

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America - www.saintjohnnewken.org

150 Elmtree RD New Kensington, PA 15068

Office: (724) 337-8162

Rev. John Parker – Acting Rector; Cell: (719) 332-3925

saintjohnnewken@gmail.com

**27th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 2. Sunday before the Nativity. Martyr
Sebastian at Rome and his companions**

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

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Parish Schedule This Week

Wed., Dec. 21st

Vespers @ 6:30PM, followed by bible study

Fri. Dec. 23rd

Royal Hours 9:00AM

Sat. Dec. 24th

Holy Supper in parish hall, 5:00PM

Nativity Vigil, 7:00 PM

Sun. Dec. 25th

Nativity Liturgy, 10:00AM

Mon. Dec. 26th

2nd day of Nativity, Synaxis of Theotokos

Liturgy 9:30 AM

The Advent Fast continues. Keep the fast! **Additionally**, in preparation for the holy day of Nativity, Orthodox Christians should strive to give confession and receive holy communion at the feast. Please talk to Fr. John about a time to have confession.

Please sign up for Holy Supper at the parish if you are joining us and would like to bring a dish to share. Please keep dishes lenten (no meat, fish, dairy cooking with oil).

Poinsettia donations are requested to beautify our temple during the Nativity season. Plants can be donated for **\$7 each**, given to the council.

St. Pantaleimon Candles offered for health and well-being of Valerie Kennedy, Barb Haught

If you are ever in need of prayers for safe travel, health issues, etc., let father John know.

There are both prayers that can be said in the liturgy as well as short blessings to be read after church or in the home. And of course please let Fr. John know if you are ever in the hospital or homebound and would like a visit.

Bulletin and Website Information Please email saintjohnnewken@gmail.com with any information you need printed in the bulletin and/or uploaded to the parish website, ie Sarris candy orders, youth group activities, etc., by the Friday before.

The Joy of Being with Christ in His Church

The Church, after the incarnation, is the very presence of God in history that embraces humanity and the whole of Creation. Christ is the head of the Church, and the faithful are His body. The Church and Christ are one. "The body of the Church is nourished, sanctified, and lives in Christ. He is the Lord, omnipotent, omniscient, everywhere present and filling all things, our staff, our friend, our brother: the pillar and sure foundation of the Church." The Church for St. Porphyrios is a cosmic reality. In the Church, Christ unites all Creation. "Christ united the body of the Church with heaven and earth: with angels, men, and all created things, with all of God's Creation – with animals and birds, with each tiny wildflower and microscopic insect. The Church became the fulness of Him who fills all in all, that is, of Christ. Everything is in Christ and with Christ. This is the mystery of the Church."

St. Porphyrios states that in the liturgical life of the Church, in worship, people experience here and now Paradise; they participate in God's trinitarian life. In his view, Paradise begins here and now. The different images that identify Paradise with gardens, with flowers, mountains, streams, and birds, are mediums for envisioning the beauty of Paradise. These images must not be taken literally since "Paradise is something else, something very exalted." He identifies Paradise with Christ. Those who experience Christ here on earth experience Paradise. The Church is Paradise on earth, the same as Paradise in heaven.

Christ is the joy that transforms those who are genuinely united with Christ in His Church. "Have Christ's joy. It is the joy that lasts forever, that brings eternal happiness. The joy of our Lord gives assured serenity, serene delight, the all- joyful joy that surpasses every joy" (John 16:24 & I John 1:4). Christ desires to enrich us with joy. Most of all, this is what He wants to fill us with - joy - because He is the well- spring of joy.

- Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis -