



“ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU

Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE

St. John the Baptist - HOREN

Holy Ascension - CALMAR

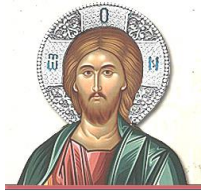
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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Volume 56, Issue 11

December 2024

December 17 – Commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Barbara



The Holy Great Martyr Barbara lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-311). Her father, the pagan Dioscorus, was a rich and illustrious man in the Syrian city of Heliopolis. After the death of his wife, he devoted himself to his only daughter.

Seeing Barbara's extraordinary beauty, Dioscorus decided to hide her from the eyes of strangers. Therefore, he built a tower for Barbara, where only her pagan teachers were allowed to see her. From the tower there was a view of hills stretching into the distance. By day, she was able to gaze upon the wooded hills, the swiftly flowing rivers, and the meadows covered with a mottled blanket of flowers; by night the harmonious and majestic vault of the heavens twinkled and provided a spectacle of inexpressible beauty. Soon the virgin began to ask herself questions about the First Cause and Creator of so harmonious and splendid a world.

Gradually, she became convinced that the soulless idols were merely the work of human hands. Although her father and teachers offered them worship, she realized that the idols could not have made the surrounding world. The desire to know the true God so consumed her soul that Barbara decided to devote all her life to this

goal, and to spend her life in virginity.

Barbara met young Christian maidens in the city, and they taught her about the Creator of the world, about the Trinity, and about the Divine Logos – the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Providence of God, a priest arrived in Heliopolis from Alexandria disguised as a merchant. After instructing her in the mysteries of the Christian Faith, he baptized Barbara, and she partook the Holy Communion.

During this time, a luxurious bathhouse was being built at the house of Dioscorus. By his orders, the workers prepared to put two windows on the south side. But Barbara asked them to make a third window, thereby forming a Trinity of light. On one of the walls of the bath-house Barbara traced a cross with her finger. The cross was deeply etched into the marble, as if by an iron instrument.

Upon her father’s return, Barbara declared her faith and he became enraged and attacked her. Barbara fled and hid; but he found and beat her. She was tortured and subsequently was beheaded by her own father.

Looking at the life of St Barbara, whose venerable relics we are blessed to have at the Cathedral (in Edmonton), what surprises our heart is how strong can be a Christian soul, to denounce the hardest and harshest temptations of this life, to withstand them all by herself, and to sacrifice the dearest things for the people of this world – her youth and beauty, and her love for family, for the sake of the Lord who endured the cross for us!



What we might not know about Holy Forefathers and Fathers

The two last Sundays of December and before the Nativity of Christ are called the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers and the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. The Holy Forefathers and Fathers are the Old Testament relatives according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, beginning with the holy ancestors Adam and Eve, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and his sons, the holy patriarch Abraham, and so on up to the glorious Nativity of Christ. So, today let us come closer in contemplating these Sundays – the Saints of these Sunday!

The unknown Forefathers – by Fr. Sergiy Begiyan

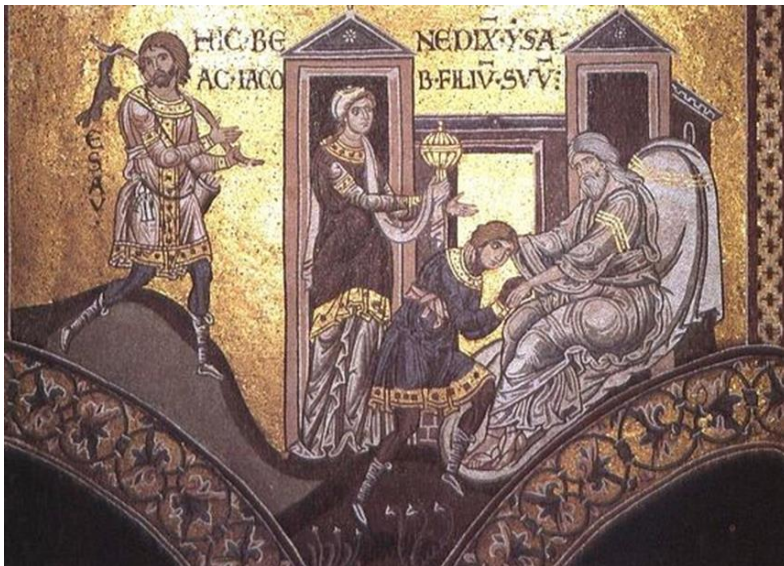
(the beginning is in the December bulletin of 2023)



