



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: **Metropolitan Constantine**, Patriarch Pavle, Archimandrite Raphael, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, **Father Paul Stoll**, Father Deacon Joseph Bulkanowa, Frank & Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Joe Karas, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Angela Wesolosky, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Terry Reinhart, Bernie O'Masta, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mary Pekich, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Amy, Nigel Daniel, & Daniel Pocura, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Sandy Gamble, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Khoruia Joanne Abdalah, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 3-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 10-month old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Cindy Rita, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Jeff, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Bill, Sophia Grace, Erin, Jimmy Fennel [6th Grader], Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Peter Paul & Louise May Sprock, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Claudia [Horvath] Gradicheck, Alberta, Margaret Mueller, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Tony Notaro, John Holupka, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Denny Doran, Pete Special, Rita Very & family, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD: Stefania Lucci, Kay Tomson, Ann Ostaffy, Steve Sakal, Elisabeth Arasin, and Homer Paul Kline.** We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

There is a new COFFEE HOUR sign-up sheet downstairs. Please pick a Sunday or two to bring in treats to share!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to our February babies: David Shirley on the 1st, Kyle James Weiser on the 12th, and Michael Horvath on the 14th. May God grant them all Many Years of Good Health, Wealth, and Happiness!

Please remember ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR "BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION" AND CAMPBELL'S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex's Fourth Grade and Matt's Second Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! *Alex and Matt*

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

Schedule of Services

Sunday, February 4

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON, APOSTLE TIMOTHY OF THE 70, MONK-MARTYR ANASTASIUS THE PERSIAN, MARTYRS MANUEL, GEORGE, PETER, & LEONTIUS—BISHOPS, SIONIUS, GABRIEL, JOHN,

LEONTUS, & PARODUS-PRESBYTERS, & 377 COMPANIONS—IN BULGARIA, MARTYR ANASTASIUS THE DEACON OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

Tone 1

I Corinthians 6:12-20

Luke 15:11-32

Litany in Blessed Memory of Milton G. Chicka, Daniel Pysh, & Sara Chicka—Fr. Bob

Sunday, February 11

Obednitsa

10:30 AM

MEATFARE/FORGIVENESS SUNDAY, SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT, TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GODBEARER-BISHOP OF ANTIOCH, MARTYRS ROMANUS, JAMES PHILOTHEUS, HYPERCHIUS, ABIBIUS, JULIAN & PAREGORIUS AT SAMOSATA, MARTYRS SYLVANUS-BISHOP OF EMESA, LUKE THE DEACON, & MOCIUS THE READER, SAINT LAWRENCE THE RECLUSE-BISHOP OF TUROV & VENERABLE LAWRENCE THE RECLUSE OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA

Tone 2

I Corinthians 8:8-9:2

Matthew 25:31-46

Sunday, February 18

Divine Liturgy

10:30 AM

CHEESEFARE/FORGIVENESS SUNDAY, COMMEMORATION OF THE EXPULSION OF ADAM FROM EDEN, HOLY MARTYR AGATHA OF POLERMO, MARTYR THEODULA OF ANAZARBUS, MARTYRS HELLADIUS, MACARIUS, & EVAGRIUS, SAINT POLYEUCTUS-PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, SAINT THEODOSIUS-ARCHBISHOP OF CHERNIHIV

Tone 3

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 6:14-21

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY VESPERS

4:00 PM

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 04 FEBRUARY 2007

**MEATFARE SUNDAY, SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT
TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE
GODBEARER-BISHOP OF ANTIOCH, MARTYRS ROMANUS, JAMES
PHILOTHEUS, HYPERCHIUS, ABIBIUS, JULIAN & PAREGORIUS AT SAMOSATA,
MARTYRS SYLVANUS-BISHOP OF EMESA, LUKE THE DEACON, & MOCIUS
THE READER, SAINT LAWRENCE THE RECLUSE-BISHOP OF TUROV &
VENERABLE LAWRENCE THE RECLUSE OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA**

TROPARION—TONE 1

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews;
While the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure Body;
Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior,
Granting life to the world.
The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of life:
Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ!
Glory to Thy Kingdom!
Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 1

As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Thyself.

Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished!
Adam exults, O Master!
Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to Thee:
Thou are the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 1

READER: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.

PEOPLE: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.

READER: Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the just!

PEOPLE: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee.

READER: Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us.

PEOPLE: As we have set our hope on Thee.

ALLELUIA VERSES

God gives vengeance to me, and subdues people under me.

He magnifies the salvation of the king, and deals mercifully with His Christ, with David and his seed forever!

Just before the funeral services, the undertaker came up to the very elderly widow and asked, "How old was your husband?"

