

# St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

November - December 2021

## Elder Gabriel (Urgebadze) of Georgia

The holy confessor Gabriel (Urgebadze) was born on August 26, 1929. His name in the world was Goderdzi. For a long time, his mother was against her son's aspiration to monasticism, but towards the end of her life she reconciled herself with his choice, and subsequently she herself took the veil. She also was buried at Samtavro Monastery.

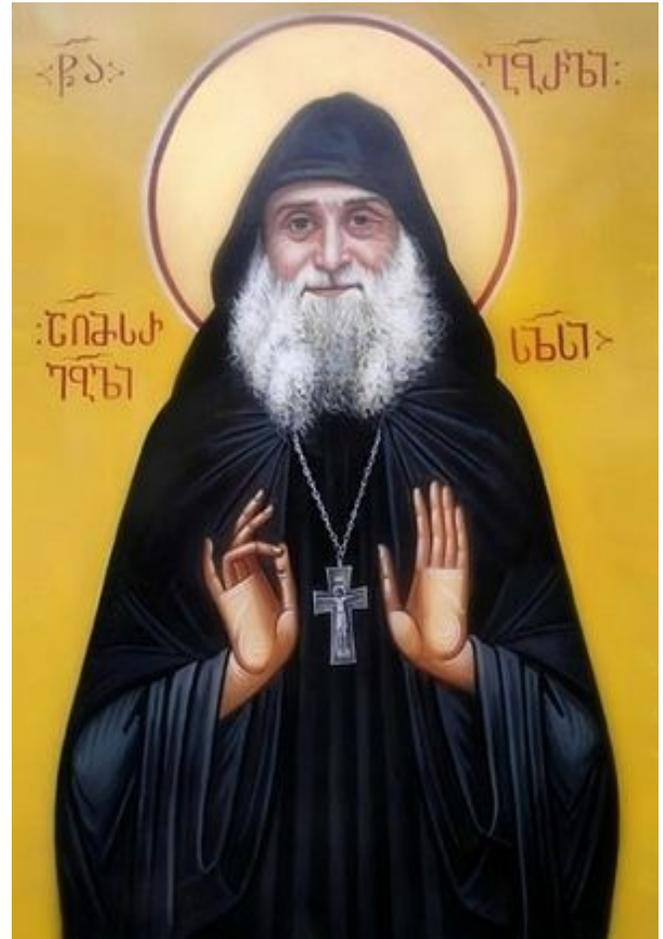
Goderdzi came to believe in God while he was still a child. One time the neighbors were fighting, and one of them said, "You have crucified me like Christ." The boy began to wonder what "crucified" meant, and Who Christ was. The adults sent the child off to the church, where the church warden advised him to read the Gospel. He saved up his money, bought a Gospel, and in a few years had learned the text practically by heart.

A longing for monasticism arose in him in his youth. Later, the elder would say, "There is no greater heroism than monasticism." And he proved this by his whole life.

He took monastic vows when he was 26, receiving the name of Gabriel, after St. Gabriel of Mt. Athos, the starets who had walked through the water and brought to shore the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God, which had floated to Athos over the sea. Fr. Gabriel especially revered the wonderworking copy of the Iveron Icon kept at Samtavro Monastery.

Fr. Gabriel built a church with several cupolas in the courtyard of his home on Tetri Tskaro Street in Tbilisi. He erected it with his own hands and finished around 1962. Fr. Gabriel found the icons for this church at the town dumps, where in those atheistic times people brought and threw out, along with the trash, a large number of sacred objects. Sometimes he wandered around the dumps days on end. He had a small studio where he cleaned the icons and gave them frames and settings of various materials. The walls of his church were covered with icons. He even framed photographs and pictures of icons from secular magazines.

On May 1, 1965, during a demonstration, Hieromonk Gabriel burned a 12-meter portrait of Lenin which hung on the building which housed the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR, and he began to preach about Christ to the people who were gathered there. He was severely beaten for this and put into a solitary confinement cell at the Georgian KGB. At the interrogation Fr. Gabriel said that he did it because "it is forbidden to treat a man like God. The Crucifixion of Christ ought to hang where the portrait of Lenin was. And you need to write, "Glory to the Lord Jesus Christ." In August 1965 Fr.