Almost all of us know the forefathers, someone once read something somewhere and remembers which of them "gave birth to whom" and even briefly knows the life story of the most famous of them. We have read and seem to know – but at the same time we do not know. The Bible gives us only a scheme, a plan, a skeleton on some issues, which we ourselves must develop and “clothe with flesh”. We should be motivated by our curiosity and piety, the desire to find something else important that the writer did not make so much obvious.

Isaac and Rebekah

Who among us would be willing to draw 30 buckets of water from a well for a stranger, especially one accompanied by servants who could easily do it themselves?



Icon: Isaac Blessing Jacob

It is fascinating that Abraham decided to arrange a marriage for his son only when Isaac turned 40. Let's take a closer look at the story of Isaac's betrothal. Abraham sent his trusted servant, Eliezer, to his homeland to find a wife for Isaac from among his people. Eliezer took servants, gifts for the bride, and, of course, camels to carry provisions and for transportation. Upon reaching his destination, Eliezer prayed to the God of Abraham, asking that the woman chosen by God would respond to his request. With faith he asked the first young woman who came to the well for water, and she willingly gave him a drink from her jar and also watered his camels (Genesis 24:17-20).

How many times have I skimmed over these verses without delving into their meaning? The essence, as the chronicler points out, is this: Rebekah watered

all of Eliezer's camels. Eliezer had taken 10 camels from Abraham's herd for the journey. On average, a camel drinks 3–5 buckets of water at a time. This means Rebekah had to draw and pour at least 30 buckets of water from the well. This seemingly small detail already says a lot about Rebekah's character: her diligence, kindness, and

hospitality. Let's put it this way: who among us would willingly draw 30 buckets of water for a stranger, especially one whose entourage includes servants perfectly capable of doing it themselves? Or consider this scenario: you approach a water pump to fill your jug, and suddenly a group of friendly people arrives in several cars and politely asks you for a drink. "Oh, sure," you reply. "And as a gesture of goodwill, I'll wash your cars as well."

Isn't it remarkable that in the 4,000 years since Rebekah's act of kindness, ordinary human decency has not caught up with her saintly virtue?

We learn more about the humility and meekness of Isaac's bride later in the story. When Eliezer approached Abraham's lands, Isaac came out to meet them, and Rebekah immediately covered her face with a shawl. Of course, one might argue that this was simply a custom among women of the East. But what is the point of covering one's face before the very man who would become her husband that same night? There is only one reason: Rebekah's profound modesty.

And the Lord richly rewarded this humble family with His blessing.

Jacob and Rachel

Why is Jacob, who deceitfully obtained his father Isaac's blessing, considered blessed before God?

The answer lies in Esau's [his elder brother's] unrighteousness. Esau's transgressions were so great that Jacob's deceitful act, in comparison to his brother's life, is not seen as sinful.



Icon: Jacob's Vision

What does the Bible tell us about Esau's unrighteousness? One example is this: at the age of 40, Esau took two Hittite women as wives, "and they were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah" (Genesis 26:35). Esau violated two principles at once. First, he married women from outside his people, specifically from the ungodly people surrounding them, despite his grandfather Abraham's warnings against this for his descendants. Obviously, Isaac and Rebekah, who themselves faced challenges in finding righteous spouses, were deeply disheartened by Esau's "reckless marriages".

