

Christos Razadajetsja!
Slavite Jeho!



Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!



The Weekly Forerunner

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

301 Struthers Liberty Rd

Campbell, OH 44405

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest



DECEMBER BULLETIN SPONSOR

*In memory of Sveda family and for the good health of Sveda Family
Given by George & Barbara Kolasar*

Weekly Liturgical & Events Schedule

Sunday, December 24

9:35 AM: Hours
10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Strict Fast Social followed by Christmas Eve Vigil

Monday, December 25

9:30 AM: Hours
10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Singing of Christmas Carols

Saturday, December 30

6:00 PM: Great Vespers

Sunday, December 31

9:35 AM: Hours
10:00 AM: Hierarchical Divine Liturgy / His Eminence AB Melchizedek / Honoring AP Joseph & Matushka Was-ko on the occasion of his 50th Anniversary to the Holy Priesthood

DECEMBER Liturgical Attendance

Day	Vespers	Divine Liturgy	Communi-cants
Sat. Dec. 2	7		
Sun. Dec. 3		52	35
Tuesday Dec. 5 Vesperal Liturgy		23	
Sat. Dec. 9	15		
Sun. Dec. 10		67	37
Sat. Dec. 16	16		
Sun Dec. 17		60	46

January Candle & Bulletin Sponsors

Bulletin: In Memory of my father George on the Occasion of his 41st year of repose – Given by AP Andrew Bartek

Wine: Available

Incense: Available

Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light: Available

Altar Candles: In memory of my husband Robert Kennedy on his heavenly birthday on Jan. 3– Given by Sue Kennedy

Tetrapod Candles: In memory of my mother Jennie Rudiak on her anniversary Jan. 3– Given by Sue Kennedy

St. Herman Candles: TAKEN

St. Panteleimon Icon Candles: For all my family and friends – Given by AP Andrew Bartek

Protection Icon Candles: Available

St. John the Baptist Candles: Available

Flowers: In memory of my God-mother Helen – Given by AP Andrew Bartek

\$50 per month	\$30 per month	\$25 per month
Wine Bulletin	St. Herman candles	Incense
Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light	St. Panteleimon Icon candles	Flowers - \$75
Altar Candles	Protection Icon candles	
Tetrapod Candles	St. John the Baptist candles	

DECEMBER SOCIALS

Dec 24– Sisterhood

Dec 31 – Fr. Wargo’s 50th Anniversary w/ Archbishop Melchizedek

The Birth Of Christ Poet: Alfred Tennyson

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid--the night is still; The
Christmas bells from hill to hill Answer
each other in the mist. Four voices of four
hamlets round, From far and near, on mead
and moor, Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound. Each
voice four changes on the wind, That now
dilate and now decrease, Peace and good-
will, good-will and peace, Peace and good-
will to all mankind. Rise, happy morn! rise,
holy morn! Draw forth the cheerful day
from night; O Father! touch the east, and
light The light that shone when hope was
born !



20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia / Commemorated on December 28

The Holy 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia: At the beginning of the fourth century the emperor Maximian (284-305) gave orders to destroy Christian churches, to burn service books, and to deprive all Christians of rights and privileges of citizenship. At this time the bishop of the city of Nicomedia was Saint Cyril, who by his preaching and life contributed to the spread of Christianity, so that many members of the emperor's court were also secret Christians.

The pagan priestess Domna was living in the palace at that time. Providentially, she obtained a copy of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Saint Paul. Her heart burned with the desire to learn more about the Christian teaching. With the help of a young Christian girl, Domna went secretly to Bishop Anthimus (Cyril's successor) with her faithful servant, the eunuch Indes. Saint Anthimus catechized them, and both received holy Baptism.

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PRAYER LIST– Updated 12-20-23

PARISHIONERS: Achilles Arvan / Audrey Chengelis / Donna Chiarelli / George Horodnic / Irene Horodnic / Pauline Fesz / Mary Fredericks / Paula Kennedy / George Kolesar / Barbara Kolesar / Mary Jane Puskas / Kenny Ruff / Dorothy Shirilla / Julia Simko / Marion Zwinski / Martha Centofanti

HIERARCHS & CLERGY: Archbishop Benjamin / Archbishop Alexander / Archbishop Melchizedek / Bishop Matthias / Fr. James Gleason (Fr.) / AP Moses Berry / Fr. Michael Rustic (Fr) / Fr. Mirolyub Ruzik / Sub-deacon Wylie Meath (Fr)

