

# SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS



*Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord -- December 25th*

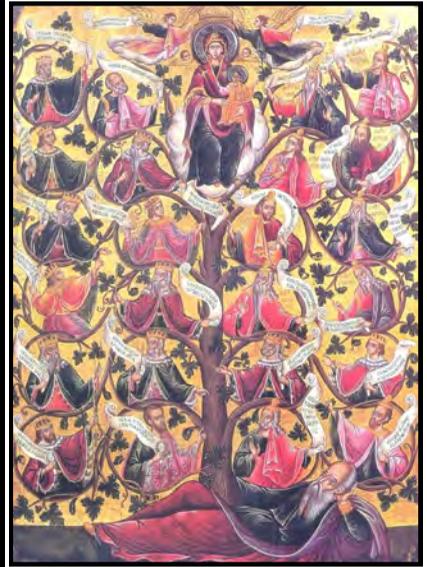
## Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On the last weekend before the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, the Church remembers all the Holy Ancestors of Christ in the flesh. Only two Gospels, namely Matthew and Luke, include any information about the infancy of Jesus. They both include a genealogy. These genealogies are not parallel, nor are there parallels elsewhere in their Gospels. It is difficult to reconcile some of the details in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. The absence of an infancy narrative in Mark suggests very strongly that these narratives did not exist in the earliest form of the Christian traditions about Jesus and that various traditions about the infancy were formed later. Matthew's version of the traditions is greatly affected by the use of Old Testament texts. Theological imagination and symbolism also play a very large part in the composition of the infancy narratives. The reason why they both included a genealogy was to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the term of the history of salvation that was begun with the promises to Abraham.

Our Epistle reading is taken from Paul's letter to the Hebrews. It expresses the faith of the Ancients. Paul clearly defines faith as "confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see." This is truly a wonderful definition, especially as we prepare to celebrate our belief that our God actually became incarnate in the Person of Jesus and, like all humans, came into time and history by being born as a human.

The "incarnation" of God as a human being is, truly, a wondrous miracle. It clearly expresses our belief that we are connected to God in an intimate and special manner.

As we think about this miracle we realize that it clearly expresses a truth not only about God but



also about humankind. It says that God created us by sharing His very life-force with us and that we are created in His image. It also says that He has created us with the potential to also become in His likeness, as seen in the Person of Jesus. How can we say that? We can say that because He created us with FREE WILL and the ability to choose how we live.

Because Jesus is truly and fully a human like us, God revealed that we have the power to live like Jesus lived. It is all a matter of choice! If we choose to live like Jesus, we discover the fullness of life.

# Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

The next feasts to be considered, as we trace the development of our Church feasts, are the THEOPHANY and the NATIVITY.

The Cyrillian Feasts were not the only ones which owed their beginnings to Arianism. Just as the Council of Constantinople signaled the defeat of Arianism and helped rapidly disseminate the Cyrillian Group, it also seems to have encouraged the general adoption in the East of two other feasts concerned with the nature of Christ: the Theophany and the Nativity.

The Theophany is a feast of the “manifestation” of Christ and has at various times commemorated his birth, his baptism, the adoration of the Magi and the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana. There was originally only one feast that included all the Theophanies of God in the world.

The feast celebrating Christ’s birth and was originally observed locally by at least the third century. The Nativity of Christ, the only one among the twelve Great Feasts which was of Western origin, was being celebrated in Rome by 354 but was probably observed locally elsewhere in the West before this date. The Christian feast of the Nativity coincided with the pagan festival of *Natalis Solis Invicti*, the Birth of the Invincible Sun. The cult of the Invincible Sun had sprung up before the time of Constantine who personally associated himself with the deity, but it was only during his reign that it began



to become officially accepted in the West. The Christian Feast of the Nativity celebrates the birth of Christ, who possesses full humanity and full divinity and who is co-eternal with the Father. Its observance on the festival of *Natalis Solis Invicti* no doubt drove home the point of Christ’s divinity, the birth itself indicating his humanity.

The introduction of the Nativity into the East from Rome seems to have been quite deliberate and closely coordinated with Theodosius’ anti-Arian policy. It first appeared in the East at Constantinople and Antioch around 385 - that is after the Council of Constantinople and Theodosius’ order that all Christians profess the faith of the Bishop of Rome. Constantinople was currently undergoing forcible conversion from Arianism to the true faith expressed by the Councils by Theodosius and Patriarch Meletius of Antioch, who was exiled for his faith by the Arianizing emperor Constantius II, was made president of the Council by Theodosius. Thus the Nativity Feast’s early appearance in Constantinople and Antioch rather than some other cities is indicative of their part in a larger scheme. **More to follow**

# The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

After we commemorate the Mother of God and the various different kinds of saints, we pause to remember those who have departed that have been a part of our lives. I cannot stress how important I believe this is. Each time we come to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, we should remember those we know who have died as well as the living. If you have celebrated the Divine Liturgy with me, you know that I always pause

and invite you to “call to mind the memories” of those you know who have died. I is my greatest hope that this happens. In most parishes this is not said

aloud and the congregation is not invited to personally remember the deceased. I cannot encourage you enough to always pray for those who have made a transition to a new life.