Gabriel was put into a psychiatric hospital for an examination. There he was diagnosed as insane: "A psychopathic individual who believes in God and angels." They gave him a "white ticket." But after that even more horrible things happened to him. In order to please the authorities, the hierarchs of the Church did not allow him to come into the church and did not let him into the services—they drove him away. Batiushka did not have the possibility of receiving Holy Communion, which he wanted with all his heart. He could go several days without food, could go a long time without sleep, but he could not live without the Church. And the starets often cried out of powerlessness, opening his soul to his sisters.

Fr. Gabriel settled in Samtavro in the 1980's, and in the latter years he lived in a round tower. For a while, the nuns wondered at Batiushka's eccentricities, not seeing in them as yet any special podvig. At first it seemed strange

to them that for some time he lived in the hen house, where there were large chinks in the walls, and that in the winter he went barefoot.... The elder's behavior didn't fit into any kind of framework and didn't correspond to any human conceptions. But later they began to feel that extraordinary love radiated from him: he loved everyone. The starets would often shout at the sisters, demand obedience of them, make them do something, or make them eat from dirty plates. But it was impossible to take offense at him—in his eyes shone tender love.

Before Mother Theodora became Abbess, Fr. Gabriel brought her with him to Tbilisi and made her go begging. The two of them would beg for alms, but then the elder would distribute everything to the poor. If they took a taxi back, he might shout at the taxi driver and give him no money at all, or he might pay many times more than he owed.

During Holy Week the sound of continuous weeping could be heard coming from his cell. While he was praying, some people saw him rise 15–20 inches off the ground and saw light coming from him. The faithful revered Fr. Gabriel as a great ascetic and they would come to him as to a living saint. When the starets would receive a large number of guests, he would always see to it that “the professor”—that is what he call red wine—was on the table. He would generously treat his guests, while he himself ate almost nothing. Father used to say that you have to be nourished with Divine love, and not just on food.

Otar Nikolaishvili was Batiushka's spiritual child and often spent time in his cell. Once Fr. Gabriel unexpectedly said to him that they had to go right then and there to the Monastery of St. Anthony Martkopsky—that it was urgent. Otar didn't know what to say: his car wasn't working right, he was having problems with it. Batiushka insisted, and somehow they started out. Then the road began to go up a mountain, and the automobile began to cough and sputter, but the starets suddenly said, "Don't worry, son—St. Anthony Martkopsky himself is sitting in the back seat—but don't you turn around." And the car suddenly tore off ahead so fast that the driver had to step on the brakes. As soon as they drove in through the monastery gates, the engine cut out on the spot. Just at that time, several armed people came in there looking for trouble. The starets stepped out in front and said, “Shoot me.” This embarrassed and sobered the bandits, and they left the monastery.

According to the elder's will, his body was wrapped in a mat and given over to the earth in the place where St. Nina had labored. Fr. Gabriel died on November 2, 1995 of edema. He suffered terribly from the pains, but never showed it.

A countless number of healings began to occur at his grave after his death. All Georgia deeply venerates the elder.

*Larisa Khrustalyeva from Orthochristian.com*

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, under the omophorion of Met. HILARION of Eastern America & New York. The parish newsletter is published bi-monthly under the direction of the Rev. Michael Crowley. In order to ensure timely delivery to our far-flung parish, please submit all notices by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication to Father Michael at [frmichael@stxenia.org](mailto:frmichael@stxenia.org). Thank you.

**Rector:**

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Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment.