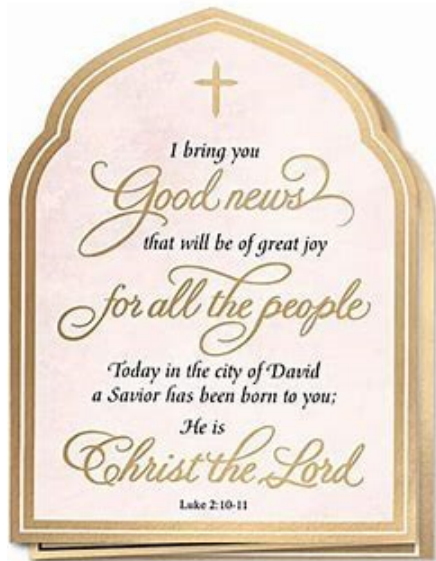
FAMILY & FRIENDS: Chrissy (Fr.) / David (Willison) / Donna Chiarelli / Dominic (Centofanti) / Ellen (Clark) / Trudy Ellmore (Fr.) / Bruce Harris (Sabol) / Katie (Garrity) / Basil Glovinsky (Fr.) / Ellen (Kessler) / Eleanor Marie / Paul (Kolesar) / Kathy (Kolesar) / Kim (Vansuch) / Malakai (Kolesar) / Joe Kollar (Fr.) / Debbie Kollar (Fr) / Andrew LaChard (Jesko) / Mea (Mahan) / Mary (Mahan) / Pauline Meath (Fr.) / Michelle Nicoloff / Matushka Raissa (Nicoloff) / Eugene (Pallai) / Ksenia and her unborn child (Petrochko) / Matushka Helen (Psinka) / Chris Quotap (Fr.) / Kristianna & infant Mary Louise (Robinson) / William Romanchak (Fr.) / Roxanne (Yannito) / Julia Shirilla / Katherine (Steffaro) / Johanna (Tusinac) / Richard (Tusinac) / Brian (Shirilla) / Joseph (Vansuch) / Eleanor Marie (Vansuch) / Paula (Voytilla) / Mary Ann Bozichovich (Kennedy) / Patty Bozichovich (Vansuch) / Drew (Willison) / Emilia Yannitto / Charlette Zenko / Catherine Zile (Fr.) / Zoland Zile (Fr.)

MILITARY FAMILY & FRIENDS: Cory Deaton (Fr.) / Alena Grabavoy (Fr.) / Liam Garrity (Zelinsky)

MISCELLANEOUS: Metropolitan Paul (Orthodox Diocese of Aleppo) & Archbishop John (Archdiocese of Aleppo) still being held captive / The UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers around the world / Those suffering persecution in Syria, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and around the world.

**SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS
PRAYER**

With uprightness of mind let us lift up our voices in prayer, celebrating the coming of Christ into the world. For He who is equal in honor with the Father and the Spirit has from love clothed Himself with our humanity and makes ready to be born in a manger. The time of our salvation is at hand! Be glad and rejoice, O Bethlehem, land of Judah! Dance, O mountains and hills round about Judea! Christ comes to save those whom He has fashioned. Lord, glory to You!
(Forefeast of the Birth of Christ!)



DECEMBER FINANCIALS

Expenses..... \$14,593.58
 Income..... \$18,526.90
TOTAL..... \$13,505.16

Weekly Tithe \$10,429
 Weekly Candles \$326
 Christmas Offering..... \$390
 Christmas Flowers..... \$395
 Reimbursement of Calendars \$572.90
 Christmas Card..... \$215
 Pre-Advent Social \$9,000
 Rubrics Book..... \$100
 Monthly Flowers \$75
 Religious items..... \$285

Other Income
 Alaska Outreach \$265

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please get all your 2023 donations in by next Sunday. Anything received after the 31st will be put to your 2024 totals.

Christmas Flowers

In order to help supplement our Christmas flowers, flowers are available for purchase (\$10.00 each). They can be *In memory* or *In honor* of family or friends. Every name will be remembered at the Great entrance at the Christmas Divine Liturgy. Please give your money to Cindy and the names to Father Andrew.

Fr. Andrew (10 flowers)

- * For the health of all St. John the Baptist parishioners and their families.
- * For the Health of the Campbell First Responders, especially the fire fighters.
- * For the health of all my family and friends.
- * For the health of my Spiritual Father, Archpriest James.
- * For the health of the City of Campbell, their residents and businesses.
- * For the Health of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, the Holy Synod & all seminarians.
- * In memory of my ordaining Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas.
- * In memory of my parents George & Dorothy, my Grandparents, my Godparents, my family & friends.
- * In memory of the Diptychs of this parish.
- * In memory of all the hierarchs of the OCA & all the priests who served this community.

Zenko Family (1 flower)

- * For the Health of Ron & Charlotte & family Angeby & Sue & Family & Matt Zenko

Polewan Family (2 flowers)

- * In memory of Michael & Ethel Dudzik
- * In memory of Tony and Mary Polewan

Rusnak Family (5 flowers)

- * In memory of my wife Laurissa Rusnak & George and Mary Rusnak (parents of subdeacon Walter Vladimir Rusnak)
- * In memory of George, Jr (brother)
- * In memory of Ann Sanders (sister)
- * In memory of Nadine Pallai (sister)
- * For the health of Joseph (brother & Mary Jane Puskas (sister)

Cvercko Family (4 flowers)

- * In memory of Andrew Cvercko
- * In memory of Anna & Andrew Cvercko
- * In memory of Antonia & Morris Pecuszok
- * For the Health of Cvercko Family

Thompson Family (2 flowers)

- * In memory of William & Helen Bakish
- * In memory of Margie Zappia

Moore Family (3 Flowers)

- * In memory of Anna Graban & George Graban
- * In memory of Edward Moore & Elsie Moore
- * In memory of Sandra Graban Whiteard