After our remembrance of the deceased, we again pray for the hierarchy of our Church. The Liturgy actually allows for the remembrance of the hierarchy four different time. Once we have remembered the hierarchy, we are called to remember the “living” persons that we personally know and love. The prayer introducing this remembrance asks God to remember those “who bear offerings and perform good deeds in Your

[God’s] holy churches and those who remember the poor.”

After our remembrance of the living, the priest offers this simple but very moving prayer: “And grant that we, with one voice and one heart, may glorify and praise Your most honored and sublime name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever”. All present respond with AMEN which means that this expresses their sentiments - that they are truly in agreement with this statement.



It should be noted that this sequence in the Divine Liturgy reminds us that we are joined with

all other Christians, living and dead, in the worship of God. It also reminds us that what we do during the Divine Liturgy is simultaneously being done in God’s Kingdom where everything exists in the “Present Moment”.

The Anaphora is then brought to an end with a priestly blessing which is meant to expressed God’s blessing on what we have prayed, believed and ritualized. The blessing is expressed in a statement: “May the mercies of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ” be with us who have, through our ritual, “actively remembered” all that God has done for us through the Persona of His Son, Jesus, the Christ.



# St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

## PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

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### LITURGY SCHEDULE

#### Christmas Eve Liturgy

Saturday December 24th - 10 PM

#### Christmas Day Liturgy

Sunday December 25th - 10 AM

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## CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Floral Memorials will be available again this year. Suggested donation is \$25. Form below

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## CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

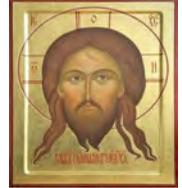
### First Step & Andrew's Pence

**First Step** is a local program that supports abused spouses and families. **Andrew's Pence** is a special collection to support the missionary activities of our Patriarch and Our Church, especially in Ukraine.

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*May God's blessing shine down upon you and your family this holiday season.  
I send my love .*

## CALLED TO HOLINESS



It is only after a person has truly developed a real *habit of prayer*, can he then begin to develop a *habit of mind*, that is a Jesus way of thinking about and reacting to life events. A *habit of mind* deals with a person's *attitudes and ideas* about life, others and self. These are a little more difficult to develop since most people don't even realize the attitudes or ideas that they have. They are typically in a person's unconscious and truly control a person's reactions to life. Among these unconscious thoughts are prejudices, bigotries and judgments that a person has about life, others and self of which they are unaware.

Most people view themselves as not bigoted or prejudiced. And yet, when you listen closely, quite frequently you hear things that support the idea that a person is a bigot.

So in deal with *attitudes of the mind*, a person has to truly attempt to assess what their thoughts

*(Continued on page 8)*



## CHRISTMAS FLORAL MEMORIALS

In memory or honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_ Envelope No: \_\_\_\_\_

## A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE ST. PHILIP'S FAST

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### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>**

Today, Holy Father, the Church celebrates the Holy Forefathers of Jesus Christ in the flesh – She celebrates all those who from ages past have been well-pleasing to God, Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary. Great were their achievements in the faith. I join now with the Church and declare: O Bethlehem, rejoice! Ephratha, make ready! For in her womb the Ewe-lamb, Mary, bears the Great Shepherd Jesus and urgently makes haste to give birth to Him. On beholding Him, the righteous God-bearing Fathers all rejoice and the shepherds sing hymns of praise to the Virgin and I join with the, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in offering praise. AMEN

### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 19<sup>th</sup>**

Today, Heavenly Father, the Church remembers the Holy Martyr Boniface. He confessed Christ with boldness and suffered death as a martyr. He is invoked to help with moderation in drink. As the holy days quickly approach, I ask Your help, O God, to observe these days with moderation in all things. Help me to witness to the true meaning of these Feasts. Help be to be bold in professing my understanding that Christmas is a time especially dedicated to remembering that You, Almighty God, became a human being in order to reveal to mankind how to live. To You, who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I offer this humble prayer. AMEN