Esau's actions were driven by lust, as evidenced by his polygamy. Later, Esau took a third wife as well. Although there was no written law at the time, the patriarchs upheld a moral code that did not permit multiple wives. Abraham had one wife,

Sarah. It was only at Sarah's urging that Abraham "entered" her servant Hagar, and after Hagar conceived, he no longer had relations with her. True, Abraham had a second wife, Keturah, but he married her only after Sarah's death (Abraham lived 38 years after Sarah's passing). Isaac had one wife, Rebekah.

Jacob also intended to have only one wife, Rachel, but his father-in-law deceived him into marrying Leah as well. Moreover, Jacob's relationships with the maidservants of his wives occurred only at their insistence. Yet Rachel was always Jacob's beloved. Accordingly, Jacob's favorite sons were those born to Rachel—Joseph and Benjamin.

Joseph, too, had only one wife, Asenath. From this, we can conclude that the moral ideal of the patriarchs, even in those times, was monogamous marriage.

The Puschenia Event of November 2024 at St. Mary's Church at Nisku

On November 17 we were blessed again to have our traditional celebration of the upcoming Christmas Lent – the Fall Social Puschenia event, which is similar to the Pancake Sunday before Easter.



The foundation for the event is always the Divine Liturgy; this year it was the Sunday 21st after the Pentecost, with the Gospel that told of two miracles performed by Jesus Christ—the resurrection of the girl and the healing of a woman, according to their faith or the faith of their family; the faith that gave them daring to trouble the Lord by their request or just to secretly touch Him.

Due to our event many people were participating at the Liturgy, hearing the

words of Gospel, praying and receiving the Holy Communion!

And the church choir, represented by Cathy Krawchuk and her family, was again helped by Denis and Synthia Fedor.

After the Divine Liturgy everyone was invited by the President to the Church Hall to the Puschenia event and the festive luncheon to sustain ourselves before our friendly lottery.

The Parish Council, that actually



planned and discussed this fundraising festivity, together with our kind and constant guests and helpers always do their best to treat people with delicious and savoury dishes, including our national pirohis and cabbage rolls and every family's best dishes – a lot of salads, meat dishes (with a tradition turkey), sauces, as well as a rich variety of desserts: cakes, cookies, puddings, candies, with a little bit of wine for friendly toasts.



As always, a lot of different and pleasant and useful prizes were prepared by the parishioners and guests. One big table was not enough this year to put all the prizes that people donated! So, our hostesses put them on the three big tables at the western wall.

This year again in addition to the Lottery, there was Silent Auction with nice and valuable articles to bid.

As it usually happens at

Puschenia, we were glad to greet our dear guests from St. Barbara's Cathedral and the other Patriarchal Parishes, as well as some new people who came to support us and to share with us their joy, and again, somehow traditionally, to greet Matthias and Ryleigh, this time with the birth of their son - Thomas Sterling Impey!

It was also a good opportunity to raise some funds for the church to support its activities in services and fellowship, and the premises maintenance. Thank you, everyone, for your generous donations!

And to all our people, who donated the new items, the Christmas ones, for the kitchen, sweets and spices, the devices and appliances for households, the ones for children, and for just giving us direct financial support! And for all the good-looking, delicious and family special dishes and treats that made us happy!

And special thanks to the Parish Council of St. Mary's Church, especially – David and Beverly Borys, Darcy and Tanny Doblanko, Daniel and Anita Borys, Matthias and Ryleigh Impey, and all our quests from St. Barbara Cathedral and Orthodox V parishes!

And to our unchanging hostess and auctioneer Natasha Borys!

Many people were glad to obtain things useful and beautiful! With them also receiving the cheerful greetings and hands clapping from the community! The heaters for the upcoming (they say, a bit colder) winter, as well as a lot of games for children, pieces of art (in different forms, such as mugs), electric kettle, warm blankets, a nice birdhouse, and a big jar with home-made pickles from grannie!

