

**St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance, as part of Orthodox Campus Fellowship  
at University of Mount Union, Dewald Chapel. Divine Liturgy, 9:00 am  
Very Reverend Father Joseph Cervo, Archpriest (AOCANA-retired)  
Rev. Protodeacon James Gresh, Mission Administrator (Bulgarian Diocese OCA)  
December 15, 2013: 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost / Sunday of the Forefathers / Hieromartyr Eleutherius**



**Tone 8      Troparion      (*Resurrection*)**

You descended from on high, O Merciful One!  
You accepted the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//  
O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to You!

**Tone 2      Troparion      (*Forefathers*)**

Through faith You justified the Forefathers, betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles.  
These saints exult in glory, for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit:  
she who bore You without seed.// So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

**Tone 4      Troparion      (*St. Nikolai*)**

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence;  
your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you. Hierarch Father Nikolai, entreat Christ our God that our  
souls may be saved!

**Tone 6      Kontakion      (*Forefathers*)**

You did not worship the graven image, O thrice-blessed ones, but armed with the immaterial Essence of God,  
you were glorified in a trial by fire.

From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying: “Hasten, O compassionate One!  
Speedily come to our aid,// for You are merciful and able to do as You will!”

**Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11      (*Forefathers*)**

**Tone 4      Prokeimenon      (*Song of the Fathers*)**

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your name forever!  
*v: For You are just in all that You have done for us!*

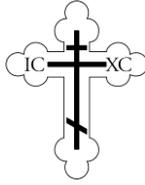
**Tone 4 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

*v: Moses and Aaron were among His priests; Samuel also was among those who called on His Name.  
v: They called to the Lord and He answered them.*

**Gospel: Luke 14:16-24      (*Forefathers*)**

**Communion Hymns**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!  
Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



### JOYOUS OCCASION TODAY

Blessing of the hand written Icon of our patron saint, St. Nikolai, will take place today after it sets upon the Altar during the Divine Liturgy.

May the Lord bless all those who contributed to this most important spiritual aid, whereby we honor the memory of this great 20<sup>th</sup> Century saint who walked among and blessed many Orthodox Christians in America. Special thanks also to the Abbot and Abbess (*our beloved Mother Anna*) of Monastery Marcha, for the holy relics of St. Nikolai that are implanted in the Icon reliquary.

May Holy Saint Nikolai, intercede to Christ our God, for the building up of our mission and for the salvation of our souls.

### DECEMBER SCHEDULE:

**Today:** Special parish meeting after Liturgy for By-laws & finalize land purchase.

**Saturday, December 21, 5 pm.** Vespers/ Confessions heard following.

**Sunday, December 22, 9 am.** Liturgy / Sunday before Nativity of Christ.

**Tuesday, December 24, 6 pm.** Matins/Liturgy for the Nativity of Christ (Christmas). (*There are no services Christmas morning*).

**Sunday, December 29, 9 am.** Liturgy; Sunday after Nativity of Christ (Christmas).

**Sunday of the Holy Forefathers:** Is the Sunday that falls between December 11-17. Commemorated today are the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, who lived before the Law and under the Law, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God said, "In thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, 22:18).

*The following is an excerpt from the book, "The Winter Pascha," by Fr. Thomas Hopko:*

Two Sundays before the celebration of Christmas, the Orthodox Church rejoices in the festival of the Holy Forefathers of the Old Covenant, including those who came before the giving of the Law. They foretold the coming of the Messiah and are redeemed by his saving Pascha. Together with the Canon of the Nativity of Christ, the following hymns are sung at the services of the day.

*Let us offer praise to the fathers*

*Who shone forth before and during the Law;*

*With righteous minds they served the Lord and Master*

*Who shone forth from the Virgin,*

*And now they delight in the unending Light.*

*Let us honor Adam, the first-formed man and forefather of us all,*

*Who was honored by the hands of the creator.*

*He rests in the heavenly mansions with all the elect.*

*With his whole mouth, tongue and heart,*

*The wondrous Enoch hoped that in the Spirit*

*He might call with godly mind upon God, the Master of all.*

*Having lived on earth in a well-pleasing manner,*

*He has been taken up in glory.*

*Let us hear the divine words of those who cry aloud,*

*Telling of the coming of Christ.*

*For behold, He is born in a cave of an unwedded Maiden,*

*And his awesome birth is foretold to the Wise Men*

*By the suddenly appearing star.*

There is a great difference between *existing* and *living*. Many people exist. Very few really live. Only those who seek God have life. Only those who delight in His commandments and rejoice in accomplishing His will pass beyond mere existence and actually find life. "Seek God, and your soul shall live" (Ps 69:32, LXX). This is the cry of the psalmist David who is especially hymned on this Sunday and on the Sunday after Christmas. His exhortation is in perfect harmony with the words of God given to Moses in His revelation of the divine Law.

*"See I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, and cleaving to Him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."* (Deut 30:15-20)

The holy forefathers and mothers, together with all their descendants, have chosen life. They find it in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is Life itself, God's incarnate Word. The celebration of the Winter Pascha is a celebration of Life in God's Word. For "Christ who is our life" has already appeared (Col 3:4). We have "beheld His glory" (Jn 1:14). Now that glory is hidden in the "form of a slave" (Phil 2:7), but it will be revealed at the end of the ages in power for those who "have loved His appearing" and "live in Him" (2 Tim 4:8; Col 2:6).

*You shone as heaven's lights upon the earth*

*Enkindling the light of piety.*

*You called forth the choir of all creation*

*As you sang to the Master who saves all from temptation,*

*"Bless Him, O children! Exalt Him, O priests!*

*Praise Christ, all people, throughout all the ages!"*

## **HOLIDAY GIVING OPPORTUNITIES:**

Please see the additional page for opportunities to share in your blessings this holiday.

We have collected \$300 towards purchasing food and gifts for the two families being "adopted" by our mission and our military service men and women. Thank you for your generosity. There is still time if you are considering donating cash or gifts. Please contact Cathy Krupko before purchasing items to avoid duplication of gifts. Checks can be made out to St. Nikolai Orthodox Mission of Alliance. If you are interested in helping to shop, please contact Cathy at 330-257-0984.

St. Nikolai of Zica  
Orthodox Mission of Alliance  
P.O. Box 193  
Maximo, Ohio 44650