### **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20<sup>th</sup>**

Today the Church remembers the Holy Bishop-Martyr Ignatius, the God Bearer. He is called God-bearer because he carried God within himself and was aflame in heart with love for Him. As I prepare myself to celebrate the mystery of God's Incarnation in the Person of Jesus, I invoke Ignatius to help me carry God into my world. I ask his help to become a God-bearer, unafraid to witness to the true meaning of the feast of Christmas to others. Help me to witness to the spiritual meaning of Christmas by the way that I celebrate it. I also ask the help of the One Who I call, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

### **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21<sup>st</sup>**

Today again, Heavenly Father, the Church remembers another Martyr, Holy Juliana. These remembrances before Christmas remind me that there have been many before me who have even given their lives instead of denying their belief in You, my Loving God. As I am reminded of these holy martyrs I am encouraged in my own faith and belief in You. I beg Your help, O Father, to have the courage to be like them in my commitment to my faith and hope in You. Help me to develop the courage to love You as they loved You. I humbly ask this of You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and offer You my praise. AMEN

## A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE ST. PHILIP'S FAST

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### **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup>**

The Church today honors, Heavenly Father, the Great Martyr Anastasia. She truly lived her life in accord with the Gospel message by secretly going to the dwellings of the poor and those in the prison, bringing them whatever was needed for their daily subsistence. She washed their wounds and consoled them in their anguish. She truly loved her neighbors as herself. As I think about her life, which was dedicated to making You, O God, present in her world, I am inspired to ask You, O God, to help me become a God-bearer in my world. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. AMEN

### **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup>**

The Church remembers today, Heavenly Father, the Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete. Shining like the morning star, the Martyrs' commitment to belief in You, O God, has shown beforehand unto us Him Whom the virgin conceived without seed of man. Help me, as I prepare to celebrate Christmas, to recall the love You have shown to humankind by Your Incarnation. Help me, Father, to have the courage to witness to You in my world. Help me to make Christmas truly a spiritual remembrance and do all in my power to bring Your love into my world through me. I make this prayer to You my Loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

### **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>**

On this day, O Loving Father, I would join my voice with the Church and offer this prayer: "On this day the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to God the ineffable Word, Who was before all ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God". As I offer this prayer, I would offer to You, my Loving God, my sincerest thanks for the great mercy You have shown to me and all humankind by coming into the world. By Your incarnation in the Person of Jesus You have revealed to me how I can live if I want to benefit from the gift of this earthly life. I offer You praise, Almighty God, and render glory to You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

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As we celebrate the incarnation of Our God in the Person of Jesus, let us ask God to help us truly understanding its meaning for us. It is truly a great revelation about human life. Let us stand in awe at this great mystery and believe that **GOD IS WITH US** and, therefore, He is ready to help us, if we so desire, to grow in the likeness of Jesus. It is our choice how we respond to this mystery.



# Schedule of Services

**Sunday, December 18 - Weekend of the Holy Ancestors - Tone 6**  
**10:00 AM + Lydia Soja; Greg & Esther Petrovich**  
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## WEEK OF CHRISTMAS

**Monday, December 19 - Boniface, Martyr**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Tuesday, December 20 - Ignatius, Bishop-Martyr**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Wednesday, December 21 - Juliana, Martyr**  
*No Liturgy Scheduled*

**Thursday, December 22 - Anastasia, Great-Martyr**  
**8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Friday, December 23 - Ten Martyrs of Crete**  
*No Liturgy Scheduled*

**Saturday, December 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE**  
**10:00 PM - Divine Liturgy at St. Michaels**

**Sunday, December 25 - Nativity of Christ - CHRISTMAS DAY**  
**10:00 AM + Intentions of All Members of the Parish**  
**Intentions of George & Irene Durisin; Daughter Glorula**

*(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)*

are about life, others and themselves. For example, there are many people who feel that they are not worthy of God's love. This, of course, is a fallacy since God's love is not dependent upon us. He unconditionally loves all of us regardless of how we behave. He cannot not love us. We are His creation and He continuously shares His life with us out of love. You can only imagine what this thought of unworthiness does to a person. It skews all of life's experiences. It makes it impossible for a person to grow in the likeness of Jesus! It makes it impossible for us to have a true and genuine relationship with God.

The prayer habit that has been developed can truly assist a person in truly assessing their *attitudes of mind* and then finding ways to change them.



