



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Patriarch Pavle, Bishop Robert, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father John Monronko, Father Michael Mihalick [MS], Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, 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, 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 6-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 2-year-old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Bill, Erin, Jimmy Fennel [7th Grader], Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Margaret Mueller, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Rita Very & family, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Mildred Walters, Michael Miller, Mike Pelchar [Liz's brother], Jim Logue—throat cancer, Liz Stumpf, Ester Tylavsky, Ed Jamison, Theodore Nixon, Charles Johnson, Donna Kerr [stroke], Amy Forbeck, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Gloria Prymak [Liz's niece], Robert Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, Sabrina, George & Mika Rocknage, Elizabeth Mitchell, Ann McKivitz, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD:** Stefania Lucci, Kay Tomson, Ann Ostaffy, Steve Sakal, Homer Paul Kline, and Steve Ostaffy. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

Our prayers and sympathy go out to Michael Horvath and his family on the falling asleep in the Lord of his daughter Claudia Gradicheck. May

God grant her the Kingdom of Heaven and Life Everlasting! Vechnaya Pam'yat!

REMINDER: 2008 wall calendars and donation envelopes are available downstairs! Also, sign up in the back of the church for house blessing!

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 Fifth Grade and Matt’s Third 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, January 13 **Divine Liturgy** **10:30 AM**
SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY/BEFORE THE THEOPHANY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY RIGHTEOUS ONES: JOSEPH THE BETROTHED, DAVID THE KING, JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD, VENERABLE MELANIA THE YOUNGER-NUN OF ROME, SAINT PETER MOHYLA-METROPOLITAN OF KIEV, VENERABLE GELASIUS-MONK OF PALESTINE, SAINT GAUIS

Tone 8
Galatians 1:11-19
Matthew 2:13-23

Parastas in Blessed Memory of Steve & Tillie Kuzman—John & Debbie Paouncic

Friday, January 18 **Grand Compline & Great Blessing of Waters** **7:00 PM**
STRICT FAST

Saturday, January 19 **Obednitsa & Blessing of Houses** **10:30 AM**
THE HOLY THEOPHANY: BAPTISM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

Sunday, January 20 **Divine Liturgy** **10:30 AM**
SUNDAY AFTER THEOPHANY—SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET AND BAPTIST JOHN, AFTERFEAST OF THEOPHANY

Tone 1
Ephesians 4:7-13
Matthew 4:12-17

Sunday, January 27 **Divine Liturgy** **10:30 AM**
35TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SAINT NINA-EQUAL-TO-THE-APOSTLES & ENLIGHTENER OF GEORGIA, THE HOLY FATHERS SLAIN AT SINAI & RAITHU, SAINT JOSEPH ANALYTINUS OF RAITHU

**MONASTERY, VENERABLE STEPHEN-ABBOT OF CHENOLAKLOS MONASTERY NEAR CHALCEDON,
SAINT THEODULUS-SON OF SAINT NILUS OF SINAI**

Tone 2

I Timothy 1:15-17

Luke 18:35-43

Discourse On the Day of the Baptism of Christ
Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

We shall now say something about the present feast. Many celebrate the feastdays and know their designations, but the cause for which they were established they know not. Thus concerning this, that the present feast is called Theophany -- everyone knows; but what this is -- Theophany, and whether it be one thing or another, they know not. And this is shameful -- every year to celebrate the feastday and not know its reason.

First of all therefore, it is necessary to say that there is not one Theophany, but two: the one actual, which already has occurred, and the second in future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world. About this one and about the other you will hear today from Paul, who in conversing with Titus, speaks thus about the present: "The grace of God hath revealed itself, having saved all mankind, decreeing, that we reject iniquity and worldly desires, and dwell in the present age in prudence and in righteousness and piety" -- and about the future: "awaiting the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:11-13). And a prophet speaks thus about this latter: "the sun shalt turn to darkness, and the moon to blood at first, then shalt come the great and illuminating Day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31). Why is not that day, on which the Lord was born, considered Theophany -- but rather this day on which He was baptized? This present day it is, on which He was baptized and sanctified the nature of water. Because on this day all, having obtained the waters, do carry it home and keep it all year, since today the waters are sanctified; and an obvious phenomenon occurs: these waters in their essence do not spoil with the passage of time, but obtained today, for one whole year and often for two or three years, they remain unharmed and fresh, and afterwards for a long time do not stop being water, just as that obtained from the fountains.