**Parish Council**

President: Archpriest Michael Crowley (978) 204-0428  
Warden: John Kekis [kekisj@gmail.com](mailto:kekisj@gmail.com)  
Secretary: Subdeacon David Nettleton (203) 895-7636  
Treasurer: Nicholas (Charles) Kronauer (978) 265-6369  
Sisterhood: Pam Reed  
Cemetery: Natalie Pishenin (978) 658-5564  
Daniel Hakim  
Andrei Doohovskoy  
Anthony Sarantakis  
Dmitri Nikshych  
Isaac (Shedly) Justinien  
Choir Director: Laryssa Doohovskoy (978) 841-5960  
Church School Director: Alexei Doohovskoy

**Trapeza Schedule**

Please limit coffee hour to Bagels, Muffins/ Pastries, and Fruit.

The coffee hour will be outside, so each week will be **weather dependent**. *Please check the weather before your Sunday when bringing food.* There will be big bottles of juices that the Sisterhood will buy and put in the fridges in the kitchen and basement. Each week, you can grab a bottle or two for coffee hour.

Coffee will be made each Sunday morning.

**Important - whoever is on for coffee hour is in charge of cleanup as well.**

**NOVEMBER**

7 Reed, Savage, Mendez  
14 Fischer, Dolan, Orbite  
21 Crowley, Poletti, Prokopienko  
28 Potluck

**DECEMBER**

5 Mat. Kaleria Sarantakis, Mcpherson-Semyenko, Capitanio, Rockwell, Legaspi  
12 Fedina, Guryeva, Ajgaonkar  
19 Gonzalez, Kekis, Warner  
26 Engalichev, Lynch, Harris

## PARISH NEWS

### Thank you

~ To everyone who helped make the Parish Feast Day and the Fall Festival such a success!



~ Thank you also to everyone who donated winter coats for needy children in Methuen!

### Condolences

~ To the Klar and Crowley families on the passing of their beloved Emilia on September 3. May her memory be eternal.

### Please Remember in Your Prayers

Jane Rockwell, Peter Danas, Dimitri Nikshych and Laryssa Doohovskoy.

Also, please be sure to inform the Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home.

### Sisterhood News

~ We will continue to offer a coffee hour during the winter as we are able.

~ If you would like to be on the Sisterhood email list, please send your email to:

[StXeniaSisterhood100@gmail.com](mailto:StXeniaSisterhood100@gmail.com)

### Choir News

If you have a private service - wedding, baptism, funeral, etc. – and would like to have choir singers, please contact Laryssa at [stxeniachoir@gmail.com](mailto:stxeniachoir@gmail.com).

## FROM THE DIOCESE

### St Herman Conference – Dec 23-27, 2021

With the blessing of Their Eminences Hilarion, Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York, and Gabriel, Archbishop of Montreal & Canada, the 2021 St. Herman Youth Conference will be held in the parish of St. Luke the Blessed Surgeon in Pompano Beach, FL. The conference will commence on Thurs-



day the 23rd and conclude on Monday, the 27th of December.

The conference will address current concerns in society and present challenging questions to provoke thought. The first speaker will be Archpriest Seraphim Chemodakov (cleric of St. Vladimir Memorial Church in Jackson, NJ). Fr. Seraphim is a seasoned pastor as well as expert in family therapy.

The second speaker is Dr. Sampson Ryan Nash, professor at Ohio University. He chairs a number of professional organizations and will deliver a talk entitled "Whom Can We Trust? On Authority, Truth & the Orthodox Way." In addition to these talks, a number of workshops and discussions will be scheduled. The divine services will be officiated by Archbishop Gabriel and Bishop Nicholas of Manhattan, in the presence of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God.

Attendees will be treated to a special cruise on the waterways of central Florida, where a final banquet will be served and the traditional talent show will be held. Due to travel regulations, only those over 18 years of age may participate. The cost will be \$350.00 for double occupancy and \$300.00 for quad occupancy.

Registration should be completed immediately, due to the fact that space is limited and only 70 registrants can be accepted. Registration is available at the conference website: [www.sthermanconference.org](http://www.sthermanconference.org).

