

St. Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church

45 Winter St.

Newport, NH 03773

603-863-8376

stvasilios.nh.goarch.org



December 2016 & January 2017 Services

- Sun., Dec. 18th Sunday before Nativity
Epistle Reading: Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40
Gospel Reading: Matthew 1:1-25
9:30 AM Orthros (Matins)
10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Christmas Luncheon & Raffle Drawings
- Sat., Dec. 24th **Nativity Eve 5:30 PM –Subject to Change – Please Call**
Epistle Reading: Galatians 3:8-12
Gospel Reading: Luke 13:19-29
- Sun., January 1st Sunday before Epiphany
9:30 AM Orthros (Matins)
10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Luncheon for St. Basil & Vasilopita
- Sun., January 15th 12th Sunday of Luke
9:30 AM Orthros (Matins)
10:00 AM Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour: Available – Please bring water bottles for Holy Water

For updated information on service schedules and content, please see our web site at:

<http://stvasilios.nh.goarch.org/>

There Was No Inn in the Room

*By Fr. Mark Sietsema**

No room at the Inn. The bad guy of every Christmas pageant is ... the innkeeper! That cruel, heartless, money-driven petty tyrant who couldn't find a space in his inn for a pregnant woman and her weary husband. Because of his indifference, the holy family winds up—not in a room at the Bethlehem Motel — but in a barn, in a stable, surrounded by barn animals.

And it comes straight from the Gospel of Luke, right? "And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." But is this what the Gospel really said? The ancient Greek had a word for "inn" is pandocheion which sounds like the modern Greek word for hotel, xenodocheio. We find this word later in the Gospel of Luke in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan brings the wounded Jewish man to an inn, pandocheion, and pays the innkeeper to take care of him. But the word in the Christmas story is not pandocheion, but another word: katáluma, which means a place to sleep, usually in the sense of a guest room or spare room in a home.

This same word “katáluma” comes up again later in the Gospel of Luke just before the Last Supper, when Jesus tells two disciples to ask about a room – a kataluma – where he can eat the Passover with his disciples.

We think of the Last Supper as taking place in an upper room, a space on the second story of a house. And that is a fairly accurate picture of where the guest quarters would be in a home in ancient Judea. The average house was just four walls enclosing a single room with a flat roof. Your bedroom was your living room, dining room and den.

If there were guests to be accommodated, often the guest room would be set up on the roof of the house. This would be the katáluma. Luke tells us that when the holy family got to Bethlehem, ouk een aftois topos en to katalúmati, "there was no space for them in the guest area."

Whose guest area? The innkeeper's? Probably not.

First of all, Bethlehem in the first century was a tiny, tiny village off the main roads. It probably didn't have an inn because there wouldn't have been enough visitors to keep it open. If you were going to Bethlehem, it was because you knew someone there. And Middle Eastern hospitality meant that you stayed at the home of the person you were visiting—a relative or a friend—in their special guest room --- their *katáluma*. We know that Joseph and Mary had relatives in Bethlehem: that's the whole reason they went there, so that Joseph could return to his ancestral hometown for the census. So it would have been expected that they would stay in the home of a family member. It would have been strange and unexpected for them not to stay with family: it would have been an insult, in fact, one way or the other.

But Joseph and Mary were not the only relatives coming back to Bethlehem that first Christmas. All of Joseph's other relatives who had left Bethlehem would also have returned for the census. So it only makes sense that all of the family *katalúmata*, guest-rooms, would be full. The last to arrive would find that there was no space in the *katáluma* for them. And a man traveling from Nazareth way up north down to Bethlehem in the south, with a pregnant wife, would probably have been the last to arrive.

But would they then have been directed to the shed to sleep with the cows?

No—because there probably wasn't a separate shed for the animals. Back then, the average home had an area—within the four walls of the one-room house—for the animals to spend the night. Archaeologists have found lots of these simple split-level homes with a dugout area in one end of the house where the animals would be brought in for the night, to keep them warm and to keep them from being stolen. And so the people slept in one part of the room and just a few feet away and a few steps down, the donkey, the ox, the sheep would have slept as well. And in case the animals needed to eat in the middle of the night, often a feeding trough would be carved into the floor of the higher living area, so the animals could stand and eat hay. This trough was the manger.

Why would you put a new mother and her child down by the animals? Well, first of all, maybe there weren't any animals there at that time. Maybe that part of the house could have been cleaned out for human occupation while the

animals were housed overnight with a friend or relative nearby. In that case, then the lower area with the mangers would have been a good place for the baby. It would have had a little more privacy and quiet than the rest of the house. It would have been close enough for help but far away enough for separation.

And so, there is no evil innkeeper to blame on Christmas Eve. There are only average people doing the best they could to help under the circumstances. It's not quite the superhero story of a lone mother and child braving rejection and the elements. The poor people of Bethlehem—and poor they were in that village at that time—they were not the villains of Christmas Eve.

But in a sense that's the point. When Christ came to the poor and the powerless, they received Him. They were not the ones who rejected him. It was the rich and powerful, the high and mighty, the best and the brightest, the movers and shakers—these were the ones who would prefer to see Christ left out in the cold.

But the common people received him gladly, during His ministry and from the moment of his Incarnation. And so it is still today. Blessed are the poor—and the poor in spirit—for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is the message of Christ, and the message of the Christmas story.

**Fr. Mark Sietsema is the Presiding Priest at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Lansing, MI*

Ladies Auxiliary Christmas Gathering

On Saturday, December 10th, the Ladies Auxiliary will be meeting at Summercrest Senior Living Community (at 169 Summer St. #38 in Newport) from 3-5 PM. Anyone that would like to carpool up should meet at the church parking lot at 2:45 PM. We will be visiting with several of our parishioners who are residents there and having some light refreshments. We hope you can join us!