Why then is this day called Theophany? Because Christ made Himself known to all -- not then when He was born -- but then when He was baptized. Until this time He was not known to the people. And that the people did not know Him, Who He was, listen about this to John the Baptist, who says: "Amidst you standeth, Him Whom ye know not of" (Jn. 1:26). And is it surprising that others did not know Him, when even the Baptist did not know Him until that day? "And I -- said he -- knew Him not: but He that did send me to baptize with water, about This One did tell unto me: over Him that shalt see the Spirit

descending and abiding upon Him, This One it is Who baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 1:33). Thus from this it is evident, that -- there are two Theophanies, and why Christ comes at baptism and on whichever baptism He comes, about this it is necessary to say: it is therefore necessary to know both the one and equally the other. And first it is necessary to speak your love about the latter, so that we might learn about the former. There was a Jewish baptism, which cleansed from bodily impurities, but not to remove sins. Thus, whoever committed adultery, or decided on thievery, or who did some other kind of misdeed, it did not free him from guilt. But whoever touched the bones of the dead, whoever tasted food forbidden by the law, whoever approached from contamination, whoever consorted with lepers -- that one washed, and until evening was impure, and then cleansed. "Let one wash his body in pure water -- it says in the Scriptures, -- and he will be unclean until evening, and then he will be clean" (Lev 15:5, 22:4). This was not truly of sins or impurities, but since the Jews lacked perfection, then God, accomplishing it by means of this greater piety, prepared them by their beginnings for a precise observance of important things.

Thus, Jewish cleansings did not free from sins, but only from bodily impurities. Not so with ours: it is far more sublime and it manifests a great grace, whereby it sets free from sin, it cleanses the spirit and bestows the gifts of the Spirit. And the baptism of John was far more sublime than the Jewish, but less so than ours: it was like a bridge between both baptisms, leading across itself from the first to the last. Wherefore John did not give guidance for observance of bodily purifications, but together with them he exhorted and advised to be converted from vice to good deeds and to trust in the hope of salvation and the accomplishing of good deeds, rather than in different washings and purifications by water. John did not say: wash your clothes, wash your body, and ye will be pure, but what? -- "bear ye fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt 3:8). Since it was more than of the Jews, but less than ours: the baptism of John did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness by grace: it gave the commandment to repent, but it was powerless to absolve sins. Wherefore John did also say: "I baptize you with water...That One however will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Mt 3:11). Obviously, he did not baptize with the Spirit. But what does this mean: "with the Holy Spirit and with fire?" Call to mind that day, on which for the Apostles "there appeared disparate tongues like fire, and sat over each one of them" (Acts 2:3). And that the baptism of John did not impart the Spirit and remission of sins is evident from the following: Paul "found certain disciples, and said to them: received ye the Holy Spirit since ye have believed? They said to him: but furthermore whether it be of the Holy Spirit, we shall hear. He said to

them: into what were ye baptized? They answered: into the baptism of John. Paul then said: John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance," -- repentance, but not remission of sins; for whom did he baptize? "Having proclaimed to the people, that they should believe in the One coming after him, namely, Christ Jesus. Having heard this, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus: and Paul laying his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:1-6). Do you see, how incomplete was the baptism of John? If the one were not incomplete, would then Paul have baptized them again, and placed his hands on them; having performed also the second, he shew the superiority of the apostolic Baptism and that the baptism of John was far less than his. Thus, from this we recognize the difference of the baptisms.

Now it is necessary to say, for whom was Christ baptized and by which baptism? Neither the former the Jewish, nor the last -- ours. Whence hath He need for remission of sins, how is this possible for Him, Who hath not any sins? "Of sin, -- it says in the Scriptures, -- worked He not, nor was there deceit found in His mouth" (1 Pet 2:22); and further, "who of you convicteth Me of Sin?" (Jn 8:46). And His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit; how might this be possible, when it in the beginning was fashioned by the Holy Spirit? And so, if His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit, and He was not subject to sins, then for whom was He baptized? But first of all it is necessary for us to recognize, by which baptism He was baptized, and then it will be clear for us. By which baptism indeed was He baptized? -- Not the Jewish, nor ours, nor John's. For whom, since thou from thine own aspect of baptism dost perceive, that He was baptized not by reason of sin and not having need of the gift of the Spirit; therefore, as we have demonstrated, this baptism was alien to the one and to the other. Hence it is evident, that He came to Jordan not for the forgiveness of sins and not for receiving the gifts of the Spirit. But so that some from those present then should not think, that He came for repentance like others, listen to how John precluded this. What he then spoke to the others then was: "Bear ye fruits worthy of repentance"; but listen what he said to Him: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and Thou art come to me?" (Mt 3:8, 14). With these words he demonstrated, that Christ came to him not through that need with which people came, and that He was so far from the need to be baptized for this reason -- so much more sublime and perfectly purer than Baptism itself. For whom was He baptized, if this was done not for repentance, nor for the remission of sins, nor for receiving the gifts of the Spirit? Through the other two reasons, of which about the one the disciple speaks, and about the other He Himself spoke to John. Which reason of this baptism did John declare? Namely, that Christ should become known to the people, as Paul also mentions: "John therefore baptized with the baptism of repentance, so that through him they should believe on Him that cometh"