Frederick Family (3 Flowers)

- * In memory of Naume & Mary Evanoff
- * In memory of Robert Fredericks
- * In memory of Svetlana Evanoff Gozur

Ruff Family (2 flowers)

- * In memory of Kens parents Frank & Norma Ruff
- * In memory of Carol's parents Hank & Dorothy Karr

Glovinsky Family (3 flowers) (Marblehead)

- * In memory of Karen Muzaka
 - * In memory of George & Dorothy Bartek
- For the health of the Archpriest Fr. Andrew Bartek

Johnston Family (2 Flowers)

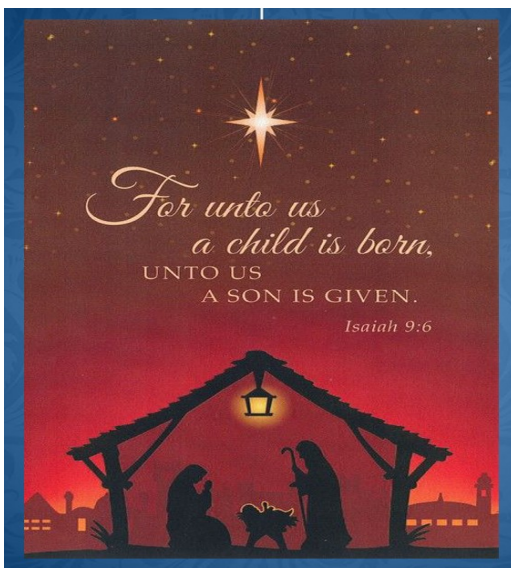
- * Memory of George & Mary Vasile
- * Memory of Ernest & Jane Johnston

A FEAST OF JOY

Christmas is preeminently a feast of joy. In the radiant faces of children and the Expectant sparkle of their eyes, in the exchange of gifts and greetings, in the sounds of Christmas music, we catch a glimpse of humanity's deepest longings for joy, peace, sharing, unity, love and celebration. Christmas is an invitation to us to seek the fulfillment of our desires through Christ Who became man, lived among us and embraced us with His love. The message of Christmas, is full of hope: Christ is Emmanuel, God with us! Rejoice! Heaven and earth are united! We do not have to search for a Savior high on a mountain or in a deep sea. Christ has fully united Himself with our human nature. In the words of St John the Evangelist: "The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw His glory!... Out of the fullness of His grace He has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another." (Jn. 1:14,16) Christmas is not merely a promise but already a fulfillment because Christ, God's priceless gift to us, is already given! We have the assurance that Christ lives and embraces us with His love here and now. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS TO RECEIVE HIS GIFT BY FAITH, AN OPEN HEART AND OBEDIENCE UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST. Without accepting the call of Christ, without receiving the loving forgiveness of the One Who was crucified for us, Christmas remains an unfulfilled dream. Only as the Risen Christ is born in our hearts, as we die to our old ways and become new by His grace, can we truly experience the magnitude of the meaning of Christmas, the joyful festival of God's personal presence in our midst!

REPOSED LIST FOR DECEMBER

- Dan Ivanovich (1929) ©
- 1- Sam Zilens Sr (1978) ©
- 1- Mary Livoniak (1952) ©
- 2- John Gozur (1972) ©
- 2- Marian Dunchak (1999) ©
- 2- Priscilla Sirilla (2003) ©
- 3- John Korchniak (1919) ©
- 3- Irene Black (2003) ©
- 4- Kathleen Garman (2010) ©
- 4- Anakreon John (1923) ©
- 5- Mary Bobosh (1975) ©
- 5- Michael Evans (1977) ©
- 6- Sophie Sasnowchik (1975) ©
- 6- Ann Dahulich (2017)
- 6- Mary Krajnak (1945) ©
- 8- Anna Hastol (1982) ©
- 8- Bill Soltis (2014)
- 8- George Kotie (1940) ©
- 8- Mary Pretko (1947) ©
- 8- Anna Papoch (1963) ©
- 9- Mary Niznih (1990) ©
- 9- Emanuel Ginnis (1954) ©
- 9- Joseph Andrasko (1960) ©
- 9- Judith Banas (2018) ©
- 10- Michael Basala (1991)
- 10- Suzanne Marinelli (1999) ©
- 12- Pauline Truhan Livosky (2017) ©
- 13- Andrew Libertin (1931) ©
- 14- Michael Hastal (1984) ©
- 14- Susan Marie Sveda (2004) ©
- 15- Theodore Fesz (2020) ©
- 15- Joseph Graban (2003) ©
- 15- Still born Cmur (1924) ©
- 15- Catherine Papantonakis (1951) ©
- 15- Eugenia Pontikos (1953) ©
- 16- Anne Cvercko (1996) ©
- 16- Svetlana Gozur Evanoff (2014) ©
- 18- Archbishop Job (2009)
- 18- V. Rev. Michael Macura
- 19- Edward Malchisky (2001)
- 19- Catherine Bondar (2010) ©
- 19- Margaret Boldish Feltovich (2016) ©
- 20- George Fischu, Sr (1983) ©
- 20- Anna Livosky (1946) ©
- 20- Loukas Arfaras (1951) ©
- 21- John Kotchmar (2022) ©
- 22- Susan La Valle (2019)
- 22- Peter Alesaudridis (1946) ©
- 22- George Roman (1953) ©
- 23- Fr. David Sedor (2008)
- 23- Anna Volchko (1989) ©
- 23- Mary Vansuch (2008) ©
- 23- George Matzye (1950) ©
- 24- John Feltovich (1981) ©
- 25- Stephen Vansuch (2002) ©
- 26- Fr. Robert Sally (2002)
- 26- Julia Malchisky (1971)
- 26- John Joseph Marinelli (1996) ©
- 27- Eileen Elash (2009) ©
- 27- Adam Nedastup (1920) ©
- 28- Fr. John Kuchta (2019)
- 28- Julia Zora (2001) ©
- 29- Andrew Midlik (1943) ©
- 29- John Vansuch (1995) ©
- 30- Bishop Boris (2000)
- 30- Ed Pehanich, Sr (2019)
- 30- Kosta Alesandridis (1928) ©
- 30- Christina Chulik (1943) ©
- 31- Robert LaVallee (2007)
- 31- Hermenegildo Guerrero (2018)
- 31- Mary Shirilla (1952) ©
- 31- John Niciforos (1964) ©