## FROM THE LIVES OF SAINTS

**The Monk Gerasimos** (*Commemorated Oct 20/Nov 2*) was born in the village of Trikala in the Peloponnese. Upon reaching maturity he withdrew to the island of Zakina for a monastic life. On the Holy Mountain he became a schema-monk and studied with the ascetics of Athos. Having received blessing from the elders, the monk set off to Jerusalem to worship at the Lifebearing Grave of the Saviour. Having made the rounds of the holy places, visiting Mount Sinai, Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria and Egypt, he returned to Jerusalem where he became a candle-lighter at the Sepulchre of the Lord. The monk was ordained by the blessed Patriarch of Jerusalem, Germanos (1534-1579), to the diaconate, and then to the priesthood. The Monk Gerasimos did not slacken in deeds of prayer. For quietude he withdrew to Jordan, where he spent 40 days without respite. Having received the Patriarch's blessing for a life of silence, the monk

Gerasimos withdrew Zakinthos. He dwelt there in solitude for 5 years, nourishing himself on vegetation. At an inspiration from above he went to the island of Cephalonia and on to Omali, and having restored a church he founded a women's monastery at which he dwelt for 30 years in constant toil, vigil, and prayer on bended knee stretched out upon the earth. For his exalted life he was vouchsafed of God a miraculous gift -- to heal the sick and cast out unclean spirits. The Monk Gerasimos, aware of his impending end for several days, gave his blessing to the nuns and peacefully expired to the Lord on 15 August 1579, at 71 years of age. When his grave was opened two years later, his holy relics were found undecayed and exuding fragrance, and were curative.

**Blessed Simon of Yur'evetsk** (*Commemorated Nov 4/Nov 17*) was born in the city of Yur'evetsa in the Povolzhsk or Volga region. Forsaken by his parents, the saint took upon himself the exploit of fool-for-Christ. Both winter and summer he went barefoot, in a single shirt, so that his skin became blackened and withered from fasting. Unthinking people often were cruel to him. Blessed Simon was fond of praying in the porticos of various churches. The ascetic exploit of self-denial cleansed his soul, and he received from God the gift of foresight: he foresaw many things and predicted the future. And contemporaries, mentioning his name, beheld various miraculous signs. Just before his end the saint went to the house of the voevoda (military commander) Feodor Petelin. Here, not knowing the saint, in a fit of anger he gave orders to give him a beating. Saint Simon fell grievously ill. He summoned a priest, made his confession, received the Holy Mysteries of Christ and consigned his soul to God. The voevoda became remorseful in his sinfulness. And amidst this, all the city gathered for the funeral of the saint. The body of Blessed Simon was buried in Theophany monastery. This occurred on 4 November 1584. In the year 1635 Patriarch Joasaph ordered the Theophany hegumen Dionysii to compile an account of the life and miracles of Blessed Simon and gave blessing to write his icon. The celebration of Blessed Simon has been made since the year 1635.

**The Icon of the Mother of God, named "Quickly-Hearing"** (*Commemorated Nov 9/Nov 22*) -- an ancient wonderworking image, is located on Holy Mount Athos at the Dokhiareia monastery. The monastery tradition suggests that its time of writing belongs to the X Century, during the time of the monastery head Saint Neophytes (Comm. this same day). In the year 1664 the kitchener Nilos, coming at night to the

kitchen with a burning torch, heard a voice from the image of the Mother of God raised up over the door, summoning him in future not to walk here and not to soot the icon. The monk thought that this was a prank of some one of the brethren; he disregarded the warning and continued to walk into the kitchen with the sooty torch. Suddenly he fell blind. With fervent repentance the Monk Nilos prayed before the icon of the Mother of God, begging forgiveness. And again he heard the wondrous voice, proclaiming forgiveness and return of sight and a command to announce to all the brethren: "From this time this My icon shalt be name Quickly-Hearing, since quickly to all hastening to it shalt appear mercy and fulfillment of entreaty". The MostHoly Mother of God did then fulfill and now fulfills Her promise -- quick help and consolation manifest for all who with faith hasten unto Her.

In Russia copies of the wonderworking Athonite image "Quickly-Hearing" were always availed to with great love and veneration. Many of them were glorified by miracles. In particular, instances were noted of healing from the sickness of plague and demonic-possession.