"99," she replied. "Two years older than me."

"So you're 97," the undertaker commented, "Hardly worth going home, is it?"

A living witness of our Orthodox Christian faith is one of the greatest gifts we can share. This witness often comes through an expression of service, which feeds the hungry, heals the sick, builds churches, and cares for children. The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) is offering several 2-4 week Mission Team opportunities this year that will allow you to share your faith with communities in need around the world. All Orthodox Christians over the age of 18 are asked to prayerfully consider applying for an Orthodox Mission Team. For more information or to apply, contact Andrew Lekos by phone at 1-877-463-6784 or by e-mail at teams@ocmc.org. Information and applications can also be found at the OCMC website by visiting www.ocmc.org/teams.

SCOBA

The Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas
8 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10021

Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Matthew 25:21

Share The Light Sunday

21 January 2007

To the Most Reverend Clergy, Venerable Monastics and The Devout Faithful of the Holy Orthodox Church in the Americas.

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

We recall with sober joy the teaching of our Lord Jesus concerning the talents given to servants by their master, and how each servant was called to answer for the talent he received. One of our most fervent prayers is that we would not be like the foolish servant who, only fearing and not also loving his master, went and buried his talent in the ground, and was cast into outer darkness for his unfaithfulness. But to the faithful servant, our Lord said "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

That is why, as those called to serve the faithful as Shepherds of your souls, we pray daily for you to join us in the task given to us all by Christ Himself when He commanded His Church to make disciples of every nation. By God's grace we have been given this nation to serve and to share the timeless beauty of our Orthodox faith in order that this precious Gospel would transform not only nations, but the everyday lives of people for whom Christ died and rose again.

We fulfill this command each time we all gather to celebrate the Divine Mysteries, when our faithful priests proclaim the Gospel, when we build our church buildings in our communities, when we teach Sunday School, and as we serve the needy in our midst.

But the day and age in which we live offers us so many ways to effectively communicate the message of faith to our neighbors and families. We live in an age when communication technologies have expanded our ability to raise awareness of our Orthodox faith as never before. Technologies like the internet, podcasting, cell phones, as well as TV, radio, and print, challenge us to take advantage of these new tools to obey the command of the Savior. These technologies are already being used by many to communicate to our children and grandchildren, and those messages, some good and some not so good, are affecting our lives every day. Where is the voice of Orthodoxy in this modern cacophony of messages?

There is no need for us to be afraid of modern technology or to fear we will be left out of its potential. Many faithful Orthodox ministries are working hard to harness all these technologies for use by the Church. At the forefront of this effort is our **Orthodox Christian Network**. This agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas produces weekly radio programs and now is launching a 24 hour online media resource called The Ark, that will feature Orthodox Christian music and more for our faithful.

It is because of this unprecedented opportunity to serve our local parishes and faithful through media that we have set aside the third Sunday in January as **Share The Light Sunday**. This year it falls on Sunday, January 21, 2007. We urge each parish to enthusiastically participate by offering a special contribution on this Sunday to help build a national, sustainable, and effective media witness for Orthodox Christianity in America.

Let us together take up the valuable talents available to us and let us use them faithfully to serve one another and this nation, and together we will hear from our Lord, "Well done."

May Christ, our True Light, grant you His peace and salvation!

With Paternal love and devotion,

+Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Chairman

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

+Metropolitan PHILIP, Vice Chairman

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

+Metropolitan CHRISTOPHER, Secretary

Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada

+Metropolitan NICHOLAS of Amissos, Treasurer

American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in the USA

+Metropolitan HERMAN

Orthodox Church in America

+Archbishop NICOLAE

Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada

+Metropolitan JOSEPH

Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church

+Metropolitan CONSTANTINE

Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA

+Bishop ILIA of Philomelion

Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America



THE EPIPHANY [THEOPHANY] OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST - January 6/19

Prologue of Ohrid

When our Lord reached thirty years from His physical birth, He began His teaching and salvific work. He Himself signified this "beginning of the beginning" by His baptism in the Jordan river. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, " The beginning of the world - water; the beginning of the Good News - Jordan." At the time of the baptism of the Lord in water, that mystery was declared to the world: that mystery which

was prophesied in the Old Testament; the mystery about which in ancient Egypt and India was only fabled; i.e., the mystery of the Divine Holy Trinity. The Father was

revealed to the sense of hearing; the Spirit was revealed to the sense of sight, and in addition to these, the Son was revealed to the sense of touch. The Father uttered His witness about the Son, the Son was baptized in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovered above the water. When John the Baptist witnessed and said about Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world"