Stewards of St. Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church as of September 1, 2016

“The rich man is not one who has much, but one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever.” St. John Chrysostom

Thank you for your stewardship!

Nick & Artemis Donis	Christos Georgiadis	Arthur & Sarah Katsanos
Saggiotes Trust	Kostas & Sofia Katsanos	Rassias-Miles Family
Dino Vlahakis	Frank & Stacy Souliotis	Aliki & George Souliotis
Laura Mosconas	Gus & Barbara Tampasis	Nick & Helen Stamos
Fred & Liz Tampasis	Nick Tampasis	George & Jennifer Souliotis
Lina Papandreou	Adrienne Camfield	Steve & Nancy Nanopoulos
Phid& Alice Dantos	Solon&Marge Kanakis	Nikolaos& Lindsay Nanopoulos
Christos Nanopoulos	Kelly Smith	Greg & Nancy Tsongalis
Evangelia Davis	Nick& Chrysoula Kontoes	Dimitri & Sandra Tselepidakis
Kimberly Gallant	John & Katie Gioldassis	Vasilios Vasiliadis
Allan & Maria Price	Arnold Johnson	Jackie Miller
Dr. Charles Saggiotes	Demo & Georgia Sofronas	Van Gokas
Dolly Gokas	Nicholas Vasiliadis	Beatrice Belkakis
Vanech Family	Dimitri & Julie Dimakis	Margie Dimakis
Kosta & Zoi Dimakis	Georgiadis Family	Georgitsis Family
Gina Gioldassis	Dean Gioldassis	Nikas Family
Rassias Family	Greg & Claire Timbas	Evgenia Tsimis

Photos on Website

The St. Vasilios website has photos of Church services and activities/events over the years. Please notify us in writing if you do not want your photo to appear on this website. Thank you!

Prayer List

Please use this list to pray for members of our community who are sick or in need of God's care.

Calliope Scumas	Teresa Richardson	Athena Tsoukanakis	
Demetra Tampasis	Angelo Nestor	Kiki Coidakis	Laurie Zagaris

If you feel a name should remain on the list, or if you would like a new name placed on the list please contact Laura at 603-477-2070.

Donations of Nonperishable Items and Supplies

This holiday season our Church has decided to focus on helping a local charity in need of our support. The **Turning Points Network** (formerly known as Women's Supportive Services). Newport and Claremont share a 16-bed emergency shelter that services our local families. Items very much needed are:

SHELTER PANTRY NEEDS *Kitchen towels *Laundry detergent, bleach/bleach alternative, dryer sheets *Diapers (sizes 2, 3, 4) *Denture care *Energy light bulbs *Food storage (zip bags, tin foil, plastic wrap, food storage containers) *Garbage bags (kitchen and large black sizes) *Cleaning products *Dishwasher detergent (for a dishwasher) *Soups *Spices, salt and pepper, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise *Peanut butter and jelly *Bread and muffin mixes *Dinner kits **HOLIDAY NEEDS** *Crafts, games, toys (for children at the shelter and holiday program) *Gift cards for teens (for holiday program- I-Tunes, Game Stop in Claremont, Amazon, local bookstores)

We will place a box in the Church Hall for these donations. Thank-you for your generosity during this holiday season!

Inclement Weather

Now that we are entering the winter months it is important that everyone call the Church answering machine for Church service updates. In case of snowy conditions the answering machine will be updated by 8:30 AM on Sundays. When in doubt, please call. Also, it is fine to call Laura at (603) 863-1384 for updates.

Ladies Auxiliary Raffle

We have many wonderful raffle baskets this year! We hope our parishioners, family and friends will support us in raising funds for church improvements. Raffle tickets will be drawn during our **Christmas party on December 18th**. All of our baskets will be on display in the Church Hall during the month of December and extra raffle tickets are available in the Church Hall. If you have any questions please see Jennifer or Laura.

New Year's Luncheon

We will be celebrating the name day of our church on **Sunday, January 1, 2017** with a luncheon hosted by the Ladies Auxiliary. As always, there will be an array of delicious dishes and desserts as well as the Vasilopita. It is the tradition of our parish that the proceeds from the luncheon will be sent to the "Lucky Girls" Orphanage in India and St. Innocent Orphanage in Mexico and St. Basil's Orphanage in New York. We hope you will be able to join us for the festivities to celebrate the New Year!

Theophany/Epiphany

On Sunday, January 15th, we will celebrate the service of Epiphany following Liturgy. Please remember to bring your Holy Water bottle(s) that day to receive the blessed water. The church also has extra bottles available. If you would like your home or business blessed please let a member of the Parish Council know. We will schedule a day and time for that to occur.

Vasilopita Coins & Nativity Icons

The Ladies Auxiliary is selling beautiful Vasilopita coin sets as well as lovely Nativity icons handmade in Greece. These items are on display in the Church Hall. The coin sets are selling for \$15 and the icons are selling for \$15. If you have any questions please see Jennifer or Laura.

Save the Date

Winter Carnival Dinner

Please mark your calendars for Sunday, February 12, 2017. Our Parish will be hosting a Greek dinner at 5 PM as part of the Newport Winter Carnival attractions. Last year was our first time participating in the winter carnival and it was very successful. We are looking forward to this event and are in need of volunteers to assist with the preparations. Please see a Parish Council member to help with this fun evening!

Christmas Décor

Please bring a poinsettia to church in December to decorate the altar area. Our church will look festive and beautiful.

Christmas Offering Envelopes

Enclosed please find this year's Christmas offering envelope. We thank you for prayerfully remembering our parish during the Christmas season. God bless you!