In the year 1938 the Athos Dokhiareia monastery presented to the Russian Spiritual Mission at Jerusalem a copy of the wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God "Quickly-Hearing".

**The Monks Varlaam the Wilderness-Dweller, Joasaph the son of the Emperor of India, and his father Avenir:** (*Commemorated Nov 19/Dec 2*) In India, -- once formerly having received the Christian faith through the evangelisation of the holy Apostle Thomas, there ruled the emperor Avenir, an idol-worshipper and fierce persecutor of Christians. For a long time he did not have any children. Finally, a son was born to the emperor, and named Joasaph. At the birth of this son the wisest of the emperor's star-gazers predicted, that the emperor's son would accept the Christian faith which was persecuted by his father. The emperor, wanting to ward off the prediction, commanded that there be built for his son a separate palace and he arranged matters such, that his son should never hear a single word about Christ and His teachings.

Reaching a youthful age, Joasaph asked permission of his father to go out beyond the palace, and he saw existing there such things as suffering, sickness, old age and death. This led him into ponderings over the vanity and absurdity of life, and he began to engage in some serious thinking.

At this time in a far-off wilderness there asceticised a wise hermit, the Monk Varlaam. By a Di-

vine insight he learned about the youth agonising in search of truth. Forsaking his wilderness, the Monk Varlaam in the guise of a merchant set out to India, and having arrived in the city where Joasaph's palace was situated, he declared that he had brought with him a precious stone, endowed with wondrous powers to heal sickness. Being brought in to Joasaph, he began to present him the Christian faith in the form of parables, and then also "from the Holy Gospel and the Holy Epistles". From the instructions of the Monk Varlaam the youth reasoned out, that the precious stone is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he believed in Him and desired to accept holy Baptism. Having made the sign of the cross over the youth, the Monk Varlaam bid him to fast and pray, and he went off into the wilderness.

The emperor, learning that his son was become a Christian, fell into a rage and grief. On the advice of one of his counsellors, the emperor arranged for a debate about faith between the Christians and the pagans, at which under the guise of Varlaam there appeared the Magi magician Nakhor. In the debate Nakhor was supposed to acknowledge himself beaten and in such manner turn the imperial youth away from Christianity. Through a vision in a dream, Saint Joasaph learned about the deception and he threatened Nakhor with a fiercesome execution, if beaten in the debate. Nakhor in terror not only beat the pagans, but he himself came to believe in Christ, and he repented and accepted holy Baptism and went off into the wilderness. The emperor tried to turn his son away from Christianity by other methods also, but the youth conquered all the temptations. Then on the advice of his counsellors, Avenir bestowed on his son half the realm. Saint Joasaph, having become an emperor, restored Christianity in his lands, built anew the churches, and finally, he converted his own father the emperor Avenir to Christianity. Soon after Baptism the emperor Avenir died, and Saint Joasaph abdicated his rule and went off into the wilderness in search of his teacher, the elder Varlaam. Over the course of two years he wandered about through the wilderness, suffering dangers and temptations, until he found the cave of the Monk Varlaam, asceticising in silence. The elder and the youth began to asceticise together. When the end for the Monk Varlaam approached, he served out the Divine Liturgy, partook of the Holy Mysteries and communed Saint Joasaph, and with this he expired to the Lord, having lived in the wilderness 70 of his hundred years. Having buried the elder, Saint Joasaph remained at the cave and continued with the wilderness efforts. He dwelt in the wilderness for 35 years, and expired to the Lord at age sixty.

The successor of Saint Joasaph as emperor, Barachias, with the help of a certain hermit, found in the cave the undecayed and fragrant relics of both ascetics, and he conveyed them back to his fatherland and gave them burial in a church, built by the Monk-Emperor Joasaph.