As for me [f. Yevheniy], I was surprised to see how the mug I won gets lighter after the hot coffee is inside, as if the winter night, depicted on it, changes to the day! (I was so eager to win a mug last year! 😊) And for the Easter musical egg too! Thank you and God so much for these gifts!



May God bless the organizers of the feast!

Have a good Christmas lent!

We proved how old the Shroud of Turin really is – the rest is a matter of faith

Since the days of Galileo, science and faith have frequently been at odds with each other. But inside Professor Liberato De Caro's laboratory, they seem to be in union.

(the continuation – the beginning in November 2024 bulletin)

For sceptics, the main scientific evidence that it must be a mediaeval fake came in 1988, when snippets were subjected to radiocarbon dating by laboratories in Oxford, Zurich and Tucson, Arizona. The results suggested that the linen cloth dated from sometime between 1260 and 1390AD. They confirmed what many sceptics had long believed – that the Shroud was an ingenious hoax, a manufactured relic that would have been a cash cow for the mediaeval pilgrimage business.



Since then, however, many experts have called into question the accuracy of the dating. They say it was skewed by contamination – either from past restorations that used contemporary materials to repair the cloth, or from microbes, or even from damage caused by the 1532 fire, which could have altered its chemical composition.

It was not the radiocarbon techniques that were at fault, but the fact that the parts of the Shroud that were tested were contaminated, said

Chief technician Rocco Lassandro played a key role in the discovery

Jean-Christian Petitfils, a French historian who has studied the relic for more than 40 years.

“Traces of fungus and calcium carbonate were found,” Mr Petitfils, the author of *The Shroud of Turin: The Definitive Investigation*, told the *National Catholic Register*. “The sample area corresponded to a darned area: modern threads were inserted in the 16th century, in order to repair this area that had been worn away. The carbon-14 experiment (of 1988) is null and void.”

Prof De Caro also believes that the results of the 1988 analysis are wrong. “The Shroud has been the centre of attention for centuries. It was touched by countless people, displayed during parades, affected by smoke from candles. There was a great deal of contamination. That is why the carbon dating gave a result that suggested that it dated from mediaeval times,” he says.

He points out that tests conducted in 1999 found pollen on the Shroud that were consistent with pollen from plants found in and around Jerusalem. And he suggests that if the Shroud was a medieval forgery, surely it would be easy to replicate? Yet no one has managed to come up with a replica, faithful to every detail.



The Turin Shroud on display in Turin Cathedral, 2015

“With all the technology that we have in the third millennium, we still have not been able to reproduce it. Science has not been able to explain how the image was formed. There is no known physical or chemical process that would enable a corpse to generate an image like this. It’s a total mystery.”

It seems particularly fitting that the research has been carried out in Bari. For centuries, pilgrims flocked here en route to the Holy Land.

The labyrinth of alleys and tiny piazzas in the old town are replete with shrines and white-stoned medieval churches, resembling a miniature Jerusalem. The 12th century Basilica of St Nicholas holds the remains of the saint – the inspiration for Santa Claus – and is a focus of devotion both for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians.

Inevitably, the question poses itself. Are the scientists religious? Prof De Caro is. As a young man he was an atheist, but says the wonders of the natural world convinced him that there must be some grand plan behind the creation of the Universe. Personally, he thinks the Shroud is genuine. “If I had to be a judge in a trial, weighing up all the evidence that says the Shroud is authentic and the little evidence that says it is not, in all good conscience I could not declare that the Turin Shroud is mediaeval. It would not be right, given the enormous quantity of evidence in favour of it. It correlates with everything that the Gospels tell us about the death of Jesus of Nazareth.” Prof Giannini, on the other hand, is not a firm believer. She says she believes in some sort of spiritual dimension to the world, but does not go to church.

Either way, the scientists insist that whatever the outcome of their X-ray examination, they would have published the results anyway, in the interests of academic rigour. “As scientists there are certain standards that we adhere to,” says Prof De Caro.

So having lobbed a grenade into the world of Shroud research, what happens next? The team in Bari is keen for independent tests to be carried out by other laboratories around the world, so that their findings can be subject to scrutiny. The two samples – the one from the Shroud, the other from the scrap of linen found at Masada – are currently kept at the University of Padua in northern Italy. There they wait to be examined afresh.

“The technique we used is non-destructive, which is a huge advantage. It means the tests could be conducted again by another laboratory,” says Prof De Caro. The X-ray analysis may suggest that the Shroud is 2,000 years old. But, remarkable as the findings may be, they still don’t definitively prove it is the cloth that covered Christ. “Science can take us only to a certain point,” says Prof De Caro. “Everything beyond that is a matter of faith.”

Story by Nick Squires
www.msn.com

On December 19 we commemorate one of the greatest Saints - Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Children of all the world are awaiting these days because they know how kind is St. Nicholas, or they also call him, Santa Claus. He has a special gift, two or three, for everyone! The bags in the shape of socks will have all kinds of wonders and sweets inside!

Why are the Saints given such a chance of doing wonderful things and help people?

St. Nicholas lived long ago and was a priest at a small town. And one thing that he liked doing is helping people secretly, especially those who were in a desperate need. Like once when he got to know that three girls are so poor that they will have to separate from their family and become slaves, he took everything he had, made three bags with gold and at night when no one saw him put the gold at their house and saved them!

Every time he had anything or if his word was respected with any people, he saved people from poverty, sword, illness, or sin, standing boldly between them and any kind of need and danger.

And this is the greatest secret of Saints: every good deed they did in this life they, by the Grace of God, they can now do with the almighty and wonderful power of God, and to much more people, from Heaven!

Look at the pictures! The first one is a chance to help St. Nicholas find the way, with gifts, to the needy people - the maze of Farther Nicholas.

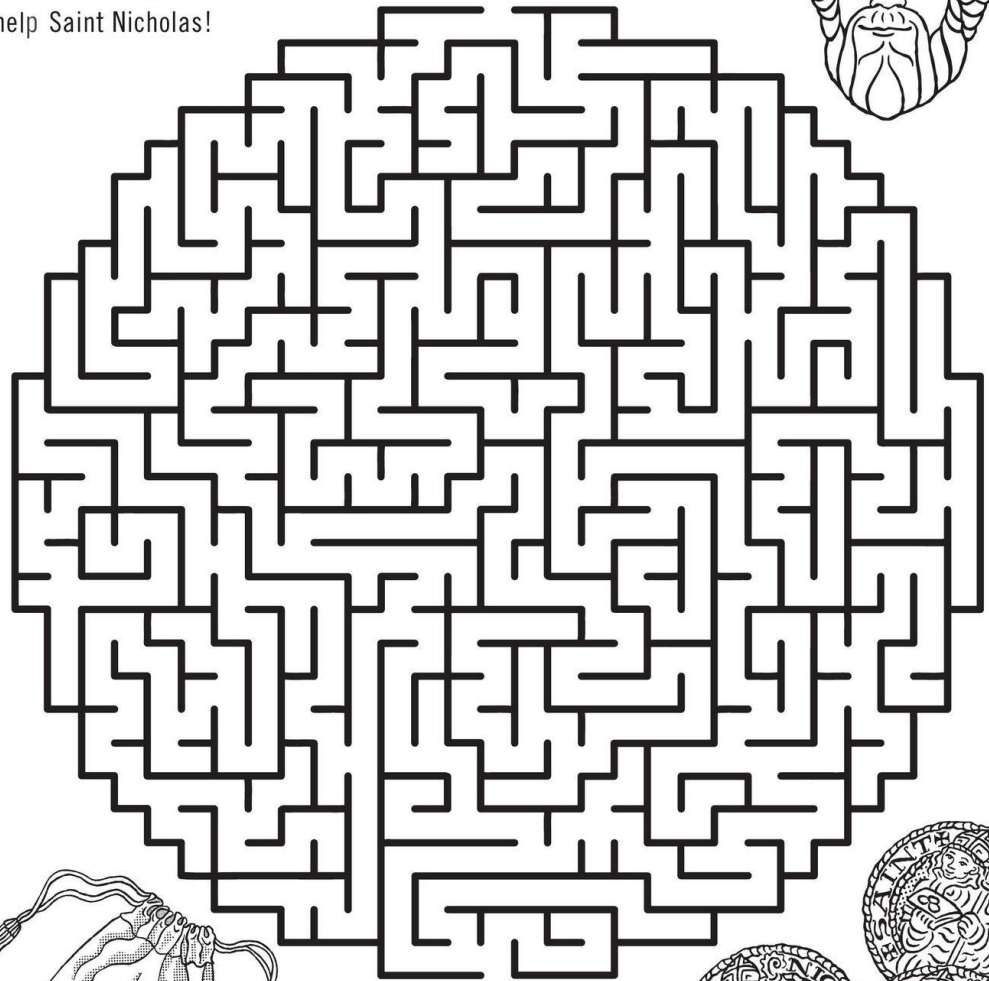
And the second one (in the next page) is a picture of you and the Saint: give colors to it, and draw more gifts that you like, and which St. Nicholas will give to you and other children!

