



*And when they had opened their treasures,  
they presented gifts to Him:  
gold, frankincense, and myrrh.  
--Matthew 2:11*

*Christ is Born! Glorify Him!  
Christos Raždajetsja! Slavite Jeho!*



*Office of the Metropolitan*

*312 Garfield Street*

*Johnstown, PA 15906*

## **CHRISTMAS ARCHPASTORAL LETTER**

**January 7, 2022**

**Protocol No. 27/2021**

### **CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!**

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this glorious Feast of the Nativity we celebrate a truly wondrous event in which God, in His infinite and marvelous grace, became man bringing us enduring hope, newness of life and eternal salvation. The Son of God, the Lord of Glory and King of Kings who upholds the universe by His word of power, became man so that we human beings might be redeemed, renewed, united with Him, and become fellow citizens with the Saints and members of God's kingdom.

The magnitude and depth of the event of the Nativity of Christ are impossible to grasp, but the message is clear and true. It is a message of grace, hope, and salvation to all humanity and to all the created order. It is a message which we both celebrate and share on this sacred day, an invitation to "come and see" what our loving Creator and God has done for us.

On the night of the Nativity, the angels appeared in the glory of God and announced the birth of Christ to the Shepherds. In response they said, "Let us go...and see this thing that has happened." Accepting the invitation to participate in this glorious event, they came and saw the newborn Christ, and becoming amazed by what God had done for our salvation, went away glorifying and praising Him for all that they had seen and heard (Luke 2:8-20).

Following the Nativity, Wise Men in the East saw a mysterious star and following it came seeking the King who was born in Judea. Upon learning of the place of the birth of the Lord, they came and saw the Christ child, offered Him gifts, and worshipped Him. Responding to the invitation presented to them in the sign of the star, they came and encountered the one who would be a great ruler of His people as foretold by the prophets (Matthew 2:1-12).

As the Shepherds and the Wise Men received the invitation to "come and see" the superb miracle of the Incarnation of God, we are also invited to "come and see" Christ and the great work He has done for our salvation. On this day we "come and see" the bright light of truth and life shining through the darkness and despair of our violent and war torn world. On this day we hear a message of hope, grace and peace. We come to Christ and see justice, holiness and love.

Today may all of us, Priests, Panis, Deacons, Sub-Deacons, Readers, Parish Officers, Parishioners (young and old), Friends, and Supporters of our God-protected American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese experience the joy and wonders of the Shepherds and the awe and respect of the Three Wise Men at the arrival of the Messiah, our new born King. Christ is Born!

Greetings from Johnstown with much love,

*+ Metropolitan Gregory*

# St. John's Orthodox Church

*Parish Celebration*



## *Anniversary*

*September 9 - 11, 2022*

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*Join us in Fellowship and Prayer  
to celebrate  
God's Blessings upon our Parish Family*

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*Mark your calendars now and plan to be there!*

*detailed information to be forthcoming*

# SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Very Reverend Father Michael T. Chendorain, Pastor  
Fr. Protodeacon Gregory Benc \* Professor George Hanas, Choir Director

*Christos Raždajetsja!  
Christ is Born!*



*Slavite Jeho!  
Glorify Him!*

The Feast of the Nativity in the Flesh of Our Lord God & Saviour Jesus Christ  
Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

CHURCH RUBRICS: Epistle Reading: Galatians 4:4-7 ★ Gospel Reading: St. Matthew 2:1-12

## SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY DIVINE SERVICES

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 07 - NATIVITY OF OUR LORD & SAVIOUR - CHRISTMAS DAY!

8:45AM Chanting of the Canon of the Nativity & Singing of Traditional Christmas Carols.

9:00AM Holyday Divine Liturgy of the Nativity of Christ with Festive Anointing.

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 08 - SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS & EVER-VIRGIN MARY

9:00AM Holyday Divine Liturgy with Festive Anointing.

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 09 - FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN THE PROTO-MARTYR

9:00AM Holyday Divine Liturgy with festive anointing.

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 14 - JULIAN NEW YEAR & FEAST OF ST. BASIL

9:00AM Holyday Divine Liturgy.

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 15

9:00AM Divine Liturgy for the January Monthly Perpetual Commemorations: *Anthony Book, Helen Bishop, Helen Kupcha, Anna Dankorch, John & Caroline Lasko, Theresa, Subyak, John Skoba, Ann & Elizabeth Ello, Veronica & Charles Brehun, Joseph & Mary Compell.*

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 16

9:00AM Sunday Divine Liturgy.

## SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY PARISH ACTIVITIES

### MONDAY, JANUARY 10

5:00PM Weekly Soup Kitchen -- *Come and serve!*

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 16

10:30AM Sunday Social Hour -- *Come down and join us!*

Sunday Church School -- *All students are to attend!*

WE WELCOME ALL OF OUR FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND GUESTS WHO HAVE COME TO JOIN US THIS MORNING FOR OUR CELEBRATION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR. MAY THE NEW-BORN KING BLESS ALL OF YOU AND KEEP YOU SAFE THROUGHOUT THE COMING YEAR. WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US THROUGHOUT THE COMING DAYS AHEAD.

*As an act of kindness, please visit the sick and shut-ins of our parish, or call them on the telephone, send a card, light a candle or simply say a prayer for them. Remember all of our Parish Family at Christmas!*

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH ☩ 145 BROAD STREET ☩ PERTH AMBOY, NJ 08861

CHURCH: 732.826.1970 ☩ RECTORY: 732.826.4442 ☩ MOBILE: 201.486.2123

EMAIL: FMCHENDORAIN@GMAIL.COM ☩ WEBSITE: [WWW.SIACROD.ORG](http://WWW.SIACROD.ORG)

## PRAYER LIST

His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Metropolitan Gregory, Pani Eleanor Herbert, Fr. John & Pani Eleanor Pribish, Helen Hrehowsik, Lia Gogoladze, Judith Raskoshin & Unborn child, Jenna Quinn & Newborn Son, John & Suzanne DiBiasi, Frank Ello, John Billy, Amet Ramnarian, Bill Kobasz, Helen J. Dunham, Dacia Snider, CPL Michael Delcher, Joann Kolator, Irene Tobin, Olga Mitko, Lynn Beres, Maryann Dudash, Eleanor Aleksza, Sandy DiLeo, Olga Medvigy, Michele Camisa, Abigail Billy, Joseph Santalla, Sussi Howard, Amanda Orender, Helen Deliman, Melanie McHenry, Peggy Patrick, Lillian Kalog, Maryann Della Serra, Victoria Dean, Stephen Skasko, George Kratsashvili, John Paul Hall, Veronica Houser, Joshua Skoog, Michael Ascher, Elizabeth White, CPL Michael Delcher, LCPL Logan Grguric, PO Daniel Langner, Smn. Daniel Birthisel, 2LT Jonah Strenski, the unborn children of this world and for more vocations to the Holy Priesthood.