(St. John 1:29), and when John immersed and baptized the Lord in the Jordan, the mission of Christ in the world and the path of our salvation was shown. That is to say: The Lord took upon Himself the sins of mankind and died under them [immersion] and became alive again [the coming out of the water]; and we must die as the old sinful man and become alive again as cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is the Savior and this is the path of salvation. The Feast of the Epiphany [Theophany in Greek] is also called the Feast of Illumination. For us, the event in the Jordan river illuminates, by manifesting to us God as Trinity, consubstantial and undivided. That is one way. And, the second: everyone of us through baptism in water is illumined by this, that we become adopted by the Father of Lights through the merits of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Ancient Greek gods' new believers--By Malcolm Brabant
BBC News, Athens Sunday, 21 January 2007, 22:19 GMT**

Followers of the 12 Greek Gods, who, according to mythology, ruled the Ancient World from Mount Olympus, have cast a thunderbolt at their Orthodox opponents.

After successfully staging a landmark ceremony at the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens, their leader pledged to fight for the right to conduct baptisms, marriages, and funerals according to the rites of the ancient religion.

"We are a legitimate religion. But the authorities don't let us do this, but we shall claim this right through the European Union," said Doretta Peppas, the high priestess, who led the prayers next to the 15 remaining columns of the temple.

The move is bound to aggravate the highly conservative Greek Orthodox church, which strongly disapproves of what it regards as paganism.

First service

"They are a handful of miserable resuscitators of a degenerate dead religion who wish to return to the monstrous dark delusions of the past," said Father Efstathios Kollas, the President of Greek Clergymen.

Hundreds of followers of Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Artemis, Aphrodite and Hermes stood in a circle, a mile from the Acropolis, in what was the first official religious service allowed in the grounds of an Ancient Greek temple.

Previous rites have been performed covertly, but the culture ministry was obliged to grant

permission for the event after a court last year legitimised the religion, which was eclipsed 1600 years ago by Christianity.

"I feel very emotional," said Ms Peppa, a writer. "We have been persecuted for 16-and-a-half centuries but now we are here. This is our human right. And we shall carry on worshipping at our temples. They have now been put to proper use.

"This is as important to us, as prayers are for Muslims, Christians or Hindus," said Apollonius, a former taverna owner from Melbourne, Australia.

He abandoned the Church for the 12 Gods, because 'they make me feel whole, they make me feel part of the universe.'

Ancient ceremony

Ms. Peppa said she turned to the ancient religion because she could not countenance the concept of just one God outside the world.

Her co-religionists believe that the Olympian gods exist in the world and control various elements of nature.

For example, Poseidon is the God of the Sea; Hera, the Goddess of Marriage; and Aphrodite is the Goddess of Love and Romance.

The ceremony was an attempt to emulate those carried out in Athens in the 4th Century BC, when the Greeks were preparing for the games at Olympia.

Believers dressed as ancient warriors left their spears, swords and shields at the entrance before entering the Temple.

This was supposed to represent the truce between warring states that took place during the games.

And it was a symbolic message sent to the rest of the world calling for peace in 2008 when the Olympic Games take place in Beijing.

The international publicity surrounding the Temple of Zeus ceremony may galvanize the all-powerful Orthodox Church to step up its opposition.

But one of the participants has appealed for tolerance.

Wearing a crown of daisies and a flowing white gown, a red haired woman who identified herself only as Artemis said: "This is the land which has given birth to freedom and

democracy. If we really want to say that we are democratic and we have freedom, then we have to be allowed to practice our religion."

Friends in Christ,

Please kindly notice that I did not dive for the Holy Cross along with all these young guys during the Holy Theophany Blessing of the Waters! Also, difficult and crowded as it was on the docks, I did not fall in, either! I really enjoyed seeing the commitment these young people gave to this wonderful event!

Peace!

Yours,

Fr. Joshua
St. John Antiochian Orthodox Church
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North Charleston, SC 29405
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Web: www.orthodoxcarolina.org

For those who don't get the paper!! How Proud are we?
In His Love,
Fr John

Divers participating in the 7th annual Epiphany Celebration line up prior to the dive on the docks in front of Bluewater Grill at Wrightsville Beach Saturday, January 20, 2007. The tradition comes from the early Christian Church traditionally celebrating the Baptism of Jesus Christ for 10 days during the month of January. The tradition has evolved and the hour-long ceremony included a blessing of the waters, a blessing of the boats and a dive for the cross.

Nicholas Fernandez retrieves the cross that was thrown into the water during the 7th annual Epiphany Celebration on the docks in front of Bluewater Grill at Wrightsville Beach Saturday, January 20, 2007.