⊕ SAINT NICHOLAS ⊕ DAY MAZE

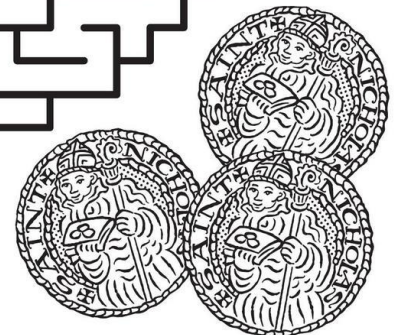
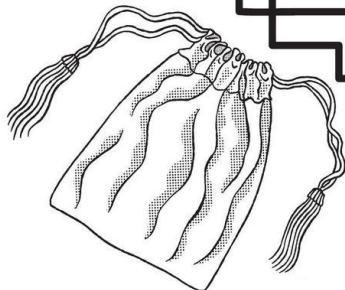


Draw a line through the maze to help Saint Nicholas!

START



FINISH



Saint Nicholas



December 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>1</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku</p>	<p><u>2</u> Prophet Obadiah (Abdias) (9th c. b.c.)</p> 	<p><u>3</u></p>	<p><u>4</u> The Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple</p> 	<p><u>5</u></p>	<p><u>6</u> Martyr Theodore of Antioch (4th c.)</p> 	<p><u>7</u></p>
<p><u>8</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>9</u></p>	<p><u>10</u> Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos “Of the Sign”</p> 	<p><u>11</u></p>	<p><u>12</u></p>	<p><u>13</u> Apostle Andrew the First-Called</p> 	<p><u>14</u> Prophet Nahum (7th c. b.c.)</p> 
<p><u>15</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral Patronal Feast Celebration</p>	<p><u>16</u></p>	<p><u>17</u> Great Martyr Barbara</p>  <p>10:00 am – Liturgy & banquette at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> St. Nicholas Bishop of Myra Day</p> 	<p><u>20</u></p>	<p><u>21</u> St. Patapius of Thebes (7th c.)</p> 
<p><u>22</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary’s Church, Nisku</p>	<p><u>23</u></p>	<p><u>24</u> St. Daniel the Stylite, (490)</p> 	<p><u>25</u></p>	<p><u>26</u> St. Arcadius, monk, (1077)</p> 	<p><u>27</u></p>	<p><u>28</u> Hieromartyr Hilarion Troitsky</p> 
<p><u>29</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara Cathedral</p>	<p><u>30</u></p>	<p><u>31</u></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>	<p></p>