(Acts 19:4); this was the consequence of the baptism. If John had gone to the home of each and, standing at the door, had spoken out for Christ and said: "He is the Son of God," such a testimony would have been suspicious, and this deed would have been extremely perplexing. So too, if he in advocating Christ had gone into the synagogues and witnessed to Him, this testimony of his might be suspiciously fabricated. But when all the people thronged out from all the cities to Jordan and remained on the banks of the river, and when He Himself came to be baptized and received the testimony of the Father by a voice from above and by the coming-upon of the Spirit in the form of a dove, then the testimony of John about Him was made beyond all questioning. And since he

said: "and I knew Him not" (Jn 1:31), his testimony put forth is trustworthy. They were kindred after the flesh between themselves "wherefore Elizabeth, thy kinswoman, hath also conceived a son" -- said the Angel to Mary about the mother of John (Lk. 1: 36); if however the mothers were relatives, then obviously so also were the children. Thus, since they were kinsmen -- in order that it should not seem that John would testify concerning Christ because of kinship, the grace of the Spirit organized it such, that John spent all his early years in the wilderness, so that it should not seem that John had declared his testimony out of friendship or some similar reason. But John, as he was instructed of God, thus also announced about Him, wherein also he did say: "and I knew Him not." From whence didst thou find out? "He having sent me that sayeth to baptize with water, That One did tell me" What did He tell thee? "Over Him thou shalt see the Spirit descending, like to a dove, and abiding over Him, That One is baptized by the Holy Spirit" (Jn 1:32-33). Dost thou see, that the Holy Spirit did not descend as in a first time then coming down upon Him, but in order to point out that preached by His inspiration -- as though by a finger, it pointed Him out to all. For this reason He came to baptism.

And there is a second reason, about which He Himself spoke -- what exactly is it? When John said: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and Thou art come to me?" -- He answered thus: "stay now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill every righteousness" (Mt 3:14-15). Dost thou see the meekness of the servant? Dost thou see the humility of the Master? What does He mean: "to fulfill every righteousness?" By righteousness is meant the fulfillment of all the commandments, as is said: "both were righteous, walking faultlessly in the commandments of the Lord" (Lk 1:6). Since fulfilling this righteousness was necessary for all people -- but no one of them kept it or fulfilled it -- Christ came then and fulfilled this righteousness.

And what righteousness is there, someone will say, in being baptized? Obedience for a prophet was righteous. As Christ was circumcised, offered sacrifice, kept the sabbath and observed the Jewish feasts, so also He added

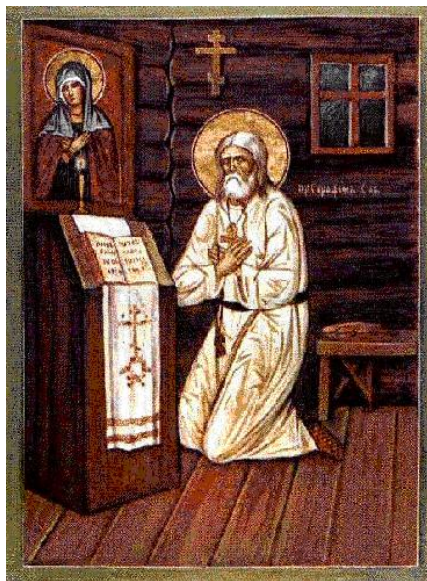
this remaining thing, that He was obedient to having been baptized by a prophet. It was the will of God then, that all should be baptized -- about which listen, as John speaks: "He having sent me to baptize with water" (Jn 1:33); so also Christ: "the publicans and the people do justify God, having been baptized with the baptism of John; the Pharisees and the lawyers reject the counsel of God concerning themselves, not having been baptized by him" (Lk 7:29-30). Thus, if obedience to God constitutes righteousness, and God sent John to baptize the nation, then Christ has also fulfilled this along with all the other commandments.