Father John Stavropoulos, second from left, from St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, raises the cross to symbolize Christ entering into the earth during the 7th annual Epiphany Celebration on the docks in front of Bluewater Grill at Wrightsville Beach Saturday, January 20, 2007. The tradition comes from the early Christian Church traditionally celebrating the Baptism of Jesus Christ for 10 days during the month of January. The tradition has evolved and the hour long ceremony included a blessing of the waters, a blessing of the boats and a dive for the cross. Photo by MATT BORN / WILMINGTON STAR-NEWS

The 'L I T ! T L E' Things. *via Pani Cindy Mycyk*

As you might know, the head of a company survived *9/11 because his son started kindergarten.*

Another fellow was alive because it was *his turn to bring donuts.*

One woman was late because her *alarm clock didn't go off in time.*

One was late because of being stuck on the NJ Turnpike *because of an auto accident.*

One of them *missed his bus.*

One spilled food on her clothes and had to take *time to change.*

One's *car wouldn't start.*

One went back to *answer the telephone.*

One had a *child that dawdled* and didn't get ready as soon as he should have.

One couldn't *get a taxi*.

The one that struck me was the man who put on a new pair of shoes that morning, took the various means to get to work but before he got there, he developed a blister on his foot. He stopped at a drugstore to buy a Band-Aid. That is why he is alive today.

Now when I am stuck in traffic, miss an elevator, turn back to answer a ringing telephone...all the little things that annoy me. I think to myself, this is exactly where God wants me to be at this very moment.

Next time your morning seems to be going wrong, the children are slow getting dressed, you can't seem to find the car keys, you hit every traffic light, don't get mad or frustrated; It may be just that God is at work watching over you!

May God continue to bless you with all those annoying little things and may you remember their possible purpose.



**The Serbian Orthodox Church
to her spiritual children at Christmas, 2006**

PAVLE

By the grace of God

Orthodox Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, with the Hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church - to all the clergy, monastics, and all the sons and daughters of our Holy Church: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with the joyous Christmas greeting:

PEACE FROM GOD - CHRIST IS BORN!

"Great indeed is the mystery of our religion:
God is manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels, preached among the nations,
believed on in the world, taken up in glory."
(I Tim. 3:16)

These words of the Apostle Paul, our dear spiritual children, most fully depict all the beauty of the joy of Christmas in which we truly participate in

the great mystery of God descending from Heaven to earth and man's ascending from earth to Heaven and sitting at the right hand of God the Father. This, in essence, is the divine sonship of everyone who desires it through an active faith. The Son of God came to call us into the everlasting Kingdom of God and to bring us into the reality of eternal life, being that He, our Lord, is always the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:5).

The event of Christ's birth from the Virgin Mary brings together all hopes and longings of mankind throughout the centuries preceding it, as well as the faith of all the centuries that followed it, and it will last throughout all the centuries to eternity. This is the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), for God and man are united together in the person of Christ. God is born as a man without ceasing to be God, so that man can become "god by grace", without ceasing to be man.

Rejoicing in eternal and indescribable joy because of the great gifts of God's love, let us ask ourselves as believing Christians, called out and sent into the world to be "the salt and light of the earth" (Matthew 5:13-14), are we, and to what degree are we, truly responsible in our God-given freedom. It is not good to make excuses for ourselves to someone else and yet see his mistakes, for condemning is not the way of faith. Often times this is an obstacle on the road of life and too heavy a yoke for him who acts this way. This is why we turn to you, sons and daughters of Christ's Church, "not as lords over your faith, but as helpers of your joy" (II Cor. 1:24). On bended knees we implore you: show love without hypocrisy toward one another and toward all people - "let us not grow weary in well-doing." (Gal. 6:9) Let us work to carry out the lesson of our Holy Fathers: "Every Christian needs to be such a person that God is never ashamed of him." We can fulfill this axiom, noble people of God, but only if we make some effort will we succeed in the good works of our noble faith.

There are many selfish people today who think that they can do everything alone. Many are the false "great" people and nations and, each thinks that he alone can change the world. That is why we need the faith of the righteous Joseph, the simplicity and hospitality of Bethlehem's shepherds, and the wisdom of the Magi from the East who, guided by the star, brought gifts to Christ without fearing King Herod. Let us believe with the faith of the prophets and righteous from the Old Testament, and let us persevere together with the holy apostles in witnessing to the great Mystery of faith, knowing that besides Christ "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

This knowledge in faith does not hinder us in love toward others. On the contrary, it directs us forward and opens us up to every person, regardless of who he is, how he prays, or whether he prays. For "God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Act. 10:35) Our faith that Christ is the Savior of the world and mankind, equips and enables us to always serve the improvement and salvation of the world. The Son of God, for us and our salvation, became man and our servant. So each one of us is called to serve for the betterment of life and for the salvation of all and everyone. How much better and different everything would be if we Christians would actively understand the meaning of the "great ones" serving the "little ones"! Life would be more beautiful and the world would be much better. It is possible - but only if each one conquers self-will, renounces his own selfishness, abandons personal self-interest, and exchanges it for a self-sacrificing and unselfish way of life.