Galatians 4:4-7 (Epistle, Nativity)

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

40 Day Remembrance

December 24—Protodeacon Nicholas Jannakos
 January 7—Paul Graban & MaryJean Dean
 January 21—Bret

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays

1-Ileana Bruner, Thomas McDonald
4-Steven Calzone, Hannah Willison
5-Ted Fesz & Mat. Laryissa Bremer
6-Mat. Susan Northrup & Paul Demkosky Sr.
8-Nicholas Basile
9-Alexis Jesko, John Koval, Pauline Meath, Angie Dardovsky
10-Karen Zwinski
13-Helen Colaluca
14-Kenny Ruff
16-George Rusnak
17-Ann Cvercko
27-Claudia Moore
30-Christina Adzima
31- Ken Krause

Anniversaries

5-2004- AB Mark of Philadelphia
19-1971 Retired Bishop Seraphim of Sendai
26- Anthony & Shelia Jesko, Jr.
31- Jimmy & Christine Billy

PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING OF HOMES

Before the Priest arrives at your home, here are a few reminders on how to prepare:

- * In the main room of the home, usually the kitchen or dining room, have placed on the table a white cloth, a candle and /or an Icon or cross. You may place a small container of Holy Water on the table. (Note: Father will be bringing his own.)
- * Make a list of those living in the house including pets and all deceased you want prayed for.
- * Turn off all TV's, radios, computers, etc. so as to keep focused on the blessing service.
- * Make sure that pets are heeled or restrained so as not to get underfoot while Father goes through the home.
- * In some customs, someone (usually a child) takes a candle and leads Father through the house while the rest follow.
- * If you have any items to be blessed (Icon, Cross, etc.) put them on the table where the blessing will take place.
- * When the priest arrives, have everyone in the home gather around the table and join in the blessing. **PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT.**
- * Invite friends or neighbors to participate and witness the beauty of this tradition.

NOTE: Remember, the invitation to the priest to come and bless your home is an invitation to ask for the mercy of God upon the household. The sprinkling of the Holy Water is a sign of God's presence in the home as an extension of His Holy House, the Church. It is a time to renew our commitment to God as we begin another year in His mercy and love for mankind.

HOME BLESSING SCHEDULE

Theophany is but a month away. Please contact Fr. Andrew if you have a certain day and time you would like reserved to have your home blessed. The schedule fills up quickly!

Home Blessings will begin January 8th, 2024.

CHRIST THE SAVIOR

During the early Christian centuries Christmas and Theophany or Epiphany were celebrated together. The liturgical tradition concentrated on Theophany which marks the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of His adult ministry as the initial great event revealing Jesus' significance to humanity. During the early fourth century of the Church of Alexandria observed both Christmas and Theophany on January 6th. In due time Christmas began to be celebrated separately— first in Rome (354), then Cappadocia (380), Antioch (386), Constantinople (400) and gradually everywhere—on December 25th. By choosing this date the Church wished to christianize the “Feast of the Invincible Sun,” a popular observance marking the shift in the sun’s cycles in late December when the days again become longer. For the Church Fathers Christ was the only invincible Sun of Righteousness Who by His birth illuminated the world and inaugurated the dawn of a new age. In the liturgical year it is still natural to observe the period from Christmas to Theophany as a continuous celebration of Christ’s coming to the world. On Christmas we celebrate the incarnation of Christ while on Theophany we remember His public appearance as the Son of God. To think of the period between these two holidays as having the same significance, that is, Christ’s coming to the world, may help us to appreciate more deeply the meaning of Christ’s coming to our own lives. What is the meaning of Christmas? The heart of Christmas is Christ Himself. Only Christ can give us a true Christmas. In Hebrew the name of Jesus is Yeshua, that is, “God saves,” or “God is salvation.” Christ is the Saviour. Christ is not simply a religious genius, an inspired prophet, or a wise teacher but the Lord of life and death. He is the victor over sin, satan, corruption and death. He comes to us as God, a divine gift from outside the realm of human possibilities, in order to rescue us from a condition of alienation, evil and mortality which no education, no moralisms, no technical skills, but only God’s power, can overcome. He is Emmanuel, the presence of God Himself in our midst, Christ the Savior! (A year of the Lord Liturgical Bible Studies, Vol. 2

The Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ Commemorated on December 25

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born of the Most Holy Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem during the reign of the emperor

Augustus (Octavian). Caesar Augustus decreed that a universal census be made throughout his Empire, which then also included Palestinian Israel. The Jews were accustomed to be counted in the city from where their family came. The Most Holy Virgin and the Righteous Joseph, since they were descended from the house and lineage of King David, had to go to Bethlehem to be counted and taxed.

In Bethlehem they found no room at any of the city’s inns. Thus, the God-Man, the Savior of the world, was born in a cave that was used as a stable.

“I behold a strange and most glorious mystery,” the Church sings with awe, “Heaven, a Cave; the Virgin the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain is laid.” (Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Nativity Canon).

Having given birth to the divine Infant without travail, the Most Holy Virgin “wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger” (Luke 2:7). In the stillness of midnight (Wisdom of Solomon 18:14-15), the proclamation of the birth of the Savior of the world was heard by three shepherds watching their flocks by night.

An angel of the Lord (Saint Cyprian says this was Gabriel) came before them and said: “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). The humble shepherds were the first to offer worship to Him Who condescended to assume the form of a humble servant for the salvation of mankind. Besides the glad tidings to the Bethlehem shepherds, the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magi by a wondrous star. Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Theophylactus, commenting on Saint Matthew’s Gospel, say that this was no ordinary star. Rather, it was “a divine and angelic power that appeared in the form of a star.” Saint Demetrius of Rostov says it was a “manifestation of divine energy” (Narrative of the Adoration of the Magi). Entering the house where the Infant lay, the Magi “fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt. 2:11).

The present Feast, commemorating the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, was established by the Church. Its origin goes back to the time of the Apostles. In the Apostolic Constitutions (Section 3, 13) it says, “Brethren, observe the feastdays; and first of all the Birth of Christ, which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month.” In another place it also says, “Celebrate the day of the Nativity of Christ, on which unseen **Con’t Next Pg**

Nativity con't from previous Pg

grace is given man by the birth of the Word of God from the Virgin Mary for the salvation of the world.”

In the second century Saint Clement of Alexandria also indicates that the day of the Nativity of Christ is December 25. In the third century Saint Hippolytus of Rome mentions the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, and appoints the Gospel readings for this day from the opening chapters of Saint Matthew.

In 302, during the persecution of Christians by Maximian, 20,000 Christians of Nicomedia (December 28) were burned in church on the very Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In that same century, after the persecution when the Church had received freedom of religion and had become the official religion in the Roman Empire, we find the Feast of the Nativity of Christ observed throughout the entire Church. There is evidence of this in the works of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church of the fourth century.

Saint John Chrysostom, in a sermon which he gave in the year 385, points out that the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is ancient, and indeed very ancient. In this same century, at the Cave of Bethlehem, made famous by the Birth of Jesus Christ, the empress Saint Helen built a church, which her mighty son Constantine adorned after her death. In the Codex of the emperor Theodosius from 438, and of the emperor Justinian in 535, the universal celebration of the day of the Nativity of Christ was decreed by law. Thus, Nikēphoros Callistus, a writer of the fourteenth century, says in his History that in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian established the celebration of the Nativity of Christ throughout all the world.

Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople in the fifth century, Sophronius and Andrew of Jerusalem in the seventh, Saints John of Damascus, Cosmas of Maium and Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople in the eighth, the Nun Cassiane in the ninth, and others whose names are unknown, wrote many sacred hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which are still sung by the Church on this radiant festival.

During the first three centuries, in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Cyprus, the Nativity of Christ was combined together with the Feast of His Baptism on January 6, and called “Theophany” (“Manifestation of God”). This was because of a belief that Christ was baptized on anniversary of His birth, which may be inferred from Saint John Chrysostom’s sermon on the Nativity of Christ: “it is not the day on which Christ was born

which is called Theophany, but rather that day on which He was baptized.”

In support of such a view, it is possible to cite the words of the Evangelist Luke who says that “Jesus began to be about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23) when He was baptized. The joint celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Theophany continued to the end of the fourth century in certain Eastern Churches, and until the fifth or sixth century in others.

The present order of services preserves the memory of the ancient joint celebration of the Feasts of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany. On the eve of both Feasts, there is a similar tradition that one should fast until the stars appear. The order of divine services on the eve of both feastdays and the feastdays themselves is the same.

The Nativity of Christ has long been counted as one of the Twelve Great Feasts. It is one of the greatest, most joyful and wondrous events in the history of the world. “The angel said to the shepherds, ‘Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ Then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, glorifying God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ Those who heard these things were astonished at what the shepherds told them concerning the Child. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen” (Luke 2:10-20).

Thus the Nativity of Christ, a most profound and extraordinary event, was accompanied by the wondrous tidings proclaimed to the shepherds and to the Magi. This is a cause of universal rejoicing for all mankind, “for the Savior is Born!”

Concurring with the witness of the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, in their God-inspired writings, describe the Feast of the Nativity of Christ as most profound, and joyous, serving as the basis and foundation for all the other Feasts.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

See also: Discourse on the Nativity of Christ by Saint Gregory Thaumaturgos, Bishop of Neocaesarea.



Matthew 2:1-12 (Gospel, Nativity)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Second Day of the Nativity of our Lord Commemorated on December 26

On the day after the Nativity of Christ we celebrate the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos, and come together to give her glory and praise. This is the second day of the three-day Winter Pascha.

Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity—concretely and historically—is the humanity He received from Mary. His body is, first of all, her body. His life is her life. This feast, the assembly in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.

Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding

us that the source and foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

Father Alexander Schmemmann, *The Services of Christmas* (1981)

Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen Commemorated on December 27

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called "archdeacon." He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was "the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stephen was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel."

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Stephen preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned Saint Stephen, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. Saint Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, Saint Stephen suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death Saint Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stephen, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stephen on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

Saint Stephen is also commemorated on August 2 (Translation of his relics) and on September 15 (Uncovering of his relics in the year 415).

**Remarks at the Gravesite - 40th
Anniversary of Repose of
Protopresbyter Alexander by His
Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon
Monastery of Saint Tikhon of
Zadonsk
December 13, 2023**

Today we gather to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the exodus of one of the luminaries of the Orthodox Church in America, the departed servant of God the Very Reverend Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann.

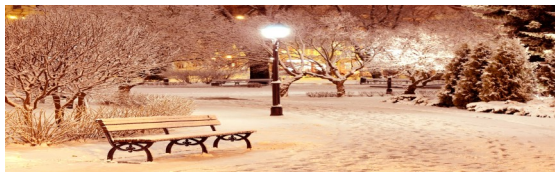
People may debate this or that aspect of Fr. Alexander's legacy and teaching, but the reality and power of that legacy remain beyond debate. His dedication to pastoral formation and theological education was reflected through his years of service as Dean and Professor at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. His vision for the establishment of a proper ecclesiastical life in North America was foundational and is still concretely expressed on all levels of our existence as the Orthodox Church in America. He was a champion of both the authority of bishops and synods and an architect of conciliarity properly understood. Throughout his life and ministry, he maintained the heart of a pastor and the love of Christ for all.

On behalf of the Holy Synod and all the monastics, clergy, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, I offer our collective gratitude for his life, his example, his teachings, and his legacy.

As we pray for Fr. Alexander's blessed repose, may we continue to be inspired and enlightened by his love for the Church and her worship. May his memory always point us back toward the gratitude that elevates and ennobles humanity, the thanksgiving that originates in and is perfected by the Eucharistic action of the Divine Liturgy.

Furthermore, placing our trust in the merciful God, we also hope that as we pray for him, Fr. Alexander now prays for us and all the children of the Orthodox Church in America.

May his memory be eternal!



**14,000 Infants (the Holy Innocents) slain
by Herod at Bethlehem / Commemorated
on December 29**

14,000 Holy Infants were killed by King Herod in Bethlehem. When the time came for the Incarnation of the Son of God and His Birth of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Magi in the East beheld a new star in the heavens, foretelling the Nativity of the King of the Jews. They journeyed immediately to Jerusalem to worship the Child, and the star showed them the way. Having worshipped the divine Infant, they did not return to Jerusalem to Herod, as he had ordered them, but being warned by God in a dream, they went back to their country by another way. Herod finally realized that his scheme to find the Child would not be successful, and he ordered that all the male children two years old and younger at Bethlehem and its surroundings be killed. He thought that the divine Infant, Whom he considered a rival, would be among the dead children.

The murdered infants thus became the first martyrs for Christ. The rage of Herod fell also on Simeon the God-Receiver (February 3), who declared before everyone in the Temple that the Messiah had been born. When the holy Elder died, Herod would not give permission for him to be properly buried. On the orders of King Herod, the holy prophet and priest Zachariah was also killed. He was murdered in Jerusalem between the Temple and the altar (Mt. 23:35) because he would not tell the whereabouts of his son John, the future Baptist of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The wrath of God soon fell upon Herod himself: a horrid condition struck him down and he died, eaten by worms while still alive. Before his death, the impious king murdered the chief priests and scribes of the Jews, and also his brother, and his sister and her husband, and also his own wife Mariam, and three of his sons, and seventy men of wisdom who were members of the Sanhedrin. He initiated this bloodbath so that the day of his death would not be one of rejoicing, but one of mourning.

The Christian Church very rightly proclaimed these murdered children as Saints, because they died at an innocent age, and were, in some way, the first martyrs of Christianity. They may not have been baptized in water, but they were baptized in the blessed blood of their martyrdom.

Last but not least, the relics (or perhaps some) of the Holy Infants are found in Constantinople, in the Church of Saint James the Brother of the Lord, which was built by Emperor Justin. Most of their Holy Relics are at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Portions of their Holy Relics are also to be found in the Pantokrator Monastery on Mount Athos.

