, 25 December 2019 -- Christmas Day

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) Galatians 4:4-7; 2) Matthew 2:1-12
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Services, Theophany 2020

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Friday, 03 January 2020

6:00 am	Matins and First Hour Pss: 5, 22(23), 26(27)	1) Isaiah 35:1-10; 2) Acts 13:25-33; 3) Matthew 3:1-11
11:00 am	The Royal Hours Pss: 28(29), 41(42), 50(51) Pss: 73(74), 76(77), 90(91) Pss: 92(93), 113(114-115), 85(86)	1) Isaiah 1:16-20; 2) Acts 19:1-8; 3) Mark 1:1-8 1) Isaiah 12:3-6; 2) Romans 6:3-11; 3) Mark 1:9-15 1) Isaiah 49:8-15; 2) Titus 2:11-14;3:4-7; 3) Matthew 3:13-17
4:30 pm	Vespers	

Saturday, 04 January 2020 -- Saturday before Theophany

6:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) 1 Timothy 3:14-4:5; 2) Matthew 3:1-11
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Sunday, 05 January 2020 -- Sunday before Theophany; Vigil of Theophany

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	1) 2 Timothy 4:5-8; 2) Mark 1:1-8
4:30 pm	Solemn Vespers Great Blessing of Water	1) Genesis 1:1-13; 2) Exodus 14:15-18.21-23.27-29; 3) Exodus 15:22-16:1; 4) Joshua 3:7-8.15-17; 5) 2 Kings 2:6-14; 6) 2 Kings 5:9-14; 7) Isaiah 1:16-20; 8) Genesis 32:1-10; 9) Exodus 2:5-10; 10) Judges 6:36-40; 11) 1 Kings 18:30-39; 12) 2 Kings 2:19-22; 13) Isaiah 49:8-15; 14) 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 15) Luke 3:1-18 1) Isaiah 12:3-6; 2) 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; 3) Mark 1:9-11
8:30-9:00 pm	Great Compline and Solemn Matins Pss: 96(97), 131(132), 111(112)	1) Mark 1:9-11

Monday, 06 January 2020 -- Theophany

10:00 am	Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great	1) Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; 2) Matthew 3:13-17
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From the Jampot



Our wet autumn continued into the color season. Rain was frequent, and, with some notable exceptions, most days were overcast. Despite the conventional expectation that late rains would result in a washed out fall, this season's color was vibrant and brilliant, some of the most spectacular we've seen in our thirty-six years in this blessed land. Coming on a bit later than usual and developing slowly, it peaked during the second week of October on the inland highlands with fiery reds and stunning golds. It withstood the heavy rain and high winds we endured early in the week, and the few clear days that ensued were absolutely stunning. It began to come down during the third week, but our own shore remained golden past the end of the month.

The exceptional color drew many people to the area, and, in spite of the generally dreary weather, **Jampot** was thronged most days during the first two weeks of October. The second week of the month proved the busiest of the 2019 season. On Saturday, October 12, the shop filled upon opening; a line of those waiting to enter began forming within fifteen minutes and soon stretched out to the parking lot; it remained almost until closing.

We saw our first snow that day, but our patrons were undaunted. Endur-

ing their ten or fifteen minutes in the – sometimes heavily – falling flakes with patience and cheerfully striking up conversations with those around them, they seemed excited and happy for the experience. Certainly, they were a joy to us. We celebrated Vespers that evening weary but elated at having experienced the busiest single day in **Jampot's** history.

The final week began slow but picked up toward the end. **Jampot** closed its doors for the year at 5:00 PM on Saturday, October 19, 2019, with only a few rum raisin brownies and a couple loaves of cinnamon breakfast bread remaining on its bakery counter. The coffee shelf was likewise bare, and only a few confections remained. The final day had been our best ever, a truly robust end to a truly successful season. With gratitude to all who made it possible, we look forward to reopening on May 1, 2020.

Meanwhile, having enjoyed a week of relaxation, we return to production and stand ready to fulfill your personal or gift-giving needs with the items offered on the following pages.



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

Thanksgiving

Descending into our thirty-seventh winter on this beautiful and windy shore, we find ourselves and the holy endeavor of building this monastery abundantly blessed. As we approach our national day of Thanksgiving, we call to mind some of the blessings received and express our prayerful gratitude to the Lord.

Our Bishop visited us for a week in July and the Proto-Syncellis of the Eparchy for a few days in late September. Both encounters proved enlightening and left us with a new sense of direction and encouragement, as well as indications of policies and projects that could prove particularly beneficial. The monastery has thrived under the benign neglect of the Eparchy these past twenty or so years, but a closer collaboration and association is surely God's will and bodes well for the future.

We hosted a large group of college students for Vespers and dinner in February and a smaller one in October, as well as a large group from a Roman parish during September. These fruitful encounters, along with the visit from two busloads of pilgrims from downstate, help spread abroad knowledge of the monastery and provide awareness of the Church's Ritual variety.

We have also received more contact than ever before from men interested in the possibility of life in this monastery. Several have visited and another is scheduled for December. The visits were generally positive; we remain hopeful and pray for the Lord's guidance of the potential developments.

The apprehension with which we viewed our shortened workweek proved unfounded, and we finished the year with a modest increase in Jampot revenue. Contributions during the season received a major boost from a \$20,000.00 matching grant by the Reinerio Family Foundation. While much help is still needed, these financial gains ease the current situation and hasten the day we can undertake the final phase of Jampot expansion.

For all this and much else, we heartily thank the Lord. Most of all, we thank Him for you, our friends, patrons, and benefactors. Through your prayers, patronage, and gifts, the work of building the monastery moves forward. We thank you from the depths of our heart. God bless you; may He abundantly reward your share in His loving providence.