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*Pastor*

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### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Sundays @ 10:00 AM**  
Ukrainian & English

**Weekdays @ 8:00 AM**  
English

### SACRAMENTS

**Penance**  
*By Appointment*

**Baptism & Matrimony**  
*In most instances membership  
required for six months*

**Funerals**  
*Membership of an immediate  
family member required*

### Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko  
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky  
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny  
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky  
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur  
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak  
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier  
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich  
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter  
313.624.9867

<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

## Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

The next thing that must be considered is Jesus AS the WORD. The Logos-doctrine of the fourth Gospel, which is John's Gospel, represents the summit of New Testament Christology. Here the power of the divine Word is revealed in all its fullness: He is Creator and Redeemer, the Judge in the time to come and the sacrificial Lamb, the High Priest and the servant of servants. Paradoxically - or rather, in the language of the Church Fathers, "antinomically" (i.e., the structural makeup of Jesus) His power is revealed through self-abasement, suffering and death, just as those who assume His ministry of reconciliation will be called to manifest their strength through weakness. It is this antinomy that reveals the



true nature of the Word: the Word of God is a Person, a divine hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, who becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Word *becomes* flesh; therein alone lies His power to assume human life and to raise it to an eternal, glorified order of existence.

In authentic Christian experience, the Word comes to its fullest expression within a sacramental context. Whether proclaimed through Scripture reading and preaching, or sung in the form of antiphons and

dogmatic hymns, the Word of God is primarily communicated - expressed and received - by the ecclesial act of *celebration*, and, in particular, celebration of the Eucharistic mystery. So what I am saying is that the Word of God truly becomes present to us in the act of celebrating the Eucharist. Why? Because it makes Him present to us in a real way and it also repeats the primary act of His entire life, namely offering His own life back to the Father in real Thanksgiving for the gift of human life. As we repeat what He did, we too join with Him in offering real Thanksgiving to the Father for the gift of life. This is the focus of our celebration of the Divine Liturgy - to join with Jesus in offering to God our lives in thanksgiving for the gift of life.

The Sacred Scriptures for a great part of our celebration. All the texts of the Divine Liturgy are Scripture based. The Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, is truly made present to us in our Eucharistic celebration.

As the resurrection appearance at Emmaus indicates, the first generation of Christians situated proclamation of the Word in an ecclesial-liturgical setting. The risen Lord draws near to two of His disciples and inquires as to the subject of their conversation. That happens in the Divine Liturgy.

# Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

I would continue the thought I started in the last issue of the Bulletin about the surprise Christ gave to the early Christian community with His Ascension back to heaven. In truth, the early post-resurrection Christian community thought the story had reached its conclusion with Christ's resurrection. It was, of course, only beginning. There was work to be done, a witness to be proclaimed, and those left behind would inaugurate that work and witness. Moreover, the early Christian generations would play a key role in witnessing to, incarnating and interpreting the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Though Christ was physically leaving, he promised the disciples that He would soon return to them through the Spirit, the Spirit who would empower them for ministry and form, them into Christ's body on earth, the church.

Again, layers of questions present themselves. Who is this Holy Spirit who will infill and energize the church? How is the Holy Spirit related to Christ and to the Father? Are Father, Son and Spirit simply different manifestations of one divine being, or is the Father distinct from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit? If these distinctions exist, exactly who is the Holy Spirit? What is the Spirit's work and mission? And what of the witnessing community Jesus predicts the Spirit will form, infill, power and direct? How can the church, made up of sinful human beings, still be called by the apostle Paul Christ's "body", the fullness of him who fills all in all"? In short, what is the church?

As the early church pondered these questions, its thinking coalesced around central theological areas:

- The question of authority: To what should the church look for its guiding authority? What is the relation between Scripture and the apostolic tradition, and how do these two relate to one another in the formation of doctrine?
- The question of the Trinity: Is Christ genuinely



Divine? If so, how is the divinity of Christ to be understood in relationship to the Father and the Spirit?

- The question of the incarnation: What is the relationship between Christ's deity and His humanity? If Jesus was truly divine, was he also truly human? How can He simultaneously be both?
- The question of Christ's work: How has Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection overcome sin and introduced the life of the age to come into this present evil age?

There are still three more basic questions that I shall share in the next issue of this article.



## *The Twofold Coming of Christ*

We do not preach only one coming of Christ, but a second as well, much more glorious than the first. The first coming was marked by patience; the second will bring the crown of a divine kingdom.

In general, whatever relates to our Lord Jesus Christ has two aspects. There is a birth from God before the ages, and a birth from a virgin at the fullness of time. There is a hidden coming, like that of rain on fleece, and a coming before all eyes, still in the future.

At the first coming He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. At His second coming He will be clothed in light as in a garment. In the first coming He

endured the cross, despising the shame; in the second coming He will be in glory, escorted by an army of angels.

We look then beyond the first coming and await the second. At the first coming we said: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. At the second we shall say it again; we shall go out with the angels to meet the Lord and cry out in adoration: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

*St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

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