*May the Newborn King surround them with His Glory and grant them health and long life for many blessed years! Christ is Born!*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Christmas Greetings:** Christ is Born! Glorify Him! ✠ Christos Raždajetsja! Slavite Jeho!

**COMPACT WEEK:** Meat may be eaten Wednesdays and Fridays. NO Fasting 'til Theophany Eve, Jan. 18.

**In the event of an emergency or if you are admitted to the hospital,** please contact Fr. Michael at the rectory or on his cell phone (201) 486-2123. Please do not hesitate to call at anytime, no matter the hour. If he cannot be reached, please call Fr. Andrew Fetchina at (732) 382-8844 and he will be happy to assist you.

**2022 CHURCH CALENDARS ARE IN!** Please take one calendar per household until January 31 in the vestibule. Thank you to Greg Chubenko at Novak Funeral Home for underwriting the cost of these gems once again.

**2022 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING will be Sunday, February 06<sup>th</sup>** immediately following Divine Services. Mark your calendars and plan on attending as we chart the course of the parish for the coming year. If you are interested in serving on the Parish Council or if anyone has any agenda or maintenance items they would like to see entertained, please see Stephen Wythe.

**FINANCIAL REMINDER FOR ALL PARISHIONERS:** Please properly label donations you make via check to the church in the Memo Line, on the envelope or with a separate piece of paper as to what they are to applied to (i.e., dues/stewardship, renovation fund, etc.). Your help is greatly appreciated in this matter.

**AN APPEAL TO OUR PARISHIONERS:** Some Priestly Vestments, altar boys dalmatics and altar cloths are in need of replacement. We are appealing to our faithful to consider donating to cover the cost of some or all of these items on behalf of the church. Anyone wishing to donate towards this effort is asked to see Father at their convenience. Priestly Vestments: Blue, : Altar Cloths: White, Purple : Altar Boy Robes: Red, Purple, Blue. Thank you!

*You're invited* The Parish Family of Saint John's invites you to join us for the "Second Holy-Night Supper" being Held in our Parish Hall on Theophany Eve, Tuesday, January 18, 2018 at 5:30PM, followed by the Vigil Service and the Great Blessing of Water in Our Church. There is no charge for this Holy Supper. Rather, it is a "covered dish" dinner that will help preserve this sacred tradition of our faith. If you would like to make at home and donate any one of the fasting food dishes, or help make them in the church kitchen, or donate towards the cost of fish or the purchase of the wine or fruit for dessert, please sign up in the vestibule or call Father Michael at the rectory - 732-826-4442. We look forward to seeing all of our parishioners, children as well as adults, as we share in the Second Holy Supper on the Eve of the Baptism of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Please come and join us in holy and quiet fellowship.

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ  
*Friday, January 07, 2022*



*And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him:  
gold, frankincense, and myrrh.  
—St. Matthew 2:11*

My joy,

Countless times we have heard of giving gifts during the holiday season. Whether it be monetary donations to the vast numbers of charities that exist or sacrificing time to work in a hospital cancer ward or soup kitchen, the idea of gift giving is a paramount concern of everyone. The model for Christian gift giving has always been traced back to the wise men three. Their gifts have become the standard for the perfect gifts for us to present to the New-born King. However, it's not the outer gift so much that matters but the spirit which is conveyed.

What makes the gift of the wise men perfect is their ability to bear and communicate the Spirit of Truth and of Love. On the one hand, the gifts show the Magi know who the Christ Child is. With gold they honor his kingly humanity, the frankincense pays homage to His divinity and the myrrh foreshadows His redemptive death on the Cross. They are not carried away by the outer trappings of these items – their gifts show they discern His inner reality.

Some will quip, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.” However, more importantly, Jesus is the gift and *we are the reason*. The gift of God is salvation and eternal life in His loving presence. This gift comes to us in His Son. With so much emphasis on the material and psychological aspects of giving and receiving and with our preoccupation with ourselves, we lose sight of salvation as a gift. Like all gifts and the experiences we have of them, this ultimate gift is not something just given and received, it is something that is to be shared.

In sharing the gift of salvation, we first realize that it comes to us as an encounter with God, made most personal and meaningful in the image His Eternal Son as a human infant presents to our sense of tenderness, protectiveness and affection. It is my sincerest prayer that during this Christmas celebration, we can develop the awareness that our Heavenly Father cares for us, his children, as tenderly as we care for His newborn yet Eternal Son. It is my deepest hope that we also extend that warmth of relationship, the protective and affectionate feelings for the Infant Saviour, to the “least of His brethren,” even those we consider enemies, even to those who hate us.

Remember this; His Peace cannot reign in the world until it reigns in our hearts. It is in the heart that we receive and share, and lovingly extend the greatest gift, Jesus our Emmanuel, God with us! As Christ's greatest present to us is His presence among us, our gift in return to Him should be our presence with Him - in His house, until He comes again.

May the Prince of Peace and Father of Great Mercies be the gift that you receive each and every day, blessing you with good health and happiness until He comes again. I remain,

Your servant in Christ,

*Father Michael*

# Liturgical & Floral Donations for the Feast of the Nativity

## Altar Flowers

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Fecso, Maskall and Mucisko Families, offered Anonymously.*

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Fenenic Family and for the Blessings of Good Health, offered by Peter & Lori Fenenic.*

## Altar Candles

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Smisko and Fenenic Families, offered by Rosemarie Smisko.*

## Flowers in front of Christ

*In Memory of +Robert Rathbun and Nicole Kuzma, offered by Kim Kuzma.*

## Flowers in front of Mary

*In Memory of +Sue Gray, offered by The Gray Family.*

## Flowers in front of St. Nicholas

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Hudak Family, offered by The Hudak Family.*

## Flowers in front of St. John

*In Memory of +George & Irene Zakutansky, offered by The Delcher Family.*

## Tetrapod Flowers

*In Memory of +Beloved Parents John & Anna Maslow, offered by their son, George.*

## Tetrapod Candles

*In Memory of +Beloved Husband Dennis Buckley III, offered by his adoring wife, Lisa.*

## Eternal Vigil Light

*In Memory of +Great Grandmom Ann Billy, offered by Matthew & Joseph Santalla.*

*In Memory of +Departed Family Members, offered by Deb Gandy and Dee DiForti.*

## Window Vigil Lights - The Virgin Mary

*In Memory of +John & Susan Popadin, offered by the Weir & Popadin Families.*

## Lg. Processional Cross Wreath

*In Memory of +Departed Family and Friends, offered by The Wythe Family.*

## Sm. Processional Cross Wreath

*In Memory of +Beloved Father James Hrehowsik, offered by his son, James.*

## Bread for Holy Communion

*For the Health of their Grandmother, Helen Hrehowsik, offered by Matthew & Joseph Santalla.*

## Wine for Holy Communion

*For the Health of the Sarno Family Members, offered by Sharon & Jim Sarno.*

## Charcoal & Incense

*For the Health and Safety of Grandsons Brycen, Nolan, Weston, Rylan, Desmond and Joseph, offered by Alice & Larry Mocar.*

## Bread for Mirovanije

*For the Health of the Bulko and Parella Families, offered by Michael & Lorraine Bulko.*

*In Memory of +Timothy Petersen, offered by The Petersen Family.*

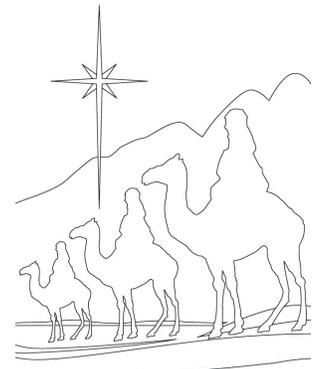
## Bulletin Sponsor

*In Loving Memory of +Stephen, Margaret & Joyce Marhon, offered by The Mocar Family.*

*For God's Continued Guidance and Protection upon our Parish Family, offered by Eileen Luongo.*

**DEEPEST GRATITUDE** is expressed to all our generous donors for their Christmas Liturgical and Floral Donations and to everyone who has donated monetarily on this Nativity Feast. May God bless all of you with peace, good health, happiness and divine salvation for many, happy and blessed years. Na Mnobaja i Blabaja Lita! Christ is Born!

Window Vigil Lights - The Lord Jesus



# CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA OFFERINGS

*In Memory of +Subdeacon Michael & Mary Zolar & Eduard, Natalia, Anotoly & Vera Alber, offered by Diane Alber.*

*In Loving Memory of +Oleg Alber, offered by his Beloved Wife, Children, Grandchildren and Great-grandson.*

*For the Health of the Alber, Dori, Fryc and McHenry Families, offered by Diane Alber.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Parents William & Pauline Beres, offered by their daughter, Lynne.*

*In Memory of +Grandparents George & Mary Thomas, offered by Lynne Beres.*

*In Memory of +Our Beloved Fathers/Grandfathers, Oleg Alber and Marian Fryc, offered by the Fryc Family.*

*For the Health of The Alber, Fryc and Dori Families offered by Julie Fryc.*

*For the Health of Granddaughter Grace Turco, offered by Stephen Gallant.*

*For the Health of Granddaughter Althea Turco, offered by Stephen Gallant.*

*For the Health of Granddaughter Mia Anne Goedtel, offered by Stephen Gallant.*

*In Memory of +Grandparents Mitro & Mary Bliskun, offered by Robert C. Horochovic.*

*In Memory of +Grandparents Anna & Mitro Horochovic, offered by Robert C. Horochovic.*

*For the Health of Raymond & Margaret Sawicz, offered by the Kuzma Family.*

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Maslow Family, offered by George Maslow.*

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Kachur Family, offered by George Maslow.*

*In Loving Memory of +Parents Charles & Mary Horochovic, offered by Patricia A. Miner.*

*In Loving Memory of +Steve, Margaret & Joyce Marhon, offered by Alice and Larry Mocar.*

*In Memory of Dimitri, Elizabeth and James Ello, offered by Betty Ello Roman.*

*In Memory of +Beloved Husband George Smisko, offered by his adoring wife, RoseMarie.*

*In Memory of +Metropolitan Nicholas, offered by RoseMarie Smisko.*

*In Memory of +Richard Pratscher, offered by RoseMarie Smisko.*

*In Memory of the +Departed Members of the Popik Family, offered by Anne Wanca.*

*For the Health of the Members of the Wanca Family, offered by Anne Wanca.*

*In Memory of +Very Reverend Father Michael Psenechnuk, offered by the Altar Boys.*

*In Memory of +Very Reverend Father Michael Psenechnuk, offered by the Altar Boys.*



**CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!**



# CHRISTMAS' DEEPER MEANING

Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol

Every time we stand before the Lord either in prayer or in celebration in Church of an event from the life of Christ, or we are in any other way experiencing the presence of the Lord, two basic things happen, which are attested by the Church and the experience of the Saints: Firstly, we are feeling joy because we are experiencing the Lord's abundant love towards man. He moves our heart into great gratitude, since we are experiencing- to the measure of our spiritual condition- God's great gift for us.

Secondly, by being presented before the Lord we are also standing in a kind of critical judgment for our actions, which leads to our salvation, particularly if this takes place during the great feast days which commemorate events from the life of Christ. Indeed any event in His life prompts us into adopting a critical attitude towards ourselves which does not lead to damnation but to our deliverance.

Thus, we are commemorating our Lord's incarnation in order to experience on the one hand His great love for us and on the other to feel great gratitude for all the wonderful things He has granted us. In addition, this benefits us in a practical way, because we are offered the opportunity to pass judgement on our life. As St Paul says: 'The Lord will not judge us if we pass judgement on ourselves'. If we criticise our ways in this life, we will not be judged in the afterlife, because judgement has already been accomplished in this world.

In other words, now that our Lord's feast is before us, we have the opportunity to critically compare our lives in terms of all the things that our Lord has accomplished for our deliverance, particularly since we know that He did not leave anything to chance but guided all things as the Master of history that He is. He is the One Who wished all events to take place in the way they did, even to the smallest detail. He was the One Who wished to be born in the specific year, at the specific place, as well as all the other elements which constitute the great event of His incarnation.

All the Saints used to critically compare the particular events happening in their lives with the life of Christ and passed judgement on themselves. We would like to believe that a Christian is the one who imitates the life of Christ as far as humanly possible. He then replenishes any deficiencies through repentance and humility. And this constitutes his inner spiritual work.

On such feast days, our Church constantly glorifies the Lord for His great condescension towards man through wonderful hymns, while digging into the deeper theological meaning of His incarnation. Holy elders as well as pious laity have particular experience of the deeper meaning of this event. When elder Efraim Katounakiotis returned from a trip to Jerusalem, we had expected him to be overwhelmed by the experience of Golgotha and of the Crucifixion. Yet, he was overwhelmed by the Cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem. He stood before this event saying: 'I thought I was somebody when I was living in my ascetic hut at Katounakia, amongst my meagre possessions. But when I saw where Christ was born, I became truly crushed in spirit'.

Having been born in a cave, persecuted and despised by all men, Christ accomplished the greatest event in man's history: His incarnation. God became man in total quietude, humility and obscurity. No one knew what was happening that night, except for some shepherds and the wise men from Persia. This event took place in absolute poverty and humility. Therefore, every time we are bothered by various demands and desires, we should place ourselves in front of the Cave of the Nativity, stand before Word's incarnation, and see how our actions compare with what the Lord' did that night. In this way we are passing judgement on our actions. In the same manner we ought to critically examine our entire life.

*(DEEPER MEANING ... continued p. 11)*

## HE COMES EVER SO HUMBLY

Dr. Panagiotis Trembelas, former professor of theology at the University of Athens, wrote that when Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, He chose to be born not of a mother who was listed in "Who's Who" but a poor, humble, pure peasant girl. He chose as His place of entry into this world not a palace but a cold damp cave that served as a stable for animals. Who would have thought at that time that this child born of this humble mother in such a desolate place was God Himself? Yet doesn't this very same thing happen again in the Eucharist? Doesn't the All-Powerful Christ, Lord of heaven and earth, Who holds the whole world in His hands, Who is worshipped by all creation, doesn't He, even in this Sacrament shed His divine glory and majesty that would render Him unapproachable, and offer Himself to us under the humble forms of bread and wine?

What happened in Bethlehem long ago happens again today whenever the liturgy is celebrated. Christ comes to us again quietly, humbly, disguised under the forms of bread and wine. Have you ever imagined what would happen if Christ were to descend on the altar with the same glorified body with which the disciples saw Him ascending into heaven? Who of us would dare approach Him? Or if He should offer His body as it was when it was taken down from the cross on Good Friday? Who of us would dare touch it? Through the Sacrament of Holy Communion the Lord makes Himself utterly approachable, disguising Himself, even as He did in the manger, and coming to us ever so humbly under the forms of bread and wine. The Eucharist is the perpetuation of Christmas. In celebrating Christmas we observe not only God's coming into the world thousands of years ago; we celebrate also His coming into the world today to be born in the manger of our soul through this great Sacrament.

*From the bulletin of SS. Constantine & Helen Cathedral, Merrillville, IN*



## WHY a virgin birth?

...Christ's birth from a virgin underlines that the Incarnation did not involve the coming into being of a new person. When a child is born from two human parents in the usual fashion, a new person begins to exist. But the person of the Incarnate Christ is none other than the second person of the Holy Trinity. At Christ's birth, therefore, no new person came into existence, but the pre-existent person of the Son of God now began to live according to a human as well as a divine mode of being. So the Virgin Birth reflects Christ's eternal pre-existence.

*Bishop Kallistos (Ware)  
The Orthodox Way*

## ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

"There is another necessary reason as far as those on earth are concerned why the Word of God took flesh or became man. If He had not been born like us according to the flesh, if He had not partaken of the same elements as we do, He would not have delivered human nature from the fault we incurred in Adam, nor would He have warded off the decay from our bodies, nor would He have brought to an end the power of the curse which we say came upon the first woman. For it was said to her, 'in pain you shall bring forth children' (Gen. 3:16). But human nature, which fell sick through the disobedience of Adam, now became glorious in Christ through His utter obedience. For it is written that as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous (cf. Rom. 5:19). In Adam it suffered the penalty: 'You are earth and to earth you shall return' (Gen. 3:19). In Christ it was enriched by being able to overcome the snares of death and, as it were, exult in triumph over decay, repeating the prophetic text, 'O death, where is your victory? O Hades, where is your sting' (Hos. 13:14 LXX; I Cor. 15:55)? It came under a curse, as I have said, but this too was abolished in Christ. And indeed it has been said somewhere to the Holy Virgin, when Elizabeth prophesied in the Spirit, 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk. 1:42). Sin has reigned over us and the inventor and father of sin has lorded it over all who dwell under the sky, provoking the transgression of the divine laws. But in Christ we see human nature, as if experiencing a new beginning of the human race, enjoying freedom of access to God. For He said clearly, 'the ruler of this world is coming and he has no power over Me' (Jn. 14:30)."

# AMEN!

Ever since God became Man and the angels sang 'peace on earth', the Word of God is saying to us: 'I did not come to bring peace, but to bring a sword'. Why did the Lord bring a sword while the angels were singing about peace? Christ was the Peace which came to the world and became man so that we would be able to love Him. He showed us that our relationship with the Lord is not a relationship with an ideology, because nobody can love an idea. One may be devoted to some philosophical ideology, but no one can love it, because it will not reciprocate one's love.

In the life of the Church quite the opposite is happening. We have nothing to do with a philosophical ideology and the Word of God did not become any such idea. Word became flesh. The Word of God incarnated so that we could love Him. And as soon as we begin to love Him, we will be able to understand that He was the One Who loved us first in a manner which cannot be comprehended. The Apostle says that 'we love Him, since He first loved us'. This is the kind of mystery which takes place in the Church. It is for this reason that Christ, as the peace of the world, became the subject of love and not of faith. One ought to transcend faith and hope in order to remain in love. As the Apostle says, 'eventually hope and faith will be abandoned and only love will remain', since love is an experiential fact, an existential event which makes man realize that he is truly united with God. This is the path walked by all those who loved Him unto the end.



*The Church of the Holy Nativity - Bethlehem*

Stephen, the first martyr, sealed his love for the Lord by imitating Him. It is written in the Acts, that when he was arrested because he was preaching about Christ, his face lit up like the face of an angel while standing trial. They condemned him to death by stoning as if he was a great sinner because this was what the Law of Moses stipulated. Yet, filled by the Holy Spirit, Stephen was praying not for himself but for the whole world, despite his awful predicament. Thus he imitated Christ, Who had been praying for those who crucified Him while dying on the Cross.

*“Let us glorify God! With the coming of the Son of God in the flesh upon the earth, with His offering Himself up as a sacrifice for the sinful human race, there is given to those who believe the blessing of the Heavenly Father, replacing that curse which had been uttered by God in the beginning; they are adopted and receive the promise of an eternal inheritance of life. To a humanity orphaned by reason of sin, the Heavenly Father returns anew through the mystery of re-birth, that is, through baptism and repentance. People are freed of the tormenting, death-bearing authority of the devil, of the afflictions of sin and of various passions.”*

St. John of Kronstadt, Sermon on the Nativity of Jesus Christ

## And on Earth Peace by Fr. George Morelli

During the season celebrating the Birth of Christ, also called Christmas, a line from the scriptures is frequently quoted. It is actually from the Gospel of St. Luke (2:14): “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace ....” Some may notice I truncated the scriptural verse and some may have filled in the rest of the verse based on their memory of how they have heard or read the verse in the past. There are two alternatives with two very different meanings: “peace on earth good will toward men” or “peace on earth to men of good will” (or “with whom God is pleased”). By temperament I am disinclined to quibble over something that may be considered a trivial lexical issue. But it is not trivial. There is an enormous theological and psychological difference between the two alternative renderings of this scriptural passage. What makes the issue so important is that this passage is so often quoted to capture ‘the real spirit of the Christmas season.’

Translations of the Scriptures into the English language which are based on the earliest ancient manuscripts (e.g., The Jerusalem Bible, 1971; The New American Standard Bible, 1960) support the second translation: “peace on earth to men of good will” (or “to those whom God favors,” or “with whom He is pleased.”). I rejoice in this. The first wording paints a picture of God giving out favors despite what good or bad people may or may not have done. That is to say, what good or bad will they may have. It portrays God as not holding us responsible for our own actions. If there is any message in the history of God’s interaction with mankind it is that He does in fact hold us responsible. The Book of Genesis (6:8) records the account of Noah and is the first of many references to “favor” in the Old Testament: “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” This is aptly summarized by King David: “For thou dost bless the righteous, O Lord; thou dost cover him with favor as with a shield.” (Ps 5:12). Note it is the righteous whom God favors.

Let us apply this lesson to ourselves during this Christmas season. It may make nice sentiment to say peace on earth good will toward men, but this is hardly the way God has been shown to dispense His favor. Our gift to both God and mankind this Christmas season, and all seasons’ would be to make ourselves “men of good will” by applying ourselves to do the work of God. As the Eastern Church spiritual father St. Maximus the Confessor (Philokalia III) tells us: “[God] gives Himself more fully to those who have performed great acts of righteousness, and in smaller measure to those who have not achieved so much.” St. Maximus goes on: “The actualization and proof of perfect love for God is a genuine and willing attitude of goodwill toward one’s neighbor.” To be “men of good will” means becoming benevolent, cheerful, compassionate, kindly, friendly, open to reconciliation, willing to help one another, especially those most in need, and taking responsibility for our own actions. This will be the seed of peace on earth; this will bring God’s favor. This would define the spirit of Christmas. This will make this Christmas season, and all seasons, meaningful. ✨

## Homily on the holy Virgin and Mother of God

*'My soul doth magnify the Lord' (Lk. 1:46)*



We have, my brethren, only a few of the words spoken by the most holy Mother of God recorded in the Gospels, and they are all about God's majesty. She was silent before men, but her soul conversed unceasingly with God. Every day and every hour, she found a new reason and inducement to glorify God.

if it were possible to know and record all her glorifying of God in the course of her life, what a vast book that would make! But, even from this one ascription of praise that she spoke in the presence of her kinswoman Elisabeth, the mother of John the great prophet and forerunner, every single Christian can evaluate what a fragrant and godly flower was her

most pure soul. This is but one wonderful canticle from the soul of the Mother of God that has come down to us through the Gospel. But such canticles were without number in the life of the Most Blessed. Before she heard the Gospel from the lips of her Son, she knew how to speak to God and glorify Him according to the Gospel. This knowledge came to her from the Holy Spirit of God, whose grace constantly poured upon her like clear water into a pure vessel. Her soul magnified God in psalms throughout the whole of her life, and therefore God raised her up above the cherubim and seraphim. And we, small and sinful beings that we are, will be magnified by the same Lord who magnified her in His Kingdom, if we exert ourselves to fill this brief life with the magnification of God in our words, acts, thoughts and prayers.

O most holy, most pure and most blessed Mother of God, extend thy wings of prayer over us. To thee and thy Son, our God, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

### ***(DEEPER MEANING ... continued from p. 10)***

Therefore, ever since Christ came into the world and brought peace, millions of martyrs gave up their lives because of their faith in Him and because they truly loved Him and had tasted His love. The love of Christ spoke into their hearts.

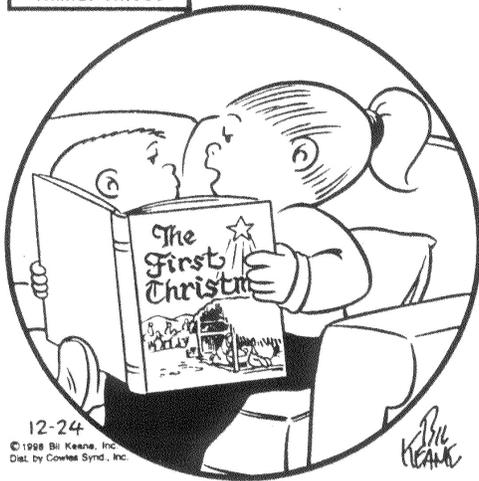
When we are celebrating the feast days for the Saints and the martyrs, we are not just commemorating certain events of their lives. We are commemorating the days when they passed judgement on themselves. They had critically looked at themselves in line with the life of the Lord. They did not take such days lightly. The saints delved deeply into the true meaning of their lives, critically examining and passing judgement on their own actions. On the one hand, they thought about Christ in His manger, His humility and obscurity, His silence and poverty, His rejection and wretchedness and on the other, they compared their own actions and examined them critically.

The Lord revealed, through the lives of the Apostles and of all the Saints, that it is not possible for the Holy Spirit to reside in us without us bearing Its fruit. He expressly stressed that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control'. Therefore, we ought to look for such fruit inside ourselves, which indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. Then we may assess where we stand spiritually. Such critical assessment is necessary and lifesaving. If we embark on this exercise during this festive season, then it will be truly lifesaving for us because it will give rise to the spiritual struggle of repentance and humility and will change our ways.

At the same time it will lead us to seek the Lord's mercy in a loving way. As soon as we recognise that we are indeed people who live in the dark, we too will declare: 'where would your light shine, Lord, if not on those who live in the dark?' As soon as we recognize that we live in the dark, we will immediately seek the light. Yet, if we think that we are living in the light, then we will never see the true light, since we only possess the light which we can see. 🔔



FAMILY CIRCUS



12-24  
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"Then the three wise men came to baby sit while Mary and Joseph went caroling."



## COMMEMORATED JANUARY 09

### The Holy Protomartyr Saint Stephen the Archdeacon

He was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul and one of those Jews who lived in a Hellenic milieu. Stephen was the first of the seven deacons whom the holy apostles ordained for the service of the poor in Jerusalem. This is why he is called the Archdeacon — the first, or chief, of them. By the power of his faith, Stephen worked many wonders among the people. The wicked Jews disputed with him, but were always confounded by his wisdom and the power of the Spirit who acted through him. Then the shameful Jews, adept at calumny and slander, stirred up the people and leaders against this innocent man. They slandered Stephen, saying that he had blasphemed against God and against Moses, and quickly found false witnesses who supported their assertion. Then Stephen stood before the people, and all saw his face 'like the face of an angel': that is, his face was illumined by the light of grace as was the face of Moses when he talked with God. Stephen opened his mouth and spoke of God's manifold works and marvels, performed in the past for the People of Israel, and of the people's manifold transgressions and opposition to God. He especially denounced them for the slaying of Christ the Lord, calling them betrayers and murderers' (Acts 7:52). While they ground their teeth, Stephen looked and saw the heavens open and the glory of God, and spoke to the Jews of what he saw: Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God (7:56). Then the malicious men took him out of the city and stoned him to death. Among his murderers was his kinsman Saul, later the Apostle Paul. At that time, the most holy Mother of God was standing on a rock at a distance with St John the theologian, and witnessed the martyrdom of this first martyr for the truth of her Son and God and she prayed for Stephen. This happened exactly a year after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. St Stephen's body was taken secretly and buried by Gamaliel in his own ground. He was a Jewish prince and a secret Christian. Thus this first of Christ's martyrs made a glorious end and entered into the Kingdom of Christ our God.



# Seeing Your God Face to Face:

## *Reflections on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ*

A few years back I was sitting with my son Matthew, cuddling before bedtime. As all parents know, that's the hour when kids come up with their most philosophical questions. And true to form, Matthew asked me, as we were cuddling together in his darkened room, "How come when we pray and ask God to do things for us, God doesn't say 'I will'? Why can't we hear God talk to us?"

That's a very good question—one that perhaps has crossed the minds of all of us at one time or another. And there is an answer. And on this holiday for children, I would like to answer that question of a child, even if the child himself won't understand the answer.



You see, Matthew, God used to say "I will" to people; they used to hear him with their own ears, long, long ago. If you read the Bible from the beginning to the end, you learn that God used to talk with people and walk with people, in just the same way that you and I walk and talk with each other.

It's quite clear from the book of Genesis, that when God first appeared to human beings, He was seen by them looking for all the world like one of us. Adam walked with God in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, the Bible says. Adam and Eve talked with God, they saw Him, they heard His voice. He was on the most familiar terms possible with them.

But they didn't appreciate this gift. They didn't take God's company seriously. And they disobeyed God, and so they lost the privilege of being with Him so closely all the time, of seeing Him face to face. This is what banishment from Paradise means, for them, and for us their great-great-great-grandchildren.

But God still spoke with people from time to time. They heard His voice. Sometimes they saw Him. As the new icon of the Holy Trinity on our iconostasis proclaims, Abraham and Sarah saw God and talked with Him and even fed Him. They saw Him in the form of three angels—that is to say, looking like three normal human beings, but there was something about their presence and personality that led Abraham to recognize that he was dealing, not with ordinary men, but with supernatural beings.

And Abraham's grandson Jacob even wrestled with God once—again, with God appearing in the form of an angel—looking like a man, but something more than a man. And Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

*(continued on next page)*

## (SEEING YOUR GOD FACE TO FACE - continued)

He knew, in other words, that seeing God was a now a special thing for imperfect people, for sinners. And after him, Moses, and seventy elders of the Israelites, saw God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:11), and ate and drank before Him in a meal of covenant fellowship. And God spoke with Moses, and with Jacob before him, and with Abraham before him, and He made them many wonderful promises, and gave them commandments and instructions for their own good.

But, once again, God's people did not take Him seriously, even though He let Himself be seen by their very own eyes in a form that was awe-inspiring, yet still human. They forgot His promises, they neglected His commandments. And so God told His people that no more would He appear to them face to face, as He appeared to Moses (Numbers 12:6-8); but that in the future, He would appear to His prophets only in dreams and visions, only in miraculous signs and wonders—in ways, that is, designed really to get our attention.

And God was true to His word. Still He appeared to His people, but now in frightening, unfamiliar ways—fire from heaven, earthquakes, mighty winds, storm clouds, lightning and thunder. Still He responded to His people's prayers, not directly, but as if through a game of Telephone, as if through forwarded emails, and only through His anointed prophets, and to them only through visions and dreams of the night, never face to face. He spoke less and less often, and each time with greater force and fanfare. Until finally He appeared to the prophets in forms that made them faint dead away from terror, as happened to righteous men like Daniel and Ezekiel—manifesting Himself in forms that human language cannot describe. But still His people did not pay attention, still they did not take Him seriously.

And so, for hundreds of years, God fell silent. He anointed no prophets. He spoke no revelations. He appeared in no form or manifestation whatsoever. Nothing seemed to work. As often as He said, "I will" to His people, they forget His promises and His answers to their prayers. And even His silence made little impression on them.

Until finally, one dark night, in a lonely little village called Bethlehem, in a part of the world that time and progress had forgotten, God gave it one more try. This night, He opted to give the face-to-face approach another chance. Not by a dazzling array of heavenly

pyrotechnics. Not in the form of a fearsome angel. Not in the form of a mighty man. But in the form of a child—a baby, a newborn infant. Meek and mild, weak and lowly, He came and appeared once more, so that this time we would take Him seriously.

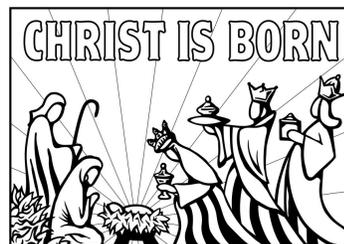
We call Jesus Christ "the Word of God." And beyond all the philosophical dissertations and theological treatises on what that name signifies, it means before all is that Jesus Christ is God's answer . . . His way of saying out loud "I will" to the prayers of every little boy, and every little girl, and every big boy and girl in the world. Or Saint Paul puts it in Second Corinthians 1:20: In Christ Jesus, the Son of God, "every promise of God is Yea and is Amen."

For what need most of all, what we have lacked since the day Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, is to see our God, face to face, as we were created to enjoy Him. And this gift of Paradise was restored on the first Christmas in the manger of the stable of Bethlehem. Go to the new icon of the Nativity in the sanctuary, look in the manger and see your God, trying once more to tell you, personally, face to face, that He loves you, that He wants the best for you, that He is ready to give you whatever you need to prepare you for an everlasting life with Him. "For this is the will of my Father," Jesus Christ said (John 6:40), "that every one who sees the Son and believes in Him should eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

God hears your prayers. And He has said "I will," in the face of this newborn babe, this son of Mary. Take Him seriously this time, people of God. This is what your life is about—not your house, not your cars, not your boat, not your job, not your hobbies, not your friends, not your family. This is what your life is about, to see your God face to face, and seeing Him, to have the life of the Kingdom to come.

*Fr. Mark Sietsema*

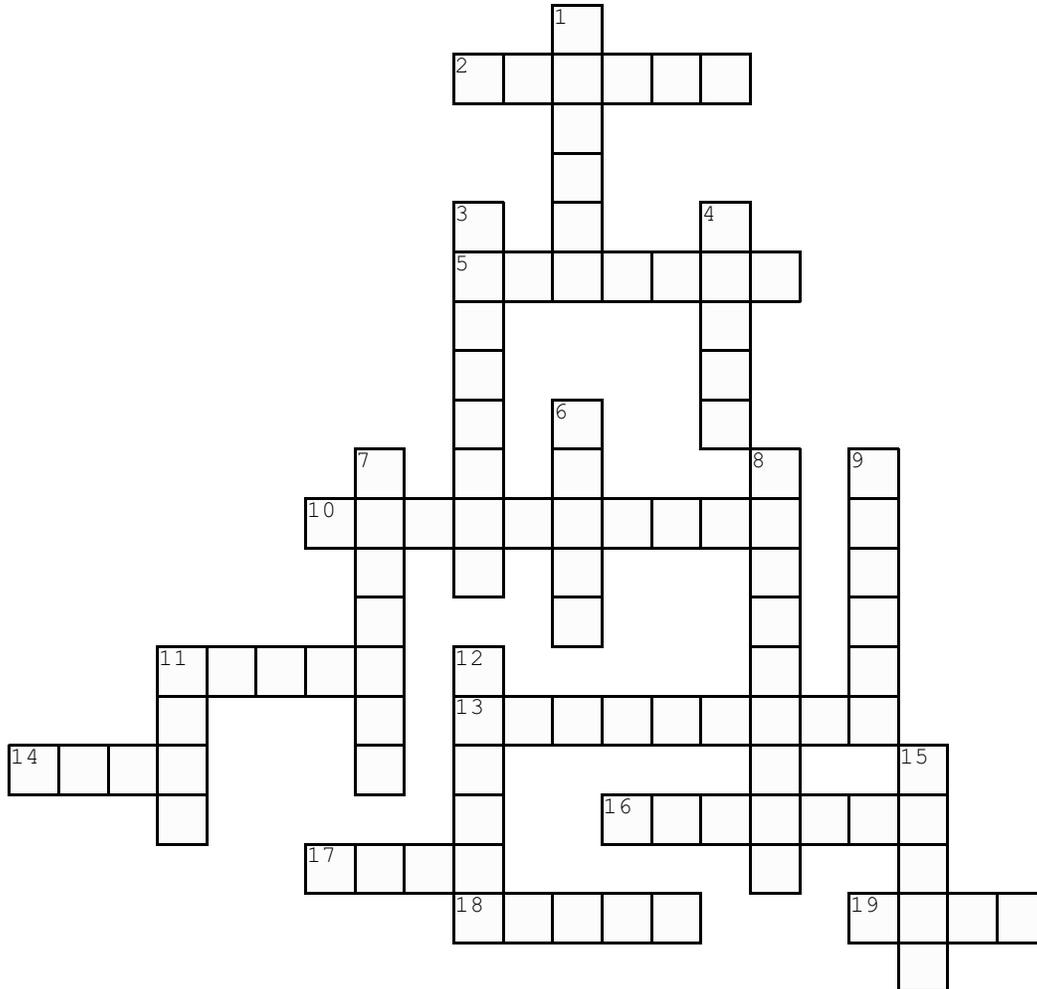
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Complete the crossword below using your knowledge of the Nativity.



Created with [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://www.theteacherscorner.net) Crossword Puzzle Generator

- |         |        |           |           |        |            |        |       |        |         |          |       |         |       |
|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|------------|--------|-------|--------|---------|----------|-------|---------|-------|
| incense | manger | herod     | elizabeth | decree | star       | gold   | egypt | angels | messiah | emmanuel | david | matthew | kings |
|         | luke   | bethlehem | myrrh     | mary   | tabernacle | isaiah |       |        |         |          |       |         |       |

## Across

2. Place where Christ laid down His Head
5. This word means 'The Saviour'
10. Means God came down to dwell among us
11. Gift of the Magi predicting Christ's Burial
13. She said 'Blessed are you among women'
14. Appeared over the head of the Christ Child
16. Gift of the Magi to reveal Christ's divinity
17. Look in the Gospel for the Shepherd Story
18. Tale the Child and escape to this place
19. Gift of the Magi to reveal Christ's Kingship

## Down

1. Sang out 'Glory to God in the highest!'
3. Means 'God is with us'
4. Family lineage of Joseph
6. Instructed by an angel where to find Christ
7. Look in this Gospel for the Magi Story
8. Birth place of Christ
9. Prophet who predicted the Virgin
11. The Virgin's name
12. Issued by Caesar Augustus
15. King who desired to kill the Christ child

## HIDDEN MESSAGE

### '12 Days' Celebrates Christmas Liturgical Season

Type "The Twelve Days of Christmas" into almost any internet search engine and the results will no doubt include a Web site that details the origin of the famous song. Followed soon after will probably be another site refuting the contents of the previous one as a hoax, possibly with an explanation of its inaccuracy.

But regardless of the song's birthplace and time and its intended meaning, there are those who welcome the tune's popularity as a lasting remnant of a traditional Christian celebration nearly lost in their opinions to the communication of the Christmas holiday.

"I'm indebted to (the song)," said Bishop Keith Ackerman, head of the Episcopal Diocese of Quincy, Ill. "It may be the only thing left in the culture that reminds us of the 12 days of Christmas."

Ackerman attributes the "appalling" conversion of a long-standing religious holiday from sacred to secular to factors driven by culture. He specifically cites the breakdown of family in America as it relates to business.

As mom-and-pop businesses shut down in the face of mighty corporate competition, the big company's view of the holiday dominates the social psyche, Ackerman explains.

"In my lifetime, I have seen the 12 days of Christmas go literally from being the 12 days after Christmas, and degenerate into the 12 days before Christmas, leading up to a white sale on the 26<sup>th</sup>," Ackerman said. Traditionally, each of the 12 days was celebrated, and "virtually every single day had a festivity related to it," he added.

The 26<sup>th</sup>, the first day, corresponds with the feast of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> is the feast of St. John the Evangelist, an apostle and the traditional author of the fourth Gospel.

The 12-day Christmas liturgical season ends with Epiphany on Jan. 6, the feast which, among other events, celebrates the visit of the wise men to the young Jesus, symbolically representing the world's recognition of the Son of God.

Ackerman has hope that the religious significance of the 12 days will surpass the commercial aspects of the modern celebration of Christmas.

"At some point, the culture is going to realize how empty it has become," he said. "We would return to the idea of giving something ourselves, not something that the department store says we can't live without." Until then, the song, no matter what interpretation, carries a special significance for Ackerman.

"One day, someone might ask, 'What's the song all about?' It might lead them to discovery," Ackerman said.

One interpretation of the song, and the version with which the Rev. Chris Layden is familiar, compares the lyrics to those of underground railroad songs – apparently innocent words intended to impart a hidden message.

Layden, assistant pastor of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Ottawa, Ill., first came across accounts of the song's origins while studying for his license in sacred theology with a specialization in sacraments and liturgy at San Anselmo in Rome.

"In Europe, the tradition of giving gifts on all 12 days is still very much alive celebration," Layden said. "Liturgically, it doesn't make sense to put up a Christmas tree right after Thanksgiving."

The song supposedly held hidden meaning for Catholics persecuted in England at a time when openly practicing their faith was a violation of the law, and could result in penalties as stiff as death. According to that theory, the lyrics served as a memory aid for children learning the tenets of their faith.

The "true love" sung at the beginning of each verse referred to God, and each gift given to "me" is given to every baptized person. The partridge in the pear tree represented Jesus Christ. The symbol of the partridge was chosen for the bird's actions when defending its young. It feigns injury to draw a predator's attention from helpless newborns.

Two turtledoves represented the Old and New Testaments. Three French hens stood for the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Four calling birds commemorated the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the Gospels they authored. Five golden rings represented the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, which records the history of man's fall from grace.

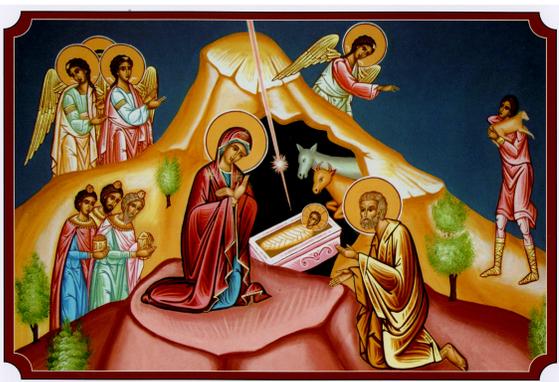
Six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation. Seven swans a-swimming equaled the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments. Eight maids a-milking represented the eight Beatitudes in Matthew 5. Nine ladies dancing stood for the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. Ten lords a-leaping equaled the Ten Commandments. Eleven pipers piping commemorated the 11 faithful Apostles. And 12 drummers drumming represented the 12 points of the Apostle's Creed.