Consider, that the commandments of the law is the main point of the two denarii: this -- debt, which our race has needed to pay; but we did not pay it, and we, falling under such an accusation, are embraced by death. Christ came, and finding us afflicted by it -- He paid the debt, fulfilled the necessary and seized from it those, who were not able to pay. Wherefore He does not say: "it is necessary for us to do this or that," but rather "to fulfill every righteousness." "It is for Me, being the Master, -- says He, -- proper to make payment for the needy." Such was the reason for His baptism -- wherefore they should see, that He had fulfilled all the law -- both this reason and also that, about which was spoken of before. Wherefore also the Spirit did descend as a dove: because where there is reconciliation with God -- there also is the dove. So also in the ark of Noah the dove did bring the branch of olive -- a sign of God's love of mankind and of the cessation of the flood. And now in the form of a dove, and not in a body -- this particularly deserves to be noted -- the Spirit descended, announcing the universal mercy of God and showing with it, that the spiritual man needs to be gentle, simple and innocent, as Christ also says: "Except ye be converted and become as children, ye shall not enter into the Heavenly Kingdom" (Mt 18:3). But that ark, after the cessation of the flood, remained upon the earth; this ark, after the cessation of wrath, is taken to heaven, and now this Immaculate and Imperishable Body is situated at the right hand of the Father.

Having made mention about the Body of the Lord, I shall also say a little about this, and then the conclusion of the talk. Many now will approach the Holy Table on the occasion of the feast. But some approach not with trembling, but shoving, hitting others, blazing with anger, shouting, cursing, roughing it up with their fellows with great confusion. What, tell me, art thou troubled by, my fellow? What disturbeth thee? Do urgent affairs, for certain, summon thee? At this hour art thou particularly aware, that these affairs of thine that thou particularly rememberest, that thou art situated upon the earth, and dost thou think to mix about with people? But is it not with a soul of stone naturally to think, that in such a time thou stand upon the earth, and not exult with the Angels with whom to raise up victorious song to God?

For this Christ also did describe us with eagles, saying: "where the corpse is, there are the eagles gathered" (Mt 24:28) -- so that we might have risen to heaven and soared to the heights, having ascended on the wings of the spirit; but we, like snakes, crawl upon the earth and eat dirt. Having been invited to supper, thou, although satiated before others, would not dare to leave before others while others are still reclining. But here, when the sacred doings are going on, thou at the very middle would pass by everything and leave? Is it for a worthy excuse? What excuse might it be? Judas, having communed that last evening on that final night, left hastily then as all the others were still reclining.

Here these also are in imitation of him, who leave before the final blessing! If he had not gone, then he would not have made the betrayal; if he did not leave his co-disciples, then he would not have perished; if he had not removed himself from the flock, then the wolf would not have seized and devoured him alone; if he had separated himself from the Pastor, then he would not have made himself the prey of wild beasts. Wherefore he (Judas) was with the Jews, and those (the apostles) went out with the Lord. Dost thou see, by what manner the final prayer after the offering of the sacrifice is accomplished? We should, beloved, stand forth for this, we should ponder this, fearful of the coming judgment for this. We should approach the Holy Sacrifice with great decorum, with proper piety, so as to merit us more of God's benevolence, to cleanse one's soul and to receive eternal blessings, of which may we all be worthy by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to with Whom the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, and worship now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.



St Seraphim of Sarov—Memory celebrated January 2/15

A lifelong intimacy with God, and an abiding Christian love for his fellow man, were two of the many attributes of a man of Sarov, Russia, known as Seraphim, who attained sainthood in the eighteenth century, a century in which far fewer saints were selected than in the early centuries when being a Christian meant risking one's life.

A visionary of near divinity and a clergyman of rare compassion, Seraphim's piety was such that he has been linked with Sts. Theodosios and Sergios as the three greatest saints born of Mother Russia. A native of Kursk, Seraphim, who was baptised with the name of Prokhor in 1759, was the son of a devout Christian woman named Agatha and a hard-driving man named Isidore, a successful building contractor. Seraphim's father met an untimely death while in the process of erecting the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kursk, leaving the widow and her ten-year-old son to see to the completion of the church. The boy fell from a scaffolding and recovered from what appeared to be fatal injuries, after which he revealed that in a vision while he lay stricken the Virgin Mary appeared to him with the message that he would survive. This vision, the first of many intimacies with God he was to experience thereafter, was the inspiration which set him on his lifetime course of service to the Lord.