**Blessed John and his parents: Blessed Stefan and Blessed Angelina** (XV Century): (*Commemorated Dec 10/Dec 23*) The life of the Serbian ruler Stefan Brankovich and his family was filled with instability and misfortune. After Serbia was seized in 1457 by the Turks, the then Serbian ruler's middle son, Stefan, distinguished by meek disposition and fine knowledge of Holy Scripture, set out to the capital of Turkey after his sister, who had been given to sultan Murat in marriage. But learning however, that the Turks with fanatic cruelty had burned the Mileshevsk monastery, Blessed Stefan rose up in defense of Serbia from oppression. When he married Angelina, the daughter of the prince of Albania, the Turks threatened Blessed Stefan and his family with punishment. With his wife and three children he was forced to hide first in Albania, and then in Italy, where later he died.

Blessed Angelina transferred the undecayed remains of her spouse to Kupinovo. At the end of the XV Century a son of Righteous Stefan and Angelina, Blessed John, became ruler of Serbia. The undecayed relics of Righteous John and his parents were afterwards glorified by many miracles.

**Sainted Modestos, Archbishop of Jerusalem,** (*Commemorated Dec 18/Dec 31*) was born into a Christian family in Cappadocian Sebasteia (Asia Minor). From his youthful years he felt a strong attraction towards strict monastic life. Saint Modestos accepted monastic tonsure. Afterwards he became head of the monastery of Saint Theodosios the Great (founded in the IV Century) in Palestine. At this time (the year 614), military forces of the Persian emperor Chosroes fell upon Syria and Palestine, killing 90 thousand Christians and laying waste the Christian churches. The Jerusalem Patriarch Zakharias and a multitude of Christians together with the Cross of the Lord was taken into captivity. Saint Modestos was entrusted to temporarily govern the Jerusalem Church in the capacity of locum tenens of the patriarchal cathedra.

With the help of the Alexandria Patriarch John the Merciful (Comm. 12 November), Saint Modestos set about the restoring of devastated Christian holy places, among which was the Sepulchre of the Lord. He reverently gave burial to the remained of murdered monks from the monastery of Saint Sava the Sanctified. After 14 years, Patriarch Zakharias returned from captivity with the Cross of the Lord, and after his death Saint Modestos became Patriarch of Jerusalem. Saint Modestos died at age 97 in the year 634.





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DECEMBER 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Nov 28 (Nov 15)</b> <b>Nativity Fast Begins</b> 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 6 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy  Fast: wine & oil	<b>Nov 29 (Nov 16)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>Nov 30 (Nov 17)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>1 (Nov 18)</b>   7:00 PM Class  Fast	<b>2 (Nov 19)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>3 (Nov 20)</b>   5:30 Vigil  Fast	<b>4 (Nov 21)</b> <b>ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>  9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy  5:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: fish, wine, & oil
<b>5 (Nov 22)</b> 24th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 7  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy  Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>6 (Nov 23)</b>     Fast	<b>7 (Nov 24)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>8 (Nov 25)</b>   7:00 PM Class  Fast: wine & oil	<b>9 (Nov 26)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>10 (Nov 27)</b>     Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>11 (Nov 28)</b>    5:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: fish, wine, & oil
<b>12 (Nov 29)</b> 25th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 8  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy  Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>13 (Nov 30)</b>     Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>14 (Dec 1)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>15 (Dec 2)</b>   7:00 PM Class  Fast	<b>16 (Dec 3)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>17 (Dec 4)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>18 (Dec 5)</b>    5:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: fish, wine, & oil
<b>19 (Dec 6)</b> 26th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 1 St. Nicholas 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy  Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>20 (Dec 7)</b>     Fast	<b>21 (Dec 8)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>22 (Dec 9)</b>   7:00 PM Class  Fast: wine & oil	<b>23 (Dec 10)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>24 (Dec 11)</b>     Fast	<b>25 (Dec 12)</b>    5:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: fish, wine, & oil
<b>26 (Dec 13)</b> 27th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 2  9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy  Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>27 (Dec 14)</b>     Fast	<b>28 (Dec 15)</b>     Fast: wine & oil	<b>29 (Dec 16)</b>     Fast	<b>30 (Dec 17)</b>     Fast: fish, wine, & oil	<b>31 (Dec 18)</b>     Fast	<b>Jan 1 (Dec 19)</b>    5:30 All-Night Vigil  Fast: wine & oil