~Matt Buedal  
Copley News Service (2004)



# Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



On the Radiant Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, we extend prayerful best wishes for a blessed Nativity and humbly ask that the Wonderful, Counselor, King of Kings and Prince of Peace bestow His Life-Giving Peace upon all of the following:

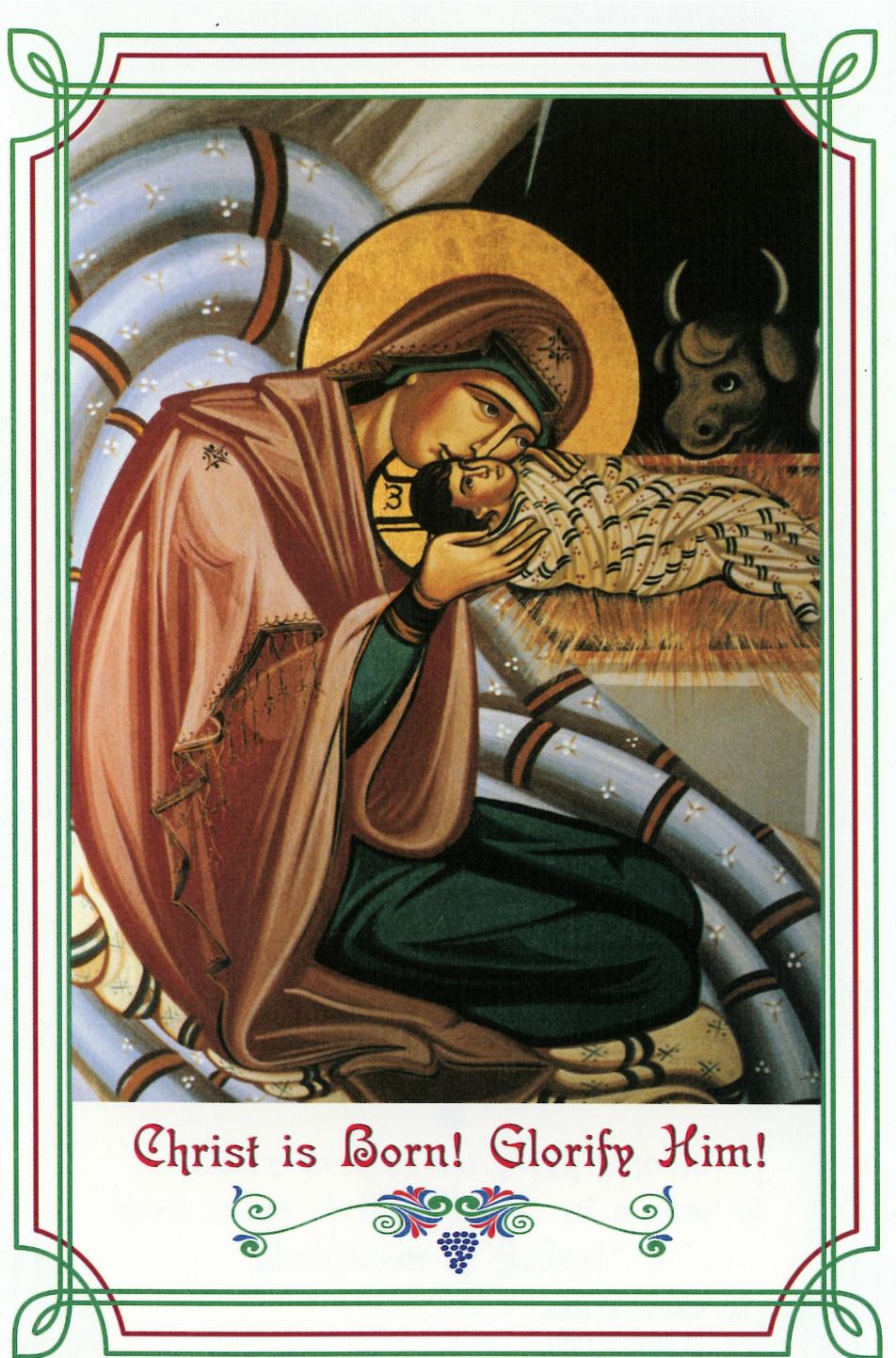
- ✘ His All-Holiness, Œcumenical Patriarch +BARTHOLOMEW I and the Holy See of St. Andrew.
- ✘ His Eminence Archbishop +ELPIDOPHOROS.
- ✘ His Metropolitan +GREGORY, our Diocesan Shepherd.
- ✘ The Very Reverend Protopresbyters, the Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers of Our Diocese.
- ✘ Our Deanery Clergy; Very Reverend Dean Father Andrew Fetchina, VRev. Father John Pribish, VRev. Father Robert Lucas, VRev. Father John P. Fencik, Reverend Father John Cmur, Reverend Father Kenneth Ellis, Reverend Father Matthew Stagon, Fr. Protodeacon Gregory Benc, Sub-Deacon Alex Breno, and Reader Ben Pribish
- ✘ All the Monks and Nuns, Deacons, Sub-deacons, Readers and Seminarians of our Diocese.
- ✘ The pious faithful of our American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese.
- ✘ The Officers and Trustees of our Parish Council.
- ✘ The Members of our St. John's Choir and its Director, George Hanas.
- ✘ The dedicated Sunday School Teachers of this parish.
- ✘ The Members of St. John's PTO who provide phenomenal assistance to our Sunday School Teachers and the parish in general.
- ✘ The loyal, pious and dedicated Knights of the Altar; Nicholas Benc, Andrew Billy, Caeleb and Ethan Chendorain, Richie Kuzma, Zachary Mucisko, Matthew Santalla, Adriancko & Erik Tomacek.
- ✘ The Members of our "Baking Crews" who continue to provide for the material means of this parish through their "labor of love".
- ✘ The Members of our St. John's Soup Kitchen who faithfully live out the Gospel of Christ in caring for "the least of His brethren".
- ✘ The Sick of this parish, who especially this day need our prayers.
- ✘ ALL of our Parishioners who have faithfully and selflessly worked, donated and prayed this past year to ensure the success of this parish.
- ✘ The children of this parish who are a blessing from God for each and every one of us.
- ✘ The newest members of our Parish Family who have made this parish their home for worship.
- ✘ Our Families, Friends, Guests and Neighbors who have come to worship at our church with us: all throughout the year and especially on this day.
- ✘ All the members of our armed forces who are serving at home and abroad protecting our freedom, especially our parish son Michael Delcher.
- ✘ And...all Orthodox Christians, especially those suffering persecution and those who are held in captivity, who today celebrate the Glorious Birth of the Messiah - that Christ is Born!

*Christos Razdajetsja! Slavite Jeho!*

# GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!

CHRISTOS RAŽDAJETSJA!

SLAVITE JEHO!



*“Slava vo višnich Bohu i na zemli mir,  
vo čelovicich blahovolenije!”*