20,000 Martyrs Con't from Pg 3

Domna began to help the poor: she gave away her valuables with the assistance of Indes, and she also distributed food from the imperial kitchen. The chief eunuch, who was in charge of provisions for the imperial household, found out that Domna and Indes were not eating the food sent them from the emperor's table. He had them beaten in order to find out why they did not partake of the food, but they remained silent. Another eunuch informed him that the saints were distributing all the emperor's gifts to the poor. He locked them up in prison to exhaust them with hunger, but they received support from an angel and did not suffer. Saint Domna feigned insanity so she wouldn't have to live among the pagans. Then she and Indes managed to leave the court, and she went to a women's monastery. Abbess Agatha quickly dressed her in men's clothing, cut her hair and sent her off from the monastery.

During this time the emperor returned from battle and ordered that a search be made for the former pagan priestess Domna. The soldiers sent for this purpose found the monastery and destroyed it. The sisters were thrown into prison, subjected to torture and abuse, but not one of them suffered defilement. Sent to a house of iniquity, Saint Theophila was able to preserve her virginity with the help of an angel of the Lord. The angel led her from the brothel and brought her to the cathedral.

At this time the emperor cleared the city square to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. When they began sprinkling the crowd with the blood of the sacrificial animals, Christians started to leave the square. Seeing this, the emperor became enraged, but in the middle of his rantings a great thunderstorm sprang up. People fled in panic, and the emperor had to retreat to the palace for his own safety.

Later Maximian went to the church with soldiers and told them they could escape punishment if they renounced Christ. Otherwise, he promised to burn the church and those in it. The Christian presbyter Glycerius told him that Christians would never renounce their faith, even under the threat of torture. Hiding his anger, the emperor exited the church, and a short time later commanded the presbyter Glycerius be arrested for trial. The executioners tortured the martyr, who did not cease to pray and to call on the Name of the Lord. Unable to force Saint Glycerius stop confessing Christ, Maximian ordered him to be burned to death.

On the Feast of the Nativity of Christ in the year 302, when about 20,000 Christians had assembled at the cathedral in Nicomedia, the emperor sent a

herald into the church. He told the Christians that soldiers were surrounding the building, and that anyone who wished to leave had to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Anyone who defied the emperor would perish when the soldiers set fire to the church. All those present refused to worship the idols.

As the pagans prepared to set fire to the church, Bishop Anthimus, baptized all the catechumens and communed everyone with the Holy Mysteries. All 20,000 of those praying died in the fire. Among them were the abbess Agatha and Saint Theophila who had been saved from the den of iniquity by a miracle. Bishop Anthimus, however, managed to escape the fire.

Maximian thought that he had exterminated all the Christians of Nicomedia. He soon learned that there were many more, and that they would confess their faith and were prepared to die for Christ. The emperor wondered how to deal with them. At his command they arrested the regimental commander Zeno, who was openly criticizing the emperor for his impiety and cruelty. Zeno was fiercely beaten and finally beheaded. They jailed the eunuch Indes, formerly a priest of the idols, for refusing to participate in a pagan festival.

The persecution against Christians continued. Dorotheus, Mardonius, Migdonius the deacon and others were thrown into prison. Bishop Anthimus encouraged them by sending letters to them. One of the messengers, the Deacon Theophilus, was captured. They subjected him to torture, trying to learn where the bishop was hiding. The holy martyr endured everything, while revealing nothing. Then they executed him and also those whom the bishop had addressed in his letter. Though they were executed in different ways, they all showed the same courage and received their crowns from God.

For weeks, Saint Domna concealed herself within a cave and sustained herself by eating plants. When she returned to the city, she wept for a long time at the ruins of the church, regretting that she was not found worthy to die with the others. That night she went to the sea shore. At that moment fishermen pulled the bodies of the martyrs Indes, Gorgonius and Peter from the water in their nets.

Saint Domna was still dressed in men's clothing, and she helped the fishermen to draw in their nets. They left her the bodies of the martyrs. With reverence she looked after the holy relics and wept over them, especially over the body of her spiritual friend, the Martyr Indes.

After giving them an honorable burial, she did not depart from these graves so dear **Con't Next Pg**

20,000 Martyrs con't from previous pg

to her heart. Each day she burned incense before them, sprinkling them with fragrant oils. When the emperor was told of an unknown youth who offered incense at the graves of executed Christians, he gave orders to behead the youth. The Martyr Euthymius was also executed along with Domna.

St. John Chrysostom's Christmas Homily

BEHOLD a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Since this heavenly birth cannot be described, neither does His coming amongst us in these days permit of too curious scrutiny. Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth, and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech.

For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

What shall I say to you; what shall I tell you? I

behold a Mother who has brought forth; I see a Child come to this light by birth. The manner of His conception I cannot comprehend.

Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unashamed of the lowliness of our nature.

For it was to Him no lowering to put on what He Himself had made. Let that handiwork be forever glorified, which became the cloak of its own Creator. For as in the first creation of flesh, man could not be made before the clay had come into His hand, so neither could this corruptible body be glorified, until it had first become the garment of its Maker.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infants bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit, that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now **Con't Next Pg**

St. John Chrysostom con't from previous pg

on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost, we offer all praise, now and for ever. Amen.