We were committing lawless acts - let us stop, and God will forgive. The greatest error we commit is abortion, because we will not admit that it is the sin of murdering a child, motivated by the selfishness of unworthy parents. It is most hideous murder, the refusal of God's blessing and the denial to a new person of the right to life. The unborn child is not a nameless embryo, a fetus; it is a person - a living soul. We implore you, dear parents, not to do this any more; do not close the door of your hearts and homes to the blessing of life. There is enough room and food for all. Remember those childless parents who with tears in their eyes beseech God to bless them with children! Do not let the lack of material possessions be an excuse for abortion. Do not cut yourselves off from God's blessing!

We know that some self-proclaimed defenders of people's rights will say that the Church is limiting freedom and the rights of people, but let it be known that we are counseling with love, without degrading. May God forgive their sin and may He bring them into the communion of love. We will rejoice if they favorably respond. Many nations give heed to their historical existence and eternal salvation, and our Serbian people have killed, regretfully, more unborn children than all our enemies in all wars put together. We would mention that in our homeland the annual number of deaths, more than twenty five thousand, is greater than the number of new births. It is hoped that this statistic will move many to a more responsible way of thinking and to better actions.

In doing good works, in forgiving and in prayer, we need to persist and endure to the end, for "when reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we

endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate..." (I Cor. 4:12-13), knowing that "the victory that overcomes the world - (is) our faith." (I John 5:4) Orthodox Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija experience and know this very well, along with all those who have been left homeless, driven by persecution from their homesteads. They bear the wounds of Christ on their bodies and are victorious over their persecutors. Many, because of their self-absorption and fear, do not understand them. They, like the early Christian martyrs and confessors, are victorious over those who think that they can reach their goal by defeating others. We deeply believe that the time will come when the aggressors will be put to shame. We pray for our enemies, that they may see that doing evil cannot bring good results to anyone. May it be known to them that after all debacles which they are inflicting upon others, in the end, they themselves will be defeated with hopelessness. And for them we pray that they may overcome "self" in order to become partakers of the peace which Christ gives.

Dear spiritual children, our holy Serbian Orthodox Church has survived all historical Golgothas and crucifixions by the joy of Bethlehem's shepherds and by the wisdom of the Magi from East, and it will continue to survive forever, in conciliar unity with all the local Orthodox Churches which together comprise One Holy Church. In her fullness (sobornost) she gathers the entire Serbian population, on all continents and in all countries, and is open to all people of good will. She has gathered her faithful children throughout the centuries, walking the narrow path and building bridges of peace and love among people and nations.

We know well our downfalls, schisms and divisions. We pray to God that they cease, forever asking all of you to be one in our Lord, so that we may show others the pure faith and holy unity, all the beauty of faith in God and faith in the man of God. It will happen when we stop creating divisions among ourselves, mostly for foolish reasons. Let us strive, in the joy of the Christmas celebration, to reconcile ourselves and let us gather around the crib of the Divine Infant, overcoming all our senseless divisions!

Of course, it is necessary to think through everything, to encounter different opinions and to discuss things, but this cannot be a reason for hatred either among ourselves or towards anyone. The rule must remain in force which states: "he who would be first, should be servant to all". Christ with His life showed all this, and we Christians have a sacred duty to affirm this life of service. Today is the most appropriate day to reexamine and correct ourselves and others so that our joy can be complete and lasting.

Every one of us needs to see in every other person the image of God, the image of our brother and of our eternal friend. Then will our hearts truly be Bethlehem's cave in which Christ is continually being born anew. And the more hearts there are like this, the better everything will be and the better we will all be.

PEACE FROM GOD - CHRIST IS BORN!

Given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade, at Christmas, 2006. (Julian Calendar)
Your intercessors before the divine Christ-Child:

Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch **PAVLE**

Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana JOVAN
Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands AMPHILOHIJE
Metropolitan of Midwestern America CHRISTOPHER
Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosna NIKOLAJ

Bishop for America and Canada (New Gracanica Metropolitanate) LONGIN
Bishop of Eastern America MITROPHAN
<etc.>