While yet a boy, Seraphim turned to the Holy Scriptures, impressed particularly by the writings of Sts. Anthony and Pachomios of Egypt, whose monasticism fascinated him, and, after absorbing the teachings in the works of St. Basil, St. Makarios, and St. John of the Ladder, he entered monastic life at the age of eighteen. Tonsured a monk in 1786 and given the name of Seraphim, he was ordained a priest in 1793 but chose not to preach until he had acquired a greater proximity to God, which he thought could come only through prayer and meditation in the complete solitude of the wilderness. The forbidding forest was to be his home for the next several years.

At one point, he broke off his sporadic contact with the monastery and took up residence on a stone slab, on which he is said to have remained for a thousand days and nights in emulation of St. Symeon, removing himself from his uncomfortable roost only for the bare essentials of life. After this test of spiritual and physical endurance, he sought the comparative comfort of a hut, from which he would emerge from time to time to tell of his visions, in which he had the company of the apostles Peter and John and occasionally the Virgin Mary.

Returning to the monastery, Seraphim had grown to such spiritual stature that he was visited by countless pilgrims seeking the way of the Lord, and was ultimately designated as the spiritual father of the nuns of the Diveyev

Convent, an order which attested to his power of healing through Jesus Christ and offered its prayers to him when he was recognised as a prophet of the Lord and named a holy Staretz (Elder of the Faith). It was his firm belief that the Kingdom of God was within us all and that only through the Holy Spirit could come the joy of complete tranquility and the inner peace which comes with faith. His sermons on this particular theme brought the true meaning of God's love to all those privileged to hear him.

Even the animals of the forest came to know the friendship of the gentle Seraphim, and he would on frequent occasions seek out the solitude of the wilderness, returning to the monastery always with renewed faith and closeness to nature that refreshed the spirit. Whenever he became ill, he relied on his "joy," the Virgin Mary, to restore his health. This association with the Divine was to manifest itself many times over.

One of the most notable expressions of the power of healing through Jesus and Mary came about when Seraphim was called upon to help his friend, Nicholas Motovilov, a wealthy benefactor who had been paralyzed by a stroke. The prayers of Seraphim were answered and his friend was healed. The true compassion of Seraphim was shown when he obtained the release of three men who had looted his hut, which they mistakenly thought to contain treasure. He died kneeling in prayer in 1833, and seventy years later was made a Saint.

from Orthodox Saints Vol 1, by Fr George Poulos
Holy Cross Orthodox Press

The True Meaning of Christmas

Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. This is how it happened. I was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I went out to the front room and to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out next to the fireplace. "What are you doing?" I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat and I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know.

He then answered me with a simple statement . . . "TEACH THE CHILDREN!" I was puzzled. What did he mean? He anticipated my question and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood bewildered, Santa said, "Teach the

children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that now-a-days Christmas has forgotten."

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **FIR TREE** and placed it before the mantle. "Teach the children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind, all the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of man's thoughts turning toward heaven."

He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant **STAR**. "Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of His promise."

He then reached into his bag and pulled out a **CANDLE**. "Teach the children that the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness."

Once again he reached into his bag and removed a **WREATH** and placed it on the tree. "Teach the children that the wreath symbolizes the real nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection."

He then pulled from his bag an **ORNAMENT** of himself. "Teach the children that I, Santa Claus, symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December."

He then brought out a **HOLLY LEAF**. "Teach the children that the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly berries represent the blood shed by Him.

Next he pulled from his bag a **GIFT** and said, "Teach the children that God so loved the world that he gave his begotten son." Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **CANDY CANE** and hung it on the tree. "Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds' crook. The crook on the staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper."

He reached in again and pulled out an **ANGEL. "Teach the children that it was the angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will toward men."**

Suddenly I heard a soft twinkling sound, and from his bag he pulled out a **BELL. "Teach the children that as the lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring mankind to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return.**

Santa looked back and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, "Remember to teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is, and I bow down to worship him, our LORD, our GOD."

Father Bob will be sending out a letter with contact information—address and phone number—for our parishioners who may be unable to get to church on a regular basis. Some are living with relatives and others are in care facilities—if you know of anyone fits this description, please see Father Bob or Pani Gina and give them the updated contact information. A card, note, or phone call can do wonders for those who feel isolated from family and friends, and this festive time of year is a great time to reconnect with them.