FATHER ANDREW CLEMENT'S (OUR DEAN) RETIREMENT PARTY

Come & celebrate & help us honor Father Andrew Clement's of 40 years of service & 37 years at St. Nicholas in Mentor.

WHERE:

Pine Ridge Country Club, 30601 Ridge Rd Wickliffe, OH

WHEN: Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 5:30-10:00 PM

COST: \$30 per person & Cash Bar / \$15 Children (4-10)

Vegan & Gluten-free options available

RSVP by January 14 to Evelyn Wick @ bobobskid@yahoo.com or 440-221-8265
9372 Euclid-Chardon Rd, Kirtland, OH 44094
All reservations must be paid by January 14th.
Checks payable to St. Nicholas.

Monthly Commemoration of Birthdays and Anniversaries

Beginning January 2024, I would like to institute the last Sunday of the month as "Celebration Sunday," have a cake or something special in order to commemorate those whose birthday & anniversary fall in that month. Fr. Andrew Bartek

CHRISTMAS GREETING FROM YOUR RECTOR

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

It is with great joy I greet you on this winter Pascha Feast of the Nativity of our Lord & God & Savior Jesus Christ!

This year has been a blessing getting to know you, worship with you and develop a stronger relationship with our God with you.

We are a spiritual family. As family, we should, and need, to look out for each other in Christian brotherhood and love as our Lord has commanded and directed us.

I look forward to our second year together, continuing to foster and grow, in not only our personal relationships, but with our Lord.

On this Major Feast Day of our Lord & God & Savior Jesus Christ, don't worry about your personal circumstances in life. Bring them to the manger; to this little babe called Jesus our King and lay it there for Him. Ask Him to guide you in your daily struggles and He will.

CHRISTOS RAZDAJETSJA! SLAVITE JEHO!



Monthly Charity Support to begin January 2024

Beginning January 2024, following the sermon, a special collection for a particular charity will be taken. Some charities maybe local, national or Diocesan. Whatever is collected each month will have \$250 added to the total.

January's sponsored charity is:
OCMC- Support a mission priest.

Nativity of our Lord 2023— From His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, my beloved children in the Lord,

Christ is born! Glorify him!

At the Vigil for today's feast, we sang with the words of St. Germanus of Constantinople: "Today the Virgin gives birth to the Maker of all. Eden offers a cave and a star discloses Christ, the Sun, to those in darkness" (second sticheron at the aposticha).

In a supreme paradox, the created world today offers shelter to the one who contains all things in the palm of his hand. Coming among us in obscurity, "born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4), in the form of a tiny baby, "in the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7), hidden in a dark cave, nevertheless he shines his light upon our gloom.

Becoming small, he allows us to touch his greatness. Clothing himself in our weakness, he permits us to rest in his strength. Embracing obscurity, he brings enlightenment to the ends of the earth. Ministering as a servant, he shows his love as our Master, our Lord, and our King.

In our present day, as the gloom waxes and the darkness closes, as "wars and rumors of wars" abound (Mt. 24:6), the icon of the Nativity—Eternity laid as a baby in a crib, Salvation in the form of a newborn child, Redemption in the weakness of infant flesh—is as timely as ever. As an American hymn writer wrote over a century and a half ago, in the dark streets of Bethlehem, "the hopes and fears of all the years" are met together on the night of the Savior's birth. If we seek an answer, a solution, to the questions of our age and every age, that Answer, the very Word of the Father, can be found lying in a manger, sleeping, yet with his heart awake (Songs 5:2); resting in his tiny human body, but at work as God (Jn. 5:17).

Once the wise men journeyed, not to meet Herod in his court of splendor, nor to seek Caesar on his Roman throne, but to find a Child in his Mother's arms. Likewise, we do not seek peace, salvation, and joy from the hand and works of "princes and sons of men" (Ps. 145:3), but from the Lord who appears to us in silence, showing us the way of humility, stillness, forgiveness, meekness, and mercy.

Today, as we join the righteous Joseph, the magi, and the shepherds in worshipping the Lord at his Nativity, enthroned in the lap of his Mother, we

place our trust in his care, his providence, his justice, which transcend all human comprehension. Setting aside our own righteousness, we repent and embrace the peace and silence of the manger. Setting aside the grand and distracting worries of the world, we concern ourselves with generosity and forbearance towards our brethren and neighbors.

As St. Porphyrius of Kavsokalyvia writes, "Only prayer, silence, and love are effective." Resting in prayer and silence, through faith and trust we encounter the love of the one who became flesh for our sake, in whom every conflict and battle ceases, the Peace and Power of God, come to reign in our hearts through his Incarnation. May we always accept that love with repentance, humility, and gratitude, and joyfully share it with others, this day and every day.

To Christ our God and Savior, born this Christmas day, be all glory, together with his Father who is without beginning and his All-holy Spirit, unto the endless ages of ages. Amen.

Christ is born! Glorify him!

I remain as ever,
Sincerely yours in the joy of our newborn
Lord and God and Savior,

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

